

(Rebuilding the House of the Lord) 1. Revival Regeneration

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes the need for revival and regeneration in the church, drawing parallels to the historical rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple after its destruction.

Duration: 52:36

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 36:19, 2 Chronicles 36:21-22, Jeremiah 25:3-11

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of brokenness and humility before God. He explains that God's contest with us is not primarily about sin, but about our refusal to acknowledge His word and admit when we are wrong. The preacher uses the example of a missionary who refused to follow instructions in building a house, resulting in unhappiness for future generations. He then references Jeremiah 25 to illustrate the consequences of unbrokenness, as God brought judgment and destruction upon the land. The preacher concludes by highlighting the significance of the current dispensation of the Spirit and the need for the church to be a vessel through which God works.

Transcript

Now the subject that I feel the Lord wants us to study together is a very interesting period in Israel's history. It's that period when their city had been destroyed, when the house of the Lord, which Solomon had built with all its glory, had been burnt with fire, and when the people themselves had been taken captive and deported hundreds of miles away to Babylon, and the land left until, and their city and temple left a smoking ruin. Then it was the almost unbelievable happened.

After seven long years as exiles in a foreign land, the edict came from Cyrus that those who wished to could return from their exile to their ruined land, and that they could begin to rebuild the house of the Lord that for so long had laid waste. And in the story we shall think about in these mornings, we're going to see the unbelievable happening. Out of the rubble, a new house of the Lord arising, and out of the ruins, a new city.

What we shall see here is not the building of the house of the Lord, but the rebuilding of the house of the Lord. Not the building of the walls, but the rebuilding, putting back what was there already, but which had been destroyed. And for that reason, this portion of the sacred story to me is a thrilling portion.

It's been with me for months, because it gives us one of the most lovely pictorial representations of what revival is. Revival is not the building of the house of the Lord, but the rebuilding of a house that's been laid waste. And we shall see here what is meant by the revival of the house of the Lord, the church.

For the house of the Lord today is in the same state of ruin as Jerusalem was of old. And we're not getting any concern ourselves for the revival of the church of which we are a part, but a revival that grace will give in our own lives. For our spiritual condition, if the truth were known, is little better than the material condition of that decimated temple and city.

I love any word that begins with R.E. God doing something again. Well, that's the story of regeneration. The first creation was spoiled, but God set his hand the second time to do it all over again.

And you're in the process of being regenerated. Because whereas it's a distinct beginning, there are parts of that wall that were there in the divine intention that have yet to be put back. And whereas regeneration has a beginning and is a continuing thing, it's the rebuilding of that wasted habitation of God in us.

And so this is what we've got here in these portions. The story historically is told in Ezra and Nehemiah. But we shall have to draw heavily on the two prophets that prophesied at that particular time and who made such a crucial contribution to the recovery of the lost condition.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah can't begin to understand what they're talking about unless you see the situation in which they lived, with regard to which they testified. And perhaps the recovery, the rebuilding of that temple and city owed more to those two men than to anything else. Now that portion of the story which we're going to read this morning is in the second book of Chronicles, chapter 36.

Because you've got to begin a little further back than with Ezra. You've got to see the situation that grace undertook to restore. And we're going to begin reading at verse 10, 2 Chronicles 36 verse 10.

I'm sorry, verse 11. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign. And he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

And he did that which evil in the sight of the Lord his God. And humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against him Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear by God.

But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen. And polluted the house of the Lord which he hallowed in Jerusalem.

And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers rising up early and sending them. Because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy.

No remedy because there was no repentance. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion among young men or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age. He gave them all into his hands and all the vessels of the house of God great and small and the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king and of his princes all these he brought to Babylon.

And they burnt the house of God and break down the wall of Jerusalem and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And then that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia to fulfill, listen to this, the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her Sabbath for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfill three score and ten years, seventy years. Now, now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing saying, thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the Lord, I am sorry, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him and let him go up. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and he put it also in writing saying, thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven, and that means Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth. How in the world did he know that Jehovah, Israel's God, was God of heaven? How in the world did he know that this God of a pathetic little nation had given him all kingdoms of the earth? Because he had witness born to him by Daniel and he knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar when Jehovah put his hand upon him and he knew that what he had came from this God, that Israel's God was the God of heaven.

I would say that's an Old Testament conversion, wouldn't you? Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and build the house of Jehovah, God of Israel. He is the God, bless his heart, he's seen something, hasn't he, which is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever remaineth in any place where he shall live, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold and with goods and with beasts beside the free will offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Now the interesting thing to me are the two references to the two sets of prophecies by Jeremiah. We're told in verse 21 that the terrible calamities that fell upon Judah and Jerusalem were to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was essentially a prophet of doom. But he took no delight in prophesying doom, he was the weeping prophet. But God gave him grievous prophecies and messages of judgment, chastening and doom for that people.

But verse 15 tells us God gave him such messages only because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. He only sent these prophecies, these prophets, with the message he did because he loved the people and he loved his dwelling place and he wanted to give them space in which to repent and return to the law of their God and thus avert the calamities that would otherwise fall upon them. My friend, if God speaks deeply to you, if he sends a prophet to you who with great difficulty shares with you a failing and a fault in you that's marring your testimony and making it difficult to other people, I want to tell you, I've got to see it.

I have it done to me sometimes. It's only because God has compassion on me and upon his dwelling place in me. Because otherwise, as we shall see, calamity, chastening, sometimes disaster, for our

Christian lives is bound to happen, friend, it's only because he has compassion on you and on me.

But as you read through Jeremiah, it's quite obvious that his, the doom that he pronounced, was not on sin so much as on the refusal to repent of sin. It wasn't merely on their ways that God was judging, but on their unbrokenness. There was mercy for them all the time.

There was forgiveness. There was alleviation of all the coming judgments if they'd only say, oh God, you're right and we're wrong. But that was the one thing they wouldn't do.

Their kings stiffened their necks and hardened their hearts from turning to the Lord. Therefore, for that reason, not because they'd sinned, but because they refused to repent and return, therefore the wrath of God arose against his people till there was no remedy because there was no repentance. And the love of God for Israel was such that he kept Jeremiah to it right to the end.

When there were successive deportations of the people, Jeremiah was always left there. There was hope even for the remnant if they would bend the neck and submit to the disciplines that God was putting on them. He besought Zedekiah, accept the discipline.

I know most of the nations, God, but you're a king, but accept it. Serve the king of Babylon and you'll live. But he stiffened his neck and he rebelled and that was the end.

He'd sworn by God that he wouldn't and every word that Jeremiah said would happen to them did happen. Not because they'd sinned, firstly, but because they wouldn't repent. They wouldn't humble themselves.

They wouldn't submit to what the discipline that God had put upon them. And when at last there's a pathetic, tiny remnant who even then decided to rebel and they thought they couldn't dare stay in Israel any longer, they went to Egypt. You know, Jeremiah went with them, testifying, testifying, challenging them right to the end.

There would have been some alleviation for that remnant if they'd only repented. And as far as we know, Jeremiah ended his days with that pathetic remnant. Oh, the love of God that does not let me go unchallenged, that speaks to me right to the very end.

And so that was what Jeremiah's prophecy was about and it's the same with us. The thing that God has against us, I have somewhat against thee, is not merely the sin and the disobedience and the egoism and the way we've reacted and treated others and the way we've committed this sin or that sin, but the fact that when he's spoken to us, we won't hearken. Perhaps you ought to see just one little sample of Jeremiah's prophecies in Jeremiah 25.

Just see it because this is a Bible reading and I don't want you to take my word for it. But here's just one little bit. It's all the way through the book.

Jeremiah 25, 8, Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, because ye have not heard my words. Why? Because you've sinned? No. But because you have not hearkened to my words.

Behold, I will send all the families of the north and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land and against inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them and make them an astonishment and a hissing, perpetual desolation. Verse 11, And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king

of Babylon. Jeremiah could speak nothing but judgment and doom and unbrokenness.

And it's the same with us. He can speak nothing but chastening and warnings of coming complications and deeper unhappiness and unbrokenness. His contest with us is not about sin, but with that stiffening of the neck and that hardening of the heart that is not prepared to see the word of the Lord spoken to us by another maybe, or in our hearts and consciences, or from the platform, and say, Oh God, you're right.

I'm wrong. And the refusal to do that, God knows what it can lead you to. It's bound to lead to a barren life and all sorts of other complications.

Years ago I had the privilege of visiting Rwanda for a short time. Well, I visited it more recently, but on this occasion, one of the missionaries showed me a house, or showed me a building, and the whole thing was wrong. It was not going to last as long as it should have done.

He said, That's the result of unbrokenness. They told me of a former missionary who'd been told what he ought to do and how it ought to be built, but he wouldn't bend. And successive generations of missionaries have had to put up with that warped building.

Well, that's a small thing. The unhappiness. It can affect our children.

Dear one, hearken to the word of the Lord. I say to myself, hearken to it. We are criticized.

Friends, there's no smoke without fire. Harken to the word of the Lord. How do you know but that the Lord is speaking to you by the mouth of a Jeremiah? He doesn't know he's a Jeremiah.

He may be trying to get right with you, saying so sorry that he reacted, but what did he react about? And God will show me. I'm right, he's wrong. Are you? This is what brought Israel low, and this is what has brought the saints low, and this is what has brought the church in England to its pathetic state.

And by the church, I don't mean the establishment, I mean the Lord's people. We are the church. We little know how far short of what God had for us we've fallen.

We little know the disciplines under which we're suffering today. It's only when you see another part of God doing things, say what's happened to England? And the hand of the Lord has been as heavy upon his people here as it was in Judah of old. And it happened.

They never believed it could, but that temple with all its splendor, and those columns with the capitals, so many cubits high, and all that gold, those mighty walls, never. But it happened. Nebuchadnezzar came.

They could never believe it could have happened, but it did. There were successive waves of deportations, and there was yet hope for that city if Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had left in charge, had heeded Jeremiah and submitted to become Nebuchadnezzar's servant. This was the discipline God had put upon him.

They would yet have had their city. They would yet have had the house of the Lord. But after 11 years, that man who resisted Jeremiah, insisted on his own policies, and insisted on rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar, God's servant.

For such he was on that occasion. So Nebuchadnezzar came, and he burnt that splendid house. The flames crackled, but only when they'd first taken all the priceless treasure out of it, and broken up the

brass, they saw it.

The house of the Lord. The Lord's house. How could he let it happen? And then the soldiers got busy on the wall.

Hack, hack, hack, and with utter painstaking thoroughness, brick was severed from brick, until there wasn't a wall left. And then to complete the job, they set fire to the palaces and to the house. And the smoke went up to him.

And nearly all the people, except the poorest in the land, were deported. And Jerusalem, Zion, the city of the great king, and the house of the Lord, where he'd chosen to put his name there, was left a smoking room. My dear friends, this is what is the situation with us in one degree or another.

Generally, corporately, and individually. Do you know the saints were meant to be, as it says in Ephesians 2, you can turn to it if you like, a habitation of God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2.20, important verse, perhaps we should turn to it.

Ephesians 2.20, ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, he says to us, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, frittly framed together, stone not only to the cornerstone, but stone to stone, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Please notice it doesn't say thou, it says ye. This is something corporate.

Ye, the saints, are meant to be built together, in fellowship, one with another, and all built into the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and were intended to be a habitation of God by the Spirit. And where the saints gather, there am I in their midst, mighty to bless, mighty to reach them in their need, and mighty to touch others. This is God's intention.

In 1 Peter you have the same thought of us as a living temple. You can turn if you like to 1 Peter 2. It talks in verse 4, 1 Peter 2 verse 4, to whom coming as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house. You and I are part of the Lord's house.

That house where he's chosen to put his name there. A habitation of God through the Spirit. The one thing that should characterize the assemblies of the saints is that the Lord is there, in manifested glory, so that others coming in say, God's in this place and I knew it not, and our hearts are searched.

It should be a place where the hearts of the saints are melted and touched. Tears may be sometimes flow. Everything so real, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

And as each new man finds Jesus, he's another living stone, built into the fellowship. Yes, yes, that temple of old that Solomon built is a pale reflection of the temple that grace is building today. But what's happened to that temple? What's happened to the habitation of God through the Spirit? If you want revival, the revival in your own heart and in your own fellowship, you'll have to admit, in one degree or another, it's been laid waste.

It's been broken down. It's been burnt with fire. And that which was intended to be a habitation of God through the Spirit is nothing more so often than a smoking ruin.

I'm not talking about those who don't believe the Bible. That's not the church. I'm not talking about the novel.

That's not the church. The church is composed of those who are living stones joined to Christ. But alas, something's happened to them, to me, to all of us.

What a pathetic sight. The house of the Lord lies waste. The stones are not built in with one another.

They're so often at variance with one another, in competition with one another, jealous of one another, resentful of one another. I know this, because I find these things in my own heart. What sort of a living stone is that? What sort of a temple is that built of stones that aren't fitly framed together at all? And if they're not fitly framed together with one another to that extent, they're not fitly framed together to the chief cornerstone.

We must say, I'm saved, but what's your current relationship to God like? I can only say that I've had to learn that my relationship to Jesus Christ is no better than my relationship to other people. And if there are barriers and divisions and coolnesses and reactions to my brethren, the same things separate me from Jesus too. Why, these things have gone on.

We have to live with them. We live with them. We are part of it.

It isn't a habitation of God by the Spirit, just a great conglomeration of isolated stones scattered loosely around the chief cornerstone, the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is not in the assemblies of the saints so often, not in the measure in which he wants to. And there are no new living stones being added.

Dear friends, this is the great dispensation. There's been three dispensations in God's history, the dispensation of the Father in the Old Testament, the dispensation of the Son in the Gospels, and from Pentecost to this day, the dispensation of the Spirit. In the first, God had his seat in heaven, and he worked from heaven.

In the second, he had his seat in the Son, and he worked from the Son. But in the third, the greatest one, upon whom the end of the ages had come, the dispensation of the Spirit, God has his seat in the Church, and he works through the Church. But the house of the Lord has been laid waste.

Do you know this is the age of harvest? Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. But the house of the Lord has been laid waste.

Do you know this is the age of harvest? This is the age of harvest. No other age has been the age of harvest. But it's not happening.

It's not happening. Living stones are not being added, as they should be, to this temple. And some of the stones that used to be there, they aren't.

The devil's taken them off, and he's building his building with them. And if you look at the condition of the stones that are around the chief cornerstone, they've lost their shape. Great chunks of them are missing.

They're not living stones. They're dead stones. Misshapen stones.

No life, no blessing. And this is the situation today I don't think we can exaggerate. The material condition of the house of the Lord and the Jerusalem of old is the exact counterpart of how things are with us, not

only generally, but individually.

And they are most candidate for restoring, reviving grace, who admit most readily that's their condition. If there's one man or another who's more prepared to admit than others that he's all wrong, that the house of the Lord in him has been laid waste, he's the first candidate for the grace of God and for revival. Then he says that revival presupposes a declension.

Therefore the man who admits to declension is the nearest to what grace is going to do for him. For grace specializes in houses of the Lord, as does lying faith. It's a terrible thing to say what I've done, but when I admit to it, and act as we shall see they acted, I become a candidate for that marvelous grace of our loving Lord.

Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, for God is the God of the re, the regeneration and revival and restoring. Jesus doesn't come and say, now I'm going to give you good advice. Don't sin, don't make a mess, don't have a quarrel, don't start getting divided.

He doesn't give you good advice, friend. Do you know why? It's too late. It's already happened.

Sometimes I say, oh Lord, may I not be jealous of sir? And the Lord says, it's too late, you're jealous already. Admit it. Now he comes with good news.

Good news for people in exactly that condition. He assumes the house of the Lord is laid waste. When he comes to a life, listen to this, he doesn't expect to find things right.

When he comes to every one in this tent this morning, he doesn't expect to find one life that isn't in need. And therefore when he finds it so, he's not shocked. Not a bit.

This is what he expected. This is why he came into the world. This is why grace is grace and Jesus is Jesus and Calvary is Calvary and the blood is what we know it to be.

And you can see all these things illustrated in this extraordinary story. I'm concentrating then this morning just on these two prophecies of Jeremiah. We got the first one.

They never believed it could happen. And friend, you don't believe what some people have told you. You don't believe you could end up a house of the Lord laid waste.

You don't believe. We don't believe it. But unless we humble ourselves, that which was spoken by the mouth of a Jeremiah will be fulfilled in us.

God cannot speak anything but ill of the consequences of unbrokenness. I have to tell myself that. I'm not a broken man naturally.

I have a hard time when a Jeremiah comes to me. I always defend myself. I stiffen my neck and harden my heart.

But unless I'm going to, if I'm to escape the disciplines that God's bound to bring on unbrokenness, I must humble myself to the word of the Lord that is being spoken to me. But Jeremiah had another prophecy. You turn back to 2 Chronicles 36.

2 Chronicles 36. In verse 21 we have the first prophecy which was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. But in the second, the second one is in verse 22.

Oh praise the Lord for this. Hallelujah. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it in writing.

You know it. We've read it. He was going to release that captive exiled people and they were to go back to Jerusalem and through them God was going to rebuild that ruined temple.

And he said pray for the life of the king when you get there. Oh yes, Jeremiah spoke of judgment. But he spoke of grace, shining through judgment.

He spoke of the storm cloud. But as he spoke he also spoke of the rainbow of mercy and grace for a people who were going to be decimated as they were. Would you turn to Jeremiah 29 verse 10.

Jeremiah 29 verse 10. When the first wave of deportees were going, a false prophet, Hanani, had said it's all right fellows don't you worry. I'm a prophet I am.

Blasphemeth the Lord. Within two full years I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar off your back. And we're back again.

He spoke lies in the name of the Lord. And so it was, Jeremiah had to give the real word of the Lord. He contested with this man.

And in chapter 29 he writes a letter from Jerusalem to those deportees, that first big wave of them. And he tells them, thus saith the God of Israel, verse 7, to you that are carried away build ye houses and dwell in them and plant gardens and eat fruit of them. It's not going to be two years, two long years.

Some of you are going to spend your lifetime there. Take ye wives, forget sons and daughters and so on and so on. And verse 7, seek the peace of the city whether I've caused you to be carried away captives.

And pray unto the Lord for it. For in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. Settle down.

Ye are not coming back that quick. Let not your prophets and your diviners that be in the midst of you deceive you. Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

For they prophesy falsely in my name. I have not sent them, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you.

Oh yes, there's chastening. But beyond the chastening, grace gives that poor decimated people a future and a hope. I will visit you and perform my good word toward you in causing you to return to this place.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord. Thoughts, revised version, I know the plans that I have for you. Plans of welfare and not of calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Then in that day you shall call upon me and you shall go and pray unto me and I will hearken unto you and ye shall seek me and you shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart and I will be found of you and I will turn away your captivity. And so this is the word. It was hard to receive.

It wasn't going to be two years, but seventy years. And they went on. And the land lay ruined.

But God had said in seventy years. And the clock is ticking, getting nearer and nearer. And as it says in Psalm 102, the time to favor Zion, even the set time, has come.

It was hard for those people to believe that all that Jeremiah had prophesied in the first place should come upon them. It was harder for them to believe there could ever be recovery. They couldn't take it in.

That land, that city, that temple. It's hard to believe. The solemn things that God says to us about our unbrokenness, we don't believe it.

We'll take a chance. But when that happened, and a home's been broken up, and sorrow's been caused, and division's caused in a church, and ourselves live for years a dry, unsatisfied life, you can't believe it can be recovered. I think it's harder to believe in revival by the grace of God than it is to believe in the chastening of God.

Can it ever be different? So much so, the messages of Haggai and Zechariah are all too encouraging to believe it can yet be. And this is where Jesus excels. Judgment is God's strange work.

That in which he delights, which he's thrilled about, is mercy. And you know Jesus is thoroughly at home in situations like this. He moves with consummate skill.

This is where he excels. This is where he gets his name. This is why we say worthy is the Lamb that hath redeemed us to God by thy blood.

The Savior can solve every problem. The tangles of life can undo. There's nothing too hard, no situation too gone, the house of the Lord too laid waste.

But Jesus can provide and restore and solve, provide it. The ones in the center of it are prepared to say they're wrong and be honest and say, oh God you're right and we've been wrong. Given that, no matter what the situation is, the land will blossom like a rose and out of the rubble there arise a new temple of the Lord.

And the walls can yet stand around Jerusalem guarding her against her enemies. It's an extraordinary story. They'd given up hope.

They'd settled down. Seventy years while many of the people who'd come away had died in Babylon. And the youngest at the time of the captivity were still living.

And one look at that land, I mean to say what could you do? But this was the very promise of God after 70 years. Jerusalem will yet be built. The house of the Lord shall let arise.

The streets of the city shall yet be full of children. And the land shall yet blossom as a rose. Just look will you, if you will, Psalm 102, 13.

Psalm 102, 13. Verse 13. Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Zion.

Listen. For the time to favor her. Yea, the set time has come.

Turn back to Psalm 85. And it came. And at last they could sing Psalm 85 verse 1. Lord, we never believed it.

We never thought it could happen. But thou has been favorable unto thy land. Thou has brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Thou has forgiven the iniquity of thy people. Thou has covered all thy their sin. As I've been in these portions of scripture these days, I've said, Lord, is this relevant for this particular hour? For long years the house of the Lord has lain waste and I with it.

If you want to think about revival, you've got to look at books years ago. Or else to some of the emerging, the lands of the emerging church. I said, is this just a Bible study, Lord? Or Lord, am I right in taking it as a word to us? That you're yet going to have mercy on Zion.

Are you meaning that I can take it, that the time to favor Zion, even the set time has come? And I can only tell you there's been a sounding in my soul. God says, you take it then. And I'm glad I'm alive just now.

I believe the fact. The time to favor Zion, even the set time has come. Don't point to little bits of encouragement here and there.

Rather tell God about the ruin. Tell him about the decimation. Tell him about your own need and fruitless labor.

Tell him how your fellowship seems to go so dead so quickly. How the church is at what it is. But Lord, grace being grace, I can believe that the time to favor Zion, even the set time has come.

Oh, there are some signs. But I'm not going to look at signs too much, save as they just encourage faith. Because after all, it's not enough for me to know what God's doing in California.

What's he doing here? Me? In your church? Could you believe it? In your fellowship? In your church? In your home? In your heart? That God is at last, having humbled us and chastened us so much, is going to have mercy on Zion? That the set time when he's going to be favorable to his land again? And the house of the Lord is going to be reconstructed, the living stones are going to become really living stones? And others are going to be added beyond anything we can think? Can we believe that the set time has come? I've asked it. I can only give you my testimony. It's sounded in my soul.

The fact I sometimes feel dead is no, doesn't change it. It's only my further qualifications for revival, if I admit it. The fact that nothing happens, that sometimes I preach and I get all stuck up, that doesn't alter.

I said, no, this is my qualification. Because need, honestly acknowledged, is only our qualification. You're a candidate for this very thing.

Oh, my dear friends, I believe it's true. I don't want to die until I've seen something of the set time that God has got to favor Zion. Once again, oh man, he hasn't favored us.

He's humbled us. Don't think that the little blessing you've had is all that he's got. And in your own heart.

You know, really, this is the history of the world. God is putting back what was lost in the fall. And I want to tell you, they're part of the wall, that I haven't put back, that I haven't seen let God put back.

The Holy Area, where grace hasn't reached, and the walls are still broken down. It's like that with all of us. And I tell you, they are going to be the most suitable candidates, who are going to be those that admit it's like that.

Take time out. Don't stop trying to be different. Admit how wrong you are.

Because then you become a candidate for Jesus. What were the signs that the set time was coming, that the clock was ticking, ticking, ticking, up to the prophesied 70 years? Well, I know one sign. Daniel started praying.

I want to tell you, in this portion of time, you've got the three greatest prayers of repentance. If you want to know how to pray for revival in your own heart, in your own poor life, and in your church, read and study Daniel 9, Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9. Away in Babylon, Daniel began to pray. He began to realize that the 70 years was drawing to a close.

He understood by books, by calendars. And he chastened himself before the Lord. He didn't say, the people have been so wrong.

He said, I, we. If you want to see a sample prayer, I don't know when this was written. I don't think it was written by David.

It was written by Asaph. Psalm 77. This is the way to pray, friend.

This is the way to pray. Psalm 77, this is more or less the way in which Daniel prayed in Ezra and Nehemiah. But here it is, Asaph.

It says so, Psalm of Asaph, not David. It would have been the wrong period. I don't mind what the period was.

This is the way. Verse 7, 77, 7. Friend, can't you pray like this? Can I not? I need to. Will the Lord cast off forever? Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Pray that with the vision of the smoking ruins of the house of the Lord.

Till you touch his heart that way. And if people are beginning to pray that way, it's only because the set time to favor Zion has come. Spurgeon said, the prayer of faith is a decree of God beginning to operate.

It was so there. Oh, I wish I had time to read Daniel's prayer. Dear old Daniel.

I love him. Great man. And a man who repented and he took the other people's sins as his own.

We have sinned. We have done wickedly and you are just and right in all you brought upon us. We don't quarrel with it.

But Lord, is there such a thing as called mercy? Is there such a thing called grace? And don't people in this state qualify for it? This is the way. And there's another prayer along the same line. This is Habakkuk.

I'm not quite sure at which point in history he prophesied. You won't find Habakkuk. I had a long time finding him this morning.

I never went to Sunday school and I was never taught the order of the Bible books, but I find I keep tumbling. Habakkuk 3, this is a great word. Verse 3, verse 2 rather.

Habakkuk 3, verse 3. Now, I believe this is the classic prayer for revival for me and for my immediate circle. Listen, here it is. In raw, remember mercy.

You admit that you're suffering under the hand of God. That the situation in your home, the dryness in your soul, the difficulties in the church, whatever it is, he's having to do to me what he did to Jerusalem. The dog.

Lord, I admit all that. I admit it's raw. It's not just one of those things.

In raw, remember mercy. That's revival. In raw, God begins to have mercy on that wretch.

Oh, friend, I pray that prayer often. I said, Lord, I'm all wrong. And Lord, I'll tell you something.

I'm under the wrath of the lamb today because the lamb is meek and lowly in heart and I haven't been. Someone's gone away in tears or been hurt and I'm on the mat. I said, Lord, you're right to make me all so dry and defeated and leave me to my own self, but Lord, I admit it all.

In raw, remember mercy. He can't resist it, friend. He cannot resist it.

You'll get what he's got for you every time you come this way. And that's the beginning of any larger favoring of Zion, which we know he has in his mind. I believe he has.

One other thing was this. Something happened to Cyrus. He came to the knowledge of the true God.

Things began to happen on a wider sphere. Doors began to open. Time to pay for Zion.

And he touched a king's heart. I want to tell you, God's not above doing that now. It happened in the Reformation.

In that great book of Durbinia's, The History of the Reformation in England, you get one chapter, the revival at grassroots, and then the political happenings with Henry VIII that permitted that to express itself. Then the revival at grassroots, then the political happening. God knows how to move, how to touch the hearts of kings, how to bring to the knowledge of the true God someone that may be crucial in opening doors.

God knows. And so, dear ones, we leave this morning with that picture of that sad city and temple. But the time to favor Zion has come.

And the unbelievable is going to happen. Can you believe in the unbelievable possibly, surely happening in your heart and life, in your home, as a result of what he does for us in these days? God will. Lord Jesus, we thank thee for thy grace.

When none was found to deliver me, thou didst come. Jesus came. Praise his name.

And we thank you, Lord. Your eyes are open to the desolations of Jerusalem. Never for a moment have you forgotten her.

And you know the plans that you have for her, plans of welfare and not of calamity, to give her a future and a hope. Lord, we've needed some encouragement. You've given it.

Our ears have heard extraordinary things in other places. And, Lord, you won't leave us out, our land, our particular church, our particular group, our particular home. Lord, we do believe that he who believes that this time to favor Zion has come has far lacked it to be right than the one who says the time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be rebuilt.

We believe your encouraging faith to expect this of me. And we want to pray that old-time prayer. Lord, we'll admit it in wrath, in wrath.

Remember mercy. We ask this in thy name. The grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.

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