

Understanding the Cycles of Revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

A revival cycle consists of crossing the norm twice, and the church must cry out to God for deliverance in times of crisis.

Duration: 23:20

Scripture: Genesis 3:8

Topics: "Repentance", "Revival"

Description

This sermon delves into the cycles of history and revival, emphasizing the importance of repentance, genuine tears of sorrow, and crying out to God for deliverance. It highlights the pattern of a right relationship with God, sin leading to judgment, heartfelt cries for help, and God raising up deliverers. The speaker urges the audience to recognize the decline in faith, the need for repentance, and the power of a remnant crying out to God for restoration.

Transcript

What we're going to be thinking of now is the whole matter of the cycles of history that are so vital a part of the subject of revival. So I trust you brought your imagination with you. I know that sometimes adults think that the use of the imagination is a childish matter.

I think that's an absurdity. I believe God gave us imaginations and he wants us to learn how to use our imagination to his glory. So put your imagination into gear.

Can you, in your mind, see up near the ceiling an eye hook? And over on the other side of the room, again in the same basic position, another eye hook. And stretch between those two eye hooks a cable. And that cable we're going to call the norm.

A revival consists, a revival cycle or a cycle of history, consists of crossing that norm twice. Let that get a hold of you. A cycle of history crossing that norm twice.

Now, let me ask a question as if this were the second grade. Where does the Bible open in terms of the norm? In the garden with Adam and Eve. Well, I've already mentioned they walked and talked with God in the cool of the evening.

They had an intimacy with God, but when you read about it, your heart probably leaps with joy at the prospect of such a thing happening to you. The Old Testament opened above the lie. Where did the Old

Testament close? What closes with Israel? In bondage.

In corruption. Because of their perpetual idolatry. Their elevating of things and imaginary matters above the reality of God himself.

Where does the New Testament open in relationship to this norm? It obviously opens where the Old Testament closes. Below the line. And we remember, don't we, that after the closing of the Old Testament, there was a period known as the 400 years of silence.

In which there is no record of God having spoken at all. And when the Son of God appeared on earth, what happened? He came to his own. And his own received him not.

They crucified him. Seven times in the first five chapters of the book of Acts, the Jews are confronted by one of the apostles with the convicting statement, You, in ignorance, crucified the Lord of glory. And where does the New Testament close in relationship to the lie? Gloriously above it.

Now take your Bible and let me show you a matter in the book of Judges that is of incredible consequence. And that deals so directly with the matter I'm bringing before you this morning. Will you turn please to Judges chapter 2. I don't know whether any of you have carefully studied the book of Judges or whether you've grasped its great consequence.

But let me read a good bit out of chapter 2 and point something of immense consequence to you on the subject we're dealing with. The angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bacchus. And he said, I have brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your father.

And I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You shall tear down their altars, but you have not obeyed me and done that which is right.

Therefore, I also said, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be a snare to you. And it came about when the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the sons of Israel that the people lifted up their voices and wept. Now let me break in and explain something that some of you may never have gotten a hold of.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 7, the apostle Paul describes a form of tears or of crying that leads to death. And then he sets forward another type of sorrow that leads to life. We have just read that when God told the people the result of their wickedness, they wept.

One of the great snares in the American church is our grievous inability to discern whether tears are from God or are the sorrow of the world. Now I'm wanting you to understand the difference between the tears that lead to death and the tears that lead to life eternal. There is the sorrow that comes from being caught and there is the sorrow that is provoked by the Spirit of God.

Those are two very different sorrows. In this passage in Judges, the first mention of tears are tears that come as a result of being caught. But I do want you to get the sense, so let me just repeat it again just to be sure.

When God is mightily at work in a person's life, he brings them under conviction and they shed tears that are genuine tears that lead to true repentance and life eternal. But there's a certain kind of preaching that

produces tears that are nothing other than the tears of having been exposed or caught. If we suppose that the tears themselves have significance, we may believe we have a convert when we have no convert at all.

And that's what's been happening to us in millions of cases. People have said they were converted and the leadership of the church has been unwise enough to take seriously the tears that were nothing other than tears of shame. But let me read on, and as I said, don't hesitate to ask if you need clarification.

So they named that place Bacchum, and there their sacrifice to the Lord. When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which he had done for Israel.

This passage will set in front of us certain basic principles. I'll give them to you now. This is a very urgent aspect of biblical teaching on revival.

The people began a right relationship with God. That's what we found in the garden. They began a right relationship with God.

But they sin and they do not repent. Therefore, God brings them under some form of a righteous judgment. When that righteous judgment is so severe that they can no longer handle it, they cry out to God.

And when they cry out to God, out of the depth of their being, God hears them and he steps in. Now, in the pattern here in Judges 2, and illustrated throughout the next 14 chapters, God himself, when the people cry out, raise up a judge deliverer. But let me repeat that pattern now in the hopes that it will stick with you.

Take this as a universal. There is some form of a right relationship with God. And as we just read, in the days of Joshua and in the days of the elders who served under Joshua, the people remained essentially faithful.

But when those men were gone, so was the religion of Israel. So they turned to sin. And when they turned to sin and did not repent, God brought them under righteous judgment.

That righteous judgment remained until it was so severe they could not handle it. And they cried out to God. And when the cry was from the depth of their being, God raised up a judge deliverer and brought them back into right relationship.

So I'll not read solidly the rest, but let me just pinpoint what I've said. Verse 7, the people served the Lord. Then verse 11, the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt and followed other gods among the gods of the people. Verse 13, so they forsook the Lord and they served Baal. And of Stark, verse 14, the next part of the cycle, the anger of the Lord burned against Israel.

And he gave them into the hands of the plunderers who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them so they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil.

Isn't that like what we were looking at last night? In Isaiah 63, 64, Deuteronomy 28, Psalm 80, verse 18, the Lord raised up judges for them. The Lord was with the judge and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies. All the days the judge for the Lord was moved to pity by their groanings.

Now, dear friends, that is a pattern that we need to lay hold of. Putting it right in the present circumstance, as a nation of churches, we have sinned wickedly. We have alienated God.

We have made a shambles of Christianity. We're pronouncing converts who are no more converted than Satan himself. As I told you, some of the estimates are above 80% of all the people in the American churches who claim to be born again give overwhelming evidence of being unregenerate.

Now, you may not believe that. You may not like that. But it's awfully foolish to deny fact.

And the fact is, we are a nation in a self-destruct mode. And not only us, but the whole of the world is in a shambles because God has been rejected. We can triumph all we like and gloat and boast about the fact that we have been given unalienable rights by our creator.

But our rights are only good as long as his rights are preserved. When we rob God of his rights, we rob ourselves of our own rights. And what is the church doing in the midst of all this grievous situation? What, the church is pretending everything is fine? There are no serious prayer meetings being called in a typical church.

You don't hear urgent preaching calling people to repentance. The guy who preaches on repentance is looked at like he was a nut, a misfit. Somebody who doesn't have the foggiest notion of what true religion is all about.

I ought to know. But now, let me repeat the pattern and then just simply demonstrate how it works out in judges. It's simple.

Right relationship with God. Number two, sin without repentance. Number three, some form of a righteous judgment from God.

Number four, heart-rending, pathetic cries to the Lord. And number five, the raising up of a righteous judge. Now just turn to the next chapter and let me show you how this is illustrated.

Seven times between chapters three and sixteen, the pattern I have just suggested to you is clearly demonstrated. I know that you can't all see this, but let me ask my friends on the front row. Do you see what I've done here? Do you see this one and this two and three? I've just simply marked off these passages to demonstrate what I'm saying to you.

So look at verse seven of chapter three. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And they forgot the Lord their God and they served the Pahos and the Asherah.

Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan, Rishan, king of Mesopotamia, and the sons of Israel served him eight years. When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord God, he raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel. To deliver them, Othniel, the son of Knez, Caleb's younger brother.

And the spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan, the king of Mesopotamia, into his hand, so that he prevailed. Then the land of Israel had rest forty

years.

And then Othniel died. So cycle after cycle. And you get the heart of what I'm saying to you.

We are at the bottom of one of those awful cycles. We have been in decline now, steadily, for well over twenty years. Some of us thought five or six years ago we had hit the bottom, but we were wrong.

And some of us think, well, surely we're at the bottom now. Maybe we are, but maybe we're wrong. But I can tell you one thing.

No change will occur until the people of God get the facts straight and begin to cry out to God for deliverance. And that's what is lacking. Now when one speaks in that vein, automatically somebody wonders, is he suggesting that the whole church has to cry out? Well, the whole church should, but it's not likely they will.

But isn't it wonderful that God still works through the remnant? And let us ask ourselves as we close this session, has my cry to the Lord been appropriate in the light of the circumstances we face? I expect most of us would say no. But thank God it's not too late.

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