

Revival - Part 4

by Doc Greenway

Revival requires personal sacrifice, unwavering loyalty to God, and a commitment to fulfilling divine conditions.

Duration: 57:02

Scripture: Romans 8:1

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being sincere and dedicated to God. He highlights the need for true obedience and worship, not just going through the motions. The preacher uses the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal to illustrate the price of revival, which includes self-sacrifice and sincerity. He challenges the audience to examine their own lives and ask if they have truly given themselves unreservedly to God.

Transcript

Just as there is no Pentecost without the Passover, there is no revival without a price that has to be paid. And I think we have to realize this sooner or later. Any study of revivals and awakenings in the Old Testament and in the Bible as a whole will amply confirm this fact.

And it seems that just as there is an historical fact that the Passover preceded Pentecost, and Pentecost is reckoned from the Passover, so unless the cross of Christ is allowed to have its way, its place in our lives, then our hope of revival is very dim indeed. There is a price to be paid. We said this last Tuesday night, as we came to the conclusion of our address for that night, that if we expect revival, we must expect that there will be a cost.

And the cost has to be met personally and individually. We commenced a series of addresses by saying there are always two elements in revival. Human availability is one, and divine sovereignty is the other.

And while this is true, and while we know that revivals are pulled out and not planned out, that God alone can send revival while we understand this, yet there are certain conditions that He has laid down which make it quite clear that although there is a divine sovereignty about revival, there are also human conditions that have to be fulfilled. And I know this, that throughout the word of God it is evident that fire never falls upon an empty altar. When the altar is filled, then the fire falls.

And when the altar of consecration and dedication has received our sacrifice, then and then only will the fire of God fall from heaven. Fire does not fall upon an empty altar. We recall the word of Jehovah to Solomon the king, If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

If my people, then will I hear. The condition is so clear. If my people are prepared to humble themselves, then I am prepared to bless them and to pour out my Spirit upon them.

Divine deliverance was always dependent on their consecration to God. If they were prepared to cast out every idol, if they were willing to break down every foe, and to sanctify themselves as unto the Lord, God was prepared to meet with them. This was the word of the Lord through Samuel, you remember.

If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. There are no half measures here at all, no possibility of an easy compromise, but a declaration on the part of God through his servants the prophets, so clear, so plain, so positive, and so searching, that no one could possibly mistake what God was driving at through the lips of these men of God. And I think that this principle of sacrifice unto God, and of fulfilling conditions laid down by God, this principle has repercussions that are very far-reaching.

For instance, in the days of Malachi the prophet, you recall how God said to his people, return unto me, and I will return unto you. But they said, in justifying themselves, wherein shall we return? As much as to say, why do you accuse us of being backslidden? And then this answer of God is tremendously revealing. Will a man rob God? Yet he robbed me.

But he say, wherein have we robbed thee? And Jehovah replies, in tithes and offerings. Then comes the command of the Lord, bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house. And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

So the practice of giving to God is involved in the price we pay for revival. This is perfectly clear. Tithes, oh, that savors too much of the law, brother.

They gave tithes unto the law, but we're under grace now. That's great. But if you're under grace, surely you should give more, and not less, than they gave under law.

I think this is perfectly fair, isn't it? And perfectly logical. If under the law they gave a tenth of their income, under grace, it causes the unmerited favor of God to us. We should not be giving less, but giving more.

This is how I see it, and I trust you see it in the same way. When you've paid your tithes, you've given nothing. It belongs to God anyway.

It's your offerings over and above this that are important, where you are concerned. And so you see, this principle, as I said, is very, very far-reaching. I heard recently of a businessman who was converted, and he wanted to be baptized by immersion.

But his conversion was so real that he took his pocketbook with him. He wanted that immersed too, because he said that he wanted everybody to understand that his bank account belonged to the Lord, and

not only his soul. Are you ready for this? Very practical, very searching, certainly.

But there is a principle involved here. There is no area of the Christian's life that is exempt from this principle, especially if we are thinking in terms of God's outpoured spirit in revival. If we do have the expectation of revival, then remember that the principle of the cross enters into every single area of our lives without any possible exception at all.

For it is abundantly proved in the word of God and in experience that no man amounts to very much in the service of God until and unless he has identified himself and died with Christ, signed, if you like, his own death warrant, and is able to say with the Apostle Paul that he is crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, he lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him. It is an important principle to understand.

We come to the cross for salvation. It costs us nothing. But the Spirit of God applies his cross to us.

That costs us everything. And this must enter very deeply and far-reachingly into our personal lives as believers. So the principle, I think, is established quite clearly in experience and in the word of God, that there are conditions to be fulfilled, there is a price to be paid for revival.

It is not easy. It's a costly business. Now, I think it's a good thing to see a principle in action, to see it demonstrated.

And this we have in 1 Kings chapter 18 and commencing in verse 21. The first book of Kings chapter 18 and verse 21. This is our starting point in a remarkable record.

It is a record that demonstrates this very principle and shows us something of what is involved in the price for revival. Perhaps we better set the story in its true perspective. This occurred, that we are going to deal with tonight, in the reign of Ahab, King Ahab.

And he was probably the most sinister king that Israel ever had. For the 22 years of his reign, the record shows that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. That's 1 Kings 16.30. It is also to be noted that Zimri, his predecessor, had exactly the same record, so that Ahab was really following a bad example.

But he went further. He took as his wife a woman from a heathen country. And if you've known anything at all about the Old Testament, you'll know that the name Jezebel, is certainly something that evokes a picture of evil.

This was Ahab's wife, his queen, Jezebel. It was she who introduced the worship of Baal in Israel. And so it's understandable that because Ahab and Queen Jezebel established this terrible worship in Israel, that the indictment is recorded against them.

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel that were before him. That is 1 Kings 16.33. There were elements in the worship of Baal too beastly to enumerate here. And this was the kind of thing that Israel were observing in their worship and in their loyalty.

I think it is true to say too that in the vast majority of cases, the nation was swayed in this way and delighted to have it so. A very small minority indeed refused to worship Baal and still looked to Jehovah. Remember too that the prophets of the Lord had been slain.

And spirituality was at a very, very low ebb indeed. Things could not have been worse. The situation seemed altogether hopeless.

And so far as Israel were concerned, one would think you might as well write them off. There was no hope of revival or recovery for them. It was just then that Elijah the Tishbite, the man from the hills, began his ministry.

And through this one man's unshakable faith, revival came to the nation even at such a time as this. Because one man believed God and trusted in him and had courage and faith toward God that things could be different. First of all, he prophesied that no rain would fall upon the land except that the word of Jehovah through his lips.

And this of course was a judgment upon the nation. And then for three and a half years he seems to disappear out of sight. No one seems to know where he was.

But now the hour has come. And he stands on Calmer's Heights challenging the prophets of Baal and determined that he would summon the nation and confront them with what they had to do in order to be brought back into fellowship with the living God and to know the blessing of God upon their lives as a people and as individuals. And in the unfolding story which I want to look at tonight, just briefly, there are lessons about the price of revival which I think we ought to learn.

And the first is this, that loyalty has to be tested. Verse 21 reads, And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.

And the people answered him not a word. How long halt ye? The word halt means to hop from one foot to another. Uncertain, changeful, vacillating, compromising, uncommitted.

How long are you going to do this, he said? Now make up your minds. Serve Jehovah if you are going to believe in him and follow him. Serve Baal and follow him if he is the one you are going to believe in.

And the issue is quite clear cut. And I am sure of this, that part of the price we have to pay for revival is an uncompromising loyalty to Jesus Christ where nothing is allowed to interfere and nothing cuts across the purpose and the will of God in relation to this matter of our faith toward God. I suppose in their case, the choice to be made was between Baal and Jehovah.

But in today's situation, the choice may be between the world and God. And many, I am afraid, are failing at this point, breaking down under this test of loyalty. They want the world and they want God, but you cannot serve God and man.

You can't have both If you like, it takes empty hands to hold the full price. The choice has to be made. I remember once in Melbourne in Australia, visiting a home.

It was the most beautiful house I have ever been in. So well established and so well furnished. They had a lovely rose garden, I remember.

The man of the house took me out into this rose garden and it was really marvelous. I said, You must be a very, very happy man. I'll never forget how he put his hands on my shoulders, looked into my eyes and said, I'm about the most miserable man in Melbourne.

I've got everything, you see, and I've got nothing. Well, it was a shock to me to hear him say this. Then he told me how, when they got married, his wife determined that instead of going all out into the service of God, he ought to make some money, first of all, and establish himself in business and so on.

And he said, I made the sad mistake of listening to her. And the result is that I've got everything that this world could give me, or everything that I need, but I lack the one essential thing, my peace with God, my sense of the reality of God in my life, that once I enjoy, choose he this day whom he will serve? How long halt he between two opinions, the world or God, self or the Saviour, the flesh or the spirit, the material things of life or the spiritual values? This is the loyalty that has to be tested eventually. And you know, if, as the prophet says, if the Lord be God, follow him, it involves loyalty in many senses, loyalty in worship.

Here the test is to know that you are really worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth, that your worship is on a personal basis, that it's not simply loyalty to a church, to a denomination, to a movement, to a group of people. But that you have established, without any shadow of doubt, a personal relationship with God, which makes it evident that you're worshipping him, that your loyalty is to him and not to anyone else. How often friends can hinder us here, how often we have to pray that we might be saved from our friends.

Loyalty in worship. It implies also loyalty in conduct. If the Lord be God, follow him.

Go to the place where our actions and our motives and our reactions are under this test. Lord, what will thou have me to do? A thou and me relationship, not thou and half a dozen other people and me, thou and me. When Saul of Tarsus cried out as he did in these words, it was surely a consciousness of conquest that made him ask the question.

He was unhorsed, he was defeated, he was conquered, and he understood this. Lord, what will thou have me to do? It was also a declaration of his personal devotion. Henceforth, thou and me, Lord, and no one else to interfere.

Is this true of us tonight? Are we able to pass this test of loyalty? When everything is brought to this point, what would the Lord have me to do? And we seek his face for guidance, for understanding, for comprehension of his will, and we are willing to do what he wants us to do. It involves loyalty in service. In response to the question, how long a halty? Are we able to say, as Joshua did, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord? I've made up my mind, I've pledged my loyalty, I know what I'm doing, I know where I'm going, I know that I belong to him and he belongs to me, whose I am and whom I serve.

This is the test. You know, there's a further test of loyalty in this chapter, which is demonstrated in verses 30 to 32, part of which reads, And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him, and he repaired the altar that was broken down.

Elijah takes twelve stones, one for each tribe, and with them he built an altar in the name of the Lord. With the stones, he built an altar in the name of Jehovah. This act was a demonstration of a restored relationship on the part of the people, and he did this as a sign and a testimony against them.

It involved the whole nation in this symbolic action. And here the faith of Elijah in the ultimate triumph of God comes shining through. He has challenged the 450 prophets of Baal, and I'm sure you know about this story.

Now it is time to prepare the way for God to manifest himself to the people. And so the altar is ready to receive the sacrifice. Stone upon stone it is built, prepared.

When it is ready, then he knows the next step which has to be taken. And this, of course, leads us to the second lesson that is taught us here about revival. Revival.

What is it? In the price of revival, self-sacrifice is unstinted. Verse 33, And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood. The sacrifice was cut in pieces, for this was to be a whole burnt offering unto the Lord, a holocaust, a feast of celebration, an expression of consecration.

And it symbolizes for us the absolute, complete, and unqualified consecration of ourselves to God. What Paul talks about when he writes to the Romans in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, or your logical worship. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

If this is it in the New Testament, think of the appeal that is made here. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, not by the power of God, not by the holiness of God, or the righteousness of God, but by the mercies of God. God loves us into living for Him, for before God ever causes us to come under the place of command, before ever God issues any demand upon us at all, He first sees to it that we are recipients of some special mercy.

This is always God's way. And do you know that the eighth chapter of Romans is packed with mercies? When Paul therefore says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, he's pointing them back to all those mercies in Romans chapter 8. And having done that, surely we have a ground then in our approach to God for thanksgiving, for praise, for this holocaust, this celebration, this giving of ourselves unreservedly, unconditionally back to God. We have accepted Christ as our personal Savior, it may be.

We know a point in time when we close in with His offer of mercy, when He became our very own Savior. But I ask you, my brother, my sister tonight, do we know this other work of grace? Do we know this giving of ourselves completely and unreservedly to Him? Do we know what it is to see the altar filled? It is for this that God asks, as part of the price that has to be paid, if we are expecting and looking for revival in our day. The action for which the Apostle asks, you remember in Romans, is this, present your body a living sacrifice.

Present, par hasteni, lay yourself beside God's altar. Don't ever try to get up onto that altar, you'll never make it. There's a law of self-preservation in human life that is tremendously strong, you'll never make it.

He doesn't expect it of you. All He wants is that you will go to Him, lay yourself beside His altar and say, well, here I am, Lord, just as I am. Take me, do what you will with me, but bless me and make me a blessing.

And when we reach this point, surely then our consecration is something which brings glory to God and blessing in our own lives and, thank God, an overflow to other people. This is the action. And what is the argument here? He says it's your reasonable service, or it is your logical worship.

Worship is completely illogical unless this act of consecration has been performed. We may draw near to God with our lips, but you take it from me, and I know you'll bat this home by experience. Though you may do this, if you've got the single sneaking suspicion that something in your life is not yielded completely to God, then you know and I know that all the praying in the world never seems to accomplish anything.

You are drawing near to God with your lips, but your heart is far from Him, and you can never receive Him. He knows and you know. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that He present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your logical worship.

Be not conformed to this world. Don't allow yourself to be run into the mold of this world, in its thinking, in its concepts, in its reasonings, but be transformed. Be ye being transformed.

It's a process, by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect. But you never prove this until you give yourself to Him in this way. Do you know anything at all about the law of reserved right? Well, it works this way.

If you had a hundred acres, you sold ninety-nine, but kept one right in the middle for your own purposes. Then, according to the law of reserved right, you have the perfect right to walk all over those ninety-nine acres into your own. It's a tremendous thing, you know, when you can say, well, I've given all to the Lord, except this one little acre.

The devil says, yes, well, that belongs to me. That's my part. So he walks all over the rest to get to what is really his very own.

Is this how we conceive of consecration? Is this how we regard our giving of ourselves to God? Years ago in England, I remember for the first time in my life, I visited Huddersfield, and I preached there in a teaching mission. While I was there, I was told this story, which I later found in one of Dr. Sangster's books. In the days when Huddersfield was only a little village, Sir John Ramsden was the big man in those days.

He owned all of Huddersfield, except one house which belonged to a Quaker. And the Quaker was determined he wasn't going to sell. And so Sir John Ramsden came again and again.

Finally, he arrived there and said, if you will sell me this house, he said, I'm willing to put a sovereign on every tile on the roof. And the Quaker looked at him and said, Sir John, if thou didst stick them up on end, he said, I would not sell it to thee. And Sir John Ramsden went down the path to the gate, stamping, and flung the gate open and slammed it behind him, only to hear the Quaker say, Sir John, yes, what is it now? Huddersfield belongs to thee and to me.

And isn't it a shocking thing when the devil can say that about any Christian? Lord Jesus, this man belongs to you and to me. I've got a part there too. Is this how we regard it? Anything we hold back from the Lord, anything that He demands of us, and we retain it in our own possession.

You can think of the law reserved right if you wish. But remember this, that until and unless we are prepared to pay the price of full surrender, then any thought of revival we may have is just an empty fantasy. It has no foundation at all.

There's a price to be paid. We said at the very beginning that this was sold, and tonight we would confirm it with all our hearts. The cost is great.

The price has to be paid. What did Jesus say? For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. So the giving of ourselves to God without qualification, without condition at all, this is involved in the price of revival.

And we do make conditions, you know. Lord, if you'll only do that for me, well, I'll do this for you. And we get down to a sort of a bargain counter relationship.

I heard a woman in Rotary once say this, and I thought she was a very spiritual person. I heard her say with my own ears, and I could hardly believe it, she said, I've told the Lord if he doesn't come through on this, I'm finished. I said, what do you mean, woman? Well, I've just told him, she said.

He's got to answer this prayer or I'm through. I said, listen to me. If Jesus Christ never blessed you again from now to eternity, he has blessed you so mightily, so wonderfully, that throughout all eternity you could praise and glorify and magnify his name.

But I said, you come down to a Jacob relationship, and you want to bargain with him. We do this sometimes unconsciously. But remember, if the consecration is to be acceptable to God, it must be absolutely unconditional and without any reservation at all.

For all that we are and have and own and hope to be belongs to him. We say it, we sing it, we pray it, but do we really believe it? And has it happened in our lives? This is part of the test, surely, that comes, part of the price that has to be paid. Remember how Paul spoke about the grace of God he had seen displayed among the churches in Macedonia? And he says, and this they did, talking about the liberality of their giving out of their great poverty, and this they did, not as we had expected, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.

They not only gave of their substance, they gave of themselves. They gave completely over to him. I heard some months ago about a young woman who was approached by a minister who was collecting for a missionary cause.

And she said, oh, I suppose, she said, you want my donation again, going into a handbag and taking out some coins? He said, yes, I'd be very glad to receive your contribution, but it's you I want, isn't it? You. I want you for Sunday school. And oh, what a fuss was made over that.

Well, she was concerned. She would have given and given and given of her substance, but to give of herself, ah, that's different. I ask you tonight in all humility, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, conscious of all that he has done for us, have you really, truly given yourself unreservedly over to him? This is the price of revival.

And I think it is demonstrated in the story which is unfolding in this chapter. Self-sacrifice is unstinted. And the third lesson concerning the price of revival that is present in this story is that here sincerity is demonstrated.

Verses 34 and 35. You know how a deep ditch was dug around the altar and how Elijah instructed that four barrels of water should be brought. And the water was poured upon the sacrifice until it overflowed.

Verse 34. And he said, do it the second time, and they did it the second time. And he said, do it the third time, and they did it the third time.

Verse 35. And the water ran round about the altar and filled the trench also with water. What is Elijah doing here? The challenge agreed upon between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was this, that God who answers by fire, let him be God.

And now Elijah sets out to demonstrate the sincerity of his own expectation by soaking the sacrifice with barrels of water. As much as to say, something more than the ordinary is going to ignite this. Not human, not natural, but something that is really divine.

For God alone can kindle this fire. And through this action, Elijah's sincerity is placed beyond all shadow of doubt. It's evident that in the Bible, God places a premium on sincerity.

Even in the days of Joshua, in the beginnings of Israel's history, it is underlined. Joshua challenges the assembled host with these words, thou therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth. If you do this, then you will put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt.

And serve he the Lord. It reappears in the New Testament, in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you all, in godly sincerity.

How much insincerity there is among Christians in our day. How insincere people can be, even in their evaluation of other people, and of things that happen, and of their own spiritual experience, so-called. I think I mentioned when we were over in Gordon's house that I once visited Gloucester Cathedral.

I had another occasion in Gloucester when I was holding a mission. I can recall that we had prayed very earnestly that God would bring in the unsaved people, the unconverted people. But it was a cathedral city, and you know, it is a job to find sinners anywhere.

Everybody seemed to be so religious. And I came to about the last night of the mission, and there had been a few souls saved, but I said, Oh Lord, you know, praying quietly to the Lord, I do want to see someone saved here tonight. And there came a man into the meeting, who evidently, to me anyway, looked as if he needed saving.

And I made my appeal, and he came down the aisle, and with his head bowed, you know, and his shoulders stooped, right down to where I stood. And I was there waiting for him with my Bible under my arm. And I said, Oh, I said, I'm so glad to see you, my friend.

You want to give your life to Jesus Christ? Yes, sir, he said, that's right. I said, Are you sure now you do want to get saved? You do want to give your life over to Jesus? Yes, that's right. He said, I came here tonight, he said, with this idea in mind.

I came to be converted and to see if I could get a pair of shoe size nines. In the same breath. It was so disappointing.

When I was all worked up thinking I was going to plead the soul to Christ, he wasn't really the least bit interested in anything but his pair of shoes. Ah, but to get back to the point, how much insincerity there can be, even in church life. But you know, when God begins to deal with people in preparation for revival, this is one of the things that appears.

Again and again, God gets to grips with the inmost part of the life of the believer. And many of these things which are glossed over, which are merely a veneer of spirituality, suddenly becomes exposed to what it is. People see beneath the surface in their own lives, and conviction begins to burn.

And then instead of saying, save the people, Lord, they begin saying, Oh, God, save me from myself and from the things within that hinder my Christian walk and the lives of other people. Sincere. You remember how Paul prayed for the Philippians, that they may approve things that are excellent, that they may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

Some translated this word sincere, tested by sunlight, transparent. It was the insincerity and duplicity of Ananias and Sapphira in the early church that tempted the Spirit of God, so some believe, to leave the church. Because in the full flesh of enthusiasm and revival fervor, here they were found, trying to deceive the Spirit of God and to tempt the Holy Spirit and lying against the Spirit of truth.

What a terrible thing it was, and what a tremendous demonstration of the judgment of God ensued. So you see, on the day the fire was to fall, Elijah made absolutely certain and sure that his sincerity was put beyond all shadow of doubt, and so must it be with us. God help us to be sincere with him, sincere in our prayers, sincere in our seeking, sincere in our consecration, not to play at religion, but to be sincere before God that the only thing we want is himself.

If we are prepared to give ourselves, spirit, soul and body, sincerely to him. I tell you, my friends, this is one of the great prices that we have to pay for revival. When God begins to deal in this way in the areas of our lives, it isn't pleasant, it is very difficult indeed.

I can recall a time in my life when I prayed and asked God, show me myself, Lord, as you see, and make me indeed a sincere servant of Christ. And God so exposed my inner life to me, although I had been a Christian all those years and filled with the spirit, all that time revealed to me the things that he could see. I'm ashamed to confess that I came to the point of suicide.

I felt I couldn't stand it anymore, and then God graciously came in and relieved me and delivered me and gave me a new outlook. It's not an easy thing. In fact, unless you are prepared to mean business with God, well, forget about it.

But how important this is, that we become sincere in all that we do and are and have before God, not before people, but before him. A fourth lesson is taught relating to the price of revival, and it is this, that obedience is manifested. Verse 36, And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things according to thy word.

Obedience is manifested. There is a commendable order in this prayer approach that I'm sure you'll notice. First, the preeminence of Jehovah.

Let it be known that thou art God in Israel. Second, the significance of the servant, and that I am thy servant. Third, the obedience of the prophet.

I have done all these things according to thy word. It does us good to recall the words of Samuel, familiar words, aren't they? Hath the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. What a tremendous thing this is.

In the light of this, surely then, delayed obedience is personal disloyalty. However great the sacrifice we make in other areas of service, it never atones for little obedience in the thing which God requires. We can

give and give and give and go and go and go and do and do and do in so many areas of service.

And all the time we know God is saying, yes, but this is what I want you to do. Sometimes we are deceived into thinking that if we are faithful in many areas of service, it atones for the little obedience we give in the thing which God requires. But it does not atone.

And you know and I know how again and again God brings us back to this very thing. He wants us to obey Him in the thing which He requires. And that is more important to God than anything else could possibly be.

Let us never ask, can I afford to obey God in this or that? But rather, can I afford not to obey Him in everything? Can I? Peter and the other apostles made this their model. It is better we ought to obey God rather than men. It is better to obey God than it is to obey men.

Even when in the case of Abraham, for instance, he expects you to sacrifice your Isaac upon the altar and give of your very best, is it then what we should be doing? I recall a man from Japan who had been 25 years a missionary there telling us as young people how when he was in America he came across a family, mother and father and the only child. She had been very worldly, given over to the pleasures of time just for a season. Then God on a dance hall floor convicted her.

She left her dancing companion, went out from the hall and home to where she found her mother and father on their knees praying for her. And she said, Mom, Dad, I knew somehow that you would be doing this. And she knelt with them and there in a dance floor she gave her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they were so thrilled, so delighted. Until some months afterwards she said, well, I feel God is erecting me to a Bible college. And she went to Bible school.

And in the course of time God began to speak to her. And one night she came home and told her parents, God has shown me that I must go to the mission field. And they said, oh, darling, we do hope it's the whole mission field.

She said, no, it's to work among the lepers. And in those days anyone who went to work among the lepers had to stay there until they died. They were never allowed to leave again.

They knew this. The parents knew it. She knew it.

Because they were pretty wealthy, they decided that they were not going to send their daughter to the mission field. They would accompany her there. They went with her all the way, right up to the compound, till they came to the great gates of the compound.

And there, a few feet away from the gate, on the outside, a broad white line, and walked without turning her head while they sang together until she disappeared, God be with you till we meet again. And they would never see her this side of eternity. Is this what it means, disobedience? Is this what God demands? I know this, that when God says, give me thine heart, he means the whole of our being, without reservation, without anything kept back, the whole of our life, the complete sacrifice is what he asks for, in complete obedience to him.

Remember this, that no one can set standards for anyone else. We ought not to be interested in what God asks other people to do, but in what he asks us to do, and in this thing, to render him the obedience for

which he asks. The quality of our obedience is of great value in the sight of God.

For it is to be rendered, not grudgingly, or hesitantly, but spontaneously, and joyously, and implicitly. Otherwise, it is not acceptable to him. It was thus God exhorted the people when the book of the law was given to them.

Thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Look, when God commands your obedience in any situation, don't waste his time explaining to him you can't do it, and why you can't do it. Just ask him how he wants it done.

Just report for duty. It will save your time, it will save his time. For God never commands us to do anything for himself without some purpose.

It may be a purpose beyond our understanding, but it is always a good and benign purpose, for God is good. Let us remember also that in the area of personal revival, this principle of obedience is often the key to spiritual blessing. You read in Acts 5.32, so also is the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them not to obey him.

Literally, to them constantly rendering obedience to him, as to an undisputed leader. No questioning here, but simply giving obedience. This verse was quoted and used again and again in the revival of which Ivor Davis speaks in the Belgian Congo.

God seemed to bless this verse to the people. And so part of the price of revival lies here, in an obedience that is manifested one more lesson and briefly. Supplication is concentrated.

This is part of the price too. Verse 37. To the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, the prophet prays in these words, Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

This is a prayer which is simple and direct. And I think it gives us a pointer concerning three important elements in prayer for a spiritual awakening. Elijah prays first, that the presence of God may draw near.

This is implied in his initial request, Hear me, O Lord, hear me. The conviction that God is listening to your voice when you pray. This is a fundamental requirement in all creative praying, to know that he is not a God afar off, who does not hear your cry, but that he is close when you pray.

This is an imperative necessity in prayer for revival. Purity of heart is also an essential, for it is written, If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So we must be sure there is no taint of unconfessed sin in our lives as we approach God in prayer for his outpoured blessing in revival.

Perseverance of will is required too. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Keep on seeking.

We must learn to cry with the prophet Isaiah, For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, And for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, And the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Those were the words of Isaiah the prophet. At the threshold of all revivals there are prayer warriors, the Lord's remembrances, who refuse to let go until the blessing falls.

Elijah prays secondly, that the power of God may be shown forth, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God. The people in their backslidden state had lost the vision of God's almighty power. And they

needed to recapture it.

That is why Elijah prayed as he did. And at the commencement and during the course of every holy ghost revival, the majesty of God's almighty power burst forth. And this is one of the things that characterizes any outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a revelation of the almighty power of Jehovah God.

And Elijah prays finally, that the people of God may be revived, and that thou hast turned their heart back again, restored from their backsliding into a living fellowship with God. As Elijah prayed like this, something wonderful happened. You read about it, then the fire of the Lord fell.

Hallelujah! I put that in, that is in the reading. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, He is the God! The Lord, He is the God! So revival came to backslidden Israel.

In spite of all that seemed to argue to the contrary, all the backsliding, all the declension, all the worship of Baal, all the prophets of Baal, all of it suddenly, somehow, disappears. And all you can see is the fire of God mantling the altar, and burning upon it, and consuming all that surrounded it, until the people knew that God was on His throne. Hallelujah! This is revival, this is what we are praying for, this is what we are believing for.

And the question is, is this the price we are willing to pay? For loyalty is tested, self-sacrifice is unstinted, sincerity is demonstrated in the price for revival, obedience is manifested, and supplication is concentrated until the fire falls. Remember, prayer is not a calculated way of overcoming God's reluctance, but it is a scriptural way of laying hold of God's willingness. So don't let us fall into the trap of regarding prayer as a last desperate resort, but rather as a first natural response when we dare to believe for a revival in our day.

May God bless His Word. Let us pray. O God, our Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for all Thy wonderful love and kindness to us in our journey with Thee through life.

And as we have come to this moment, O Lord, we thank Thee and praise Thee from the depths of our very being for Thy marvelous loving-kindness which Thou hast revealed to the sons of men, to Thy church, to Thy people, down through the ages, and in this church age, when Thou hast graciously consented to pour out of Thy Spirit upon them. And surely, Lord, it is for this that we are believing in our day and generation. O God, revive the church and save the people and help us to be willing in the day of Thy power to pay the price for revival, whatever it is that Thou wilt demand of us, knowing assuredly that no one can ever possibly outgive God.

Amen.

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