

☞ Preparing for Renewal

The last couple weeks we've been talking about the valley of dry bones. For some, the situation seems hopeless. The dryness and dullness are overwhelming, but God is not done with us yet. He can revive the dry bones.

1 Kings 18:21-46

Scholars have studied great moves of God throughout history and have discovered some "Revival Patterns:"

- 1) Awakenings are usually preceded by a time of spiritual depression, apathy and sin, in which a majority of nominal Christians are hardly different from secular society, and the churches seem to be asleep. The moral leadership of the Church has been stilled for some time and social evils are usually rampant.
- 2) An individual or small group of God's people becomes conscious of their sins and backslidden condition, and vows to forsake all that is displeasing to God. Christians recall past outpourings of God's grace and power, and long to see them again.
- 3) As some Christians begin to yearn for a manifestation of God's power a new awareness of the holy and pure character of the Lord is present. This standard of holiness exposes the degeneracy of the age and stimulates a striving after holiness by God's people.
- 4) The awakening of Christians occurs: many understand and take part in a higher spiritual life. And, whole societies often change for the better.

We need a renewal. Billy Sunday said, "They tell me a revival is temporary; so is a bath, but it does you good."

1. ☞ The Problem

Drought and famine – Elijah prophesied this in 17:1; 18:3 says the famine was severe. Sounds a bit like the valley of dry bones.

Here's the back-story: They rejected wise counsel; there was division; there was rebellion; there was compromise. The enemy of renewal is compromise, corruption and competition with the things of God.

☞ At this point the people were wavering (lit., limping). They were **indecisive**. Romans 4:20 indicates that wavering is actually a product of **unbelief**. They didn't really trust God. So there was a drought and famine of the Spirit. And when Elijah confronted it, the people were **silent**.

Psalms 34:17

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

When we are confronted with our own corruption and compromises, we need to turn to God and cry out to him. Last week I said we need to see the truth and when we are honest about our condition, it should prompt us to turn to God.

2. ☞ **The Proposition**

If Baal is God, follow him; but if the LORD is God, follow him. Which is really the supreme God of all? Baal meant lord or owner, while Yahweh means the self-existing one. Who is really God?

They were in violation of the first commandment found in Exodus 20:3: “You shall have no other gods before me.” They were trying to have God and other gods as well. **You ☞ can’t just add God to your life; you need to give your life fully to him.**

A woman getting onto a ski lift was given instructions that the moment the lift's chair touched her backside she was to sit down and lift her feet from off the ground. Instead when the chair came against her she sat down but was nervous about the height of the lift. Her hesitation caused her to keep her feet firmly planted on the platform. She wanted to see the magnificent view from the top of the lift, but also wanted to be firmly attached to the ground. With her feet on the platform, the seat began to wind back and then like a slingshot hurled her off the platform causing injury to her legs and back. Indecision is a dangerous thing. Straddling between two positions can be hazardous to your health.

So, Elijah proposes a contest involving an impossible situation: Make a sacrifice, but don’t ☞ light it up. Let’s see which god will start the fire. **God does business with those that mean business.** Plus the odds were against him: 450 to 1.

When you’re facing an impossible situation, who are you gonna call?

Luke 1:37

nothing is impossible with God.

In fact, Elijah was so confident in God, that he taunted the prophets of Baal.

3. ☞ **The Process**

This is what we need to pay special attention to if we want renewal.

Here's some things that don't work... v. 26, 28, 29 the prophets of Baal shouted... they danced around... they shouted louder and slashed themselves... until their blood flowed...they continued their frantic prophesying. This represents a lot of hype. Now, not all those things are bad, but they're not the key to renewal.

Elijah said, "Come to me" – as God's prophet, Elijah represents the Word of God. We've ☞ been talking a lot about this lately. **Get back into the Word!**

Ephesians 5:26 speaks of washing with the Word. Colossians 3:16 says we are to let the Word dwell richly within. Read your Bible, not just for study purposes or note-taking, but simply for this "washing." While the spirit uses the word to wash us, we also should be responding to what we read.

James 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

"He repaired the altar" – this represents a variety of things such as **gathering** together with ☞ other believers, **giving, praising, praying**, and remembering what God has done in the past. The altar was in ruins. Apparently, the people had not been worshiping, giving or praying. Do you need to repair the altar in your life? Have you been giving? Praising? Praying?

We need to come each Sunday expecting God to move powerfully. During worship and singing you can be chilled, thrilled or filled. Chilled = going through the motions, but remaining unmoved and cold. Thrilled = being entertained and focused on yourself. Filled = loving God wholeheartedly, receiving the Spirit and being renewed.

"He arranged the wood" – How do you arrange wood for a good fire? I believe this ☞ represents **unity and aligning with God's plans**. In Acts 2, the believers were all together, in one place which is exactly what Jesus had told them to do. So, they aligned with God's plans and were in unity. That's when the Holy Spirit came on them all in tremendous power.

"He cut the bull" – this represents removing sin, and in our modern language means ☞ **"sincerity."**

☞ **GROJ sale = Get Rid Of Junk**

☞ “He poured water” – this represents **sacrifice**. Remember, they were in a three-year drought. Water was a very precious commodity at this point, but Elijah poured it on in abundance.

Psalms 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

☞ “He stepped forward” – this can represent **doing something new**. If you need renewed, and nothing is happening, then do something different. My bet is that you haven’t been reading the word; or you haven’t been praying; or you haven’t been entering into worship.

--John Hagee... When you want what you’ve never had, you have to do what you’ve never done.

If you’re not experiencing renewal as is, you need to do something different! You can’t stay in the past. God is on the move. So we must be moving too.

Finally, “he prayed” – this one is obvious.

--E.M. Bounds... "What the Church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men -- men of prayer."

☞ **PUSH... Pray Until Something Happens.**

--Samuel Chadwick... "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray."

☞ We’re having an all-church **prayer meeting today right after Celebration**. We’ve decided to do it right away so that you don’t have to go home and then remember to come back. As well, those online can stay online with us. We are going to pray today.

And I want you to notice what Elijah prayed for. He didn’t pray for the fire to come down and he didn’t pray for the rain to end the drought. Instead he **prayed that God would be**

☞ **known**. (v. 36) cf. Ephesians 1:17...so that you may know him better.

☞ And he prayed that the **people would turn back to God**. (v.37) cf. Acts 3:19 ...Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

☞ *****The Return and PrayerMarch 2020***** September 26. Franklin Graham is leading the **PrayerMarch** in DC from noon to 2pm. Jonathan Cahn and a host of others is leading **the Return** that same day. It's a day set apart to come to the Lord with humility and repentance as well as intercession for America to return to God. You can find more information at www.prayermarch2020.com and www.thereturn.org There will also be simulcasts available for the Return that you can log onto and be a part.

We need to focus more on God. We need to know him more. We need to turn to him. These are the priorities of prayer: God's renown and man's repentance. This all leads to...

4. ☞ **The Product**

When Elijah prayed, God responded with fire.

☞ God's fire is all-consuming. **He takes over**. Hebrews 12:29 says, our "God is a consuming fire." He doesn't want just any part in the theater of your life. He wants the starring role. He doesn't just want you on Sundays, but every day, all day. He doesn't want just your words, but your actions as well. He wants all of you.

☞ "The people fell" – **they turned to God**; they repented in response to Elijah's prayer and God's power. They were restored and the process of renewal had begun.

When God brings renewal and makes visitation great things happen...

Acts 2:41 three thousand were added to their number

Acts 2:43 many wonders and miraculous signs

Acts 3:19 times of refreshing

Acts 5:12-16 highly regarded by the people

During the first meetings of the Hebrides Revival, it was reported that 75 percent of the converts were born again before they arrived at the meeting place.

Almolonga – large percentage of people are now believers; many of the businesses have Biblical names; even the crops have increased in size and quantity; and they rarely need to pray for sick people.

☞ Then, “a small cloud rose” – God was giving **a token of his plan for renewal**. He helped Elijah and his servant see what was in store for them. He was sending the rain.

Elijah pressed the servant to go back a seventh time. “Go and look again.” Open up your eyes. The servant came back this time and said, “Behold there is a little cloud—like a man’s hand...” Elijah didn’t belittle the fact that it was a very small cloud in a great big sky. It was the beginning of a bigger storm cloud—the answer was beginning to take shape. We may shrug off the beginning of God’s answer to us. “Oh, it’s just a little.” But the little cloud speaks of hope. When we are waiting on God, we need hope to have something to look forward to. Sometimes people will say, “The situation is just hopeless—nothing is going to happen.” But when you have hope, you can wait for it to happen.

It didn’t just stop with the token cloud. It was “a heavy rain” that built up to a downpour.

☞ That’s what I’m looking for! The **refreshing rain of the Holy Spirit** comes to us when we turn back to God.

And that’s not all. Notice verse 46... Elijah was empowered to run ahead of a chariot all the way to Jezreel. When we are renewed and receive a downpour of the Holy Spirit, we

☞ are **supernaturally empowered to do God’s work**.

If you’ve been feeling like an old dried-up wineskin, or like dry bones in the valley, then admit your problem and get down to business with God.

Get back into the Word. Gather, give, praise, pray. Make a sacrifice of some sort.

Let God have full authority in your life. Welcome the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Invite the Presence of God into your daily routine. Let’s be renewed!

Song: Pour out your Spirit

*God to be known by all
People to turn to God
Spiritual awakening*

*Leaders at all levels
Upcoming elections
Schools and teachers*

*Believers return to God
Repentance
Surrender*

*COVID-19
Other healings
Miracles*

*Outpouring of the Spirit
Spiritual gifts in operation
Anointing on churches*

*Christian unity
Godly lifestyles
Expressions of gratitude*