

# Prerequisites for Revival

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last Saturday, my AT&T; U-verse modem went out, which meant I have no TV, no internet, no home phone. It's been that way now for almost a week.

Well, when it first went out, I called AT&T; and I spoke with a technician. It took a while, but I finally got a live person on.

And he walked me through several steps trying to fix it from wherever he was. Well, he was very patient.

He was very positive as we went through this. And by the grace of God, so was I. But he finally came to the conclusion that my modem was dead. It could not be repaired.

And so he said he would have to order a new one. Now, as this technician went through his process, there were times when he had to pause because he was running a test.

[ 1 : 03 ] He was sort of a personable person. And so he made some small talk. But he really, during these pauses, he really wanted to talk about the coronavirus.

He asked me about what it was like here. I asked him about what it was like where he was. He said in one of our little conversations, he said, I made a mistake last night.

I watched too much news about this. And he said, I'm going to be honest with you. I'm afraid. I am afraid right now. And so that was some of the things that we talked about over this nearly 30-minute time together.

When we came to the end, he was obviously bothered, concerned about life because of this coronavirus crisis.

And so I asked him, would you like for me to pray for you? I'd like to pray for you. He said, you'd like to pray for me? And I said, yes, I would. What's your name?

[ 2 : 15 ] Well, he told me his name. But before he said anything else, he told me his name. And he said, would you also pray for my little girl? Because I am very concerned about her.

I said, I would. I said, could we pray right now? He said, let me close my eyes. So I prayed for him. I prayed for his little girl.

When I got through with the prayer, I told him. I called him by name. I said, I don't know what your religious background is. But I want to encourage you to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. He is God's son. And he's promised to take care of all who trust him now, our lives today, and forever.

I then asked him if he had a Bible. He said, I don't, but my wife does.

[ 3 : 20 ] My wife goes to church, but I know that I need to as well. I said, well, I want to encourage you to get your wife's Bible and read the Gospel of John.

I told him where it was located in the New Testament. And he said that he would. Well, we were winding it up, and he said, I want to tell you something.

He said, I really didn't want to come to work today. After all that that I listened to last night, I was just almost panicked. I was very down.

He said, but you have helped me. He said, I thank you so much for praying for me and talking with me because it has made a difference.

You have encouraged me. Now, I was blown away by that. But, you know, it tells me that God is using the coronavirus crisis to get people's attention all over the world.

[ 4 : 25 ] This man that I was talking to is in a country in Central America. And he's concerned. And he was very open to me talking to him about Jesus, praying for him, even talking to him about reading the Gospel of John.

As I said in my newsletter column this week, and in the email that came out from me, I don't know what God's purpose is for the coronavirus.

I do not know. I'm not making any kind of pronouncements. But, what if God is working through this?

It's his plan to get a lot of people's attention. And to ultimately lead to a real spiritual awakening. I think we ought to pray to that end.

I'll share more about that at the end of this service. But this morning, I want us to think about, before a spiritual awakening can ever take place, a revival's got to happen in the lives of God's people.

[ 5 : 43 ] Some people use the phrase spiritual awakening and the word revival basically interchangeably. They're talking about the same thing. But most people who write on this subject, they make a distinction between the two.

They would call revival, say revival describes God's work of restoration and renewal among his people. A revival is for Christians.

A revival is what Christians experience when God moves this way. Spiritual awakening follows revival, but it touches the lives of many people in a community or a whole area.

In a spiritual awakening, many people will be saved. But even those who don't become believers, they will know that a revival has taken place in the lives of God's people.

People that they see and know and interact with. I have no doubt that this present crisis has caused many people to think about their relationship with God.

[ 6 : 50 ] To do some self-examination. Probably even to read the Bible when they haven't read it for a long time. I am confident that it has caused many Christians to wake up.

And to realize that we have fallen far from being the holy people God has called us to be. And to influence our community.

This morning, I want us to do more than just realize and talk about our spiritual poverty. This morning, I want us to come back to God on his terms with the prayer that he will do a work of spiritual renewal and revival in us.

You know, one of the best descriptions of God's terms for revival is found in 2 Chronicles 7, verse 14. Many of you are familiar with that verse.

I want us to study it this morning with the goal, with the prayer that God will work in us individually.

[ 8 : 07 ] He will give us a true heartfelt desire and spiritual power to do exactly what he says in order to experience revival.

Let's read now 2 Chronicles 7, verse 14. If my people who are called by my name 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.

The first thing we need to understand is that this verse is addressed to God's people. Look at it. Let's look at the people who can experience revival. He says, if my people who are called by my name.

It's very clear, isn't it, that this verse is addressed to God's people. He actually calls them my people. He emphasizes in the next phrase that they are my people who are called by my name. Who are those people? Who are God's people called by his name? Well, in this verse, it refers to Jews living under King Solomon's reign.

[ 9 : 24 ] In the Old Testament in general, Jews are the only people who are called, and I quote from Deuteronomy 28, are called by the name of the Lord.

In the New Testament, only Christians are called this in Acts chapter 15, a people for his name. Here in 2 Chronicles 7, 14, this phrase, my people who are called by my name, it includes all true believers.

It's addressed to you and me. Let me be clear. This verse is not addressed to the United States of America as a nation.

A lot of people have talked about it this way, but that's not correct. Americans are not God's chosen people. This verse is describing how God's people must respond to him in order to experience revival.

Now, if enough Christians and churches throughout our country do experience revival, it will have a powerful effect on our entire country.

[ 10 : 39 ] It will affect every community. But this verse is not addressed to our country. It's addressed to churches. It's addressed to individual Christians like us.

Let's look now at the prerequisites for experiencing revival. When you were in high school or college, I'm sure you discovered prerequisites. There are probably some classes or at least one or

two that you wanted to take, but you found out you couldn't register for them. You couldn't get in the class until you had the prerequisite. Maybe you had to be a junior or a senior to get in the class. Or maybe you had to have a certain GPA. Maybe you had to take a certain number of courses before you could get in.

Well, if we want to experience revival, God says there are some requirements that we must fulfill first. Let's look at it. First, we must humble ourselves.

He says, if my people are called by my name, humble themselves. That word translated humble originally means or refers to the bending of the knee or the bending of the neck in subjection to another person.

[ 11 : 58 ] God calls us, His people, to voluntarily subject ourselves to Him because He is God. Because we know He is Almighty God, Holy God, and we have dishonored Him by the way that we have sinned against Him, the way that we have ignored Him, the way that we've disobeyed or even rebelled against Him.

God calls us to be humble, to humble ourselves before Him, which involves a brokenness, a brokenness over our sins.

It describes a heartfelt sorrow that we have genuinely because we have offended God. If we're serious about experiencing revival or just personal spiritual renewal, we've got to get serious about who we are before God.

He's God, we're not. If we're going to experience revival personally in our church, we've got to demonstrate genuine humility, brokenness, grief over our sin before God.

This will lead us to the next prerequisite for revival. We must pray. It says, if my people are called by my name, pray. Now, the first way we must pray if we're going to draw close to God is to confess our sins.

[ 13 : 35 ] God refuses to listen to you and me when we are holding on to some sin that He's convicted us of. We cannot willfully, intentionally live in disobedience to God and expect Him to hear our prayers.

David, the man who is described as a man after God's own heart, he said this about this matter. He said, if I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

We cannot hold on to our sin and expect God to hear us when we pray. But what the good news is, if we are willing to confess our sins, if we are willing to pray this way, God is ready and willing to forgive us, to cleanse us, give us a fresh start.

Look at what I hope is a very familiar verse of Scripture to you. 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Personal confession. The first order of the day under this heading, we must pray. But there's more to it here. Old Testament scholar Walt Kaiser says that the Hebrew word for prayer here focuses on intercessory prayer.

[ 15 : 03 ] Praying for others. I want you to listen to how he emphasizes the importance of us praying for one another. He says, mark it well.

Where intercession goes thin or ceases altogether, There the saints and the churches drift into spiritual lethargy. And the forces of evil have a field day in the culture.

It's important that we pray for one another. It's important that we are true intercessors and not just confessors and certainly not just seekers.

What does it mean to pray like this? Well, a pastor by the name of S.D. Gordon describes it like this. True intercession takes the persons and places in the world where evil is assaulting the kingdom of God and pleads that the strong hand of God might defeat evil.

It prays that the lost might see the glorious offer of grace given by our Lord Jesus and that they might come to trust Him personally. The intercession takes the persons and places in the world, takes us to persons and places in the world where there's evil.

[ 16 : 24 ] I want you to think about something. Liberals in Washington, D.C. who oppose God and the truth of His word are some of the persons and places in this world where evil is assaulting the kingdom of God.

Now, I'm not talking politics here. Don't get excited about this being a liberal bashing time. But here's what I want to point out. Anyone who advocates, promotes killing babies in their mother's wombs, they're evil people.

They're assaulting the kingdom of God, which is another way of describing the rule of God, even the word of God. That replies to Republicans, Democrats, Independents, anyone else.

The killing of a sacred human life at any time, the murder of a sacred human life is evil.

It's moral evil. And we need to acknowledge that and we need to oppose that and we need to pray about that. Let's think here. What's our usual response toward evil and evil people who oppose God and the truth of His word?

[ 17 : 48 ] Well, a lot of times we just get angry, don't we? We curse, we call names, or we just seek political or legal solutions.

Now, how often do you really pray that God would act to defeat evil, to call sinners to repentance?

How often do you really pray that God would so work to advance His kingdom, His rule, His authority in this world as Jesus taught us to pray? Let me be clear.

We should be angry about evil. Wherever it's found, we should be angry about evil because God is. There is nothing wrong with seeking political and legal solutions wherever we can.

That's one of the ways in this country we can fight against evil. But, God has given us the weapon of prayer. And we need to use this weapon in this fight against evil.

[ 19 : 02 ] And if we don't, we're never going to defeat it. It can't be defeated just because we're angry, just because we say things that we really shouldn't say.

And it's never going to be defeated in the courts or in the legislature. We need the power of God's working through prayer to stop evil.

That leads us to the next prerequisite. We must seek God's face. He says, if my people who are called by my name seek my face. Now, I hope you understand that does not literally mean we need to try to conjure up some kind of spirituality where we actually have a vision and see God's face.

God told Moses that no one can see his face and live in Exodus chapter 33. But to seek God's face, what is being talked about here, means to seek his presence, his approval.

It means to seek to be in his presence, to enjoy him, and to experience the blessings that come when we please God.

[ 20 : 19 ] James describes how we do that. It's in James chapter 4. He says, draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Now, think about that. When we draw near to God, he draws near to us. But James points out that experiencing closeness to God has conditions similar to what we see here in 2 Chronicles 7, 14.

We must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, he says. Unclean hands refer to our sinful actions against other people. Impure heart describes sinful motives and desires.

If we are serious about drawing near to God and enjoying fellowship with him, we must get serious about confessing our sins in attitude, in word, as well as in actions.

Let's not forget that drawing near to God or seeking him is something we can't do half-heartedly.

What we're talking about this morning is not something you just think, this is a good idea, I think I'll give it a try.

[ 21 : 39 ] We're talking about as God speaks through his word this morning, there ought to be a sense of conviction that this is true, that this speaks to me, and I want to respond.

That's the desire of my heart to do what God's calling me to do, to obey him. But I want you to look. God makes it clear that he will accept no half-hearted effort.

From Jeremiah 29, he says, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. In light of what Jeremiah is saying, will you seek God?

Will you find God? Will you do it with all your heart? What James says about cleansing our hands and purifying our hearts also involves the same response as God's last prerequisite for revival.

Look at this, we must turn from our wicked ways. Scripture says, if my people are called by my name, turn from their wicked ways. Now the phrase there, wicked ways, that's just a more graphic way of describing sin.

[ 22 : 53 ] All sin is evil. All sin is wicked in the sight of God. The word that best describes the way that we turn from our evil ways or wicked ways is the word repent.

A very familiar word if you're a Christian, if you are a student of the Bible. But not really all that familiar to most people. I want you to look at how Wayne Grudem, the theologian, defines it.

I think he includes the basic elements that we need to think about when it comes to understanding what it means to repent. Grudem says, repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it,

and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.

If we truly repent of our sins, we will follow through on everything found in this verse, 2 Chronicles 7, 14. If we truly repent, we will turn away from every sin we have confessed in prayer.

We will hate every sin that has dishonored God and broken our fellowship with Him. We will, if we truly repent, not just turn from sin, but we'll turn to God in love, in humility, and obedience.

[ 24 : 22 ] We'll want to know God better, love Him more, and faithfully serve Him, please Him in everything that we do.

And if we will turn to God this way, we will for sure enjoy close and personal fellowship with Him. I want to encourage you to do that now.

Listen to the Lord as He calls you, speaks to you, encourages you, convicts you. Do what He's telling you to do. God blesses obedience.

As we see in the last part of this verse, the promise of revival. There are two things that God promises to do when we meet His prerequisites for revival. It says at the last part of that, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

God will forgive our sin when we come to Him this way. I want to encourage you. Take God at His word. You can be forgiven of whatever you've done against God.

[ 25 : 35 ] No matter how terrible, no matter how long ago, no matter if it took place 30 minutes ago, you can be forgiven and have a fresh start with God right now.

Look again at 1 John 1, 9. If we confess our sins, what does it say? He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You can draw close to God and know that He will draw close to you because you've come clean before Him. Now the reason God forgives this way, the reason He can just forgive, let it go, and give us a fresh start is because we are united to Jesus by faith.

This 1 John 1, 9, in fact, this entire message is directed to believers only. If you are united to Jesus Christ in faith, God accepts you because during His earthly life, Jesus fully obeyed God's law. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the law. He pleased God. And through faith in Him, God credits His faithful obedience to us.

[ 27 : 00 ] And then Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. And He paid it in full. One of the last things He said was, it is finished. The penalty for our sin has been paid in full.

When we trust Him, when we are one with Him in faith, God counts His death to sin as our death to sin. That's why we can be forgiven.

If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to encourage you to turn to Him now. Admit your need of Him to save you.

Admit your sin and repent of it. Turn from it. Put your trust in Jesus as your Savior. Surrender control of your life to Him as your Lord.

Call upon Him now to save you and He will. There's a final phrase here. God will heal our land. That was a promise to the people of Israel that if they ever sinned against God and experienced some kind of national disaster and that did happen.

[ 28 : 09 ] Famine, drought, being taken away, captured by other countries, taken away, into exile. When those kind of things happened, Solomon was telling them when he wrote 2 Chronicles 7-14, if they would fulfill these prerequisites, God would rescue them.

If they obey, God will forgive them and heal their land. We can apply this by saying that whenever we suffer the effects of sin as individuals, as a church, or as God's people in general in this country, if we will do what God says in this verse, He will bring spiritual healing to us in the form of revival. It may just be personal for you. If you'll be faithful in doing what He's saying to do as a faithful Christian trusting in Jesus, it may be that you experience revival.

If your family does, it may be a real revival that takes place in your home. It may take place in our church if we all will get serious about obeying God. And if God really does a work of bringing revival and spiritual awakening, it'll affect us in this country far and wide.

But it's all going to begin with Christians. Us listening to God and obeying Him. Walter Kaiser explains why it's so important that we listen to God, obey Him, and live a holy and pure life.

[ 29 : 52 ] Look at what He says. God wants us to be clean persons, channels through which His blessings, witness, and interventions in this sinful world can flow.

I want to ask you, are you spiritually, morally, and ethically clean before God? God, are you such a clean person before God as Kaiser says that God can work through you right now?

If you are, ask God to use you to make a difference in your home, in your circles of friends, in this community, wherever He wants to use you.

Ask God. Tell Him you want to be used. You want to be a difference maker. But if you're not, if you're not clean before God right now, what needs to happen?

Do you need to humble yourself before God? And maybe before others. If you've sinned against other people, you need to confess your sin to them. You need to humble yourself before them as well.

[ 31 : 08 ] Do you need to pray right now and confess your sins? And I'm talking about specifically admitting to God this particular sin, that particular sin.

Do you need to seek God's face by drawing close to Him? And right now, do you need to turn away from, stop, hate, some specific sins that God has been convicting you of?

It may be something no one else knows about. It may be something that's affecting you and your relationships at home or at work or with friends. You know what it is.

God's made it clear. Obey Him. Final thought. Jesus concluded His teaching on one occasion with words that apply to all we learn from God's Word.

Look at what Jesus said. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. Think about it. Now that we know these things from God's Word, we will be blessed if we do them.

[ 32 : 30 ] Let's pray together. Father, help us to see clearly how we need to respond to this message. Help us to truly humble ourselves.

Help us to confess our sins. Help us to pray specifically Lord, help us to seek You, to draw close to You, to experience Your loving presence and fellowship.

Help us, Father, to hate all sin and turn from it. Help us to run from temptation. We know, Father, that You'll give us the power to always turn away help us to take it.

Lord, we thank You for making it clear how we can come close to You. We thank You, Father, for putting Your Spirit in us as Christians to enable us to do this.

I pray, Father, that You'll help all of us now respond in obedience and draw near to You and we trust, Father, that You will draw near to us.

[ 33 : 55 ] In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Amen. Thank you.