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SERMON TITLE	The Road to Restoration
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SERIES	Godly Reset
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DATE	2/21/2021
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KEY SCRIPTURE	Isaiah 57:14-21
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SYNOPSIS	<i>Revival is a sovereign act of God, but He is looking for people who are prepared and ready to receive His blessings. For revival to come there are conditions we must recognize and preparations we must make. We must prepare the way.</i>
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HIGHLIGHTS	n/a
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☛ The Road to Restoration

Isaiah 57:14-21

14 And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people." 15 For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. 16 I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me — the breath of man that I have created. 17 I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. 18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, 19 creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the Lord. "And I will heal them." 20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. 21 "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

We love the part about reviving the spirit and heart and restoring comfort. Those are God's promises to his people. But we have a role to play in preparing the way.

--Ian Malins... In ancient times when a king was to visit a city, a messenger would go before, telling the people to get ready. The people of that city would then get busy preparing the road along which the king would travel. They would remove rocks and stones on the road, fill in potholes and make the road wide and smooth. If these kinds of preparations were made for an earthly king coming to visit his people, how much more do we need to prepare the way for the sovereign Lord to come to us in divine visitation? In the desert and spiritually barren places, we need to begin now to prepare a straight highway so that the Lord can come to us.

☛ Raise the Road

v. 14 Build up, build up; Prepare the road

= areas that are below grade; substandard; less than God's best. These need to come up to the required level. These are things we've neglected and not been diligent about and have allowed to degrade into substandard qualities. Things like obedience, righteousness and holiness.

☛ cf. Isaiah 35:8 – the highway of holiness

Holiness = pure, clean; not common or profane.

Psalms 119:30

☛ 30 I have chosen the way of truth

Truth = honesty; fidelity; firmness; steadfastness.

Proverbs 4:11

☛ I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths

Wisdom = skill; shrewdness.

Proverbs 9:6

☛ Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.



Understanding = discernment; insight.

Proverbs 12:28

☞ In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality.

Righteousness = morally right; justice; virtue; loyalty.

To raise the road, we need holiness, truth, wisdom, understanding, and righteousness. We need to fill the potholes where we've been lacking in these areas. Things in our lives that have been less than pure, right and virtuous. Times when we have been stupid and lacked discernment. Those things have left ruts and potholes in our lives and they need to be raised up. There's a choice to be made and it's going to take some effort.

Determination and perseverance are necessary in the way of truth. We are so bombarded with lies and deception in our modern era, we have to work hard to embrace the truth. We must listen to instruction and guard godly wisdom. Jesus said that our hearts for virtues should be that we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Have you ever been so hungry you started snapping at people? There is a real-life behavior called "being hangry"—so hungry you begin to get angry. Ella Carter and Philip Watts actually did a study on this. "When we are hungry, our brains are essentially starved of glucose, meaning that our ability to control our emotions is reduced, as is our ability to concentrate." Jesus wants believers to be hungry and thirsty. But not for food—for the righteousness of God. When you are hungry you go to the refrigerator or to a drive-through with anticipation of finding food. God wants you to go to church, read your Bible, and pray with an anticipation that he will give you what you need.

To raise the road and get on the way of holiness and righteousness, we must leave behind the old ways and walk in his ways. Too many think that holiness is dull and restrictive.

God is not looking to extinguish our joy but rather to set it aflame in the right context. He sets boundaries for our benefit. This can be seen with the way riverbanks work. What they can do is help channel the energy of water to flow in a particular direction. If there were no banks, the water would just go anywhere and most likely disappear into the ground or cause damage to what is around it. When it comes to holiness, the riverbanks are the instructions God has given us to keep our lives in a proper order that helps rather than hurts. When they don't function in their order, then chaos ensues. But when they stay in the banks that God created, they can be a powerful thing, just like a mighty river.

☞ Proverbs 4:26-27

26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. 27 **Do not swerve to the right or the left;** keep your foot from evil.

Stay within those banks. Raise the road. Many have allowed their roads to become too low. The standards you set for yourself are subpar. It feels like freedom, but it's really a trap. God wants to come to you, but the road is full of potholes and obstructions from a life lived too loosely. It's time to build up the road, preparing the way for the Lord. Here is a simple way to begin...

Psalms 50:23



He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.

I've even created a chart showing how Christlikeness comes more naturally by simply **beginning with thanksgiving**. As we express gratitude it leads to worshipping God. As we worship God it enhances our sense of humility while strengthening our love and fear of God. Humility, love and the fear of the Lord lead to transformation. And it all begins with gratitude. Raise the Road.

☞ **Remove the Restrictions**

v. 14 remove the obstacles out of the way

= areas of resistance; barriers between us and God. These are areas of unevenness; inconsistencies; ups and downs; hot and cold; areas where refining is needed. We all struggle with this one, but God can work in us to be more consistent in our faith-walk.

☞ v. 15 (not contrite) **Presumption** and impenitence

Too often, we think that we're just fine when it comes to God. We think we're not as bad as other people. We're pretty good. But we need to see ourselves as God sees us.

In one scene from the movie Shrek, Lord Farquaad uses a magic mirror that is supposed to reveal the truth to him. However, in his pride he ends up forcing the mirror to lie and tell him what he wants to hear and see about himself. In a similar way, we can suffer from self-deception when we choose to skip over a right examination of our lives.

It's not how we compare to other people; it's how we compare to Christ.

☞ v. 15 **Pride** (not lowly)

This is an extension of presumption. When we compare ourselves to others, it can lead to pride. I know sometimes it causes discouragement, but we can always find someone we feel superior to. Pride is a huge obstruction on the road to restoration.

Psalms 10:4

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

And pride isn't just about the egotistic person. It can be simply a self-centered focus. Even when you have the attitude of "why me?" in hard times, or become jealous of the success of others – that's a form of pride. Whenever it's "all about me" there is pride.

Swallow your pride occasionally, and console yourself with the knowledge that it is 100 percent calorie free.

☞ v. 17 **self-indulgence** or greed

This one flows directly from pride. When you are overly self-focused, it leads to indulgence. Colossians 3:5 indicates that greed is actually idolatry – putting something ahead of God.



Oh sure, you don't have little statues laid out in your bedroom, but your heart is filled with them. Self-indulgence and greed are all about what you want. It's not just about greed for wealth. It can be a self-focus on life pursuits. Anytime you pursue your dreams and leave God out of the planning process, you've just replaced God with your dreams, and that's a form of idolatry. This is not to say you should be directionless, but it is to say that your plans and dreams can be a cover-up for self-centered ambitions, and that's when it can become toxic. Your dreams and ambitions may even be good, but what if God had something greater? Something better by his standards.

Self-indulgence is a roadblock on the road to restoration.

☞ v. 17 **stubbornness** or willful ways

Acts 7:51 (Stephen to the Sanhedrin)

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You

☞ always **resist the Holy Spirit!**

These obstacles all work together. There may be presumption that we're "pretty okay" and that leads to pride and self-indulgence. And once you get used to self-indulgence, you tend to become stubborn, because you like having everything focused on you. But God calls it "stiff-necked" and resisting the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 reminds us, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire."

Presumption, pride, self-indulgence and stubbornness are areas of resistance that need to be removed on this road to restoration.

Repent and Replace these with contrition and humility. God is drawn to these. He revives the contrite and lowly in spirit. In Matthew 5 Jesus said it's the poor in spirit that receive the kingdom of God and the meek that inherit the earth. There is an inheritance for those who remove the resistance, preparing the way of the Lord.

☞ **Revive**

v. 15 "Live in a high and holy place but also with the contrite and lowly in spirit..."

☞ **God's Presence** Revives the spirit and the heart. As we raise the road and remove the resistance, it makes a way for the presence of God. And it's his presence that gives new life to us.

☞ v. 18 God's Presence Restores **comfort**. It brings **healing, guidance** and ultimate **peace**.

I'm looking for an encounter with God that brings revival including healings and miracles which can only be attributed to the power of God. I want a revival that gives clear direction and guidance to God's people as we legitimately hear his voice. That would include words of knowledge, wisdom and prophecy, along with dreams and visions from the Lord. I'm talking about all the gifts of the Spirit in operation. I want a revival with the presence of God so powerful that it produces peace beyond understanding. The kind that puts aside petty quarrels and disunity, because God is leading so powerfully. I want God's presence and revival in our place and in our time. Lord, do it again!

When God is present in power and fullness, there is revival and restoration.



The heart and center of revival is simply the rediscovery of the wonderful sense of the presence of God and a hunger for that presence.

--Vance Havner... What we call revival is simply New Testament Christianity – the saints getting back to normal.

☞ **“Naturally supernatural.”** Where all the supernatural stuff in the bible is just normal life for the believer.

--Ian Malins... Revival is a sovereign act of God, but He is looking for people who are prepared and ready to receive His blessings. For revival to come there are conditions we must recognize and preparations we must make. We must prepare the way.

☞ **Raise the Road and Remove the Restrictions to be Revived.**

☞ **Malachi 3:1**

"See, I will send my messenger, who will **prepare the way** before me. **Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple**