

What Revival Can Do
Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

(Read Isaiah 6:1-8)

About a century ago, General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army said these prophetic words: “I consider that the chief dangers which will confront the twentieth century will be: Religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, Forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God and heaven without hell.” Strange words from someone who lived in a time of great spiritual renewal in America. Booth was a contemporary of Dwight L. Moody, the American evangelist who sparked a revival not only in America but in England as well. At the time, because of Moody and his co-revivalists, one historian remarked “revival became part of the American landscape.”

Booth, of course, was talking about the last century. But the quote still fits in our day. In fact, it is even more appropriate. Just consider these:

I remember the time I went to California for a vacation a few years back. I had the opportunity to speak with my aunt and learning from other relatives that she was a Christian, I was just excited to fellowship with her. But you know what, as our conversation went on, it became clear to me that her Christianity was without Christ. For she believed that Jesus Christ was just one of those great moral teachers sent by God to enlighten men. In her church, they were being taught that all religions are the same and all lead to the same God.

Perhaps, you’ve also heard of this popular book a few years back called “Love Wins” by a former pastor a megachurch in Michigan . The book is subtitled “A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived”.

You'd think it was an evangelical book. Such is not the case because the author makes the case that hell probably doesn't exist.

How about in the world of politics in America? Need I say that God's moral laws are being supplanted by man-made laws like the legalization of gambling, abortion and same-sex marriage and prayer and Bible study is banned in schools while evolution is taught as fact.

What is happening in America today is confirmation of General Booth's prophetic words. America is in desperate need of a great revival. This is the cry of people all around us because of the moral breakdown, the spiritual drought, and the uncontrolled social chaos that is taking place across the land. There is too much religion without the power of the Holy Spirit; children are growing up knowing Christianity without Christ; God is no longer the center of morality but man; and people believe in the existence of heaven but deny the reality of hell.

Today, we're starting a new series called "Preparing for Revival." In this series, we're going to look at what it takes for revival to take place. How does it start? What conditions are necessary for revival to take place? What's the difference between revival and spiritual awakening?

Today's message will lay the groundwork for this series. I'm going to talk about the benefits of revival. Revival is synonymous to renewal. And the revival or renewal we're talking about here is spiritual, not physical, emotional, mental, or what-have-you although these things are affected positively by spiritual renewal.

So, earlier, I described that the conditions here in America at present greatly demands a revival to take place. Isaiah the prophet lived in a time wherein such conditions existed. In chapter one of his book we see that God has very harsh words for the nation of Israel.

God calls her a harlot or prostitute because many Israelites have stopped worshipping the true God and turned instead to the gods of the pagan nations

around them. And those who worship God, offering incense to him and doing all other religious stuff were detestable to God for their hearts were unclean.

Wickedness and violence also abounded. There were murders, briberies, oppression of the weak and fatherless, and all kinds of sickening things. Thus, in chapter five, God pronounces his judgment on the nation of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. Unless the people repent, a heavy calamity would fall upon them.

That was the situation that Isaiah found himself in. Then, in a time when he was most discouraged, God suddenly appears to him in all his glory, cleanses him, renews his spirit, and puts a great desire in his heart to reach out to his fellow Israelites. Isaiah experienced a great transformation, a revival in his being. This country needs a great transformation, too. Transformation cannot come from the government or any man-made organization. It must start from the churches. And the churches can only be revived if Christians experience revival themselves.

Amen?

Based on Isaiah's account, we will see that revival can do for us three things. These three things are what I would like to share with you this morning.

First of all,

1. Revival can help us to know the real God.

Before the Lord appeared to him, the prophet Isaiah was a discouraged man. He was on the verge of giving up because of the distressing situation in his beloved nation. It appeared to him that Israel was on an irreversible slide to destruction. Then, King Uzziah died and I could just imagine how Isaiah must have felt all the more helpless because of the loss of someone who could hold the kingdom together. King Uzziah reigned for 52 years.

For the most part, he was a good and righteous king. Toward the end of his reign, however, he became proud and was stricken with leprosy and lived an isolated life. When he died, ominous clouds were already darkening the national

sky as enemies gathered around the nation. It was at that point that God gloriously manifested himself to Isaiah.

Let me read to you again verses 1-4:

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.”

It must have been a sight that Isaiah never saw before. Although he had been serving the Lord as his prophet prior to this, Isaiah never knew God in his majestic fullness and in all his splendor. He knew that there was a God and he knew that there was only one God, the God who revealed himself by the name of Yahweh. He was the God of his forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who said, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other Gods before me.” Other than these, however, Isaiah never knew who God really was. He had never come to grips with what God was really like, his character and his nature. So, God, one day, gave him a vision. A vision that profoundly affected him and turned his life around.

You see, when revival comes to us, we, too, begin to sense what God is really like. He lifts us out of the mundane concerns of the world and reveals to us the side of him that we have never seen before.

He opens our eyes of understanding so that we may come to know the One who holds the earth, indeed, the whole universe in his hands. Notice that Isaiah saw God seated on a throne, high and exalted.

The throne represents authority and the throne being high and exalted tells us that God's authority is sovereign and absolute. His throne is above all other thrones, whether in heaven or in earth. The Bible describes God as "*The King of kings and Lord of lords.*" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16)

Verse 2 tells us that above the throne were seraphs or seraphim in the King James Version. Seraphim means "the burning ones" because they rivaled the sun in their brightness. Yet these beings were themselves eclipsed by the glory of the One they encircled.

Isaiah didn't only see these angelic beings, he also heard them say to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." The thrice repeated word "holy" is a recognition of the threefold nature of God. It is a mystery which we do not fully understand. Later in this account God speaks to Isaiah and says to him, "Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8) Is God talking to the angels? No. He is talking to the two other persons of the Holy Trinity, his Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It's like way back in the Garden of Eden, when he says, "Let us make man in our own image." Thus, even here in the Old Testament God is revealed as three distinct persons with one substance.

Now, the word "holy" is a very wonderful word. It comes from the English root, "whole."

We all want to be whole, complete, with nothing out of order or unbalanced about us. That is how God is. He is perfect, total, lacking nothing. He is exactly what he ought to be. That is what the angels are singing.

We admire people who in our own eyes are almost like complete or holy because of their righteous living, like Mother Teresa or Billy Graham, and yet we know that all of mankind are far from perfect. Only God, in his perfection, is absolutely whole or "holy."

Further, the seraphim declare that God's glory is manifest everywhere: "the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3b) The angels are talking here about the magnificence and great beauty of God. The beauty of God can be seen everywhere, you look up in the heavens, it is there – the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, the blue sky, even the birds that fly in the air, they all point to the glory of the one and only God. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Even in the bottom of the sea, God's glory can be seen. I remember a story narrated to me by a friend when I was still living in Australia. She said that she broke up with her boyfriend in the Philippines because he is not a Christian. It was hard for her but she knew she had to do it to be obedient to God. It was hard for the guy, too, of course and he became distraught because of it. But he couldn't do anything like confront her personally since they were miles apart. She, however, prayed for him every day that he would come to know God. And, one day, she decided to pray like Moses did when he interceded for the Israelites who God wanted to wipe out in the desert because they worshipped a golden calf. She interceded for her former boyfriend the whole night until the morning and she said that at the break of dawn, she felt an impression that God answered her prayer.

Later that day, which was night in the Philippines, the guy called her, sounding excited. He said he became a Christian. And he told her how it came to be. Early that morning in the Philippines, which was evening in Australia when my friend started to pray, the guy went out with some friends to a nearby beach.

He went because he wanted to forget her. Then, he tried scuba diving. Deep in the sea, he saw colorful fish, plenty of them, swirling around him. He also took delight in the beautiful sea plants that were gracefully dancing in the water. All these made him aware of God's creative nature. Down in the sea he reflected on

the beauty of God's creation and he remembered the gospel that was presented by my friend to him whenever she had a chance. There in the deep blue sea, he committed his life to Jesus.

Folks, God's glory can be seen even in the deepest sea and cause someone to know the real God.

Revival can help us to know the real God. The second thing is that

2. **Revival can Help Us to See Our Real Selves.**

Verse 5 says:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

This passage tells us that when Isaiah became aware of God's character, he suddenly realized how lowly his position was with respect to God. I doubt if Isaiah had ever thought of himself quite like this before. But to see God is to see man. Scripture says we are made in the image of God; thus to see God is to see ourselves.

And when we see ourselves in the light of the greatness of God, we see, with Isaiah, how far we have fallen from that image. Seeing his own pollution, Isaiah cries, "Woe to me! I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips."

As I've mentioned earlier, in chapter 5, Isaiah pronounced woes on the nation of Israel for their rebellion against God.

Now, in verse 5, Isaiah pronounces woe upon himself because he recognizes the fact that he is no different from his fellow Israelites. Before, he had judged the Israelites based on his own standard of righteousness. For how could he not when he was chosen by God to be his spokesman, a godly prophet who was diligently

doing God's will. But when God reveals himself to him, the glorious light of God shone upon his being and exposed him for what he really was, a sinner just like any other. Condemned to die. Deserving God's wrath.

A marvelous lesson that runs all through Scripture is that nothing hinders our being used by God more than pride and self-sufficiency. Pride is the source of all human evil. All the agony of life flows from our feeling that we deserve more than we are getting. We desire to be bigger, better or more noted than others. In the Bible, pride is the source of all evil. Humility, on the other hand, is the source of all virtue. The first of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount corresponds to what Isaiah declares of himself as he viewed the majesty of God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit [the bankrupt ones, the ones who have nothing in themselves], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," {Matt 5:3}. God labors constantly in our lives to bring us to this same awareness as Isaiah.

There is the story of a young Scottish preacher who preached his first sermon in a new church. The pulpits in Scottish churches are raised high above the congregation, so that the preacher must climb several steps up to the pulpit.

This young man had just graduated from seminary, having reached the place where he knew more than he would ever know again! Bible under his arm, his head held high, he climbed the steps to the pulpit, confident that his message would lay his hearers in the aisles. But his thoughts eluded him, he fumbled and stumbled about. His notes fell to the floor and he had to regain them. Nothing went right.

As he came down the steps, his head downcast, sagging under a sense of failure and guilt, a dear lady sitting right by the pulpit tugged his robe and said to him, "Young man, if you'd gone up like you'd come down, you'd have come down like you'd gone up!"

Isaiah mentions that he is ruined because he is a man of unclean lips. Scripture frequently uses the symbol of the lips -- the tongue or the mouth -- as revealing what is in the heart. Jesus said that it is not what goes into your mouth or what you eat that defiles you. It is what comes out of a man for according to Jesus: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matt 15:19). James says the tongue is but a small member but it is set on fire by hell (Jas 3:6). All of us have said things we wish we could take back. As Matthew 12:34 says, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." This is what Isaiah recognized when he saw the majesty of God. There is a sense of failure, and a cry of despair as he sees how far he is from ever measuring up to the wholeness and glory of God.

If you feel this way -- and many do today -- thank God for it, for God never uses anybody without first bringing him to an awareness of his own weakness. All of us are faced with moments of truth, when we see what Isaiah saw, that the cause of our problems is our own inner defilement.

When you see yourself in this way, thank God for it, for it can be the moment of healing. But before God can heal us, first there must be the surrender of our will to God. Healing comes when we come to God in absolute surrender as we confess our sins to him. This is exactly what Isaiah did. For in verse 7, we read that after the angel touched his mouth with a burning coal, the angel said to him, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." (NASB)

The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Forgiveness is possible because of what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. On the cross, he carried our sins and then he died to pay the penalty for our sins.

On the third day, however, he rose again to declare that he has conquered death forever and those who place their trust in him would receive the gift of eternal life. In John 6:47, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”

Revival can help us to know the real God. It can help us to know our real selves. And thirdly,

3. **Revival can Help Us to Make a Real Commitment.**

Now we come to the climactic verse. In verse 8, God asks the question, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Cleansed and forgiven and revived in his spirit, Isaiah responds unhesitatingly, “Here am I. Send me.” Without a doubt, this demonstration of readiness and willingness by the prophet is due to the work of God in his heart. With renewed zeal and fervor, he is eager to go where God was sending him. God has filled him with a kind of compassion that he never had before. Now he knows how God feels for sinners. He knows that God is sending him because God wants to save his people.

Nowadays, there are a lot of Christians who want to be used by God. They want to serve him with all their strength and they pray with all their heart that God reveal his will for them. But when God asks them the question, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” they reply unhesitatingly, without fear and uncertainty, “Here am I. Send him.”

Whenever I have a discussion with a Jehovah’s Witness, almost without fail I am asked the question,

“Do Born-Again Christians obey Christ’s commandment to go and make disciples of all nations? Do they go from house to house witnessing to people?” Of course, I would tell them that Born-Again Christians have missionaries all around the world and that our churches conduct trainings on evangelism and so on and so

forth. Somehow, however, when I say those words I feel a twinge of guilt because I know the church is not as fervent as it should be when it comes to fulfilling the Great Commission. It is sad but true that people from other religions like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons take the Lord's commandment more seriously than Christians who are supposed to be the light of the world.

Norvel Hayes in the Word Bible says, and I quote "You are not supposed to think opposite from the Spirit. When you lose your vision of winning lost souls for God, then you are no longer thinking like the Holy Spirit – you're thinking like yourself."

He goes on to say, "If the Spirit of God is in your heart, then you will be moved to share Jesus with others. If you have not been doing that, then it's time to begin. You can do it. God's power is available to you to save people or heal them or do anything else that needs to be done for them." End of quote.

Brothers, sisters, the time is short. The question before us is "What are we going to do with the time left before our Lord comes again?" When he comes again, will he find us faithfully obeying his command or will he find us busy doing things other than sharing his word with people whom he also died for? In this church, we encourage you to share Jesus with others. Every now and then we conduct trainings in evangelism. If you haven't taken Class 401 yet, please do because in that class you will learn some lessons in witnessing.

Or you may also go to an evangelism training being conducted by Barry and Laura at their place every first Tuesday of the month. This will take away some of the fears of witnessing. Folks, be not afraid. Be not very afraid. God is with you. The Holy Spirit will speak through you as Jesus promised.

I believe that we really need a revival in this church. Not only in this church, but in other churches as well. Revival can refresh us, revival can cleanse us, and revival can give us new hearts. Hearts that beat for the lost and hearts that throb for the souls of men and women who need the Lord.

As I end this message and call our praise and worship team to lead us in singing our invitation song, I would like to leave with you this two thoughts. The first thought is directed toward those who don't know God yet in his fullness. Most probably, the reason you don't know him in all his majesty and splendor is that you don't have a living and personal relationship with him. Friend, God is not far away from you. He is even closer that the person sitting next to you. God has revealed himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know God, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you can start a relationship with him that will last forever.

The second thought is directed toward those who are already followers of Jesus. Do you need a revival in your spirit? Have you lost the fervor you once had when you came to know Jesus and gave your heart to him? Do you yearn to get closer to him and be useful to him? Then, would you hear his voice calling you to repent, and be cleansed, and be whole again in order to make a commitment to serving him with your whole heart, soul, and mind, and strength? When God asks the question, "Whom shall I send?" will you answer, "Here I am! Send me!"?