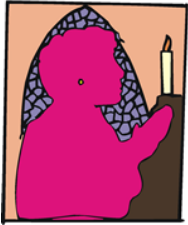


Repentance - the Road to Revival



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

There's a call going out for Christians to pray together. Often it is to pray together for revival. Be glad for it. Respond to it. Participate in prayer as fully as you possibly can.

Rarely has there been greater need of prayer and revival than today.

But I want to sound a warning. And I want to issue another call.

The warning is simply this. There will be no revival unless prayer leads to repentance.

My call is to repent.

Prayer in large groups can be little more than mass enthusiasm. The measure of its prayer success is how much genuine private prayer it generates.

The measure of its potency in producing revival is how much genuine repentance it produces.

Genuine Repentance

Mass prayer may have a fun element to it, but there's no fun in genuine repentance. It is a form of death. I die to my pride, myself, my self will, my self-defense, my self-confidence, my self-approval.

My repentance will certainly include repentance for specific acts of sin that I have never been willing to fully disapprove. It will certainly include repentance for specific acts of sin I've never been willing to stop and separate myself from. It will certainly include confession to God of these specific sins. I'll have to agree entirely with His assessment of them as heinous offences against His holiness.

But it will also include confession of some of them to people I've sinned against. And it will include restitution. In fact the measure of the validity of my repentance will be how thoroughly I make things right with the others I've hurt, offended, and grieved. My confession and restitution will need to be as complete as possible without producing further hurt and harm for others.

Wider Repentance

Moreover, my repentance will have to be for more than just all the specific acts of sin God draws to my attention as I wait on Him, willing to receive all His direction and correction.

It will have to be for my refusal previously to listen to His call to repent for these sins. It will have to be for my prideful self-will and chosen independence from Him. It will have to be for my

self-righteous attempts to live the Christian life without dependence on Him and His life in me. It will have to be for my very sinful disposition.

No, that's not going too far. Yes, if you really do know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, if your profession of faith in Him is more than just religious pretense, you did repent of your sin when you came to Him. BUT, little did you know or realize the awful sinfulness of your heart, the extent of your rebellion against God, the determination with which you wanted to live in self-dependence rather than dependence on God, the magnitude of your pride.

Among those preaching prayer and revival are those who have never let the Holy Spirit reveal their horrid selves to themselves. About them is little of the humility, meekness, and gentleness of the Master or the evidence of these fruits of the Spirit.

Our verse appropriately begins with a call to humility. Any revival that doesn't produce humility growing from genuine and continuing repentance is no revival at all.

Continuous Repentance & Revival

Nor is a time of repentance adequate - not unless it is *all the time*. We need to live in an attitude of repentance. Our every thought is likely to be tainted with something of sin, our every word, our every action. Even our confession or restitution may be incomplete and inadequate.

We need to live in a constant humble recognition of this that makes us less self-confident and more dependent on the grace and mercy of God.

Our every thought needs to have something of the stuff of prayer about it. And every prayer needs to have something of the stuff of humility and repentance about it.

Gratitude and Grace

There's a complementary truth without which our repentance is incomplete.

Every thought, every prayer, every act and attitude of humility and repentance needs to have about it something of the stuff of gratitude and dependence on the grace and mercy of God.

God knows my sinfulness more fully than I ever can. Yet He loves me fully and freely. Christ died as evidence of that love and as God's means of conveying that love to me. He dwells in me now and always by His Spirit. I am accepted in the beloved. His grace is sufficient to provide that acceptance in spite of my sin and to be constantly working to bring me to new repentances and increasing transformation into His image and growing likeness to His holiness.

New Confidence

This can give me great confidence.

Not in myself. Not in my repentance. Certainly not in my humility. Not in anything of mine. Every good thing I have, or ever will have, is only and always a gift of His grace and mercy - completely undeserved.

We dare not fall prey to believing that repentance is somehow a good work that merits God's favor, or blessing, or revival.

My confidence must be in Him alone. My trust must be in Him alone. And so I must turn to Him and His ability from myself and my ability on every prompting and in every necessity. And so I must turn more and more often from my sin to His holiness. And so, by His indwelling life, I receive a supply of His holiness that is entirely adequate right now for me in my sin and need.

This is revival. Real. Lasting. Continuing revival.

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