

We Need the Revival 4

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リバイバルの必要性 4

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ゴットホルド・ベック

Psalms

26:2 Examine me, Lord, and inspect me! Test my heart and mind.

[International Standard Version]

139:23 Examine me, God, and know my mind, test me, and know my thoughts.

139:24 See if there is any offensive tendency in me, and lead me in the eternal way.

I would like to continue the discussion with you about the “necessity, importance and possibility of the revival.” The word ‘revival’ does not sound like Japanese. Actually, it is taken from English. It refers to the ‘spiritual awakening’, ‘the reconstruction of faith’, or ‘the resurrection of our faith.’

Believers who have fallen asleep need the revival—the reconstruction of their faith. That is to say, through active fellowship with Jesus, they need to be renewed, reborn and given the new life. Do we feel the necessity of the revival deep in our hearts?

Have we noticed the serious defects that lie within us? The attitude of many believers toward the revival is not right. It is actually wrong. That is to say, they believe that there is no point in praying for revival until the time of the Lord comes and there is nothing they can do but wait. However, this attitude is absolutely wrong.

Will Jesus be happy to see believers so thirsty and miserable in their spirit? If we satisfy the condition set by the Lord for the revival, it will occur at that very moment and begin to spread instantly. The revival leads people to newly awakened life. What should be noted here is that it is only the true believers who have new life and can arouse people from sleep. There can be no revival for non-believers. Non-believers have to be reborn first.

The verses we read at the beginning are the sincere prayers of David who pleased the Lord. “Examine me, Lord, and inspect me! Test my heart and mind.” Examine me, not someone else. I don’t understand what to do unless you examine me. I am at a complete loss.

How will the revival happen? As I just mentioned, when we take an attitude like David, it will occur as a result. In the Psalm 139, “Examine me, God, and

know my mind, test me, and know my thoughts. See if there is any offensive tendency in me, and lead me in the eternal way.” David felt this way and prayed from his heart.

Several decades ago, it was reported that the revival occurred in a Bible school in some remote island of Philippine. This revival was an answer to sincere prayer; “Jesus, please purify this church of yours.” As soon as the revival occurred, people began to repent and confess their sins in front of the Lord.

This gathering continued for not just a few hours, but 13. During the subsequent 10 days, more than 1000 people were led to the Lord and saved. Where believers repent, non-believers too will be led to the repentance. Similarly, we too need the revival, don’t we? Without the revival, those who could have been saved through our prayers will have to be led to destruction.

Genesis

18:16 After this, the men set out from there and looked out over Sodom. Abraham went with them to send them off.

18:17 “Should I hide from Abraham what I’m about to do,” the Lord asked,

18:18 “since Abraham’s descendants will become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him?”

18:19 Indeed, I’ve made myself known to him in order that he may encourage his sons and his household that is born after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do what is right and just, so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised.”

18:20 The Lord also said, “How great is the disapproval of Sodom and Gomorrah! Their sin is so very serious!

18:21 I’m going down to see whether they’ve acted according to the protests that have reached me. If not, I wish to know.”

18:22 Then two of the men turned away from there and walked toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing in the presence of the Lord.

18:23 Abraham approached and asked, “Will you actually destroy the righteous along with the wicked?”

18:24 Perhaps there are 50 righteous ones within the city. Will you actually destroy it and not forgive the place for the sake of the 50 righteous that are found there?

18:25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous along with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! The Judge of all the earth will do what is right, won’t he?”

18:26 The Lord said, “If I find 50 righteous people within Sodom, I’ll forgive the whole place for their sake.”

18:27 Abraham answered, "Look, even though I am only dust and ashes, I've ventured to speak to my Lord.

18:28 What if there are five less than 50 righteous ones? Will you bring destruction upon the city because of those five?" The Lord said, "I won't destroy it if I find 45 there."

18:29 Abraham continued to speak to him, asking, "What if 40 are found there?" The Lord replied, "I won't do it for the sake of those 40."

18:30 Abraham then asked, "I hope my Lord will not be angry if I speak. What if 30 are found there?" The Lord answered, "I won't do it for the sake of those 30."

18:31 "Look," Abraham said, "I've presumed to speak to my Lord... so what if 20 are found there?" "For the sake of those 20," the Lord responded, "I won't destroy it."

18:32 Finally, Abraham inquired, "I hope my Lord will not be angry if I speak only once more. What if ten are found there?" He replied, "For the sake of those ten I won't destroy it."

18:33 As soon as he finished talking to Abraham, the Lord left and Abraham returned to where he had been sitting.

Verse 22 we just read is extremely important. "Then two of the men turned away from there and walked toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing in the presence of the Lord." He prayed and continued to pray. Abraham was convinced that if he concentrated on praying in the presence of the Lord without being affected by worldly concerns, he would be blessed and be released from the anguish and burden.

When Abraham was informed by the Lord that the city of Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be destroyed, he could not stay apathetic. He tried to mediate with the Lord and continued praying. Nevertheless, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. How could it happen? If there were 10 righteous men—believers who feared the Lord and worshiped no one but the Lord in there, Sodom and Gomorrah would have never been destroyed. This was what the Lord clearly stated and promised to him.

Residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely sinful. But that was not the only reason that these cities had to be destroyed. Believers in there were so insincere and they did not give the highest respect to the Lord. They did not even fear the Lord. We can understand very well from these verses that because of such believers, the two cities had to be destroyed. When I think of so many people around us who are heading toward destruction, I can't help but worry seriously about them.

When we come to feel responsible for their salvation, we are compelled to pray in the presence of the

Lord. Can we stay apathetic when we think of these people? When a house in the neighborhood is on fire and you refuse to help them despite knowing where the fire is, it is of course, a sin. If you see a thief breaking into the house of your friend, but you do not tell them, it is also a sin.

Are we doing something to help our family, relatives and friends? When we hear that there is a fire somewhere in the town, we run up to some higher ground to find out where it is and worry that it may be the house of someone we know. Many of our family, acquaintances and friends are still in the hands of the devil and walking on the path heading toward hell. Can we still remain indifferent to them, being aware of it?

Romans

13:11 it's already time for you to wake up from sleep.

Isaiah

44:3 For I'll pour water upon thirsty ground and streams on parched land. So will I pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing upon your descendants.

With these words, the Lord gives us the promise of the revival, great blessing and the new rebirth. Do we sincerely desire to be renewed and given a new life by the Lord? Do we seek the fellowship with the Lord more than anything in this world? Do we pray and seek seriously for the revival and the new blessing of the Lord?

Regardless of whether we are healthy or not, whether we are highly esteemed by others or not, do we sincerely admit the revival and are we willing that Jesus alone be praised wholeheartedly? Is this what we are doing? The Bible itself has to be the source of our prayer.

Psalms

109:4though I continue in prayer.

After all, there is nothing else he could do. If he didn't, he would have been devastated and totally worthless. So, confessed David honestly.

Luke

6:12 he spent the whole night in prayer to God.

He was tired. Nonetheless, he spent the whole night in prayer. Now, we should reflect on what the motive driving us is and how the state of our minds is, shouldn't we? When I try to figure out what the motive that drives us forward is, it always compels me to think of Paul. Paul wrote some harsh words to evangelists of his time, that is to say, to brothers and sisters proclaiming the gospel;

Philippians

2:21 For all the others look after their own interests, not after those of Jesus the Messiah.

There would have been no surprise if this was about non-believers. However, it was written for believers and thus, it should be taken seriously. These words are true for us too. It is said that humans have four major desires. I suppose that it will be helpful for our self-reflection to look into each of these desires.

First of all, people desire security in their lives. They all want to live securely in all aspects. For this very purpose, they deposit their earnings in their bank accounts, save money for the education expenses of their children and take life insurance to prepare for their old age. I, of course, do not deny these things. However, these are merely plans to keep their own life secure and safe.

Let us look at what Jesus said, "Don't have treasure on this earth. Do not worry about worldly things but just be concerned about God's kingdom and his righteousness and all of these things will be provided for you as well." This was what he has promised. People care so much about not just money, but their education too, which indicates how much they are concerned about the security of life.

Some people believe that the best way to proclaim the gospel is to study in divinity school to obtain the necessary qualification which is required to talk in front of the audience. This is another example of the attitude that places importance on their own security. In this sense, the testimony of Paul is unimaginably important.

1 Corinthians

2:2 For while I was with you I resolved to know nothing except Jesus the Messiah, and him crucified.

When we abandon ourselves to Jesus and entrust everything to him, in the view of this world, we will look so unstable and fragile. The Bible tells us that even Paul felt so weak and anxious when he proclaimed Jesus to the people. It can also be seen from the Bible that when Paul was exposed to danger, he was caught in fear and even prepared for his death.

Paul also confessed, "We are pressured. We have no way to run. We are persecuted, fall on the ground and do not seem to be able to rise up again." This situation is far removed from a safe life, isn't it?

The second thing on everybody's mind is ease of life. All people have the same desire deep in their hearts, that is, to lead a quiet and peaceful life and to keep themselves physically well. In this regard, Jesus did

not care about himself at all. There is a verse about Jesus himself, which is his confession.

Matthew

20:28 That's the way it is with the Son of Man. He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people.

Jesus possessed nothing in this world. He did not even have a home to come back to. He was homeless in the true sense.

Jesus was humiliated, but he did not open his mouth. He was misunderstood but did not dare to speak for himself. Jesus kept walking without a word. This verse is about Jesus. "As for me, I am only a worm and not a man." These words from the Psalm 22:6 apply perfectly to Jesus. Men can defend themselves, but worms can't.

The difference between snakes and worms is not only in their dimension and strength. When they are attacked by enemies, snakes raise their head and fight back, while worms don't do anything to protect themselves. This difference is significant. We are, or rather, our egos are, very much like snakes, aren't they?

Worms won't fight back no matter how viciously they are attacked. They just go down without protecting themselves. Jesus could say, "I am a worm." Jesus was humiliated and slaughtered. Jesus became a worm for us. Jesus said, "Just like my father has sent me, I will send you."

Jesus desires our ego to be broken down. Just like Jacob had his pride broken down when he wrestled with the Lord God, the Lord wants us to die to ourselves and serve him. When we decide not to seek an easier and more peaceful way of life and instead desire to follow the life that Jesus lived, we will be truly blessed.

However, we first need to look at the state of our minds. We all have the nature of snakes without exception; in that we like to take care of ourselves before others and we fight back against pressures. As I have just mentioned, we all have the desire for security and the desire for a peaceful life. And thirdly, there is another desire of humans, the desire for pleasure.

When we are tired, we take rest. However, if it is a rest from learning the words of God, a rest from praying or a rest from gathering in the assembly, it will lead to the destruction of our spiritual life.

When the Lord Jesus is present with us, he understands the state of our minds very well. He knows whether we have our own time, our own wealth, our own plan and our own soul. He also

knows whether we sincerely wish, “Jesus, everything I have belongs to you. May your will be accomplished.”

Jesus said, “I came here to give my life. I came to serve.” Then, he prayed, “May I be free from any kind of desire for myself.” Jesus continued to take this attitude, “I do not care about my honor at all. My Father, not what I want but please accomplish what you want.”

The fourth desire that resides within the depth of our hearts is to be respected by others. In the hearts of all men, the hidden desire is to earn respect from others and have influence on them. People want to be treated well, be admired and receive attention from others.

I must say that those who seek the respect of others are miserable. This appetite for honor cuts into the hearts of saved people just like epidemics. Many people are considered useless in his work because of such desires and are abandoned by the Lord.

Jesus tells us not to seek respect from people but to seek things from above. We should not be preoccupied with worldly things, just like the worms that crawl on the ground. Instead, we should seek the things from above.

I just listed four desires of men, namely the desire for security, the desire for peacefulness, the desire for pleasure and the desire for respect. Where do all these desires come from? They come from the arrogance of Pharisees within us. Paul had to write to the people living in Galatia, who, of course, had been saved and already believed in Jesus;

Galatians

5:19 Now the actions of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, promiscuity,
5:20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of anger, quarrels, conflicts, factions,
5:21 envy, murder, drunkenness, wild partying, and things like that. I am telling you now, as I have told you in the past, that people who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These are all the works of the flesh, which come out of our hearts full of arrogance and pride.

Mark

7:20 He continued, “It’s what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean,
7:21 because it’s from within, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come, as well as sexual immorality, stealing, murder,
7:22 adultery, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness.

7:23 All these things come from inside and make a person unclean.”

Why do so many people still keep walking on the path heading toward hell without even hearing about Jesus at all? It is because of the sins that believers commit. It is because they are all preoccupied with their own lives.

Why are our brothers and sisters, being part of Jesus' body, too weak and powerless to fight against the evil spirits? It is because we are preoccupied with our own lives. Why are so many brothers and sisters so lukewarm, insincere and self-satisfied? It is because they are preoccupied with their own lives. However, when we humble down, the Lord will have mercy on us and begin to bless us.

End