



## Articles and Sermons :: Revival Is A Turning Time

Revival Is A Turning Time, on: 2007/9/28 14:35

Revival Is A Turning Time  
By Roger Ellsworth

Scripture reading: Jeremiah 7:1-14

God's glorious work of revival is invariably characterized by God's people becoming broken over their sins and turning from them. There can be no revival apart from this. The Lord Himself said to the people of Israel under Solomon: "And... of My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14).

Real repentance among God's people seems to be a very rare thing these days. The fact is, God's people are known more for what they turn toward than for what they turn from. It is not at all unusual to see professing Christians making sinful activities and attitudes part of their lives. It is rare to see them decisively casting such things aside.

Brian H. Edwards was certainly correct to observe: "It is a sad fact that in normal times Christians hold on to those things that revival will snatch away from them."

We are now face to face with the reason there is such little interest in revival. It is very costly! It is a kind of spiritual surgery in which sinful thoughts and deeds are removed.

What kind of spiritual surgery do you need? What is there in your life that needs to be removed? Is it an inclination to be critical and gossipy? Is it an addiction to pornography? Is it resentment toward someone? Is it a fondness for pleasure that consistently takes you out of public worship? Is it a love for money that is so strong that you even find yourself unwilling to financially support the work of the Lord?

Repentance is the spiritual knife that takes out of our hearts and lives the things that do not belong. Nothing is more unpopular these days! Surgical knives are never popular! Repentance has become so unpopular that many pastors never mention it. It drives the crowd away! We may have changed our views on repentance, but God has not changed His. He still insists upon it as the indispensable way to get sin out of our lives.

The passage before us gives us valuable insight into this matter of repentance. Here the prophet Jeremiah delivers his famous "Temple Sermon" (Jer. 7:1-14). He was commanded by the Lord to "stand in the gate of the Lord's house" and preach to all those who came there to worship the Lord.

The fact that the people of Judah were coming to the house of the Lord would seem to suggest that Jeremiah's was a fool's errand. If the people were coming to worship the Lord, all would seem to be well. The sad fact is, however, that one can be in the house of the Lord on a regular basis and have a heart that is devoted to idols and is far from the Lord. The Lord Jesus Himself warned about the danger of drawing nigh to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him (Mark 7:6-7).

The hearts of the people of Judah were far from the Lord. They were still going through the motions of worshiping the Lord, but they were also worshiping their idols. They had not replaced the worship of God with the worship of idols. They merely allowed the two to coexist.

The very same thing is going on today. Many think as long as they go to church on Sunday they can live any way they want the rest of the week. They are trying to worship God and their idols.

The "worshippers" in Judah must have been very surprised when they went to the temple on the day described in this passage. There stood Jeremiah at the gate preaching passionately! His message wasn't the smiling "I'm okay, you're okay" variety. It wasn't a "Have a nice day" message. He wasn't wearing a smiley button on his lapel.

His message was arresting and sobering. One phrase captured the essence of it: "Amend your ways and doings" (vv. 3, 5). It was a message of repentance. God was not impressed by the fact that the people were merely coming to His house. He was interested in the condition of their hearts.

Jeremiah's message enables us to note some of the essential features of this business of repentance. It first shows us that:

#### Repentance Deals with Our Ways

We have a tendency to judge the condition of our relationship with God on the basis of feelings. If we are emotionally moved in a service, we conclude that we are right with God.

Jeremiah's message fastened the attention of his hearers on the conduct of their lives. It did not for one moment matter how these people felt about themselves. They were not living according to the laws of God (vv. 5-6). They were responsible for keeping the Ten Commandments, and Jeremiah here charges them with violating six of them (vv. 5-9).

Many today think the Ten Commandments have been diluted or withdrawn. Nothing could be farther from the truth. And if we want to know whether our ways are pleasing to the Lord, all we have to do is consult these commandments and not our feelings.

Jeremiah's message also shows us that:

#### Repentance Means Change

The word "amend" makes this plain. It means changing one's ways. It is to do an about-face. We may picture it in this way: when we are living in disobedience to the Lord our faces are toward our sin and our backs toward the Lord. When we repent we turn our backs on our sin and our faces toward the Lord and His will for our lives.

There is no true repentance where there is no change in the life. Some have the idea that they can continue to sin as long as they tell God they're sorry. But saying we are sorry without breaking with our sins is not genuine sorrow at all.

Real repentance recognizes God's standards for our behavior, agrees with them and is heartbroken over failing to adhere to them. It confesses with sincere sorrow and breaks with sin.

Real repentance always shows up in the life, and any repentance that does not show up in the life is a phony repentance.

That brings us to a final thing about repentance:

#### Repentance Averts God's Chastisement

Repentance averts God's chastisement and brings His blessing (vv. 3,7). Jeremiah's temple sermon confronted the people of Judah with a choice. They could repent and receive God's blessings or persist in their sins and bring calamity upon themselves.

The Lord set the possibility of blessing before the people in these words: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place" (vv. 3,7).

In other words, the Lord promised stability and security to His people if they would repent, but they were far from repentance. They felt no shame over their behavior. When sin was mentioned, they passed it off as something that was of no importance. They believed the outward form of religion (going to the temple and observing its rituals) was more than enough to cancel their sins and gain the favor of God.

They were dreadfully mistaken. During Samuel's time, their forefathers had made the very same mistake. They thought God was obligated to bless and keep them as long as they kept up the outward display of religion. On the basis of this belief, they carried the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines. There they discovered how mistaken they had been. The ark of God was taken and the tabernacle at Shiloh was apparently demolished (1 Sam. 4:1-11).

It has often been said that those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. The people of Jeremiah's generation had not learned from the Shiloh chapter in their history, and God was now telling them that they must genuinely repent or suffer a similar calamity. Through His prophet, He says of the temple: "...therefore I will do unto this house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh" (v. 14).

The people refused to repent, and the Lord did exactly as He promised. The Babylonians came against Judah, completely destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem, and carried most of Judah's citizens into captivity.

We remind ourselves of the people of Judah, not because we have some unusual interest in ancient history, but rather because we face the very same choice as they. We may enjoy God's blessings or we may experience His chastisement. Repentance brings the former; refusal to repent, the latter.

**Re: Revival Is A Turning Time - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/9/28 15:31**

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