

“Experiencing Continuous Revival” – Part 1

As most of you know, earlier this year our church purchased an AED - a portable defibrillator. If you need it, it's in a box on the wall just outside the church offices door.

An AED is a battery-operated, portable device that checks the heart's rhythm and if someone is in cardiac arrest it sends a shock to their heart to restore their normal rhythm. Have any of you ever used an AED? Have any of you ever had an AED used on you? I've heard it's a shocking experience!!!

Let me liken this to our Christian lives. Every day, in fact all throughout each day, our hearts are under attack. We call it spiritual warfare. And every day there is the prospect that our spiritual heart can get out rhythm with God's heart through sin.

Sin puts a strain on us spiritually and it affects our heart – and a whole lot of other things. And if we fail to take the proper steps in taking care of our heart, that abnormal rhythm will get worse and worse.

Our spiritual life will suffer under the pressure of trying to please God with a heart that's not healthy. In the vernacular of what we've been studying this fall, what we need is revival!

What we need is a boost of spiritual energy that resets the normal rhythm of our spiritual heart so we can live a healthy spiritual life. Now we've learned a lot in the past few weeks about how to experience this spiritual boost to our heart.

We've discussed everything from...

- our position in Christ,
- to the impact of sin on our fellowship with the Lord,
- to what the Bible says about bitterness and pride and humility and brokenness,
- to God's loving discipline,
- to the beauty of dealing with our sin through repentance,
- to forgiveness,
- and how to live in victory over sin and the enemy.

We've given you the tools you need from the Word of God to help you evaluate your walk with Christ, and deal with anything that is hampering your fellowship with the Lord and with others and to live a healthy spiritual life – to live in a state of continued spiritual revival.

So this morning my challenge to all of us is this: you CAN live a healthy Christian life. You CAN experience continuous revival in your walk with Christ, it doesn't have to be something that only happens occasionally when you have a mountain-top spiritual experience.

In fact, not only can you, but living in a state of spiritual revival is not only the expectation God has for us, it's the normal way to live the Christian life.

Let me make this clear: it's not God's will, nor is it normal to live in spiritual cardiac arrest with hearts cold or lukewarm to the Spirit of God, the Word of God, or the people of God.

It's NOT normal to live with unconfessed sin blocking our fellowship with the Lord. It's NOT normal in God's eyes to continually live in disobedience to His Word or to continually day-after-day quench the Spirit of God by refusing to listen or do what He tells us to do.

It's NOT normal for a Christian to live in friendship with the world or to love the world or live the way the world lives. It's NOT normal to never share the gospel with someone or to have no burden for the spiritually lost in your family...

Our your place of employment, or your school, or your community, or for people in other parts of the world who have no Bibles, no churches, and no chance to be saved because they're unreached.

It's NOT normal when you know you've offended or sinned against a fellow believer or a fellow believer has offended or sinned against you and you fail to forgive or do what you can to restore the relationship as Christ taught us to.

To live in a state of spiritual cardiac arrest, crippled by anything that hinders our walk and fellowship with the Lord is NOT the normal life God saved us to live.

We've learned that God is on mission to redeem lost people from their sin and give them eternal life. And His message of forgiveness and salvation – what the Bible calls the Gospel – is delivered to the world through us...

We are His representatives, His ambassadors, His witnesses. But He won't use us if we fail to reflect Him by the way we live. That's why we need to live every day in a state of spiritual revival. And we can live that way.

And here in Philippians chapter 3, God uses the Apostle Paul to challenge us and to help us learn how we can live this way.

Here in his letter to the believers in the city of Philippi, Paul begins chapter 3 by sharing that if there was anyone who could work their way into earning God's favor, or work themselves into heaven, it was him.

You see there were a lot of people – religious people - in Philippi who were claiming that a person could work their way into being saved.

They were trusting in human effort to receive God's grace and forgiveness. They believed that if you had enough worldly credentials that you could actually earn eternal life.

And Paul said to them in essence, "Hey guys, IF that were the case, then there's no one who is better qualified to do that than I am. Just take a look at my resume, would you?" So let's do that. (READ vs. 2-6)

In these verses Paul lists out all the things that IF they were able to grant salvation and forgiveness of sins, then Paul would have been in great shape spiritually because he had done them all.

Paul was:

- 1.) "Circumcised on the eighth day..."

Every loyal Jew practiced the sacred rite of circumcision on the eighth day after they were born. Circumcision began when God instructed Abraham that he and every male in his household should be circumcised as a sign of being set apart for God (Gen. 17:10-12).

All throughout the Old Testament and up to the day when Christ died on the cross circumcision was the practice God demanded of His people. It's what set them apart from the world.

This of course changed after the cross, but Paul was saying that he too was circumcised proving that he and his family were loyal to God and His commandments.

Paul was...

2.)“Of the nation of Israel...”

Paul was saying that he could trace his ancestors all the way back to the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You see throughout the Old Testament many non-Jews converted to Judaism and became followers of God.

But not Paul’s family. His family weren’t converts to Judaism, they were blood-born members of the people of God and He was proud of it.

Then he says...

3.)“Of the tribe of Benjamin...”

Of all the 12 tribes of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin was known for its unwavering loyalty to the throne of King David. The Benjamite tribe was held in high respect by all Jews for its integrity and faithfulness.

Paul was proud of the fact that his family was part of the loyal tribe of Benjamin. It was another bragging point that he could make.

Then he says,

4.)“a Hebrew born of Hebrews...”

Paul was pointing to the fact that His family were pure-blood Jews. The blood in his veins was pure. He didn't have any Gentile blood mixed in. He could be proud of his family heritage as true-blue Hebrews.

These four things mentioned so far are his family background credentials. But Paul also had an impressive resume of religious credentials.

Verse 5 says...

5.) "Regarding the law, a Pharisee..."

The religious sect known as the Pharisees were the oldest order of religious groups in all of Israel. They were known for their moral standards and strict adherence to the Old Testament Law.

Paul was pointing out that being a Pharisee was a high mark on his list of credentials. Most people would have been jealous to have been in Paul's place in the elite group known as the Pharisees.

In Verse 6 he says –

6.) "...regarding zeal, persecuting the church..."

Because he had been a faithful Jew and a committed Pharisee, when Jesus came on the scene and condemned the self-righteous Pharisees, and preached a new way of gaining right-standing with God, Paul bristled.

Paul believed that because of what Jesus preached and taught it made him an enemy of the Jews. He believed that Jesus was an enemy of God and Jesus was a threat to the Jewish way of life.

So it was out of his zeal for God and for Judaism that after Jesus was gone, Paul went after followers of Christ and hunted them down and persecuted them and killed them.

Paul shows that you can be sincere about something, but you can still be sincerely wrong. You can be committed to a cause, but if it's the wrong cause, your commitment can lead you down the wrong road.

Paul was sincere and he was committed, but it was misplaced sincerity and commitment.

Then finally he says in verse 6:

7.) "regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless."

Paul was religious, but his religion wasn't leading him to God it was leading him away from God. Paul was a faultless observer of God's Law, and no one was more faithful in practicing the religion of Judaism than he was.

His whole point here is that if there was anyone who could have worked their way into heaven, if there were anyone whose list of credentials could impress God and cause him to shower His favor and His salvation on someone, it was Paul.

But then Paul says in verse 7... (Read).

Paul said to the believers in Phillip, "All those things don't matter. None of them were good enough to save me. None of them cancelled out my sin. None of them made me righteous in God's eyes..."

In fact, I no longer consider them things I'm proud of. I've given them up. I've let them go for something better. I've put them forever in my past because I found something better – I found someONE better, and that someone is Jesus Christ.”

Paul had come to the conviction that having Jesus is worth more than all the things that he could count as valuable. In fact, he had the conviction that Jesus must have ALL of him. Jesus wanted him to surrender all of his life over to HIS Lordship.

Look at verses 8-9 (Read).

Paul surrendered to Jesus when He trusted in Christ for His salvation. That was a past commitment in his life. But he is also saying – and please don't miss this cause this is the crux of what I'm getting at this morning –

He was saying that there was a continual lifestyle of surrender to Jesus that he was also living out and this is the core of what continuous revival is all about.

Paul came to know Christ at salvation, yet he had the continued passion to grow in that knowledge. Paul continuously pursued a lifestyle of surrender to Christ and knowing Christ in an ever-increasing fashion.

In fact, compared to knowing Christ, everything in his life he considered to be of absolutely no value whatsoever. He called them a loss...

- Circumcision? A loss!
- A blood-born Jew? A loss!
- From the tribe of Benjamin? A loss!

- A died-in-the-wool Hebrew? A loss!
- A tried-and-true Pharisee? A loss!
- A zealot for his religion? A loss!
- Faultless in regards to God's standards? A loss!

I want to focus in on verse 8 again. Look at that verse in the Amplified Version. It helps unpack its richness for us:

(SLIDE)

"Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege – the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth and supreme advantage – of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, (WATCH THIS NOW) and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly." Philippians 3:8 (READ THE LAST PART AGAIN!!!)

Do you feel, can you hear, the passion in Paul's words? It wasn't enough for him to just "know" Christ positionally for salvation. To him it's all about the process of knowing Christ for the rest of His life.

That was now His passion to progressively, more deeply and more intimately Know Christ and understand Him more fully. That's what I'm here to challenge you with this morning.

Paul didn't just want to be saved and call it good. He didn't just want fire insurance to be able to say he was going to miss hell. He had a persistent determination to experience Christ in an on-going communion and fellowship and an ever-deepening relationship.

Years ago Pastor A.W. Tozer who's in heaven now wrote a book entitled *The Pursuit of God*. In the book he wrote this...

(SLIDE)

“In Christianity today, everything is made to center upon the initial act of accepting Christ and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found him we need no more seek him. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire.

(Slide)

Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. We need to pray, “O God, I have tasted your goodness and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire for you. I want to want you. Show me your glory so I may know you. Begin a new work of love within me.” ~ A. W.

Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*

That's the kind of prayer we all should be praying today as result of this study: O God, give me a want for you. O God, begin a new work of love FOR YOU in me.

Would you dare to pray such a pray like that this morning? Would any of us in this room pray a pray like this and mean it from our heart today? I dare say if we did sparks of revival would begin to rise in Fellowship Community Church!

Please note again what Paul says in verse 9. Having a right standing with God doesn't come through anything we can do, but only when we put our faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is by alone in Jesus Christ alone.

There's nothing any of us can do to have our sins forgiven and be righteous in God's eyes. Our human effort falls short of God's standard of perfect holiness. Our only hope comes in placing our faith in Jesus and His death on the cross and His resurrection.

We have to come to the place where throw our hands up in the air and we abandon our efforts at earning God's favor and we admit before God that we are sinners and we humbly plead for God in His mercy and grace to forgive us and to saved, only then we can experience forgiveness of sins and salvation which results in eternal life in heaven.

So let me ask you this morning: Was there ever a time in your life that you genuinely repented of your sin? Can you look back on a time when you placed your faith alone in Jesus Christ alone to save you and give you eternal life? Is Jesus your Lord and Savior this morning?

If you have doubts about that, then settle this issue today. Humble yourself before the Lord and admit that you need Him and ask Him to forgive you of your sin and give you eternal life. Salvation can be your today for sure and forever!

Let's move on to verse 10. (Read).

Paul says, "My goal is to know Him (I Want to know Christ)..." The word know means "to come to know by experience". You should write that in your Bible somewhere.

Paul was saying that He wanted to experience Christ in an ongoing, growing fellowship for the rest of his life. I love once again how it's presented in the Amplified Version:

(SLIDE)

"For my determined purpose is that I may know Him (AND HERE'S WHAT THAT MEANS...) that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly."

Philippians 3:10 (Amplified)

Once again, we see a depth in Paul's words. To know Christ means that we experience Christ in relationship. We progressively day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, live in fellowship with Christ.

And as that happens over time, we know Christ better, deeper, and stronger. It's the same thing that the Psalmist was referring to in Psalm 63:8...

(SLIDE)

"My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me."

Psalm 63:8

When we cling to God, we experience His right hand upholding us. Sometimes we might feel like God has abandoned us, but God upholds those who cling to Him.

The Psalmist put it another way in Psalm 42...

(SLIDE)

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”*

Psalm 42:1-2

How many of us in all honesty this morning can say, “I thirst for the living God”? If not, perhaps we need to repent of allowing other things to challenge the preeminence of Christ in our lives.

What the Psalmist was saying is the same thing that Paul said. That your life as a child of God revolves not around religion or religious activities, but around a person, and that person is Jesus Christ.

The only way you’re going to KNOW Christ in an experiential way is to spend time with Him, meditating on His Word, applying God’s Word to your life, talking to Him through prayer every day.

Without this intimate walk with Christ on a daily basis, we will miss what God wants to do in our life and through our life. It’s a daily relationship that feeds our soul and keeps us in a spiritual state of revival.

Do you have a daily walk with Jesus Christ? Are you cultivating your relationship with God every day? That’s how you experience continuous revival in your Christian life.

In the next few verses Paul gives us some steps to take in this process...

Steps to Experiencing Continuous Revival:

(SLIDE) 1. Develop holy dissatisfaction (vs. 12-13a)

“I don’t mean that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be...”

Philippians 3:12-13a (NLT)

Did you hear what Paul said here? Do you know how much it blesses my heart to read this verse? Maybe it blesses your heart too. Paul is saying here that it’s his life’s passion to know Christ, but he hasn’t arrived yet.

He’s saying, “Hey guys, I still have room for improvement. I’m still working on this. I don’t want to be satisfied with where I am in my walk with Christ. I want more of Christ.” That blesses my heart, because here is the greatest missionary who ever lived, saying “I’m not there yet. I have room to grow.”

But on top of that, catch the heart of what he’s saying. Paul’s telling us that the first step to pursuing a passionate walk with Christ and knowing Him is to develop a holy dissatisfaction with your spiritual life.

No matter where you are in your walk of faith, no matter how strong you may be, (and by the way the length of your Christian walk doesn’t guarantee the strength of your Christian walk. It should, but it doesn’t for many!)

But no matter where you are in our walk with Christ, or how strong you may be. No matter how consistent you may keep your daily time with God, do this...

Stand in front of the mirror of the Word of God and say to yourself, “I have not arrived.” Let’s do that. Hold up your Bible, look at it, now say those words out loud with me, “I have not arrived.”

Now, let those words motivate you. Let God stir within you this morning a holy dissatisfaction for where you are in your walk with Christ, and let that feeling of dissatisfaction motive you and drive you and spur you on in your walk with Christ, to know Him by experience in greater and greater ways.

Steps to Experiencing Continuous Revival:

(SLIDE) 2. Forget the past (vs. 13b) READ

Philip. 3:13b (NLT) “I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past...”

I believe this has multiple applications for us. It means that if there’s anything in your past, anything in your background that hinders you from pursuing God with your whole heart, you need to put it out of your mind and let it go.

Let go of past failures. Let go of past sin. But not just that, let go of past successes and achievements – God’s not impressed. God wasn’t impressed with Paul’s list of qualifications. They didn’t do anything for him.

They didn’t bring him any closer to Christ. If there’s anything in your past that keeps you from being able to say, “I Want to Know Christ” and then live that out, you’ve got to release it and let it go.

But, forgetting the past also means that if you have failed miserably in pursuing Christ, if you have not made it a habit to spend time with Christ daily, if you have never developed a daily quiet time that leads you to knowing Christ by experience, then confess it, and as of today, put it in your past.

I don't believe God is nearly as interested in what you've did or didn't do yesterday and in the past as He is in what you are doing today and going to do tomorrow – amen?!

Someone said, “Memories of successes can make you smug and self-satisfied. Memories of failure can make you hopeless and paralyzed in your pursuit of God. Never look back like that. Give humble thanks for successes; make humble confessions of failure; then turn to the future and go hard after God.”

Isn't that good? Fellowship, let's go hard after God!!!
And that brings us to the final way we can put this into practice...

Steps to Experiencing Continuous Revival:

(SLIDE) 3. Focus on the future (vs. 13c-14) READ

The picture Paul is referring to here is that of an athlete straining forward to cross the finish line. If an athlete is going to compete against top-notch talent, if he or she is going to not just compete, but win...

Then it requires dedication; daily discipline; denying yourself of the things that you could do, in order to train yourself to compete and win when you are facing world-class competition.

This morning, my call to you is that you and I will follow Paul's example and be like an athlete. Set a goal for yourself in that you are going to KNOW CHRIST; you are going to experience Christ in a daily relationship.

You are going to seek Him out through a daily time spent in His Word, the Bible. You are going to seek Him out through talking with Him in prayer. You are going to set a time with Him every day and you are going to do your best to keep it.

Fellowship, let's develop a holy dissatisfaction for where we are spiritually in our walk with Christ. Let's put the past out of our mind. Let's put our previous failures at trying to walk with Christ behind us.

And let's strain forward like an athlete, let's look at what lies ahead of us. There's a finish line up ahead. And if we have been faithful to walk with Christ, He's going to reward us when we stand in His presence in heaven. You and I CAN experience continuous revival.

High up in the Alps there is a monument to a faithful guide who died while ascending a peak to rescue a stranded climber in bad weather. The monument contains just 3 words: "He died climbing."

That's the way Paul wanted to go –having a holy dissatisfaction for where he was, pursuing God with all his strength, forgetting the past, reaching forward to eternity, to Christ til death ushered him into the presence of the Lord. Will they be able to say about me or about you, "He died climbing?"

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands.
I'd rather be led by His nail pierced hand

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame.
I'd rather be true to His holy name [Chorus]

Chorus:

Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.