

"Revive Us Again"

From time to time Christians go through a spiritual slump and they need to be revived. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're saying "Revive Us Again!" Stay with us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God graciously gives us life, eternal life, and an abundant life. We know this because the Word of God reveals it. We would truly be impoverished without the teaching found in God's Word. What we know about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit comes from the revealed will of God in the Bible. What we know of creation, of the cross, of the resurrection of Christ comes from the Bible. And this is why we turn our hearts to the written word of God. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

While, becoming a Christian is something that we do once in life, remaining strong in our faith is a lifelong pursuit. From time to time we all need reawakening to our faith, renewing our love, and reviving in our spirit. We are all imperfect and we need the Lord's continued forgiveness and blessing and strength. Psalm 85 and verse 6 asks, "Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?" I tell you we can rejoice in our God, when we're revived, because we find in Him, once again, the joy of our salvation!

Galatians 5:22 places joy right after love as a "fruit of the Spirit." Paul urges us in Philippians 4 and verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" Nehemiah 8 and verse 10 reminds us that, "the joy of the LORD is your strength."

David had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba and by arranging the death of Uriah. Oh, his guilt ate him up inside until he confessed his sin and repented. And he wrote in Psalm 51 verses 12 and 13, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You." When we renew our joy in our salvation, we want let everybody know about it!

Well we offer this study on revival free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Revelation 2 verses 1 to 7, and then we'll explore our need for revival!

Our reading today comes from the words of Jesus in the book of Revelation. Chapter 2 verses 1 through 7. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds (that) you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Jesus speaking very powerful words to the church at Ephesus in the later part of the first century. Let's pray together. Father help us never to stop loving You and stop wanting to be close to You. Father help us to revive our spirits and to be strong once again. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Just like the Christians at Ephesus, some today have left their first love. Some today have stopped meeting regularly with the church, stopped studying their Bibles, stopped praying to God, and stopped serving the Lord. Some attend worship but rarely get involved in the work of the church. The New Testament speaks about a disciple named Demas; Colossians and Philemon mention him and call him a fellowlaborer with Paul. 2 Timothy 4 and verse 10 says, "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." Well, Demas needed reviving!

Well, what is revival? Well, first, revival begins with remembering. Many have forgotten what it was like when they were lost and outside of God's care. They forgot the darkness, the emptiness, and the life without the promise of God. Others have forgotten what it was like when they were first saved. Remember when you became a Christian, when you came up from the waters of baptism clean and pure. Remember your joy in Christ and your zeal. Colossians 1:13 to 14 reminds us, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us (in) to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." The Lord Jesus told the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 and verse 5 "Therefore remember from where you have fallen." When Christians leave the Lord, sadly, they leave God's blessing behind.

This is why worshiping regularly is so vital and important. It reminds us of the most important things to our souls. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood. 1 Corinthians 11:23 to 26 says, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." We must never quit taking communion, or stop singing, or stop praying, or stop studying God's Word, lest we forget what the Lord Jesus has done for us.

Second, revival follows repentance. We start repenting when we become Christians, but we continue repenting throughout our Christian life. As often as we sin, we ought to examine ourselves and repent of that sin. The Lord told the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 and verse 5 to "repent and do the deeds (that) you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." This church had existed for decades and had some mature Christians who still needed to change their hearts and ways.

The Lord knew people would sometimes stray from their commitment, but He made a promise to Solomon that He would relent from sending calamity on the people if they would humble themselves and repent. You remember the Lord said to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7 and verse 14, "and 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, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Proud and arrogant people will hardly repent. Proud and arrogant people do not seek the face of the Lord. They do not look to Him for help or for blessing. Only people who realize how much they need the Lord will humble themselves and seek His face.

When God's people seek the Lord and turn from their wicked ways, God takes notice and hears their prayers for forgiveness. He does more than forgive: He heals their land. He blesses them and

provides for their needs. He restores them. Many wonder why they are so unhappy. Well, could it be that the guilt of their sin has spoiled their lives?

Ezra helped to revive Israel and to heal Israel to God. For seventy years the people had been in captivity to Babylon. By God's grace, Ezra led a group back to Israel to begin living as God's people after the Babylonian captivity. Ezra 7:10 says, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."

When you study God's word, you learn what is right and wrong. Once he taught the people God's law, the people found that they had sinned by intermarrying with the idolatrous nations that were around them. Now as you read the book of Ezra, chapters 9 and 10, you learn how seriously Ezra took sin and how sincere he was in leading the people to repentance. Though Israel, Ezra, excuse me, had not sinned himself, he mourned in his heart the sins of the people. Ezra 9:3 says, "When I heard about this matter, (he said) I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and (I) sat down appalled." Verses 5 to 6 says, "at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and (I) stretched out my hands to the LORD my God; and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens."

Ezra 10 and verse 1 says, "Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly." How long, how long, how long has it been since you wept over your sins? The Israelite men made a covenant that very day to separate from the families they took from the idolatrous nations. You see repentance demands that we sacrifice sinful things that we may have loved or held dear. We give up our sins, because they are against the ways of God and offend God.

We need to be like the people of Ephesus in their early days. When they saw the truth of Jesus Christ, they saw the error of witchcraft and sorcery. In Acts 19:18 to 19 says, "Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. (That is the sins) And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." My friend when you become a Christian, you must leave the sinful world behind.

Sometimes Christians grow weary of well doing and they just need encouragement and revival. They need to renew their faith, restore their love, and get busy serving the Lord. We don't know what happened to Timothy, but it seems he began to be timid and fearful and then he faltered in his service to God. Paul wrote him in 2 Timothy 1 and verse 6, "For this reason I remind you (Paul says) to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." Now we don't know what the gift Timothy possessed, what it was, but he wasn't using it as he ought to. We also recall another minister who wasn't doing his job. Paul wrote in Colossians 4 and verse 17, "Say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" My friend are you fulfilling your ministry? Are you doing what God would have you to do?

Third, revival insists that we return to Christ. The Lord Jesus in Luke 15 tells the story of a young, Jewish man who wanted to live on his own terms and for his own pleasures. He got his father to give him his share of his inheritance early and went then he went off to a far country. Well, he wasted his inheritance on reckless and immoral living. And it didn't work well for him. You see sin never does. A famine came upon that country and he ended up alone, broke, friendless, and ashamed of himself.

He decided to come home to his father. But felt unworthy to be called his father's son. The father graciously welcomed him, embraced him, kissed him, dressed him in the best robe, and celebrated with a feast. The father said in Luke 15 and verse 24, "for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." And they began to celebrate."

Now many have left the church to pursue their own desires. May I ask, "How's it working for you?" Are you closer to God? Will God hear really your prayers at this point? Are you happy in your soul? Is your family closer to God since you made this decision?

John the Baptist came into the world to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you considered how he would do that? Luke 1:17 says, "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him (that is Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." We live in a selfish, "me-first" society that separates families. We must turn our hearts back to God and back to the spiritual needs of our families.

If you leave the Lord, you may lead your children to leave as well. But if you draw close and stand with the Lord, you will lead others to stand boldly with the Lord as well. If you're spiritually asleep, you need to wake up and look to Jesus who bore the cross for you. If you're complaining, look at the cross and hush. If you've become apathetic, you need to remember what the Lord sacrificed for you. If you're flirting with sin, you need to look at the cross and remember what sin causes. If you're sluggish in your faith and service to God, you need to look up at the cross and get involved with the Lord and His church!

Fourth, revival will lead to renewal. Each day calls us to renew our faith and commitment to Christ. Luke 9:23 calls us to take up our crosses daily. Don't tell me what you did in the past. What are you doing for the Lord today? Romans 12:1 and 2 says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58 reminds us, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." What we do for the Lord matters. We must remain steadfast in our efforts to do good and to preach the gospel. There is still much to do. Paul urges us in Galatians 6 verses 9 and 10, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

Let's get busy! If all the sleeping folk will wake up, and all the lukewarm folk fire up, and all the discouraged folk will cheer up, and all the depressed folk will look up, and all the wicked folk will straighten up, and all the lazy folks, will get up, and all the immature folk, will grow up, and all the dry bones will shake up, and all the Christian soldiers will stand up, then we can stand strong for God and be revived! Let's pray together. Father help us to look to You and to look to Your Son Jesus. To have faith and boldness and zeal and love in our hearts. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

What about you? Are you in a spiritual slump? Have you wandered away from the Lord Jesus and become distracted by this world and forgotten your salvation? Are you worshiping regularly at church? Do you read your Bible regularly? How's your prayer life? Are you saying no to sinful behaviors? While we cannot earn our salvation, God expects us to live godly lives that demonstrate our faith and love.

I hope you haven't become like the Ephesian Christians who "left" their "first love." When a person wanders away from God, like the prodigal son, he loses more than he thinks. When a person wanders away from God, he loses the grace of God, the ear of God in prayer, and the promise of God for the hereafter. He loses the fellowship of brothers and sisters at church. He loses the joy and the hope found in Christ Jesus. One day lost and alone without God is one day too many. And all of us need God in our lives!

God is waiting for you; He hasn't moved or left you. You may have left Him. But He wants you to come home. And when people sin, they separate themselves from God and His grace. To get back in God's favor, you must place your trust in Jesus Christ, you must repent of your sins, you must confess the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, and you must be baptized into Christ. Peter told the guilty souls at Pentecost, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now if you lovingly obey, just as these people did, God will graciously forgive you just as He did them. Why not do just as they have done? Why not obey the Lord today?

Well, we hope today's study about revival has encouraged you to live for the Lord. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons, on our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

As always we say to people that you might tell a friend about our program and let them know about it. And God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.