**How to Pray for Revival**

**Isaiah 63:18-65:8**

Week Three

This week, as you follow *Change Me*, the 28-day personal revival guide, you will spend extraordinary time in prayer.

The year 1856 marked the thirteenth straight year of decline among the major denominations of the United States. In 1857 a businessman, Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier, left his career to become a missionary in New York City. Noticing the downcast countenance of businessmen in NYC, Lanphier decided upon a noon time prayer meeting to invite others to come and pray with him. (Roy Fish, *When Heaven Touched Earth: The Awakening of 1858 and Its Effects on Baptists*, p. 33) Lanphier stood on the street and prayed, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” The Lord’s answer was to call people to pray. (Alvin Reid, “A Lone Man and United Prayer: Jeremiah Lanphier and the Prayer Revival,” AlvinReid.Com, January 29, 2014.)

“It is God’s will through His wonderful grace, that the prayers of His saints should be one of the great principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ’s kingdom in the world. When God has something very great to accomplish for His church, it is His will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of His people...” (Jonathan Edwards as quoted by Alvin Reid. Reid, “Prayer for Revival,” AlvinReid.com, June 11, 2014.)

So, how do we pray for revival? Let’s consider Isaiah 63:18-65:8 as an example.

Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Second Kings 15-20 gives us a reference point for the time of Isaiah’s prophecy. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah’s prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah’s prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry. “Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked.” (*The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.)

Here’s a Basic Outline of the Whole Book:

Chapters 1-39 Judgment

Chapters 40-66 Comfort

So, Isaiah 63-65 is obviously in the portion of comfort. We might say here is Isaiah’s hope for his nation. The portion we have read is a prayer. It guides us in our attempt to pray for revival. I want you to see four principles to guide us in praying for revival.

**Recognize the Desperation of our Situation**

Isaiah 63:18-19 address the desperation of the situation in Isaiah’s time.

Isaiah’s tone is reminiscent of the Psalmist’s tone as revealed in Psalm 42. Psalm 42:1-3 says,

As a deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for You, God.
**2**I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I come and appear before God?
**3**My tears have been my food day and night,
while all day long people say to me,
“Where is your God?”

My fear is that we will not desire revival until we become desperate about our situation. The reason for the Psalmist’s desperation is the apparent “absence of God.” “While they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" This must indicate the mockery of the watching world. Doesn’t our world do that today? The watching world continues to ask, “Where is your God?”

Instead of admitting that there is an absence of God, we make excuses for God not being seen. We say things like “Well, we don’t have all the evidence.” Or, we might say, “God doesn’t work like He used to work.” We might way, “Well, people don’t respond like they did years ago.” As long as we accept these excuses, there will be no agonizing, no desperation over the absence of God.

We must come to that place where we would say, “God, unless you show up, there is no hope.” That’s desperation. That kind of desperation leads us to have tears as our food day and night.

And today, we might conclude, “If we are not desperate now, when will we ever be desperate?”

**Recognize the Definition of Revival**

We cannot pray for that which we don’t know, so we need a definition for revival. There are many ways to define revival, but I am struck by the imagery in this text. Consider Isaiah 64:1-4. We might conclude this simple definition of revival:

 Revival is God coming down!

That is the picture that we see in the Old Testament with Moses when God visited him in a burning bush. That’s the picture we see in the incarnation of Jesus. That’s the picture we see in the coming of the Holy Spirit. In a figurative sense, we need the Heavens to open, and God come down.

Here’s what I think. We need to experience that which we know to be sure is the visitation of God. We cannot accept a false substitute for revival. Revival is not a great service. Revival is not an emotional experience. Revival leaves us forever changed.

Revival is Isaiah hearing as Isaiah 6 reveals, the angels saying to one another:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts;
His glory fills the whole earth.

Revival is Isaiah then saying:

Woe is me for I am ruined
because I am a man of unclean lips
and live among a people of unclean lips,
and because my eyes have seen the King,
the Lord of Hosts.

Revival is Isaiah then hearing the Lord say,

Who should I send?
Who will go for Us?

And revival is Isaiah then saying:

Here I am. Send me.

“When did you last hear anyone praying for revival, praying that God might open the windows of heaven and pour out His Spirit? When God sends revival, He can do more in a single day than in fifty years of all our organization. That is the verdict of sheer history which emerges clearly from the long story of the Church.” (D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who died in 1981, as quoted by Alvin Reid.)

**Recognize the Demand for Repentance.**

Consider Isaiah 64:5-8.

Here is the hard truth:

 We will never experience revival until there is repentance.

“Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late–and how little revival has resulted? I believe the problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying, and it simply will not work.” (Tozer, as quoted by Alvin Reid.)

Our first task is to search our hearts and repent of sin. We are going to do this in our prayer revival. It is not fun, but we must.

**Reevaluate the Desire for Revival**

The Lord answered Isaiah as revealed in Isaiah 65. Look at verse 1. The Lord says, “Here I am.”

Leonard Ravenhill, author of *Why Revival Tarries*, said, “The only reason that we don’t experience revival is because we are willing to live without it.”

Dr. R. A. Torrey said:

“I have a theory…that there is not a church, chapel, or mission on earth where you cannot have revival, provided there is a little nucleus of faithful people who will hold onto God until He comes down. First, let a few Christians—there need not be many—get thoroughly right with God themselves. This is the prime essential. If this is not done, the rest, I’m sorry to say, cannot be done, and it will come to nothing. Second, let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until God opens the heavens and comes down. Third, let them put themselves at the disposal of God to use them as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. That’s all. This is sure to bring revival in any church or community. I have given this prescription around the world. It has been taken by many churches and many communities, and in no instance has it ever failed, and it cannot fail.”

**So What?**

In the words of Lanphier, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”