

I. Introduction

- A. Over and over again, there have come times in history when darkness covers the land. There are times when evil is rampant, the hearts of God's people are lukewarm and complacent, culture sits in chaos, and the whole world lies hypnotized under the spell of the Dark Lord Satan.
- B. In those days, when good women and men don't know what to do, there is only one answer: **REVIVAL**.
 1. You could almost say that revival is the church on steroids evangelizing a world on life-support.
 2. But it's not steroids and it's not adrenaline, and it's not whipped up enthusiasm or human emotion at all.
 3. It is a somber, serious, work of God. In that work, God does something in the church so startling that the world takes notice and there is a flood of new salvations.
- C. Do you ever feel tired or worn out?
 1. If you down a Grande coffee at Starbucks, you'll get 310 mg of caffeine.
 - a) Red Bull gives you 80 mg, No Doz gives you 200 mg, Monster Maxx gives you 200 mg, Mountain Dew Amp gives you 220 mg, In a cup of Death Wish coffee, you'll get 728 mg, But if you pick up Black Label Brewed coffee, you'll get 1,555 mg of coffee — the equivalent of 5 grandes at Starbucks.
 - (1) I'm not advocating, I'm just illustrating.
 2. The Church is not fueled by caffeine, enthusiasm, steroids, or emotion.
 3. **The Church is fueled by Jesus Christ uplifted and proclaimed, because that is where the Holy Spirit works in power.**
- D. There are a lot of places in the Bible where God leans down from heaven, and shouts Wake Up!
 1. Paul says it his high time to awake out of our sleep/ (Rom 13:10)
 2. He says, Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. (Eph 5:14)
 3. In 2 Chron 13:12 God sounds an alarm to wake up his people, so they will stop fighting against him.
 4. Joel says to blow the trumpet in Zion and to sound an alarm in his holy mountain. (Joel 2:1)
- E. God keeps sending wake up calls, but too many churches keep hitting snooze.
- F. I believe we have reached a tipping point.
- G. Nothing we do can fix society. Nothing can fix our world. There is no human solution. No cultural fix. No politician can help us. No legislation can turn the tide. No court rulings. No medical discoveries. No group consensus. No election. No program. No amount of throwing money into the ecosystem.
- H. Nothing.
- I. I am not saying to give up. I am not even saying to give up on the things I just listed.
- J. What I am saying that we have reached a tipping point. We're too far gone. Evil openly masquerades as good.
- K. The world-spirit can never reverse the calamities the world-spirit has caused.
 1. Our problems are spiritual. Our problems are moral. Our problems are demonic. Our problems are with God. Our problems are too big to fix on our own.
- L. Unless God intervenes in a big way, we have, in many ways, crossed a point of no return and, humanly speaking, there is no going back.
 1. Our Series is called **REVIVAL**. I'm not sure how long it's going to last.
 2. My talk today is called **IT'S TIME TO TURN AROUND**.

II. Key Verse

- A. I know that the word revival conjures different meanings for different people.
 1. If you're from the south, a revival is an annual event in churches. They bring in special preachers and maybe even have tent meetings. A lot of energy, a lot of condemning sin, and a lot of excitement.
 2. If you're from other places, say Redding, to you a revival might mean an emotional event with bizarre experiences or prophecies and special words from God.
- B. So, where should we look to see what real revival really is? How about we try the Bible. One of my favorite Bible experts, Walter Kaiser, says there are 16 revivals recorded in the Bible. I think I'd like to add one to his list to make it 17.
- C. Over these next few weeks, we're going to look at many of these revivals.
- D. The key verse in the whole Bible on revival is:
 1. *If 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 heal their land.* (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- E. In this verse, we find the **subjects** of revival, the **conditions** of revival, and the **results** of revival.
- F. In the surrounding verses, we also find the context of revival.
- G. I want to give a definition of revival, and then I want to take apart this verse.

III. What is Revival?

- A. Revival is a special and unusual work of God.
- B. In this work of God, God first energizes the church, believers in Jesus. Then he moves beyond the church to wake up a spiritually comatose world.
 1. Revival is the sovereign act of God, in which He restores his own backsliding people to repentance, faith, and obedience. (Stephen Olford)
 2. Revival presupposes that the Church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and revival consists in the return of the Church from her backsliding and in the conversion of sinners. (Charles Finney)
- C. Here's my definition:
 1. **Revival is a sudden, unusual, and intense work of God in the Church.**
In revival, God purifies, awakens, and mobilizes his own people.

The awakening in the Church results in a cleansing of culture and in unusually large numbers of people coming to faith in Christ.

- D. Revival is unusual. It is not the normal state for Christians or for the church. Revival is extraordinary. Revival is a spiritual awakening plus unusual numbers of conversions.
- E. We can't manufacture true revival. We can't manipulate God in this. God the king decides when to pour out revival from heaven. We can't make it happen.
- F. But we can pray, we can hope, we can prepare, we can ask.
- G. So I want to go back to 2 Chronicles 7:14 and some surrounding verses and expose our hearts to the healthy radioactivity of God's Word.

IV. Revival

A. **THE CONTEXT: When a culture finds itself under divine discipline, and the church finds itself apathetic and lukewarm, it's time to turn around.**

1. When things are bad, conditions are ripe for revival.
2. There has been a serious decline in the appetite of Christians for spiritual things.
 - a) Our Bibles are gathering dust. Our marriages are weak. Our morality is hardly different from unsaved people. Our passion for God is quenched by thousand little things, I mean idols, that matter more than God. Evangelists are a dying breed and evangelism is dead. Church is optional, depending on what else is going on. And there is a presumption of a kind of grace that isn't grace from a God who exhibits nothing of the transcendence and awfulness the Bible reveals him to possess.
 - (1) I am not talking about unsaved people.
 - (a) God never expects the world to act like the church.
 - (b) But God does expect the church to act like the church... and
3. The basic context for revival is the very bad news that most of us Christians disobey God most of the time.
 - a) **When Christians sin, they lose the joy of their salvation (Psalm 51:12).** You can't lose your salvation, but you can lose the joy of your salvation.
 - b) **When Christians sin, the world loses its salt and light. (Matthew 5:13, 14)** So society becomes spoiled like rotten meat in the moral realm, and dark, foolish, and clueless in the truth realm.
 - c) **When Christians sin, we bring ourselves and our society under divine discipline. (Heb 12:6-11)** God says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord," but how can he be Lord of the nation if he's scarcely Lord of the church? (Ps 33:12)
4. When you have a majority of Christians and churches who outright reject the Bible, or put it on the side, or lapse into a backslidden, indifferent and lukewarm condition, the whole nation falls under the judgment of God.
 - a) Welcome to America.
5. The words of 2 Chronicles 7:14 are spoken by God to King Solomon. Solomon has just built what was the most beautiful and extravagant temple in world history. Our verse in Chronicles is from the dedication ceremony of that temple.
6. In his prayer of dedication, Solomon recalls some warnings from God. One of them is this:
 - a) **Whenever God's people turn away from him life will be harder than it needs to be.**
 - b) They will be under judgment.
7. So before the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 there is the somber warning of 2 Chronicles 7:13:
 - a) *Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people..." (2 Chronicles 7:12, 13)*
 - (1) Drought... financial devastation. Locusts... parasitic infestation. Pestilence... Disease and virus proliferation.
 - (a) Does any of this sound familiar?
 - (b) The question needs to be asked by every generation and culture: have we reached the point described in verse 13?
 - (c) You hardly need to be a prophet to see that the pace of evil in our society has accelerated so much that if God doesn't judge us soon, he owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah.
8. Why would God send those judgment among his people?
 - a) These are wake up calls.
 - b) God loves you too much to subsidize your self-destruction. So he puts all kinds of obstacles between his people and their heartbreaking, life-destroying ways.
 - c) God's discipline gets more and more intense as times goes on, up to and including national disintegration.
9. There are two bright spots here:
 - a) The first bright spot: Scripture proves that even if a country falls, God can still bless his people... for example Daniel and Esther. National disaster is no barrier for God when it comes to blessing his faithful remnant.
 - b) The second bright spot: Revival.

B. **THE SUBJECTS**

No matter how far they have fallen, how long they have backslidden, how wrecked their lives, or how evil their society, when Christians turn our hearts back to God, he turns his face back to us in restoration and blessing.

1. If my people, who are called by my name.
2. There are biblical interpreters who say this promise isn't for the church today. This promise is only for ancient Israel. They say that 2 Chronicles 7:14 is Christians reading somebody else's mail.
3. I could not disagree more.
 - a) God speaks to "My people." You might be able to refer that only to Israel.

- b) But that limitation falls apart with the next phrase, “who are called by my name.”
- c) This phrase is used in both testaments for all God’s people, in all ages of time, and in both new and old testaments.
- 4. Revival is for believers, for the church, for born again Christians, wherever, whenever, whatever we’ve been up to.
- 5. No matter how far they have fallen, how long they have backslidden, how wrecked their lives, or how evil their society, when Christians turn their hearts back to God, he turns his face back to them.
 - a) The church’s apathy does not have to have the final say.
 - b) The setting aside of Scripture, the spectacular decline in morality, the well-deserved discipline from the hand of the Father that we see today...
 - (1) None of this has to be terminal.
 - (2) God has made a promise to his people who are called by his name, and that promise is bedrock certainty to you and to me and to the whole redeemed body of Christ today.
- 6. We are the subjects of revival.
- 7. And that gives me hope, because the final chapter on our society today is not yet written.
- C. **THE CONDITIONS: When a large mass of believers fulfill the conditions of revival, we create an open space for God to create a massive turnaround in our lives and our world.**
 - 1. And there are four conditions: humble ourselves, pray, seek God’s face, turn from our wicked ways.
 - 2. **If My People will Humble Themselves...**
 - a) To humble yourself *Intellectually* is to confess that the Bible is smarter than you.
 - b) To humble yourself *morally* is to confess your sins, and to own them and quit excusing them, and to say that you deserve the judgment of God, but for the Cross.
 - c) To humble yourself *spiritually* is to confess your dependence on God every single day, and to quit acting as if you can create for yourself the kind of life only God can give you.
 - d) To humble yourself *overall* is to quit pushing back against the wisdom and ways of God, and to quit complaining when you don’t get the grace you insanely think you deserve.
 - (1) No grace is ever deserved, so no whining is ever righteous.
 - e) To humble yourself personally is to say that God is your God and to constantly remind yourself that you are not God.
 - (1) To humble yourself is to profess that God is my king.
 - (2) It is to offer up complete respect, ongoing trust, and continual obedience to him.
 - f) What would happen in the majority of Christians in America would go to God and humble themselves.
 - g) It would be the end of practical atheism, the elimination of selfies, the death knell to whining and complaining, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - h) Warning: if you won’t humble yourself before God, God has ways of bringing you to your knees. Look at our country.
 - (1) Humbling yourself would be the first condition of revival.
 - 3. **If My People will Pray...**
 - a) There are about ten Hebrew words in the OT for prayer. But this one focuses on you praying not for yourself, but for others.
 - b) Intercession, as it’s called.
 - (1) Pray for the world and its problems. Pray for God to work in the darkness of Washington DC and Sacramento. Pray for God to work in my heart and for all of us.
 - c) There’s a great revival under King Jehoshaphat where God told him to stand still in the face of his enemies. Don’t fight. Don’t engage the battle. Just pray for their defeat.
 - d) There’s another scene where Israel is fighting the Amalekites. Moses is on a hillside in plain sight, hands lifted in prayer. When his arms grew tired, and his prayer grew weak, the Amalekites prevailed. So two men came alongside to hold up his arms and to encourage Moses to keep on praying, and it was through prayer that God’s people won the victory.
 - e) A survivor of concentration camps, Corrie Ten Boom, said:
 - (1) When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles, When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.
 - 4. **If My People will Seek My Face...**
 - a) The best commentary on this phrase is found in the Psalms. In Psalm 27:7-14, you have a great description of what it means to seek the face of God.
 - b) To seek God’s face means that every day, you work on your relationship with him, because your relationship with God is top priority.
 - c) Your life is a menu. Family. Work. School. Friendship. Marriage. Sports. Kid’s sports. Working out. There are a lot of things on the menu.
 - (1) You choose.
 - (2) Of all the choices you make, from this menu, choose to keep God in the first place.
 - (a) **When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.” (Psalm 27:8)**
 - d) To seek his face means to create a bond with God—mainly through the Bible and prayer.
 - e) To seek God’s face means to make choices every single day to keep your heart warm and tender toward Christ. The opposite of seeking God’s face isn’t really gross evil and sin. No.
 - f) The opposite of seeking God’s face is this:
 - (1) *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (Revelation 3:15, 16)*

- g) That's is the opposite of seeking God's face.
- h) What would happen in our lives, and what would happen in our church, and what would happen in our county, and what would happen in our land, if the majority of people who call themselves Christians woke up every day, and decided to seek God's face... so they opened their Bible and they prayed and then they went out to face the day.

i) Revival.

5. If My People Will Turn from their Wicked Ways...

- a) The final condition that would make space for revival in the sovereign plan of God is if God's people would repent of their sins, confess them to God, and turn from their evil ways.
 - (1) Jacob was commanded to put away his idols. (Gen 35:1-4)
 - (2) Joshua told the nation of Israel they had to throw away the God's of Egypt. (Josh 24:14)
 - (3) Isaiah commanded God's people, "Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right!" (Isa 1:16,17)
- b) Ouch, right? Forgive me if I step on toes here... but...
 - (1) These things have to go: Bitterness. Pornography. Adultery. Self-righteousness. Self-serving. Laziness. Fear as an excuse. Victimhood as an excuse. Same sex sexual imagination and activity. All sex outside of marriage. Cohabitation (the world's morals are immoral). Addiction. Alcoholism. Lying. Stealing. Horoscopes. Astrology. Witchcraft. The pursuit of wealth over the pursuit of God. Immorality. Hatred. Violence. Abuse. Cheating. Dishonesty. Hypocrisy.
 - (a) Did I skip anybody?
 - (2) Those temptations have to go. That evil ring that owns your soul has to be thrown into the fires of Mt Doom.
- c) God wants his people to be clean. Holy. Pure. It's time to change direction. It's time to turn around.
- d) It was sin *in the church* that got us into this mess.
- e) It will be the turning away from sin that gets us out of it.
 - (1) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:8-10)
- f) You say, Bill, my sins are too big and my habits are too deep.
- g) And I say the Cross is bigger, and Christ is stronger, and even little victories are victories still. And they count too.
- h) Set aside your sins, and let God reign in your heart.

6. We've seen the context of revival, the subjects of revival, the conditions of revival, and now the results of revival.

D. THE RESULTS: When God sends revival, he accomplishes in days what takes years of labor in the church, and decades of effort in politics to do in restoring his people to a place of blessing, the culture to a place of wholesomeness, and the gospel to a place of prominence.

- 1. Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land.
- 2. These are the results, because this is the miracle of revival God promises to send.
- 3. We'll be talking about the incredible power of revival in weeks to come.
- 4. But let me end with this.

V. Conclusion

A. Lord, Revive us again.

B. We are caught in the midst of turmoil on a global scale such as we have not seen in our lifetimes. It is the great battle — Satan is spending his final breaths — the principalities and powers are raging against the kingdom of God.

- 1. Where are the warriors for revival? Where are the soldiers of Christ?
- 2. Have we become too dumbed down? Too nice? Too agreeable? Are we afraid to stand on the Word of God?
- 3. In the name of unity, have we sacrificed truth? In the name of getting the world to like us, have we watered down the offense of the cross?
- 4. Do people even need Christ any more? Or has He simply become one option among many?
- 5. Where are the men and women who will spend and be spent for the gospel? Where are the missionaries? Where are the preachers of the Word in power?
- 6. Where are Christian women and men who will let God have his way in their hearts?
 - a) The only thing God will ever take from you are things that break your heart.

C. Church, let's return to the Lord. He won't turn us away. He's just waiting for us.

D. It's time to turn around.

E. It's time to humble ourselves and to pray and to seek his face and to turn from our wicked ways.

F. Let's start with small victories, small prayers, small obediences if we have to. But let's start.

G. We pray the prophet Isaiah's prayer for revival:

- 1. Oh that you would rend the heavens! That you would come down! That that mountains (Washington DC) might shake at your presence (Isaiah 64 :1)

H. And Habakkuk's prayer:

- 1. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. (Habakkuk 3:2)