

**Revive Us**  
**Jonah 3**  
**October 22, 2000**

We are going to see today in our text an example of what all of us would like to see in our own society; and that is revival or spiritual awakening. Jonah finally makes it to Ninevah and the results are nothing less than a miraculous spiritual awakening in the city. The entire city of Ninevah turns to God. Today, as we look at Ninevah, we are going to think about the nature of revival but before we read our text let me mention a couple of things that are important to keep in mind when we talk about revival.

First, there are dozens of different ways people have defined revival throughout history. And the reason there are so many different ways of defining revival is because there is a fundamental debate among those who study revivals. And the debate is this. Is it solely up to God to bring revival or can we do certain things to cause God to bring revival? You see the difference. One side says humanity can do nothing to get God to bring revival, God brings it when he is ready regardless of what we are doing. The other side says if we will do certain things God has promised in his word that he will send revival. They will point to passages like the one in our scripture reading this morning where God promises to heal the land and forgive sins if the people will turn to him and humble themselves and repent of sin. As far as that debate goes, I do not think it is all one or the other. I think God does bring revival in his perfect timing but, in the same way, I think God promises in his word to bring revival if people will turn to him in certain ways. We are going to see in our text today certain things I think we must embrace if we desire to see revival.

Second, let me say this before we read our text. Revival can happen on many different levels. I think often we just envision revival taking place in a country or in a church. In scripture and throughout history we see that revival can take place on a personal level, revival can take place in a family, revival can happen on an institutional level such as in a church or on a college campus, and revival can take place in cities, states, and even on a global level. Revival can happen anywhere people are in need of God. So with all that said let's read our text. Jonah 3. Now, as I mentioned earlier, from this text I want to point out to you 4 elements I think we must embrace if we desire to see revival happen at any level, whether we are talking about personal revival or global revival.

The first element we must embrace if we desire to revival is this: we must spend time with God's word. No genuine revival that I have studied has ever occurred without God's word present. Wherever you find genuine revival, you will find the word of God in some form. And that is true here in Jonah. Jonah gets the call from God a second time. God tells Jonah to go to Ninevah and proclaim what? The message I give to you. The words of Jonah's message in vs 4, '40 more days and Ninevah will be overturned', those are not Jonah's words as much as they are God's. Through Jonah the people of Ninevah have the chance to hear God speak to them; and that word sparks the flames of revival. You see, God's word is central here.

It is no different for us today. We have God's word today in the form of the bible. If we desire personal revival, we must be spending time in God's word. If we desire revival here in this church, we must be spending time in the scripture. If we are ever going to see nationwide revival we must hear the word of God. Revival doesn't take

place without God's word present in some way. That is why personally, I am disappointed to see the 10 commandments taken out of courthouses, schools, and other government controlled buildings. When you remove God's word you are removing opportunity for revival. It is somewhat frustrating to see a culture that in large part sees the bible as solely a man-made creation. As a society we do not consider the bible to be God's word. Until we adopt a higher view of scripture we are limiting our opportunity for national revival.

Consider an interesting example of nationwide revival. Many of you are familiar with the Reformation that took place in the 1500-1600's. You know the famous reformers Luther and Calvin. The reformation was one of the greatest periods of revival and spiritual awakening this world has seen and do you know the invention that helped make the reformation possible? It was the printing press. For the first time in history literature could be mass produced. For the first time people had a chance to read the bible in their own language and it sparked revival that spread throughout Europe. Now, it may seem a bit hopeless that we would see revival on that level today. As a society, God's word is not embraced, but I'll say this: on a personal level, on a family level, on a church level, it doesn't have to be that way. We can spend time in God's word. We must embrace the word of God if we desire to see revival.

A second element this text teaches us that we must embrace if we desire to see revival is this: we must obey God's word. Now this is a bit obvious so we won't spend much time here but let me say this. You can read God's word all day but if you do not act upon what God says then it does you little good. Notice v5. It says the Ninevites believed who? God. They knew God was speaking to them and they believed God.

How do we know they believed God? Because they acted upon what they heard. They put on this sackcloth, declared a fast, and began to call upon God in repentance. They didn't just hear God's word. They believed God's word and their obedient action was evidence of their belief.

That obedience to God's word is an element you see in all genuine revivals. If we desire to see revival in our lives not only must we spend time in God's word but we must obediently act upon what his word tells us to do.

A third revival element we find here and one we must embrace is this: we must declare a fast. Now, often when we think of fasting we think of what? Going without food for a certain amount of time. But what we must remember is that almost always in the bible fasting is connected to what? Prayer. Fasting isn't just God's way of getting us on a diet. Fasting is God's way of urging us to seek him before anything else. That really is the principle behind fasting and that is really what I am saying here. When I say we must declare a fast I am not just talking about staying away from food. What I want us to consider is this: are we seeking God before anything else? Have you removed those things from your life that would distract you from God?

Notice that is the first thing the Ninevites do here. V5--the Ninevites believed God and they declared a fast all of them from the least to the greatest. Everyone made it their priority to seek God above all else. When you hit those spiritually dry and trying times; when you need spiritual renewal and revival be intentional about putting away distractions, those things that would get between you and God. Declare a fast from those things. Turn off the TV, turn off the radio, turn off the computer, put away the studies, remove anything that would distract you from God. Then get alone with God and talk to

him, listen to him, seek his face. That intense and intentional seeking after God is a mark of any genuine revival. If we want revival we must declare a fast.

Finally, a fourth element present in all genuine revivals and one we must embrace if we desire revival is this: we must embrace a humble attitude. There can be no revival without genuine humility. Pride will kill the revival spirit. Notice the humility here among the Ninevites. V5, they all put on sackcloth, v6, the king covered himself in sackcloth and sat in the dust. These are all signs of humility. Notice the decree of the king. V8, all were to put on sackcloth; this sign of humility, but the king goes further. Everyone was to call on God and give up their evil ways and their violence. Ninevah is repenting here of their sins. Even the king's closing statement in v9 shows humility. "Who knows? Maybe God will have compassion on us and spare us." The Ninevites are not presuming God's grace or expecting that God will forgive them. They are humbly hoping that God's grace is greater than their sins.

That is exactly the kind of attitude we must embrace if we desire revival. We must empty ourselves of any pride before God. We must turn from our sin and recognize that if we are forgiven it is not because we are so good but it is because God is so good. We are forgiven because God's grace is greater than our sinfulness. It has been said that God's word sparks revival but repentance fans the flame, and it takes genuine humility to truly repent.

On April 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln in the midst of national unrest, called the country to a national day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. And he used those words in your bulletin. Look at the last two sentences. "Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and

preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." That is the kind of attitude that moves God to bring revival.

So, if we desire revival on any level we must spend time in God's word, we must obey God's word, we must declare a fast from those things that would pull our attention away from God, and we must humble ourselves before our Father in heaven.

Humble ourselves in prayer, in repentant prayer, in confessing prayer, in soul searching prayer.