

CAN WE HAVE A REVIVAL ?

"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." II Chronicles 7:14.

"Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquity of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God." Nehemiah 9:1-3.

Last Sunday morning I spoke to you on the subject THE NEED FOR A REVIVAL. In that message we considered three questions -- What is a revival? Do we need a revival? and, What kind of a revival do we need? As to the kind of revival that we need, we discovered that we need a revival to save us from our worldliness, to save us from spiritual illness, and to save us from the binding power of sin. Now we come to consider the question, Can we have a revival? What does God say?

"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." II Chronicles 7:14. This text makes it plain that God has a people. For them, this is almost timely passage. A revival presupposes a spiritual declension, a falling away from God, and a going back into the ways of sin. Backsliding is a sin which is never profitable. No backslider is doing his duty or pleasing God.

A revival quickens the dormant powers of a church into activity. It is a renewal of life; a return from a state of neglect to one of vigor and activity. It awakens the careless to a sense of their guilt and misery. It breaks the power of the world over Christians. It imparts new life. It floods the souls of the devout with joy and love. It banishes malice and envy. It leads Christians to do their duties. It awakens thoughtless sinners and results in their salvation. It is our greatest need today.

Do we really want a revival? There is no question about our needing one, but do we want it? If so, there is a price we must pay for it, or we shall never get it. Are we ready to pay it? What is the price?

I. We Must Honestly Face Our Sins.

Our present condition is due to our sins. Nehemiah 9 shows us that the children of Israel did not dodge a thing. They came face to face with the fact that this disaster had come upon them because of their sins. They put their finger on their sins, came clean with God about them, and said to the Lord, "Everything Thou hast done to us should have been done." Friend, when you come down to that, you are getting right with God.

II. We Must Humble Ourselves Before The Lord.

The children of Israel humbles themselves before God. The sackclothes and earth implies humility before God, an unconditional surrender to Him, and an absolute dependence upon Him.

Humility is freedom from arrogance; holiness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own worth; self-abasement. Humility is the richest pearl of the Christian crown of graces.

It is a suit that is always in fashion, never wears out, and is always becoming. It is recognized by man, admired by angels, and appreciated by the Lord. It brings the soul into a position to hear God's voice, be used of Him and receive blessings from Him. Humility enables one to walk consistently, love generously, serve willingly, act meekly, forgive heartily, forbear thoughtfully, and respond obediently.

We have been everything but humble before the Lord. We are a proud, self-sufficient generation. And yet the Bible has so much to say about the place of humility in a Christian life. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5:5. God will lift you up. One of the seven things which God hates, we are told in the book of Proverbs, is a proud look and a haughty spirit.

III. We Must Break Up The Fallow Ground.

We must do our part in response to what God asks, if we are to receive a revival from Him. There is always something that He bids us to do, some step of obedience we must take. In a picturesque phrase, Hosea tells his people what they must do. It is a picture from the fields with which they were all familiar. If land is to produce a good harvest the fallow ground must be plowed. It must be laid open to frost and rain and sunshine. The weeds and thorns that may have sprung up in it must be uprooted. The same kind of process must take place in our hearts and lives. "Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you." Hosea 10:12. This picture is one for ourselves. There are bits of fallow ground in all our lives, tracts of living which yield nothing to God's purpose for ourselves or for the world around us. They add nothing to our own enrichment or the enrichment of others. The first step towards spiritual renewal is to bring these under cultivation.

IV. We Must Pray.

Fervent, persistent, importunate prayer is absolutely necessary. The great revivals of history have invariably followed upon the prayers of Christians who have been deeply troubled for the honor of Christ's holy name, and for the salvation of the souls of their fellowmen.

Prayer is communion with God, committal to God and cooperation with God. Prayer is to the soul what breathing is to the body; and we can no more live a strong, healthy, spiritual life without prayer than we can live a good healthy physical life without breathing. Prayer is to the soul what steam is to the engine, gasoline is to the car, and water is to the garden. It is through prayer that we get renewed strength, heavenly wisdom, greater love, and a closer walk with God. Prayer is both a privilege and a duty. "Come boldly unto the throne of grace." "Ask and ye shall receive."

V. We Must Realize Our Dependence On God For Power.

Oh, how many things we try to do in the energy of the flesh. God cannot use anything that we do in the energy of the flesh. Only that which is of the Holy Spirit can God use. It is a prevalent tendency to depend upon human abilities. And there is pride again. Pride makes one sensitive. People are sensitive because they think they are above others. They think that God has given them some talent that He did not give to somebody else, and if they do not get a chance to display that talent, they feel offended. Their noses are in the air, and their feelings are hurt right away because they did not get the proper recognition. It is just a case of selfishness and human pride. That is one thing that is grieving the Holy Spirit in many churches today.

VI. We Must Separate Ourselves From The World.

One of the clarion calls of the Bible is for separation on the part of God's people. One of the most persistent and most urgent pleas of God all the way through the Bible is for His people to separate themselves from the world. He said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." To "have no fellowship with" means not to go about it, not to touch it, not to have anything to do with it.

VII. We Must Make A Covenant With God.

That is what the remnant of the children of Israel did. They got down to real business and made a vow to God. And they said, "Not only are we making a covenant, but we are binding ourselves under an oath and a curse. We are taking an oath before God. We are asking God to bring a curse on all of us if we do not do it." People are getting somewhere when they get in earnest like that. They said, "We are going to put God first from here on out; we are going to bring Him the first fruits of our grounds, the first of everything. We are going to put God first." Then they said, "We are going to bring God His tithe. Not only that, but we are going to quit this business of staying away from the house of God." And God tells us that the revival came. And it will come right here if we will do the same things.

VIII. We Must Do Personal Work With The Lost.