

Chapter Two Prayer for Revival

Manuscript
from tape

Habakkuk chapter 3 text: 3:2

I want us to play doctor. Some of you haven't done that since you were little children. I want you to be a doctor and this is the patient. ~~It~~ *It's symptoms are* is a nation, a country, a people. These are its symptoms, there are five (1) is the downfall of the dignity of the home. Symptom number 2 is higher and higher taxes, public money being used for free bread, free meals, other things, Symptom number three is a mad craze for pleasure, one of these involving an increase in the interest of rough sports becoming more brutal every year. Symptom number four is the amassing of great armaments, the building of armies, the spending of billions of dollars upon defense, while the real enemy is not so much on the outside as it is on the inside. Symptom number five is the deadness of religion. It's loss of touch with the people, and its loss of touch with God. Now here is a sick nation with these five symptoms, you are the doctor, what would you prescribe?

over from intro

Strangely enough, these five things, are the same things that Edward Gibbon in his famous book "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" listed as the five contributing factors to the downfall of that tremendous empire.

It sounds almost as though you were reading, or listening, to a Democrat while you have got a Republican president. There is one thing you discover as you study history - is that every civilization when it falls, the same factors are always present. Well, what would you prescribe if you had been in Rome in that day or if you had been in Israel when Habakkuk the prophet was preaching. The same symptoms that were present in the fall of Rome, the same symptoms that probably are present in our own society, were the same things present in the national, social, and religious life of Israel when Habakkuk preached, and when Habakkuk prophesied. He makes it very clear, under the inspiration of God, there here is a sick people, a sick nation, lying at the point of death. Now what would you prescribe? The first two chapters is the diagnosis, chapter three is the prescription. And he puts it in one verse, that second verse. Here is Habakkuk's panacea for all of the ills of Israel. Verse 2. His one cure-all that would solve every problem, political, economic, social, religious. Habakkuk says it can be termed in one word, revival. Oh, Lord, revive. This is what we must have, he said, Lord revive thy work.

Unfortunately, revival is like some of the drapes you have hanging in your living room. One side has been exposed ^{So} ~~too~~ long to the sun, they have been bleached of all their color. And I think that's the way the

word revival is to us today. We have used it so much and have thrown it around for so many years that it has been drained of all its real color and true meaning. Most of us think about revival as a protracted meeting where we have an evangelist come in and a singer and we meet Sunday night, Monday night and all the week through, and this is a revival. Revival is breaking Sunday School records, revival is a lot of additions, revival is preaching every night, singing every night, and having all kinds of little gimmicks and other little things to try to get the people to come. The other side of those drapes, because they have not been exposed to the sun, still have their rich texture and their full color. The other side of the word revival, because we have not explored it too much, still retains its full richness that the Bible intended for it to have. When the Bible speaks about revival it is not speaking about what you and I normally think of as a revival. The word revive means to bring back to life something that has been rendered unconscious. It may be a person, it may be a church, it may be a nation, it may be a work; it is still alive, the blood is still flowing through it, the heart is still beating, there is still a faint breath, but it is unconscious, it is inactive, it is ineffective. To revive means to restore it to its former activity, to revitalize it, to rejuvenate it

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with its original strength and its original power. To bring back

to life, to put the spark of life and enthusiasm and zeal back

into that which has grown sluggish and foggy and unconscious. And

Habakkuk says that the one over-all solution for a sick country, for

a sick home, for a sick church, for a sick Christian, is for God to

revive him. That's all that is needed. When Jesus stood at the

tomb of Lazarus and looked at that man who had been dead for three

or four days all he needed was reviving, that's all. And when

Jesus spoke the words, "Come forth", that was all he needed. It

was the over-all once and for all solution to Lazarus' problem.

And this is what Habakkuk is saying. I want to take my stand by

Habakkuk. I believe firmly with all of my heart, it is the

conviction of my soul that the one solution, the one cure-all for

every problem in our country, in our life, in our home, in our

school, in our church is God reviving, God coming into a fresh

in-filling of His Spirit into the life of these institutions and

these organizations. And so Habakkuk is praying for revival. He

is praying that God would do it. This ought to be our prayer. I

hope it is our prayer. I hope it will be your prayer this morning

that God would send a revival. And I want you to look at this

second verse then we are going to look at a few other verses in this prophecy, and see just what kind of revival it is that Habakkuk is praying for. First of all the kind of revival that we need is a revival of hearing, a revival of hearing, of hearing God's Word. Notice he says, O Lord I have heard ---- and it made an impression on him because he said and I was afraid. I have heard thy speech, I have heard your report, I have heard what you had to say. If you will notice in that second chapter in verse 1, in just a moment we are going to read it, you see Habakkuk has a complaint with the Lord. He says what a lot of us feel but haven't the nerve to put down in words. He opens up his prophecy by saying, Lord, how long are you going to let things go on like this. He said, Lord why do you allow me to see sin. Lord, why do I have to look every day upon injustices, upon human cruelties, upon sin, why do you let me do this, Lord. How long are you going to put up with this. He said, Lord, you are supposed to be everlasting. He says you are supposed to be pure, your eyes are not supposed to look upon sin - why is it then that you allow this to go on. And I guess Habakkuk

is feeling kind of sorry for himself, I guess he feels like Elijah felt when he thought he was the only one in all the world that loved the Lord. He said Lord I just have to suffer every day looking at this sin, living among these injustices, and these human cruelties, Lord, why don't you do something about it -- how long. And then all of a sudden, Habakkuk remembers who he is. And in that first verse of that second chapter he says, I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower. Now in the Hebrew he is stuttering - it doesn't come out of the English but when you read it in the Hebrew he is stuttering. And this is really what he is saying: Habakkuk in that first chapter has really been in good form, he's just been telling God like it really is, he has been asking God why he puts up with all of this, why doesn't God do something about it. All of a sudden, Habakkuk is shocked into silence and remembers who he is and who he is talking to and this is what he is literally saying, uh, uh, I will uh, go stand on my watch. He is going to shut up, and he says, I will set me on my tower, and he is stuttering, and uh, I will watch to see what he will say to me. You see, Habakkuk, like so many of us, forgot who God was and he forgot who he was. And he was so busy

speaking and so busy crying out all of these evils and all of a sudden he remembers that this was not his place and he shut up and he said, Lord, I will just go to my place and I will wait until you tell me what you want me to hear. And so he comes back and he says, Lord, I heard thy voice and I was afraid. I don't know of anything that you and I need any more today than a revival of hearing of God's Word. I'm not talking now about listening to sermons. Do you know the difference between listening to sermons and hearing God's Word? You are listening to a sermon this morning, I may be preaching about anything - let's suppose I'm preaching about being kind to your neighbor and I'm preaching the Word of God, you are listening to the Word of God and you say, amen, that's right, you ought to be kind to your neighbor, I come over here to lying. Stop lying the Bible says, you say, amen, that's right, that's good preaching, we ought not to lie. Here's another one that says, speak not evil of one another, brethren. You are listening to God's Word, and you say that's right, that's in the book, that the Word of God. That's listening to the Word of God. But now you go out on Monday and somebody insults you, somebody crosses you up, and all of a sudden you jettison everything you have

heard the day before and you strike back in anger and you begin to criticize and you begin to backbite, or perhaps you are trying to sell an insurance policy or trying to sell some piece of merchandise and if you fudge just a little bit and stretch the truth just a little but you can make the sale, and all of a sudden you just forget about anything you ever heard. You see, on Sunday we listen to preaching, but few of us ever hear God's Word. And when the Bible speaks about hearing God's Word, the word always indicates hearing with an end to obeying. You hear in order that you may obey. And if what you hear on Sunday morning in your Sunday School class and from this pulpit you do not translate into your every day life, you are not hearing the Word of God, you are not standing on your tower, you are not keeping silence before the Lord and hearing what He has to say about your life and about your conduct. We need a revival of hearing of God's Word, of listening, but more than listening of taking it in and hearing and obeying it and letting it shape and affect our every day lives. Now I want you to notice something else that Habakkuk says in that first verse. He says Now in the margin of your Bible, if you have a Bible that has margins, and sometimes it gives the literal meaning of these Hebrew prepositions, you will

find that Habakkuk is not saying he will speak unto me, but he is saying he will speak inside me. He will speak inside me. That's the way God always speaks. God has a private line to your heart that nobody else has access to and when God speaks it is not so much the loud voice on the outside but it is that still, small voice. You may call it conscience if you want to, but it is that voice that speaks inside you. It's that voice that says, when you are about to fly off the handle and lose your temper and say something very unkind about that neighbor, it's that voice, you may call it conscience, that says, now wait just a minute, you know you ought not to say this. That's God speaking inside you. It's when you are driving down the highway and you pick up a hitchhiker and you keep on driving, or maybe you are standing at the counter in the grocery store or maybe you are in the service station getting gas, you are next to somebody else. And a still, small voice says deep inside you, reckon he's a Christian, maybe you ought to just say something to him. That is God speaking. That's God speaking. Or maybe on Sunday morning when you get ready to make your offering, God says, now, wait just a minute, is that really what it ought to be? Is that

really what it ought to be? Is that really a true tithe? That's

the still small voice of God speaking. Habakkuk says when God

speaks to me he is going to speak from within the heart, the

impression, the impression. When God begins to nudge your mind

and nudge your heart and whisper a little bit and begin to make your

mind think about things you ought to be doing and you aren't doing,

that is a revival of hearing God's Word. And that is what we need.

We don't need so much a revival of listening to sermons because

we have plenty of that. We gorge ourselves on sermons until we

get indigestion from them. We have heard sermon after sermon. I

don't think I could come up with a new idea for a sermon if my life

depended on it. The nearest thing I could come up with was talking

about gray hairs and I got chewed out about that and I'm not going

to do that anymore..... We've heard it all. You've heard it all.

Someone said to me not long ago, every time we have an evangelist, I've

heard everything he's got to say. That's right. You've listened to

every sermon that has ever been preached. I couldn't bring a new idea

to your minds from the Word of God if I had to. We do not need a

revival of listening to sermons, we need a revival of hearing God's

Word in the marketplace, in the home, and on the job. This is what

Habakkuk is saying. But not only do we need a revival of hearing, we need a revival of fearing - of fearing God's wrath.

Notice in that second verse ... (chapter 3) He says --- I was afraid -- Now that's interesting. You see Habakkuk starts out in that first chapter, verse 2 and he says, Lord, when are you going to answer me, he says I have been praying about this situation, I have been praying about national conditions, I have been praying about our church and Lord, you have kept silence, and Lord, when are you going to answer me? And God does answer him and when Habakkuk hears what God said it scares him to death. Because you know what God said to Habakkuk? God said, Habakkuk, I'll tell you what I am going to do about conditions in your land and in your church. You remember the Chaldeans, don't you, your enemies, those barbarians. He says in that first chapter, verse 5, I'm going to raise up the Chaldeans and they are going to storm over your land and their horses are going to be swifter than yours and their horsemen shall fly through your land like starving eagles. He says I am going to bring judgment on your land and I am going to use your enemies as the instrument of

of judgment. And when Habakkuk hears that he is afraid. I heard, Lord, your voice and I was afraid. I heard you say you were going to bring judgement, I heard you say that things were going to get worse before they get better, Oh, Lord, send revival. You know it is an interesting study of the O.T. Did you know that God never blames sinful conditions in a country on the sinners, did you know that? He never blames drunkenness on the drinkers. He never blames gambling on the gamblers. He never blames immorality on the immoral. God never brought judgment upon any nation because of its sinners. He brought judgement upon it because of its ineffective saints. And the reason that God almost totally destroyed Israel was not because there was some unsaved people in there, drinking and carousing and gambling, but because there was a host of His people who were dead spiritually, who were not listening and who were not adhering to the Word of God, who were not translating the ethics and the morality of God into their every day living and because of the backsliding of God's people He sends judgment, and if God ever sends judgement to America, and He will, it will not be because of the gamblers and the heathen and the pagan and the drunksards we have in our society, it will be because of the

sleeping church of Jesus Christ does nothing about it. And notice, God uses their enemies to judge them. I could draw a very temporary parallel to this. For the Israelites, the Chaldeans were their arch enemies at this time. They were the Communists at that time, and God said I am going to bless the Chaldeans, I am going to strengthen them, I am going to bless them politically and economically and materially and they are going to come in your land and they are going to ravage your land and defeat your land. I don't think we need to get so puffed up and cocky in thinking that America is God's favorite and that God is on our side and nothing can happen to us and that no invading army can ever take our land. That's exactly the mistake that Israel made. They said we are God's people, nothing can happen to us and the Chaldeans rushed in to them and completely destroyed their cities. We need a revival of fearing - you say well, do you fear God? I do. I do fear God. It's not that slavish fear that I am afraid that God doesn't love me or that God is going to mistrust me, but I fear God when I remember what God is able to do. When I remember God's holiness that does not compromise. When I remember God's righteousness, when I

remember what God expects of me and what He does to nations that forget Him, I am afraid. My, we need a revival of fearing of God, that revered awe, that holy awe of God. But not only this, Habakkuk says we need a revival of seeing - of seeing God work.

Notice real carefully now his prayer -- (verse 2--- make known - and that word known means to make a public display, here's what he is saying. He's saying, Lord, it's been years and years since anybody has seen a public display of your work. He said, Lord, revive your work. Breathe life, not into the work of the church, not into the work of the people, we're still working, God, in many instances, His work is not as obvious, and Habakkuk is saying, revive thy work, and more than this, make it known, make it public, so everybody will see that God is working, that God is alive. You know the difference between first century Christians and those of us today? We say, I heard about what God did. They said, I saw God do it. Have you ever noticed in listening to testimonies how most of them are in the past tense? Talk about that man I won to the Lord five years ago -- talk about the great spiritual awakening that happened 50 years ago.

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Do you know one of the popular things among evangelicals is the swapping of tapes -- these people that years ago saw the Welsh revival, and saw some of the other great revivals, 20, 30, and 40 years ago. Before they die they put them down on tape, and now we are all listening to them, listening to what these people saw -- that we have only heard about. I had a man in my office the other day, a good friend of mine, and you know what he asked me? He said, preacher, and he's always this way, he's always happy in the Lord, he's a wonderful witness. He said, what did the last man you won to the Lord say? I wanted to say, how about Junior? He said what did the last man that you won to the Lord say? Well -- what did the last man that you won to the Lord say? How long has it been since you have seen God's work in your life? Many of us have never seen God work in our lives, we never have. We have seen God work in other peoples lives, we've heard about God working in other people's lives. But many of you have been Christians, ten, fifteen, twenty years and you would have to be honest this morning and say I have never seen God work in my life. Some of you could say, well, yes, I have seen God work, God used to work in my life, He used to use me,

I used to be an instrument, I used to feel his presence and his power, He used to use me. If you gave a testimony this morning it would have to be in the past tense. We need a revival of God's work - of seeing God's work, right now, this moment, of seeing God work in our lives. There is only one way it comes. It comes when like Habakkuk we reach the point of desperation and we become afraid of conditions and afraid of God's judgment and we hear God's Word and we cry out, O Lord revive thy work right now. I think this is the kind of revival you need, God wants to give it. It doesn't have to be in a seven day meeting. It happens in an instant sometimes. It doesn't have to be a large congregation, sometimes just one person dealing with God. Revival doesn't mean so much a broken Sunday School record as it does a broken heart. And perhaps that is the starting place of it all. Would you listen to God's Word and would you hear His voice this morning? Would you get in your place, set yourself down in your tower and listen for God to speak to your own heart?