

Convocation 2016

Sunday Message Praying for Revival

Introduction:

We live in a day of low expectations so far as spiritual things are concerned. One only need turn on his TV to the religious channels to see that.

The tiniest acknowledgment of Christ will get you in the door of membership with most churches today. And, many are openly welcoming people living in fornication and perversion.

Public figures claim to be Christian who would have been denounced as frauds just a short time ago even by the secular media.

So long as a person today avoids the socially defined sins and attends church occasionally, he is allowed without question to keep his 'Christian credentials.' No one will challenge him. In fact, the rest of us will severely chastise anyone who questions whether he is a genuine believer. At least many will.

Look at:

Rev 2:1-6

- 1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
- 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
- 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.
- 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
- 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
- 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. KJV

I want you to notice in this passage that Jesus Christ has really high standards and is not timid at all to 'call out' those who fail to meet them. Notice how many positive things were said about the pastor at Ephesus. His works - commendable. His labor - diligent, 'hast not fainted.' He was an active warrior against false teachers, v.2, and the Nicolaitans, v.6. He had borne up under difficulty without quitting. But Jesus was offended at him and grieved with him.

Now, this is not a small thing. Probably most of us have had that uncomfortable conversation with an employer or a supervisor in which they sought to admonish us for violations of the rules or for failing to meet their expectations or guidelines. But, this was Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, telling a faithful and hardworking servant that his service was deficient to the degree that

Jesus was about to act in discipline toward him.

Now, I cannot say with precision exactly what the man's problem was or where the deficiency in love for the Lord had taken him, but I can tell you that this short note reveals that the Lord's standards are amazingly high and if a person is going to be a standard-bearer, a lampstand, for Him, the level of service must be very high.

The pastor at Pergamos (2:12-17) was chastised for being too lenient and allowing people into the church that held heretical beliefs. And, unless I am mistaken, Jesus threatened the lives of some of those heretics.

Rev 2:16

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. KJV

At Thyatira (2:18-29) we again encounter a faithful pastor (in many ways): Works, charity (love), service, faith, endurance, and even making progress. But he, too, was too permissive and too lenient. There was a woman in the church teaching error and the pastor had not corrected the matter. And, again, the Lord threatened discipline Himself.

Rev 2:22-23

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. KJV

The pastor at Sardis (3:1-6) was not commended at all. He was something of a sham, having a reputation and not living up to it. Some of his members were outstripping him in earnestness and faithfulness. But the pastor, the 'angel' of the church, was severely threatened.

Rev 3:3

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. KJV

And then... there was Laodicea (3:14-22), rich and needing nothing (in his own eyes) but wretched and poor and naked and blind so far as the Lord was concerned.

There comes a point in this failure to live up to the call to excellence in the service of God where one loses sight of that call and begins to accept things as 'normal' that are not normal and assume that God is pleased with things that grieve Him.

One needs eyesalve... but he needs to become aware that he needs eyesalve... then he must care deeply enough not only to seek it but also to repent of what he sees once his eyes are working again. You know, of course, that we are talking about spiritual eyes and spiritual healing for

those eyes.

But that, my friend, is the spot in which American Christianity, from preacher to pew, finds itself today, in my opinion. There are some positive things that one might say about many of us:

We haven't denied the faith,
We have been mostly faithful,
We have worked hard and haven't quit,
We have rejected false teachers,
And, at times, we have even suffered for Christ's sake.

But I wonder this about myself. Have I ever loved Christ with the love that He was talking about and calling for?

Rev 2:4-5

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. KJV

And, then, I wonder if that lack of love for Him on the one hand and the ease of our lives on the other hand led us into lukewarmness and spiritual blindness like that poor fellow at Laodicea?

I do for all the world believe that it has, to one degree or another.

What shall we do?

Let us go from the last book of our Bible to the first. There is a story from the life of Isaac, Abraham's son, which has been used as an object lesson for spiritual predicaments such as ours.

Gen 26:12-25

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.
13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:
14 For he had possession of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.
15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.
16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.
17 And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.
18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.
19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing

- water.
- 20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.
- 21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also:and he called the name of it Sitnah.
- 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.
- 23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.
- 24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.
- 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well. KJV

If you were to think of the wells as pictures of the outpoured Spirit of God that our grandfathers and great grandfathers experienced and then think of the Philistines as all of those contrary forces both in the world and in our own selves that have shut up the blessings of God from us, then I think you get the picture. Isaac “digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them.”

In each of the corrective messages that Jesus dictated to the pastors of those early churches, He called upon them to ‘repent’ and ‘do the first works.’ Listen, we live in a day in which everyone has an idea about how Christianity can be made better and the churches improved, how we can know the blessings of God upon us. But all of it involves something ‘new,’ something ‘different,’ something ‘fresh.’ All the while Jesus was saying ‘repent’ and ‘return.’

The truth is that we do not need new methods, new books, and new ideas. We need to ‘dig again the wells where our great-grandfathers found the Water of Life, the Outpoured Power of the Spirit of God. However, we must admit that we are operating at a disadvantage when compared to Isaac. You see, he was there when those wells were first dug. He knew where they were and what methods his father had used to dig them. But they didn’t dig those ‘wells’ of Revival in our father’s day, did they? Nor, for the most part in the days of our grandfathers. There is a sense in which the ‘wells’ of God’s blessing are lost to us.

But, they are not lost completely because those wise old men drew us treasure maps, as it were, to show us where they are and how to dig them again. **Books**, they wrote **books** to tell us how they found God’s Power upon their lives and how we can find it as well. But... we don’t read books do we? Especially not those written 100, 200, 300 years ago when men really could write, when they really had something to say, and when people really could read. And.. So... the treasure maps are hidden from us in plain sight simply because we lack the sense of our poverty, the respect for their genius and spirituality, and the will to stir ourselves out of sleep.

Look again at how the story of the wells ended.

- 18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of

- Abraham his father; for the philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.
- 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.
- 20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.
- 21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also:and he called the name of it Sitnah.
- 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.
- 23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.
- 24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.
- 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Digging those wells caused problems but Isaac kept at it until he had peace, v.22. And then, God came and spoke blessing to his soul, v.24. Then... he built his own altar and dug his own well, v.25. He arrived at a place of blessed communion with God on his own and no longer needed the wells of Abraham. But he did need them in order to get there.

Once Revival comes we will know how it came and how we were able to obtain it. We may no longer need the instructions and advice of men long dead. But... until then... we need them. Revival, just like our salvation, comes by Grace through Faith, but that doesn't mean that it is easy or that we are simply passive in the process. On the contrary, it is a battle all of the way, and the blessings are reserved for those who endure and persevere in the seeking of it. It has always been that way and it always will be just that way.

So, what is the Old Way?

There is a picture of it found in Ex. 33. Moses had come down from his first visit up Mt. Sinai to receive the Law of God and found the Israelites dancing around the Golden Calf. You will recall that he broke the tables of the Law and had 3,000 of them executed.

God had sent two consequences upon them:

1. He sent plagues among them, 32:35,
2. And, He told Moses that His Presence was not going with them because of their wickedness, 33:1-3.

Ex 32:35-33:3

35 **And the LORD plagued the people**, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Exodus 33

- 1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:
- 2 And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:
- 3 Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for **I will not go up in the midst of thee**; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. KJV

In a sense they were like us, under the chastisement of God because of our lukewarmness and our lack of love for Him and without His Presence among us because He has withdrawn Himself. But Moses knew what our great-grandfathers knew, that undertaking any spiritual endeavor without the Direct Empowering Presence of God's Spirit is useless. But we, for the most part, in our day are like Samson after Delilah had cut his hair.

Judg 16:20

- 20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. KJV

We think that we can build a church with our own efforts and conjure up a Revival by our own talents but the reality is that we are as weak as Samson was with his hair lying there on the floor. Moses knew better, so he did two things. He set up a tent outside the camp, and he went out to the tent to cry out to God concerning the matter. There he presented his case to God, argued with Him if you will.

Ex 33:12-17

- 12 And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.
- 13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.
- 14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.
- 15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.
- 16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.
- 17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. KJV

Paraphrase: "You told me to bring these people here. You said that you know me by name and that I have found grace in your sight and now you are telling me that you are not going with me? Well, if you are not going to go with me, please do not command me to continue." He argued with God from the position of his own relationship with Him. "If I belong to you and you have commanded me to serve you in this way, You must go with me because it does not work any other way."

Listen, God has called us, commanded us, to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. He has called us to be holy in a wicked world and to be lights in the darkness, witnesses to Him and to His power in this world.

And if He is not going to be with us and empower us by His Spirit, we cannot do this any more than Moses could have led the children of Israel to the Land of Promise with only an angel for a companion.

There is a story told of a famous Scottish preacher whom God mightily enabled to preach the word. His fame had gone all over the country and a couple of noblemen from some distance away had traveled to hear him. They arrived at his church too late to hear the Sunday morning message but they knew that he preached again in the afternoon, so they determined to wait. There was a small building near the church where the preacher would go to be alone between the services. Time came for the afternoon service and no preacher. Finally, one of the noblemen sent a servant to see if he could tell what was wrong. He came back in a while somewhat puzzled. "I do not think that he is coming," he said. "I heard him talking loudly to someone saying 'If you do not come with me, I cannot go and preach,' but I heard no one reply."

Even a famous and mighty preacher like this man knew that he must have the Presence of God or all was in vain.

Our world is falling apart and the standards of Christ are mighty high. If we are to make a difference, God must empower us in a special way. This is why I pray for Revival. We must or both we and the church will fall short of our calling.