

## Revivals And Church History :: Preparation for Heaven-sent revival.

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Preparation For Heaven-sent Revival

By Al Whittinghill

Those today who understand the alarming situation in the world and who are honest in their evaluation of the true spiritual condition of the visible church cannot deny that there is an urgent need for heaven-sent revival among God's people. There is no way that the church, as she is today, can answer the challenges of this dark hour or meet the desperate need of this generation to hear the Gospel. The church must first experience the glorious touch of the Lord in fresh resurrection life and revival power.

It is truly remarkable how many great movements of the Spirit of God have taken place throughout the history of the church, all over the world, as the people of God have turned to Him in desperation and spiritual need and dared to act upon and claim the wonderful promises of God: "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" (2 Chr. 7:14).

Every true believer realizes and knows in his heart that God has called each Christian into a deep, rich, pure, and unbroken fellowship with Him. We are called by Him to share in the glorious life that is in His Son! But every believer also realizes, to some degree, how frequently his true spiritual life is interrupted or diminished by our giving over to some distraction or yielding temporarily to the old nature of selfishness. The Bible calls this independence from God "sin"! There are yet foes within, and on every side, that each of us must face in the unfailing name of Jesus if we are to enjoy the constant joy of His presence and the assurance of His manifested, abiding Life.

Our God is a jealous God, and He wants His people to love Him without a rival. Sin must be dealt with. Whenever the people of God allow unjudged or unconfessed sin to remain in their lives, or if they begin to allow idolatry to creep into their hearts, there is a loss of the sense of His presence. This is God's mercy to us; He is calling to our hearts. We will begin to experience a sense of bondage and heaviness, or an unexplainable "loneliness," that will grow and soon begin to wreak havoc in many areas of our lives. It will get harder and harder as the chastening of the Lord continues in the life of the one whom He loves, until we come to our senses and turn to Him with all our hearts. God may lean on us in our circumstances, or even our health, just to get our attention and strongly say to us that He wants us to repent and return in faith to Him. Such is the sense of the timeless truth given in Second Chronicles 7:14.

Second Chronicles chapter six (a very helpful background) is a prayer that Solomon prays as he kneels before all the people of Israel. He is asking God to have mercy upon them in the future if they fail to worship Him supremely and when they foolishly allow other things to control them. Even in the midst of chastening that would come because of sin, Solomon asks God to have mercy upon them and call the people back to Himself. Later at night God appears to Solomon and confirms to him that if His people would fulfill His gracious conditions, He would restore their intimacy with Him, and forgive their sin. Also, the land that had been experiencing hard times because of the people's sin would be healed. God promises that there will be blessing on every level when His people respond to Him appropriately and fully. So many of God's people have found these promises to be true as they have taken them to heart and looked to Him for revival.

"My people" means the church—the people that are known by His name. "My people will do something...then I will do something," says God! How often we tend to think that if we can just change the world, then things will get better. It is the church that holds the key to the future, not the world. The world cannot reform itself; it is incurably corrupted. God will use His redeemed people, the ones whose hearts are truly His, to usher in revival when they finally become willing to face His conditions and act on His promise. Once we realize our great need, we must also see that the Lord has placed the initiative for His remedy with us!

We can count on His response as we fulfill His conditions for revival. The desire of our covenant-keeping God is to restore and bring His people to the place of true blessing in Him, but we must be willing to face the real issues. Only then will He pour out His Spirit on the church and restore her to the place of spiritual beauty and power. This verse sets before us some areas of our lives that we must deal with individually, and as His church, if we expect to see Him move in revival.

val and in the restoration of spiritual blessing:

1. We must humble ourselves. Of the ten different Hebrew words for "humble" this one means "to subdue, to vanquish, to humiliate." It comes from a root word meaning "to bend the knee." It suggests our coming before Him in complete and voluntary subjection to Him. This is a fresh dealing with His Cross—our brokenness! We must turn from our pride. As we get real with Him and allow the Holy Spirit to bring our whole lives before Him, He will plow through our hearts and show us a revelation of our pride and selfishness. Our pride has been the great hindrance! The question is "Who shall be our God?"—Ourselves or our Savior?

Do we want God enough to be truly honest? We must bend the knee before Him in united authentic submission to Him. The "I" must be subdued and vanquished, and we must choose for it to be so. We must deal with our self-confidence and pride in the light of the Cross. This will mean taking off our masks, coming into His light, and abandoning ourselves to Who He is. We must ask ourselves, "Have we ever shed tears together concerning our pride?" This is the place that God says the process of revival must start. He will wait for us to come before Him and humble ourselves in a broken and contrite way. It is humility that draws the heart of God. (See Isaiah 57:15.)

2. We must pray. This is the next great condition that flows right out of, and builds upon, the first. Of the twelve Hebrew words for prayer, this one means "to judge oneself habitually in the presence of God." In First Peter 4:17 we read that "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." What is this but a fresh dealing with His crown—our truthfulness! We must turn from our prayerlessness. This may be painful, but it is essential. We cannot pray for revival unless we are willing to be changed forever! We must be specific about His lordship in our lives as we come before Him in humility.

What needs changing in our lives in the light of His Word? As we submit to Him in brokenness and honesty, God will search us and show us areas in our lives that He wants to change. We must agree with God and take sides with Him against any place of resistance in our lives! A contrite heart that is confessing a genuine willingness to be changed by God is irresistible to Him. We must allow God to search us with His eyes of fire. Throughout the Book of Acts and the history of the church, it is always "brokenhearted prayer by a desperate people of God that has brought revival. Zion must travail and give herself to effectual and fervent prayer before her fruit will come. The question that we must answer is, "Would we rather just feel right or be right?"

3. We must seek His face. This is the third condition in this way of grace. Perhaps we have been seeking His hand, His help, His gifts or His blessing; but this condition demands that we seek God for Himself—to know Him. "Face to face" is how we get to know someone. In the Hebrew this "seek" is a very intensive word. This is a fresh dealing with His calling—our intimacy! We must turn from our passivity. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). This is an attitude of holy desperation for God Himself, gripped with a sense of urgency and a zeal for communion with Him. We have a desire to know and honor Him. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and He cannot look on sin (Hab. 1:13). We must get radical and seek Him with a heart that is desiring to "draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). We must long to "walk in the light of His countenance" and to know the blessing of His approval and communion. Knowing that our Lord cannot tolerate sin in His presence, we must seek to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit" (1 Cor. 7:1) and to dwell in His sweet approval. The church must become desperate for God Himself and not just what He can do.

4. We must turn from our wicked ways. Fourth, in this divinely inspired order is this great practical step involving action. Most of us would not call our ways "wicked" because we are "church people" and fairly respectable. But once I begin to honestly humble myself and truly, prayerfully seek His face, I will surely discover that many of the things that I have been justifying and calling mere "weaknesses" are, in reality, "wickedness." The Word tells us that the wicked man must forsake his way and the unrighteous man, his thoughts. In the light of God's holy character many things we thought were harmless, suddenly, in His presence, must be dealt with as sin. This is a fresh dealing with His character—our holiness! We must turn from pollution. Small things now loom large and "pet indulgences" will become loathsome to us in the light of who He is. No more excusing ourselves; no more blaming others; no more "playing dumb." We must act on the truth that God has shown to us. The conviction of the Holy Spirit must be responded to practically. We must become available to His will. This truly is the reality of what repentance means, and the presence of His holiness is the truest test of whether or not a work is genuinely from God. Does it produce holiness and bring glory to Him?

Until we take this passage seriously and seek to respond with our whole hearts to these divinely given requirements,

we will remain far from heaven-sent revival!

No one wants revival for the church more than He who gave Himself for her that she might be a spotless Bride unto Him! Wherever and whenever God's people have gone to their knees and taken this verse to heart, God has never failed to keep His promise of blessing. This is the great need of the hour in which we live. May each of us give ourselves fully to being part of the preparation of the church for real revival. "O Lord, may the world become astonished by Your glory and want to know You as they see the people of God clothed once again in the beauty of Your holiness and filled with Your love."

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