

Where Does Revival Begin?

by Tom Garner

True revival begins when we recognize we are the problem, humble ourselves, pray, and seek God's face through His Word, prayer, and fasting.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 64:7, James 4:8

Topics: "Revival", "Repentance"

Description

Tom Garner preaches on the importance of revival, emphasizing the need for the church to awaken from spiritual deadness and return to a vibrant, God-centered life. Drawing from Isaiah 64, he highlights the prayer for revival and the call for God's people to rejoice in Him once again. Garner parallels the historical fall of Israel with the current state of the church, urging believers to recognize their gradual decline and repent to experience true revival. He stresses the significance of humbling ourselves, praying fervently, seeking God's face through His Word, prayer, and fasting, and turning from sinful ways to receive God's forgiveness, healing, and restoration.

Transcript

Today if one were to come to you and say, "we need to have a revival", where would you thoughts go? Think about it, what does the word revival mean to you? If you were to ask many today, "What is a revival?" you would get this answer:

"It is a series of meetings where we bring our lost friends together to hear the Gospel preached and it is an opportunity to reach out to those who have wandered away from the church."

To understand what a revival is, one must look at the word revival itself:

Revival:

restoration to life, consciousness, vigor, strength, etc.,

restoration to use, acceptance, or currency; the revival of old customs

An awakening, in a church or community, of interest in and care for matters relating to personal religion.

It is based from the word revive, lets look at last two entries for the word revive:

Revive:

to restore to life or consciousness;

to activate, set into motion, or to take up again; renew

If we were now to look again at the word, revival we see it addresses those who once were alive but have signs of being dead, in other words it addresses the bride of Christ, the people who are called by His Name.

In chapter 64 of Isaiah, we find a prayer by a great prophet for the Lord to re-awaken, to bring back to life a religious consciousness, a consciousness that has been dead for some time. And his prayer continues, that when the Lord provides a revival, His people will then be able to rejoice in You.

If we were to look at what precipitated this prayer one would have to look at the history of the nation of Israel and then of Israel and Judah (I&II Kings; I&II Chronicles). This nation was placed to reflect the Lord ways versus the world's ways, in other words, to be different. Their purpose was to be salt and light to the world. But history proves that they fell away from the Lord their God time and time again, so much so that as a nation they became sick and were dying both physically and spiritually.

One might ask, "Is this the same nation who was set free from the bondage of Egypt by the power of God? Is this the same nation who witnessed the parting of the Red Sea? Is this the same nation that was fed with manna while in the desert?" Yes, this is the same people that Isaiah's prayer is for.

If one were to look at the church today, just like Israel we have fallen away. Just take a moment and ask yourself, "How long has it been since the Lord really visited your church? When was the last time you really felt the spirit of God moving in a mighty way? Have we not witnessed in our history the power and might of God in redeeming us back to himself?" Just like the nation of Israel, the changes within the church have been so gradual we have not even noticed that we have wandered away from what the Lord requires.

So like the people of Isaiah's day we have fallen away. Most churches today no longer have an impact on their communities, or if they do it is usually a negative influence. The name of the church is not held up today as an example of piety and godliness. The church today has been diluted, it serves the people more than it serves God. People are its concern not the Christ who is the Bridegroom. It is a social circle, a place to meet, but not a place to worship, to pray and seek the God of our fathers. Look around, see how far we have fallen and turn back to God and pray as Isaiah prayed, "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in You?" What must we do to be revived?

One must realize, "Revival is not for the unsaved, but for the elect."

If we come to the understanding that the needed revival is not for the unsaved but for the bride of Christ, we will then gain a new perspective for what God wants. We are God's light to the world and if the light is hidden in works that do not reflect God, then we fail to provide the proper light, and so the darkness that invades the world will not be dispelled.

We must realize we have fallen away little by little and we are now far away. We are no longer salt that insulates or preserves but we are the part of the problem, and no longer do we provide the answers that God wants us to give, but we give answers the world wants to hear. In essence we no longer preserve but we add to the decay that is growing.

What will it take for revival to occur? The following has to happen:

True revival begins when we recognize, we are the problem, and we repent. "If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways 2 Chronicles 7:14a" .

We must first recognize we are His people. People called by His name:

To be called His people we must realize what this means. To be His people we are chosen to be light to a world that does not know Him. We called to give light that repels the darkness, to expose that which is evil. Being His people we must give a balance to the worlds ways versus God's ways. To be the consciousness of the society. In this we have failed! We expose sin such as abortion, but what about the other sins? We have no basis to be proud, but humbled because of the failures for upholding the other statues of God.

We are called to be lights that reflect the very nature of God to a society that does not know Him. If people were to look at you could they see God? If not, you are not being a true light.

We are called to be salt, a preservative to a dying decaying world. Are we preserving or adding to the decay? In most of the churches today we are adding to the decay for repentance is not being stressed. We have a your ok, were ok attitude. Being God's people we are called to a higher plane of living, yet we can not be distinguished from others in action or deed.

And as His people will must humble ourselves:

To understand what humbling oneself really means, one must look at the definition of the original Hebrew. For if one were to look at the definition in today's dictionary and then to compare the definition of the word translated from Hebrew, they are starkly different. The Hebrew word for humble is: kana` (kaw-nah'); a primitive root; properly, to bend the knee; hence, to humiliate, vanquish: KJV-- bring down (low), into subjection, under, humble (self), subdue. So to humble oneself or to humble ourselves, we are to bend a knee, to be under subjection to our Lord.

There is so much talk today of our autonomy, our ability to choose our way we have forgotten to follow the Lord. To place ourselves under the subjection of His will. To consider ourselves vanquished. So to humble ourselves we must give up our freedom, and to become His servants. This may sound strange but it was not a strange concept for Paul, for in Philippians 1:1a Paul says: "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus," Paul understood that he must be under the authority of our Lord. Have you made the connection? We are to be totally under the Lord's authority, and to give up our freedom for Him. This is what is meant by humbling ourselves. Have you given our the reins of your live to Jesus Christ? Have you placed yourself under His authority? Has your Church made Him the Commander of your flock, or have you taken over the control? The text in 2 Chronicles 7:14, mean we our to humble ourselves.

And pray -- Prayer -- to pray not only individually but corporately. There was in olden times services called prayer meetings in most churches, but today if one were to look them we would hardly called them real prayer meetings. I am sticking my neck out here because my church and my denomination have almost abandoned this services and if we do have a prayer meeting, the meeting is reading a list of names of people who need prayer and we pray for them. I think this is not what the text is speaking about. One has to look at the context of the scriptures and get a full picture of what a prayer meeting is really about. A good example is found in Acts, when the people who had just started the church in Jerusalem. They meet

together to pray not just for the sick, but for direction. They sought His face and had humbled themselves and prayed.

Have we had such a prayer meeting as they? Have we really sought the Lord in Prayer? I am terrified of what I see today as prayer meetings. They have little in common with that of the early church, we are asking questions as to build we new buildings, praying of the sick and generally thanking God for blessings received. Never, (never is such a harsh word) I should say hardly never is there real petitions laid out before the Lord for we have not humbled ourselves and recognized that we are a people who are in desperate need of guidance. We just go forward and then ask the Lord to bless what we have devised.

There is a need for genuine prayer meetings. Not for blessing but for direction. For acknowledgment that he is Lord, and that we are His servants. We need to ask the Master for His direction. If we have not stopped to ask to seek His direction in Prayer then we have not truly humbled ourselves. For a servant does not tell His Master what is to be done.

We as a people must "seek His Face" individually, yes, but also corporately. This goes together we humbling ourselves and praying. But how can we truly seek His Face?

Through His Word;

Through prayer;

through fasting.

WE must seek Him, for His word in James is true: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." James 4:8a. But there is another part of the verse that has not been used by many, for offends, for James 4:8b-10: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

For if we are to work for the Master we must seek His instruction by seeking His Face. For to see His Face we then can adequately respond to His commands (as did Isaiah when presented before the throne.)

Both 2 Chronicles 7:14 and James 8b state we are to then turn from our evil ways. But how can one turn for ones evil ways if one does not know what their evil ways are? This seems to be such a moot point that I will only take a few words to help. The ten commands are still in Gods Word are they not? They still are His standard are they not? Look upon these words given by God to His people and measure yourselves against them. Do you find yourselves serving more than one Master? Do you place other things before Him, do you lie, cheat, steal, covet or even dishonor your parents? If so, this must be turned from! How does one turn from them? By repentance! If ever there was a true definition of repentance, it is found here in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Turning from ones evil way and turning to God! Turning your back on the sin that besets you or your church. I will not go further in dealing with repentance for I have covered the subject before in my sermon on "What is True Repentance" but it is something we must do if we are to see true revival Hit our churches and our nation and world.

If these things are done and we have placed ourselves under His authority by humbling ourselves. If we have sought the Lord to show us any evil way in us and we have turned from it. God states in 2 Chronicles 7:14b-15; "then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now My eyes shall be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place." His promise is that He will hear and will

forgive and will heal our land! He will then hear our prayers offered in this place!

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