

**Text: II CHRONICLES 34:14-33**

**Title: “REAL REVIVAL NEEDED”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nan and I have over the past month in some of the most famous and beautiful abbeys, cathedrals and chapels to be found anywhere in the world. But I tell you, stepping back into this place, there is no more beautiful church than Travis Avenue Baptist Church. And I’m not just speaking architecturally, through obviously that is true. I’m speaking of the beauty of this Body of believers. We’re glad to be home.

We spent the past few weeks in a part of the world that at one time was the center of the Christian faith. The cluster of islands produced some of the greatest preachers in the world ... the likes of St. Patrick, John Wesley, George Whitfield, William Carey, William Wilberforce, Charles Spurgeon, and other powerful figures in the Christian faith. It is the home of some of the most beautiful sanctuaries of worship, and the richest histories. But sadly, that’s mostly what it is today ... history.

Now the United Kingdom and Ireland is post-Christian. It is vastly non-Christian. The culture is in shambles. What happened? Historians will debate that for years, but I believe one of the major factors is that the churches no longer were the strong, vibrant force that shaped the nation. Now the UK, once a great missionary sending center, is a place in great need of missionaries to come to re-evangelize a nation that no longer welcomes the truth of the Gospel.

As we were flying home this week I was catching up on my Bible reading. The OT reading took me to II Chronicles 34 and the story of one of the great revivals that happened among the people of God and the nation of Judah. I couldn’t help but think about the continual need for authentic revival among the people of God. Turn with me II Chronicles 34.

Here’s the setting. A young man by the name of Josiah became king of Judah at the ripe old age of 8! For the next 31 years he would lead the people of God in a time of revival of their faith and commitment to the Lord God. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had long since been destroyed, taken off into captivity by the Assyrians, an act of the judgment of God because of their infidelity to God.

At the age of 16 we’re told that Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor King David. Josiah was profoundly changed and he began to lead Judah to seek the Lord.

At the age of 26 he rallied the leaders of Israel to repair the temple in Jerusalem, which had fallen into a great mess. After all, worship had so declined on the list of priorities for the people that it wasn’t any big deal that the temple was in shambles. And while the workers were going about the task of repairing the temple, and amazing discovery was made.

Read vv.14-21.

I want to talk to you today about the continual revival that is needed ...

- In our personal lives ... for how easy it is for us to let our commitment to God and our attention to the Word of God to be covered up by other things
- In our church ... it was clear to me as I walked into so many of the great cathedrals and abbeys and chapels in England, Scotland and Ireland that somewhere along the way they lost sight of their main business. And now many of them are out of business.

Josiah's experience with the people of God gives us a great pattern if we are to experience the revival that we continually need.

## 1. **REDISCOVER THE WORD OF GOD**

Now the text here doesn't tell us how or why this "Book of the Law" (v.15) was misplaced to begin with. By the way, the "Book of the Law," at the very least was what we have in our Bibles as the book of Deuteronomy, and it may well have been the entire Pentateuch (Gen. to Deut.).

As you carefully study II Chronicles you have to go back some 50 years to the reign of King Hezekiah to find the last time someone paid any attention to the word of God ... 50 years!

Since that time, under the leadership of godless kings, the people of God had carelessly disregarded the Word of God. Terrible things happened. Idolatry and immorality ran rampant. There was witchcraft, sorcery, even the ritual killing of their children.

In fact, the Bible says that during this time the people of God became more wicked than the pagan nations that once inhabited the Promised Land.

That's what happens when the people of God neglect the Word of God, and then ultimately their commitment to the God of the Word.

How can this happen?

- **MISPLACED PRIORITIES**

We can get so busy with other things ... even other good things ... that we begin to neglect the things of God in our lives. Sometimes ministry even crowds out our personal devotion to God.

Just think about Hilkiah, the high priest. What an indictment that was upon him! The guy who was supposed to keep the Word of God before the people of God ... so busy keeping the lamps burning, the doors open, the money counted ... neglected the most important thing.

So over time the Book of the Law, the Word of God, gets buried under other priorities.

- **SPIRITUAL COLDNESS**

When we're on fire for the Lord, we hunger for the Word of God. We long to spend time with Him, and we'll let nothing stand in the way.

- **INTELLECTUAL DISTRUST**

Could it be that deep down inside, the reason some people neglect the Word of God is that they really don't see the point of it all? After all, it's just another book, no more authoritative, no more authentic than a Tom Clancy novel, or listening to Oprah Winfrey.

**ILLUSTRATION** – We can take the Episcopal church as a classic example. Remember the Episcopal church (the American version of the Anglican Church of England) ordained a homosexual bishop a few years ago, and are going down hill rapidly. Arkansas Episcopal Bishop Larry Maze recently announced in a letter to clergy that certain parishes in the diocese will "likely move forward" with blessing same-sex unions. This news comes a month after the Episcopal General Convention decided not to adopt a moratorium on same-sex "blessing" ceremonies.

Here's the kicker: At that same gathering, the Episcopal body also rejected a resolution to affirm that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" as is stated in John 14:6.

- **SHEER IGNORANCE**

I'm startled at the number of believers I run across who simply do not understand how important it is that they read, study, meditate upon, and practice the word of God in their lives on a daily basis.

Nan and I worshipped in an Anglican church while in Oxford. When the pastor read from the Bible, the people used the pew Bibles. I could see only one person around me who had his own copy of the Bible that he brought with him to church.

So this revival that we desperately need starts with rediscovering the Word of God. Dig it out of the night stand. Dust it off and let God begin to use it in your life.

## **2. REFOCUS ON THE WORD OF GOD**

It's one thing to carry your Bible with you; it's another thing for it to be the focus of your day.

Josiah hit the nail on the head in v.21.

**2 Chronicles 34:21 - "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book."**

Now most parts of the Bible are clear in their application for our lives, and God expects us to obey. And we can't plead ignorance.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Suppose you're driving along and you look in your rearview mirror and see the lights of a police car flashing behind you. The officer comes up to your window and asks for your

driver's license. You ask what the problem is and he tells you that you were speeding in a school zone. "I didn't know it was a school zone." "Sorry." You'll get no sympathy from the officer because you didn't know.

Open your Bible and let God begin to speak to you from His Word. Listen to what he has to say because it will be on the test.

### **3. RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD**

I want you to notice what happened when King Josiah and the people began to focus on the word of God. In v.19 it says that Josiah "tore his robes." In other words, he repented. Then a prophetess named Huldah came to speak for the Lord. She says to Josiah:

**2 Chronicles 34:27 - Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.**

Is your heart tender toward God? Are you humble enough to repent when God puts His finger on something in your life?

Repentance is followed by renewal. Josiah gathered all the people together and called upon them to renew their commitment to the Lord in response to His Word.

**Read vv.31-32.**

You see the Book of the Law was also the Book of the Covenant that God made with His people on Mt. Sinai, when He gave them the Law of Moses and said, "I will be your God and you will be My people as you keep this Law with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

**II Chronicles 34:33b – "As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the Lord, the God of their fathers."**

I'll be honest with you. I couldn't help but wonder as I walked through the churches that are now museums ... as I lived for a few weeks in a country that is vastly lost, having once been a great bastion of the Kingdom of God on earth ... am I looking at America in the lifetime of my children and grandchildren?

All it takes is for one generation to lose their priorities.

### **CONCLUSION**

One of the things that had been neglected was the observance of the Passover. And in Ch.35 Josiah leads the people to a great observance of the Passover, the likes of which that hadn't been seen in hundreds of years. The Passover meant many things, but it was part of the covenant that God made with Israel to remind them of the fact that only by God's grace could they be delivered.

Remember what Jesus did with His disciples in his last evening with them? He celebrated the Passover meal with them, but fused new meaning into it ... a new covenant. Make this a time of recommitment and renewal to the Lord and His will for your life.

## **OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**