

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/8/92
II Chronicles 15 "Does Revival Last?"

Scripture:

Intro:

The Church stands in need of revival. Genuine Revival. With that in mind we are in the middle of a series, "Great Revivals in the Bible." Our aim: To see firsthand the reviving work of our Sovereign God as He transformed His people in the past.

There is much confusion about revival. I read a book this week by Erwin Lutzer, pastor of Moody Church in Chicago (Flames of Freedom). The book is a fascinating record of recent revival that has taken place in the past decades. I recommend the book highly. In it, Lutzer shares an experience of J. Edwin Orr. Orr says he saw a sign in the San Fernando Valley that read, "Revival Every Monday." Five miles down the road he saw another sign, "Revival Every Night Except Monday."

To clear up the confusion, we must turn to God's Word, and let God define true revival for us.

Review:

Two weeks ago, we looked at scenario #1, the revival that took place in Hezekiah's day in II Chr 29. We saw 5 marks of genuine revival: Repentance, Redication, Reconciliation, Recovery of True Worship, and Rejoicing.

Last week, we considered another great leader from the 7th century BC. His name was Josiah. We noticed 6 events associated with the revival in his day. Josiah removed sin, repaired the temple, recovered the Law, responded with obedience, received God's favor, and renewed the cov't.

The biblical revival we're going to examine this morning was quite different.

1. It happened more than 200 years before Hezekiah and Josiah.

2. It happened during a time of relative peace and prosperity.

If you'll recall, in the first two scenarios, the situation was bleak. Politically (the Assyrians), economically, and of course spiritually.

This morning we want to investigate the revival that God worked through Asa. Turn to II Chronicles 14.

Q: Does revival last? That's the question to keep in mind as we look at Asa.

Proposition: Let's look at Asa's life in II Chronicles 14-16 from 2 perspectives.

I. The Big Picture of Asa's Life

A. Reforms (ch 14a)

B. Results (ch 14b)

C. Revival (ch 15)

D. Refusal (ch 16)

II. A Closeup Look at the Revival (15:2)

A. The Responsibility

B. The Result

C. The Reverse

I. The Big Picture of Asa's Life

To get the big picture, we must know some facts about Israel's history.

--2000 BC God chose Abraham and promised to bless His family

--1400 BC God redeems a nation from Egypt; to Promised Land

--Period of the Judges

--1000 BC God chooses David to be King; Solomon follows

--931BC Civil War: Nation divided (Jeroboam and Rehoboam)

Rehoboam II Chr 12:14 "did evil"

Abijah I Kg 15:3 "And he walked in all the sins of his father"

Then in 911 BC, Asa became king of Judah. The nation had been divided for 20 years. And notice something unusual in 14:1 about the early tenure of Asa's reign, "In his days the land was quiet ten years."

Now let's quickly scan Asa's life to get the Big Picture view--4 key phases:

A. Reforms (ch 14a)

Judah enjoyed Peace in the early years of Asa (1). Years of action.

14:2-5

V 2 is refreshing. Asa did that which was "good and right in the eyes of the Lord." He resembled his great, great grandfather David. His heart was right with God. And when that's the case, it effects your life.

Q: How did Asa do right? Two ways:

1. NEGATIVE--He eliminated that which was unacceptable (3).

In v 3, Asa initiated a spiritual spring cleaning in Judah. The altars and images and high places and idols were removed.

2. POSITIVE--He encouraged the acceptable (4).

In v 4, Asa urged his people to return to the Book, God's Law. What's more, he encouraged them to "seek the Lord." That's key.

Q: What did they experience as a result of the reforms? PEACE (5)

Key: The LORD was the One who gave them peace (1, 5, 6, 7)

Asa brought about great reforms. Watch carefully. The reform movement by Asa lasted 15 years before the actual revival began in ch 15.

Illust:

B. Results (ch 14b)

The reforms and the period of rest afforded Asa the opportunity to perform. .

1. Civil Projects (6-7)--old cities renovated, new cities constructed

2. Military Project (8)--built up the army for defense purposes

Then what happened? Asa's first major obstacle. . .

14:9-10 "Zerah the Ethiopian. . .a million, and 300 chariots. . ."

Notice the odds. Asa is outnumbered 2 to 1. He knows he can't win with those odds. He needs supernatural help. So what does he do?

14:11 "And Asa cried unto the Lord. . . Help us!"

And God did!

14:12-15 "So the Lord smote the Ethiopians. . ."

Wow! Asa trusted God in the face of an impossible challenge. And he saw God perform the miraculous! Illust:

Which brings us to phase 3 in Asa's life.

C. Revival (ch 15)

We'll take a closer look at this phase later. For now notice 5 key ingredients of the revival:

1. The Key Agent of Revival--The Spirit of God (1).

15:1 "And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah. . ."

2. The Key Instrument of Revival--The Word of God (2).

15:2 "And he went to meet Asa"

Who was Azariah? We don't know much. But he was a prophet (8). He delivered the Word of God to Asa. It was God's Word that was the instrument for revival.

Quote: Billy Sunday, "One spark of fire can do more to prove the power of gunpowder than a whole library written on the subject." (Lutzer, 191)

3. The Key Word in Revival--SEEK (2, 4, 12, 15)

4. The Key Effects of Revival (vv 8-18)

- a. Asa removed sin (8).

- b. Asa influenced others to do likewise (9-10).

Illust: See v 16 Even removed his own mother!!

- c. God's people sacrificed (11).

- d. God's people renewed the Covenant with God (12-13).

- e. God's people rejoiced (14-15)!

5. The Key Focus of Revival--The Heart (17).

15:17 ". . . the heart of Asa was perfect all his days."

Don't miss this. Revival happens from the inside out, not outside in. Revival does not begin on the outside. Revival begins on the inside. Revival is a change of the heart.

Illust: People say to me, "I've got these bad habits in my life. I'm working on straightening these things out so I can be right with the Lord." Wrong order. Give the Lord your heart FIRST, then He'll give you the power to clean up the vessel.

D. Refusal (ch 16)

Don't miss this. Asa faced 2 great tests in his life. We already saw the first in ch 14--the Ethiopians. What did he do in test #1? He trusted God, and passed the test! In fact, shortly after that, his nation experienced revival.

How did he do in test #2? See. . .

16:1 "In Asa's 36th year, Baasha came up against Judah. . ."

Who was Baasha? The king of the northern 10 tribes. He was a wicked king. In fact, the northern kingdom never did have a godly king, and never sought the Lord.

What did Baasha do? He started building a fortress city at Ramah. Why? To box Asa and his people in. Military aggression.

Remember what Asa did in test #1? He cried out to the Lord (14:11). What did Asa do in this test? He trusted in his own wisdom. How? He tried to buy help, from Beh-hadad king of Syria.

16:2-3 "Then Asa brought silver. . . to Ben-hadad."

Did Asa's plan work? Let's look. . .

16:4-6 "And Ben-hadad hearkened unto Asa. . ."

Did Asa's plan work? You say, "Sure it did. He got rid of his problem! He didn't need God that time. He figured out a way to take care of the problem all by himself!"

Oh really? Shortly thereafter, Asa received a visitor. His name was Hanani.

16:7-9 "Because you have relied on the king of Syria. . . you have done foolishly. . ."

Wow! Hanani pulled no punches with Asa! As God's spokesman, he told Asa the sobering truth. "Since you refused to trust Me, since you thought you could handle your problems on your own, you've just forfeited the peace you've known all your life. From this point on, you can expect war."

It was all downhill from that point for Asa.

1. He allied himself with wicked Ben-hadad instead of trusting God.
2. He cast Hanani into prison (10).

Just think of that! He deliberately rejected God's message and God's spokesman. Apparently some people pleaded with Asa to listen. What did he do to them?

3. He oppressed those who didn't see things his way (10).

You say, "Well Asa just had a bad day, didn't he?"

Listen. What began as a bad day turned into a characteristic of his life. He refused to trust God one time, and that led to another and another. He became self-sufficient. And he died that way.

4. He refused to trust God when he was inflicted with disease.

READ 16:11-13

Instead of turning to God, Asa turned to man. Now this passage does not support the notion that we don't need doctors. The physicians mentioned here were possibly idolatrous medicine men who used incantations. But the bottom line is this. Asa stopped trusting God in his life. He chose to trust in Man.

That is dangerous.

Illust:

Notice a key lesson from Asa. In test 1, he heard God's Word, he trusted God, and the result was peace. In test 2, he heard God's Word, he rejected God's Word, he trusted his own ingenuity instead of in God, and the result was war.

Application:

That's the big picture of Asa's life. Reforms, Results, Revival, and Refusal.
Illust:

Tran: There's the big picture. Now let's take. . .

II. A Closeup Look at the Revival (15:2)

Definition: What is revival?

"Revival" is something that happens to God's people, to Christians. Certainly, the spillover effects touch the lives of lost people, and a by-product of revival is evangelism. The word revival is derived from 2 Latin words, *re* which means "again" and *vivo* which means "to live." Lit. = "To live again." Revival is, "The inrush of the spirit into a body that threatens to become a corpse! (Lutzer)

Lutzer points out 2 obvious features of revival: It is primarily the restoration of believers (only those with life can be REvived). And it is the product of the Holy Spirit's work, not dependent on human strategy--though human beings are of course directly involved (136).

Caution: We can't cause revival by using tear-jerking music or frightening stories. We can get emotional responses, but not genuine revival. And emotional responses, like the seed that fell on rocky soil in Mt 13, don't last.

II Chr 15:2 reveals 3 key principles about revival for us.

A. The Responsibility

What was it that God wanted from Asa? From the people of Judah? From you?

What responsibility do we have if we're to experience revival?

V 2 ". . . if you SEEK Him"

Revival occurs when we SEEK. What does it mean to "seek"? The word is used at least 5 times in II Chr 15.

Allow me to pose 3 questions about our responsibility to "seek":

Q: Who are we to seek?

A: Seek a Person (2, 4, 12, 15)--"Him", "the Lord God".

Christianity is a personal matter. It's not a religion. It's a relationship, a lifechanging relationship.

Q: With what are we to seek God?

A: V 12 "with all their heart and all their soul"

God desires your heart, all of it. He doesn't want a piece of your life. He's not interested in leftovers. Jesus summed it up in Mt 22:37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind."

Q: What prompts people to seek God?

A: 1. Ultimate Cause--The Sovereign Working of God's Spirit

Rom 3:11 "There is none that seeks after God"

Ps 14:2-3 "The Lord looked down from heaven. . . to see if any did seek God. . ."

Ps 10:4 "The wicked through the pride of his heart, will not seek after God. . ."

note: A wicked person is not necessarily an immoral person (it may lead to that). Rather a wicked person is one who won't seek God. God is not in his thoughts.

The Spirit prompts men to seek God. How does He do that? Often He uses

2. Immediate Cause--"trouble" (15:4)

15:4 "But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord. . . and sought Him"

God uses "trouble" to get our attention. For the Israelites in v 4, the trouble came in the form of enemies raiding their land during the days of the judges. For us trouble may come in all shapes and sizes--A broken marriage causes some to seek God. A wayward teenager. A lost job. Bad health.

Illust:

B. The Result

15:2 "if you seek Him, He will be FOUND by you"

Mt 7:7 "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock. . ."

Eg--of those who sought God in II Chr

--Jehoshaphat (22:9)

--Uzziah (26:5)

Illust:

Consider a third principle of revival.

C. The Reverse

15:2 "If you forsake Him, He will forsake you"

Listen to these tragic words. . .

16:12 ". . . in his disease, he sought not the Lord"

Q: Why does the Bible include II Chr 16? Asa's life was great, until ch 16. Why not leave it out? Why not stop with the revival in ch 15?

A: The Bible is realistic. Asa was human. He blew it later in life. The Bible does not hide his flaws. They were there. And they were ugly. The Bible tells it like it is. God works with people where they are. Asa is a clear reminder to us that sin has consequences, severe ones. And Asa is a clear reminder to us that revival is not the end of the story.

Q: Does that mean revival is NOT important, that we don't need it?

A: Certainly not. But revival is merely the beginning. God expects us to trust Him until the race of life is finished.

Conclusion:

John Newton wrote a revival song. . . (Wadsworth, 40)

Genuine revival starts when 2 things happen in your heart:

1. You repent of your sins.
2. You trust your life to Jesus Christ.

Q: Are you willing to give your heart to Him today?

Key Verse: II Chron 7:14 "If my people. . . humble, pray, seek"