

God's Covenant Revival Promise

by Ray Greenly

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, seeking God's face, and turning from wicked ways in order to experience revival.

Duration: 43:17

Scripture: Exodus 20:1

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses the analogy of a beautiful oak tree with dry rot to illustrate the state of the church today. Despite its outward prosperity and impressive music, the church is lacking intimacy with God. The speaker emphasizes that the greatest ministry is to minister to the heart of God through seeking His face, reading His Word, and praying. To experience revival, the speaker explains that we must humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face, and turn from our wicked ways, as outlined in Exodus 20. The speaker warns against setting up idols of expectation and emphasizes the importance of keeping God's commands.

Transcript

God's covenant revival promise. Deuteronomy the 17th chapter verses 16 through 20. The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them.

For the Lord has told you, you are not to go back that way again. Second Chronicles, the first chapter, verse 14 through 17. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses.

He had 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt.

Verse 17, they imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150. Deuteronomy 17, verse 17. He must not marry wives.

He must not marry wives. I'm sorry, he must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray. First Kings 11, 1 to 6. King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonites, Hittites.

They were from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your heart after the gods, after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. Verse 3, he had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray.

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Astereth, the goddess of the Sidonites, and Moloch, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

He did not follow the Lord completely as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Carchemish, the detestable god of Moab, and for Moloch, the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.

Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite. Verse 23, And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eldah. Verse 26, Also Jeroboam son of Nebat rebelled against the king.

Second Chronicles the second chapter, verse 5, The temple I'm going to build will be great because our God is greater than all other gods. But who is able to build a temple for him since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a temple for him except as a place to burn sacrifices before him? In the midst of his sin, he still speaks holy words. As he builds the temple of God, he has already made an alliance with Egypt and has married Pharaoh's daughter.

He comes to build the temple of God and after it's all completed in all of its grandeur and the presence of God resides in the temple. The glory is so great that the servants of God cannot even enter it for fear of their life. The glory would devour them.

He then begins to pray to God and he says, When your people sin, because all men sin. Solomon held a theology that said it's okay to sin. And from the very beginning of his life, he walked in rebellion against the Most High on one side of the street and on the other side of the street, he was the great builder of God's temple.

You ever want to do something great for God? Solomon wanted to do something great for God so he built a temple. Within 50 years of its construction, the king of Egypt came and ravished the temple and stole everything from it. You cannot walk on both sides of the street.

Solomon was named by God saying, I loved him, Jedidiah. God loved Jedidiah. He was a man of peace.

There was no bloodshed on his hands. He came before God and said, I don't know how to rule. Would you show me how? Would you give me the ability to discern between good and evil? And God said, I'm so pleased with what you've asked me.

I'm going to give you wisdom beyond any that any man has ever had. Plus, I'm going to give you riches. I'm going to give you everything your heart desires.

Just be faithful to me. We know from other portions of Scripture that Solomon tried everything. He tried wine, women, and song.

He tried building great estates and great vineyards. He tried ruling over men. He had this incredible throne with steps up with a little lion on each step, all inlaid with ivory.

When the Queen of Sheba came to visit, she was overcome. She could not believe the beauty of the pageantry just to bring the king a cup of wine. But at the center of all of this was dry rot.

Have you ever seen an oak tree? Tall, beautiful limbs stretched out to heaven. Looks magnificent. And then you look closely at this tree, so huge you can't put your arms around its trunk.

And down at the base you see this small opening. You push a stick into it and find that the wood is rotted. It's all hollow inside.

And then the storm comes, and the oak tree goes down, and you say, how could such a great oak tree fall? You go over and look carefully. Guttled, dead on the inside. Never has the church been more prosperous than it is today.

We have the best of everything. We have the best music. We certainly can match anything Hollywood could show up with.

We have smooth-tongued preachers who can express the Word of God in such eloquent ways that we sit enthralled. I mean, when you read Max Licato, you have to say, what a gift, a Solomon gift this man has been given to be able to write the prose that he writes. But the church today is gutted on the inside, because like Solomon, we've walked in sin.

We've walked following the love of our life. Now God made a promise to Solomon. You've heard it many times, but we need to look carefully at it.

Second Chronicles, the seventh chapter, verse 14. If my people, who are called by my name, will 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. You know right at the beginning that this is not a promise that God will heal America.

God will not heal America. Judgment has been spoken and America is finished. We're going to watch now in the next months and years as America totally disintegrates.

Judgment has been spoken over America, but this had reference to the actual land of Israel, as God's people lived in it. We do well not to try to take this promise and apply it geographically, but spiritually these are the ways of God and these ways apply today to the gutted out American church and they apply to us. If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves.

I found in the last weeks that I have been living just tight, muscles tight, body tight, and I talked with Jan about it and she said to me, no, it's not the past weeks. I think it's been all of your life. You don't know what it means to relax.

All you know is tightness and, Ray, it's sin against God. Well, I said maybe we should have a conversation about it. Maybe we need to talk about what causes my tightness.

I find that I have lived with much fear in my life. I thought the fear was gone, but my body doesn't lie, and so I've lived ready to flinch. I remember growing up with my brothers.

They were both bigger than me and there was a lot of punching and fighting going on when mom and dad weren't around and all they had to do was swing a fist at me and I would flinch because I knew what it felt like to be hit and knocked down. As I grew in ministry, I learned how to flinch from the attacks that were always coming. Never in my life has my preaching fit into the body of Christ.

It's always been a point of bitterness and anger on the part of some. As I've grown and matured and now finally gaining gray hair, that should mean that I finally have relaxed and settled into what God has called me to, but no, there's still that residue of defensiveness in my soul, and as we've spoken about this, and we're not finished, we're in the midst of this conversation, as we're talking together about this, it has become more and more apparent to me that that residue of defensiveness in my soul comes out of unbelief. It comes out of an unbelief that God loves me enough to take care of me, that his hand is not strong enough to hold me against the enemy, even though Jesus said, no man can take you out of my hand.

It's become clear to me that this tightness in my body is reflective of unbelief and that unbelief is sin, and so I've said to my wife, could we continue our conversation, but this time, you understand when you begin to talk to your wife this way, it's formal, and there are no holds barred. Could we begin to talk realistically about worst case scenarios? So I said, Jan, would it be all right if the National Prayer Chapel were to close? She said, if that's what the Lord wants, that would be fine with me. I said, well, that's not fine with me, so now we've got a dissidence between us.

I said, would it be all right if we have to move out of our house and we lose everything we possess? She said, of course, that's not a problem to me. I said, well, that's a problem to me. I've been homeless.

I know what it's like to be left hanging, and of course, she said, well, didn't the Lord provide for us a place? How many nights did you spend in the car? Well, not one. Well, didn't the Lord ask you if it was all right if you slept in the car? Yes. And you said you didn't like that, and he said, what? All right, I'll take care of you.

Will you receive only from my hand what I choose to give you? Now, do you understand all this I'm talking about comes back to this first condition that God lays out for revival. Will you humble yourself before me? To humble myself before God means to give up all ownership of my life, that it's okay if the worst case scenarios take place. Is it okay if I die? Jan's response is, if the Lord's finished, of course.

Well, that's not all right with me. I haven't accomplished what I believed I was to accomplish for God. This is called pride.

If we humble our hearts, whatever the Lord gives to us from his hand, we rejoice in. Whatever it is, we rejoice in it, because we are not considering ourselves as important, but we have humbled our hearts

before God. We cannot begin to even approach the throne of God until we have given up this insidious pride that locks us into defensiveness and into tightness in our bodies and in our souls.

This defensiveness, that it has to go my way, has to be broken by the blood of Jesus as long as this residue of body concern is there, and our bodies don't lie to us. Body language is language of the soul. So, I'm in the midst of a struggle right now coming to terms with saying every worst-case scenario that I can come up with is acceptable, and I will rejoice in it if that is what the Lord chooses to give to me.

I hold nothing back. This is what it means to humble our hearts before God. To humble our hearts doesn't just mean going before God and say, okay, God, I've got a humble heart now.

No, what's a humble heart look like? A humble heart is a slave person who bows before their master and says, whatever you say is fine. You're the master. It means giving up utterly all sense of mastery over my life.

There is no dignity in place to prevent me from serving my master. Do you remember back here in Exodus? Turn. Exodus, the 20th chapter.

I want to read this for you. Exodus 20, verse 1, and God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for their sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.

The Lord's saying, don't set your idol of expectation up and bow down and worship that idol. Don't establish some idol of self-importance and self-autonomy and think now that because I'm autonomous and it appears that I'm getting away with it, that I'm allowed to have this. Solomon thought he could have his wife from Egypt and still build God's temple and everything would be okay.

He actually believed he could go and worship and offer his son as a burnt offering to a wicked and evil idol and that God would accept that and God became angry with him and pronounced judgment that was irreversible on his life. So I'm in the midst of this struggle in my soul to come to terms with something that has been a part of my heart and life from the time I was a small child. I have not ever from the time I was the smallest child felt safe.

I have always felt like an outsider, someone looking on from another place, never really accepted or loved. That's been a part of my life from the time I was a little child and now the Lord's saying to me, that's pride. That's pride.

That's thinking you're somebody. That's setting up differences between yourself and others, between yourself and me. It has to go.

That self-identity is pride and it's an idol that is worshipped. So to humble our hearts from the very beginning means that we have to come to terms with these idols that we've established in our lives and no longer worship at them, no longer give them any credence in our heart. How do I even talk about, how do I talk about that central part of a man's soul that thinks he has a right to rule over his little kingdom and be

somehow special, to be somebody? Am I the only one with this? So I have a right when I go out someplace to purchase things that will please my little.

It doesn't have to be something expensive. It can be nickel wafers, but it's mine. It's my bag of potato chips.

It's my little luxury. It's that identity that I'm, I'm sacrificing and I deserve and I'm somebody and I have my little kingdom. I don't have much, but what I do have, I'm going to hold on to with all my heart.

The Lord is saying, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, acknowledge that I am God. Acknowledge that I rule over heaven and earth. Acknowledge that you have nothing except what I give to you.

Receive only from my hand what I will give you. Don't go out and get anything for yourself because I'm the master. That's what he's saying to us.

Well, what if I'm not satisfied with what he gives me? Come on, be honest. Are you real satisfied with what God chooses to give you? Oh, I'm satisfied as long as he's giving me smiles up. But cause troubles to come.

Cause things not to go smoothly in the way I would expect. Cause financial difficulty to come. Cause me to have to come and speak God's word over the radio and have no phone calls.

I mean, you should see me. I'm sitting like a hawk on that phone. I want phone calls, God.

I pray before anything. Lord, send phone calls. As though I have to encourage God to save his children.

Do you see how utterly arrogant that is? So the first step the Lord is saying in his covenant promise of revival is that you must humble yourselves. Now before we can pray, which is the second step, we have to have a humble heart. Now there are some exceptions to this.

Balaam was able to pray without a humble heart, but he ended up being executed by God. There is no prayer acceptable before God from one who does not have a humble heart. Humble, contrite, broken heart.

Many prayers are said every day across America. Most never reach the throne of God. They are simply psychological exercises because there is no humbleness of heart.

Number three, seek my face. It does not say seek my hand. It does not say come and see what I will do for you.

I can see it now. I meet Jan for the first time. We begin to talk and I begin to ask her questions about her skills and her abilities because I want to find out if she can do anything for me.

Oh, now that is going to build a relationship real fast, isn't it? Is this woman utilitarian enough for me? Can she do for me what I need her to do for me? And if she cannot, let us look for another one. Now that is a basis upon which to build a true loving relationship, isn't it? So we go to God. God, what can you do for me? Let us bargain a little bit.

I will do this for you if you will do that for me. I do not think most of us would agree that that would be a way to build a caring and loving relationship. Well, now we have been married 20 some years, right? So now I come to Jan and I say, if you will fix dinner for me tonight, I will do this for you.

So now what is she going to say? All right, I will do dinner for you, but I need more than that from you. So now the relationship is a matter of bargaining between us. Will I do enough for her and will she do enough for me? Obviously marriage is about doing something for each other, right? I can tell you right now, Jan would not enter into that kind of marriage relationship with me.

I can tell you now God will not enter into that either. You see, if we begin saying to God, I want revival because I want something great for you, God, and I'm willing to give you this if you'll give me that. I'll serve you.

I'll give you my tithes and my offerings. I'll show up in church, but I expect you, God, to take care of my business. I'll take care of your business.

You take care of my business. And the Lord says, no, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face. You see, the heart of this matter truly is relational.

The Christian faith is not a religion. It is a submission of the heart of man to his God. It is a submission of a woman's heart to her master.

It is giving up ownership. It is no longer walking in rebellion against the Most High and then last and turn from their wicked ways. Now, this was the problem.

Solomon had wicked ways. Women, horses, chariots. Solomon had his wicked ways, but in the midst of his wicked ways, he also was serving the Lord God and building the magnificent temple.

He was living out his life as the king of God's people, as the anointed of God, but God only spoke to him twice. Why would God only speak to the greatest king of Israel twice? Because God didn't have anything to say to him, because Solomon wasn't seeking his face. He was seeking his hand.

Solomon was walking in known sin, rejecting the word of the Holy Spirit to his heart, and yet at the same time continuing his religious activities. And I wonder today, is there anybody here who continues to come to this house, but who continues to walk in rebellion against the Most High in specific areas that the Holy Spirit has spoken to you about, but you continue to walk in those ways, and the Lord will not be speaking to you? His voice will be silent, and he will finally turn in anger against you and send oppressors against you, adversaries against you, until you're destroyed. If my people who are called by my name will 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 heal their land.

There is not anything more important in my heart than that the Lord should forgive me for my sin. Only sin can stand between my heart and God. Nothing else could possibly stand between us, only sin.

But if we comfort ourselves in our religious activities, while at the same time walking in arrogance before God, in ownership of our lives, refusing to surrender what he asks us to surrender, I can tell you now, he will cut us off. I know I'm going to have to finish to the very bottom, both talking with my wife, in talking with you all, in the prayer closet, until all tightness is gone from my soul. I've been saying, Lord, now I need the grease man.

I need the grease man. I need the Holy Spirit. I need the Holy Spirit to come and oil me and remove from me this sin of my life, which I have not been cognizant of, but is being revealed to me, that's killing me, so that I can't just rest in God's presence.

I have to be doing what I'm supposed to be doing. I have to be accomplishing what I'm supposed to be accomplishing. What would happen in my relationship with Jan if she would go home this afternoon and immediately go to work accomplishing all the things that she knows she's to accomplish? And finally, say, okay, I have to get dinner for you.

I'll get dinner. And she fixes dinner and then cleans up and then goes back to her work. And that goes on day after day after day.

No intimacy, no time to be together, no building of love between us. How long do you think you would see us come into this sanctuary with joy between us? It'd be gone. We'd turn into roommates.

Some of you are roommates with God. You show up in his church, but there's no intimacy. I want to tell you today, please hear me.

This is what God is saying to my heart. There is no greater ministry than to minister to the heart of God. There's not anything in the physical realm that we can accomplish that will begin to even touch simply being in the presence of God, reading his word, praying, and ministering to him, seeking his face.

That's what God has called us to, to seek his face. Do you want God's covenant promise of revival? If you do, you're going to have to meet the conditions that he's laid out. He's laid out for us four things.

He asks of us to humble ourselves, to pray, to seek his face, and to turn from our wicked ways. And he says, I will do three things. I will hear your prayer.

I will forgive you for your sin, and I will heal the land, or I will bring revival. Revival is not something that just suddenly happens. It's not like an accident occurring out in the street, and we hope to be close to the accident that happens.

Revival comes when God's people will meet the conditions necessary for his covenant promise for revival. Will you meet those conditions? If you will meet those conditions, I invite you to come to the table of the Lord.

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