

IV. Revival in Biblical Perspective
Revive Us Again!
“The Profile of Revival”
II Chronicles 7:1–14
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Let's start by looking in II Chronicles 7. This is God's Word. It's the truth. II Chronicles 7:11–14 says [11] *Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. [12] Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. [13] When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, [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 grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

We have started in on an expositional series from various texts from God's Word dealing with revival because we have asked God to lay upon our heart and to come and visit us with revival for some very specific reasons. Our theme verse is Psalm 85:6 which says [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* The sons of Korah wrote this Psalm and had experience revival because they had been traitors against God but God revived them. He took 250 of their lives when they were traitors against Moses and Aaron and then He revived them and they became part of the temple ministry. Then the sons of Korah authored twelve of the Psalms in the Bible. Psalm 85 is a psalm affirming the revivals of God and the people of Israel, specifically their revival and a prayer; [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*

It is no abdication of the Great Commission to have in your commitment to take the Gospel to all the nations to have a passion and commitment for the Gospel to go to your own nation. You can treat it wrongly where we want Jesus to be the tribal god of America but that is blasphemy. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords of all the nations but that does not mean we don't have a burden for our own nation. I want to win my neighbors to Christ but I need to start with my family. I don't need to dodge or end with my family but I need to start there.

The way has been carved out for us. Look at the Reformers. Calvin sent 1300 missionaries to his homeland of France. He visited there at the peril of his own life from Geneva. John Knox said, ‘Give me Scotland or I die.’ Latimer and Ridley are burning to death as they say ‘Oh God let us light a candle for England that shall never be put out.’ We see it in the life of the Apostle Paul who was supposed to take the Gospel to all the nations and in the book of Romans he said of his own nation, Israel, that he would be accursed if God would only come and save them (Romans 9:1–5). His burden was for his own nation even though his specific call was to all the nations.

While we can wrongfully use Jesus in our nation, it is not wrong to tell our nation they need to know the God of glory and grace through Jesus Christ. They need to know His redeeming grace and the blessings of His common grace throughout this nation. So why am I talking about revival? I am talking about a Gospel awakening. We are not praying for revival to

America because you don't get revival to nations. Revival assumes that somebody has already been 'vived.' What we are wanting to see, is the Gospel moving and sweeping our nation, and how does it do that? We see that from His church, who in days of spiritual apathy, spiritual distraction, Biblical illiteracy, spiritual impotency are no longer available, used or committed to the God of glory to send His grace to that nation and from that nation to all the nations because they have become absorbed with the emptiness of self, even the church.

I want to put it this way. The way the church of the Lord in a nation goes, is the way that nation will go. The nation is dominated by the world and the world always goes into a death spiral of sin in various forms unless the grace of God comes to it, either through the stream of redeeming grace with sinners being transformed or through common grace with sin being restrained and virtue being elevated. This should be coming through the pulpits to God's people as they engage in Gospel ministry with one another and in the community with both evangelism and discipleship as well as public theology in the public square. That is what God calls us to do but if we're spiritually impotent, apathetic and Biblically illiterate then it will show up in the culture.

Our culture is in a death spiral. What does that tell you about the church that is in this culture? It should not amaze us where the culture is, and God is giving them over. What ought to astound us is why the culture is there and that's because we've squandered the blessings God has given through His providence through His church to this nation by becoming absorbed with ourselves instead of the God of glory, His presence and power. Therefore will you not O Lord, revive us, His people, again? We're confessing that You've done it before and we're asking You to do it again. We're asking You to start with me, with us, move among us and then see that sweeping movement of Gospel power as thousands and millions are brought from death unto life in Jesus Christ. As Biblical marriage and Biblical sexuality become again affirmed and we no longer call good evil and evil good and we no longer call light darkness and darkness light. That is what the world inevitably will do unless the work of God's grace through His church is flowing from us to them. When we see what we see in the chaos, debauchery, depravity and the willingness to stand against God and call what God says is good evil and evil good, that is here inevitably because we are not there for Him. And He is not sought to be in us and that is why we call for revival.

What is revival? Revival is the extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. In revival we have already been 'vived' but now we're a valley of bones. God, would You do something extraordinary to get these bones on top of each other and get them connected to raise up an army? We don't just want skeletons, we want some life! God raise us up again for You to serve You that You might be in us and working through us. That is an extraordinary work that is not merited or deserved. It is a work that comes down. Revival is not worked up but it comes down, even what God uses to bring revival is already there because God has begun the work of revival. God uses revival leaders, revival preaching, revival praying, and revival worship but whenever you have that you know that God has already shown up and He has established what He is going to use.

He uses ordinary people in ordinary places. He starts them underneath haystacks. He starts with those meeting secretly in a room at Oxford College. He starts them in amazing places. He starts them from the Garden of Gethsemane. He uses them through the ordinary means of preaching, leading, praying and worship but look at the extraordinary work as the landscape of nations are transformed through the transforming of men and women through the

Gospel of grace through the church of Jesus Christ again, alive in Christ and for Christ. That is what revival is.

Now when revival shows up there is a mark on it. In revival, the people of God who have known the fullness of God are restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing, yet they cannot get their fill of God. At one time we knew God but now we have become so full of ourselves we don't have the fullness of God. When God's people are filled with God to overflowing they can't get enough of God for they are panting like the deer. They need Him every hour! I needed Him at my conversion and it didn't stop then. I need Him every hour on the way to that glorious hour when I meet Him face to face.

I don't need a program although I'm not opposed to them. I don't need another personality profile or a change of circumstances around me. I need Him in me and then the circumstances won't dictate to me for I will become His instrument in them. I need Him every hour and now I have Him to overflowing where I can't get enough of Him. I don't have Him on the shelf nearby so if I get into trouble I can go check with Him. I need Him every hour so that means I want Him to have me every hour.

How do these revivals come? Charles Finney, Billy Graham and George Whitfield have some good insights on revival but I'm going to shortcut all of that and give you who they would want to work from. What does God say on how revival comes? He has already told us how when His people need revival He will bring revival. I will show you through His Word how He brings, develops, and instigates revival, plus how He responds in the context of bringing revival. This is what He does.

Let's review what we've already studied on this. Proverbs 14:34 says [34] *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.* We're not talking about just Israel, a covenanted nation but if righteousness is promoted by redeeming grace and common grace is being elevated in any nation so that what is good is called good and evil is called evil, even though they are not a perfect nation, then that is what exalts a nation. It is not the strength of the dollar or the new administration of a presidency or the size of the military or the GNP or their geographical territories. What exalts a nation is when righteousness is embraced, but sin is a reproach.

Every single sin deserves God's ultimate eternal judgment for in Romans 6:23a says [23] *For the wages of sin is death*, but not all sins are equal. Don't be misled when people tell you that. Some sins are worse by consequence, sinfulness and heinousness. When the land is filled with certain sins those sins have a voice that pierce into the heavens, God hears it and He comes down to bring judgment upon that land. In Genesis 4 it was the shedding of innocent blood that brought God down. The voice of Abel's blood came up to the heavens and God came down to bring judgment upon the land and to drive them from the land. If that was done then for one life, where do we stand with at least 60 million that we have legally, morally, politically declared just to destroy? If I'm missing something you correct my logic. If I see God's judgment falling upon a third Reich in Germany with its death culture what is going to happen and what is happening to us?

In Genesis 11 you see a nation that decides they are great. This is secular arrogance at Babel. The cry goes up to God and God comes down to bring His judgment upon them. Babylon is great and we will take God's place for we're not under God, we are god. We will build a ziggurat to heaven and define majesty and authority. God comes down and brings an end to them. I love my country but with all due respect please hear me. I'm supporting our president no matter who they are so don't hear this as a political statement in any one direction

but I, as a minister of the Gospel, am not primarily focused to make America great. My desire is for America to know the greatness of God and bow. That's my heart and there will come real greatness. I'm not being irrational for I understand you need to deal with issues concerning economy, military etc.

Righteousness is what exalts a nation and that comes by the grace of God through His people in a nation. Sin brings the reproach of God and the worse judgment is when He gives us over to our secular arrogance, the shedding of innocent blood, and the third time God comes down is when the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah and sexual anarchy came up to Him. He came down and brought judgment upon those kingdoms with direct destruction because of their rebellion against God in sexual anarchy, perversion and promiscuity. The worse judgment is when He gives them over to do those things shamelessly.

So what is our nation's hope? Our nation's hope is the Gospel of grace at work in the church alive for Christ through the church into this nation and from this nation into the world. It is a sweeping of Gospel awakening that begins with a revived church. That is exactly what the Chronicler is telling us in II Chronicles 7:14. I want to give you a few things of important context to this text of Scripture before I give you the profile of revival revealed by God to His people.

The book of Chronicles is written after Israel returns from the Babylonian captivity. God took them into Babylonian captivity because of their sin to bring corrective discipline upon them and then as He promised in Jeremiah after 70 years He returned them. Now that they are back they are intermarrying with paganism, engaging in child sacrifices and the worship of Molech and all those things. The very things that sent them under God's judgment and discipline they are now embracing again after He returned them to the land. So this book takes on the writing of a historical narrative.

Originally it was not I and II Chronicles, it was just Chronicles. We later divided it up so we could get a better grasp of it. In I Chronicles He is showing them God's grace and favor to His covenant people as He has put them in the land. He gave them judges and then He gives them a king. Then He brings in King David and we see what happens with him and then I Chronicles ends as Solomon is coming to the throne. II Chronicles begins with Solomon building the temple and the glory of God coming into the temple. The temple is dedicated and consecrated and then God declares five things about the temple—it is My House, God's House, it is the House of Sacrifice, the House of prayer, the House of His presence, the House of My Name. It is a glorious day and they are feasting.

He is about to say 'if My people who are called by My name...' and He has given attention to the temple that bears His Name and dwelling place and that temple is pointing to Jesus. Jesus will come and He is the fulfillment of that temple for He will be the House of prayer, God in the flesh, bring the sacrifice for our sins, the Intercessor for us, and He is Immanuel, God with us. Then He saves us at Calvary and then He makes us His temples, His dwelling place, so that you and I have the dwelling of God within us, the Name of God upon us and we bring, not dead sacrifices, but living sacrifices of praise. And we have God's presence within us.

That is where we are now but at this moment in II Chronicles in this great moment of joy He says to Solomon in II Chronicles 7:13, *[13] When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people.* Why does God do this in the lives of His people? It is because they have sinned against Him. It is corrective discipline. He is telling them that He is faithful but His people are never fully faithful

and that is why He has to keep working with them to bring them back. He doesn't say 'if' this happens but when this happens. But then He goes on to say what will happen when this happens. He does this work in them so that they come back to Him.

II Chronicles 7:14 says *[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.* Here He has laid out for us a promise. It is a promise that He will discipline His people and a promise that He has made a way for revival.

He outlines the profile of revival in four steps, revealed in His Word. He says here is how you know He is moving in revival. One you will see My people humble themselves. Two you will see My people seek My face. Three you will see My people call out in prayer and four you will see My people turn from their wicked ways to Me. Then He will bring the blessings of that revival to them and through them even changing the landscape around them.

The book of II Chronicles not only has a promise and a premise but it has an outline and the outline is verse 14 of chapter 7. The rest of the book goes through the kings that led His people into apostasy and the kings through which He brought revival and there are five of them. There is Jehoshaphat, Rehoboam, Asa, Josiah and Hezekiah. God works through revival in these kings in the line of David for the nation of Judah. In each of these kings where God brought revival one of these directives is highlighted and enlarged for us.

One king will show the humbling of himself. One king will show what it means to pray. Another king will show what it means to seek the face of God. Another will show what it means to turn from our wicked ways. Now each one has all four elements but each one highlights one of them so we'll be able to dig down deeper into it. In the coming studies we'll look closer how God highlights each of these four directives in the revivals that take place in II Chronicles. We will see how these revivals are accomplished and the great things He is doing and has done throughout it.

In other words, II Chronicles 7:14 is a God-given message of hope in the inevitable days of despair. We haven't even asked the question and God answers it. In the first part of this chapter they are feasting and having a big time party and then God speaks to Solomon. He gives Solomon a wakeup call by saying 'when' not if, He brings discipline upon His people because of their apostasy and when it happens this is what you tell them. Humble yourself, seek My face, pray and turn from your wicked ways and then I'll heal you, restore you and forgive you.

A few weeks ago our new Vice President made a request at the Inauguration when he was inaugurated. Mr. Pence asked to use Ronald Reagan's Bible and have it opened to II Chronicles 7:14. That's encouraging because I sense that Vice President Pence knows when he had that, that America's blessing is dependent upon that not because the verse is aimed at America. No America is the surrounding landscape. It is aimed at the church in America, God's covenant people. I love my country but it is not a covenanted country. We didn't take Israel's place for there has only been one nation that was a covenanted nation and that was Israel.

The rest of us are nations and the hope of a nation is the blessings of God upon His people in that nation. That is addressed from the Old Testament trajectory to the church in the New Testament, His Kingdom that is found in all the kingdoms of this world, manifested in local churches. He is calling His people to do these four things. His people are those called by His Name. Romans 10:13 says *[23] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Acts 4:12 says *[12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* He is looking at those who have confessed Jesus Christ and called upon the name of the Lord to be saved and God has put His

Name upon them. We are a people of His own possession. It is those people in the midst of a nation.

I think Pence knew it wasn't for America because you can't humble yourself until you get converted. America needs the church to be revived so that we who have been filled with God's love, life, presence and power again empty ourselves of ourselves and go back to Him for His presence and power. When that happens, from His church that blessing will flow into the landscape and marriages will be reclaimed, families are reclaimed and life is reclaimed. The healing of the Gospel begins to flow into the landscape when His church, His people are revived. This is addressed to us and this country needs to listen and respond. There will be no Gospel awakening in the land without revival in His church.

How does revival come? God says it comes through when His people humble themselves, seek His face, pray and turn from their wicked ways. Have you noticed how we tend to make humility a prayer request? God uses it as a sermon life takeaway. You can pray for humility but then duck. If you're being revived you already have the life of God in you therefore you have the power to take the action to take the last seat and not the first seat or to deny yourself and not promote yourself or engage in God-confidence and not self-confidence. I will humble myself not because I have the power but because God's power is within me and I have enough sense to know God doesn't need a self-confident Christian but a God-confident Christian. He makes God-confident, God-reliant Christians and that is what He uses in this world.

So Lord, help me humble myself and then seek Him. When you seek Him you seek His promised presence. Where is His special promised presence? Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there I am. I will inhabit the praises of My people. The person who humbles themselves is the one who has a passion and a desire for worship because they are going to meet God with His people. I came to this conviction years ago. I know there are providential hindrances where people don't show up to gathered worship but if I just work gathered worship in then I'm telling God there are some other people I'd much rather meet than Him. Also if nothing else is more attractive to me, I will come. Now you know we haven't humbled ourselves.

These steps are not only intentional because of the power of God's grace and the presence of God's Spirit but they are interdependent and they are layered. You will not seek His face and His presence until you humble yourself but when you humble yourself you will seek Him. You won't seek Him until you get emptied of you. It is not until I get emptied of me that I will seek Him for up until then I'm pretty confident in me. Perhaps I might need a little adjustment and I'd like for God to show up and coach me some but I don't really need Him. No, that is not how it works. When you humble yourself you are telling God you can't do it without Him and you will seek that place where He has promised to be present in special ways. I'm going to seek You in Your Word, in prayer, in worship for I'm going to meet with You God! You dwell in the gathered temple of God's presence, His people. I'm coming to give the sacrifice of praise to You, to call upon You in prayer for I desire to meet You. When you do that then you'll start praying.

There is a place for every day prayer and I don't mean that derogatorily. This includes the time you sit down to a meal. The duty of prayer sometimes feels dutifully but don't dismiss it. This is not looking at running that prayer down for this is looking at a different prayer. It's the prayer of passionate desperation. This prayer in my life was in North Charleston when I was 7 years old. For three straight days my dad walked me to the elementary school I would be

attending so I would know how to do this on my own when school started. The day school started the Charleston paper mill decided to emit more odor and smoke than they normally did and it covered everything. At the same moment the densest mist that has ever come off the Cooper River and the Atlantic Ocean flowed into Charleston that day. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I kept going off on the wrong street from this circle area and after 30 minutes I just stopped. At 7 years old I shouted, "Daddy, help!" And he pulled up. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen in my life. He opened the door and said 'Son, are you lost?' I said, 'Absolutely!' He told me to get in the car so he could get me to school.

Yes, God's providence was wonderful that day but my point is that I was in desperation. That's revival prayer. It's not duty prayer. There is a place for duty prayer, formal prayer, set prayer. This is desperation prayer. God, we are disintegrated. We have no hope unless You come, so come in the Name of Your Son Jesus, for Your glory. And that leads you to turning from your wicked ways. We will see the sinfulness of sin and we'll want to repent. We'll see the consequences of sin. It's very easy to show up and talk with someone with worldly sorrow, meaning I have personal consequences to sin that I am sorry about.

Here is what Paul says about Godly repentance. II Corinthians 7:10 says *[10] For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.* You are sorrowful over the sinfulness of sin and not just the personal effects of sin. You know when someone has Godly repentance because they are not just sorrowful over the sinfulness of sin but the consequences of their sin not necessarily to them but to others and they are broken with it. God forgive and help me do deeds appropriate to repentance.

Whenever people tell you that God's people can't sin just take them to this text because this verse in II Chronicles 7:14 says they will turn from their wicked ways and who is the 'their' in this verse? It is God's people. We can become apathetic. We can fall down. We can fall away. That can happen to His people but God begins to rein us in by His grace and we humble ourselves. We seek His face. We pray. We turn from our wicked ways.

So here are your takeaways. One is God's people are called to be a blessing to all the nations. Abraham in you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Jesus says to go and make disciples of all the nations. Preach the Gospel to the world. Secondly, God's people cannot be a blessing to the nations without the presence and power of God. We will not be a blessing to the nations unless God has given us a light to be a blessing to our own nation. Thirdly, God's people will not seek His presence and power until the grace of God convicts again of the sinfulness and emptiness of sin and self. There is no good thing that dwells in me. I need the Holy Spirit. I don't need a patch up job but I need a revival job. I need an extraordinary work of God's grace and God delights to do it in ordinary places with ordinary people by ordinary means.

I come from a city that was a product of God's great blessings. In the 1750s, God raised up a man by the name of Alexander Craighead, a great Scottish preacher. Within four years God brought this amazing revival to seven Presbyterian churches and what was so amazing was a city was born, Charlotte, North Carolina. Things like Blue Laws were started in which a city said they wouldn't tell you to go to church on Sunday but no businesses would be open on Sunday. We're not working on Sunday. That is a creation ordinance and we're going to bless it. So came the Blue Laws of the Blue Stocking Presbyterians that had been revived. It spread for decades upon decades. Then it began to diminish for various reasons.

In the late 1930s, we needed an awakening in the land and to get that we needed a revival. It needs to start here in the churches of Charlotte. So eleven men would go to a dairy farm and pray every week for God to bring a revival to the churches of Charlotte. They prayed

all the way to 1943 and God answered their prayer by bringing Mordecai Ham to preach in the pulpits of Charlotte, North Carolina. Revival broke out throughout the city and from that revival came a Gospel awakening. One of the men who was the son of the man who owned the dairy farm, Franklin Graham, where those eleven prayed and his little boy Billy Frank was there while they were praying and when the revival broke out in 1943 Billy Frank was 17 years old and he came to Christ. Then he was brought back as the revival continued and we moved from revival to awakening. My grandfather was one of those eleven men who came to pray. In 1948 when Billy Frank came to preach and one of the Gospel movements in that place was an 18 year old man with a 17 year old wife holding a two month old baby. That was my father, mother and me as a baby.

This was awakenings from revival in ordinary places, Charlotte, with ordinary people, dairy farmers, with ordinary means, preaching, prayer, leadership with extraordinary blessings, praise His Name! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. Perhaps God is laying these four distinctions on your heart. God, help me humble myself by Your grace and for Your glory. Help me kill the old man, kill self, deny self to take up the cross. I want to seek Your presence God. Empty me of me and fill me up with You. I want to call upon You with intentional, persistent pleading of passionate desperation. Revive us again, O Lord. God, help me turn from my sins to my Savior, not simply to do better but to my Savior who is the Better, and then bring the blessing to the landscape of this nation with a Gospel awakening. If you want to pray with someone don't hesitate to contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200, but O God now we make our way to You. We have a nation that is going its way because Your people are not going Your way. Help us come to the Savior. Revive us to Him who is The Way, The Truth and the Life to the glory of God we come O Christ to You, Amen.

Power Point

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW: Revival is the extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

In revival, the People of God who have known the fullness of God are restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing, yet they cannot get their fill of God.

THE ALL IMPORTANT CONTEXT OF THE TEXT

THE PROFILE OF REVIVAL REVEALED BY GOD TO THIS PEOPLE

- I. Humble themselves
- II. Seek His face/presence
- III. Pray
- IV. Turn from their wicked ways

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

1. God's people are called to be a blessing to the nations.
2. God's people cannot be a blessing to the nations without the presence and power of God.
3. God's people will not seek His presence and power until the grace of God convicts again of the sinfulness and emptiness of sin and self.