

Pastor Jim Lloyd

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Title: THE ENEMIES OF REVIVAL

Text: 2 Chronicles 7:14

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV) - *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

I thought to title this message "God's Recipe for Revival." This passage is a call to believers. It's a call for believers to: humble themselves, and pray, and seek God's face, and turn from their wicked ways; SO THAT... We would hear from heaven, and our sins would be forgiven, AND our land would be healed. Instead, I've entitled it "The Enemies of Revival."

Wednesday night I played a bit of a game entitled "Opposites" with our Rangers. I'd call out a word and they'd give me its opposite. I'm going to do the same sort of thing this morning, only I'll not call out the phrases. We're going to flip these mandates for revival and observe the enemies of revival.

This word was spoken to King Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Solomon is told by God that DISOBEDIENCE and REBELLION will result in judgment upon the nation of Israel. This verse is God's promise that those who – turn from their sins, call on Him and walk in His ways – will experience a revival of the PRESENCE and the BLESSING of the Lord. Now, this is a verse to Israel, BUT... It speaks to every generation. Those who meet the CONDITIONS detailed in this verse will experience the PROMISES mentioned in this verse. We need revival!

We Pentecostals love our meetings, BUT... We need MORE than a meeting. We NEED a revival. We need something that we cannot produce by our own efforts. Revival is a SUPERNATURAL event. It comes ONLY by the sovereign decree of the Lord. We can have a MEETING this morning, but we cannot have a revival UNLESS THE LORD GIVES IT. YET – while we CANNOT produce a revival, we CAN meet the requirements set forth in these verses, and that will set the stage for revival. Our text speaks of the possibility AND the PROBLEMS that prevent revival. While this passage tells us what we can have if we meet the conditions, it also tells us what can PREVENT revival.

So, this morning, I'd like to call our attention to "The Enemies of Revival. There are four problems indicated in this verse that can sabotage and prevent revival and the blessings of God. We need to listen closely to what the Bible has to say about this matter and do WHATEVER WE NEED TO DO to see that these enemies of revival do not stand in the way of getting what we need from the Lord.

Note: This verse is another of those verses directed to GOD'S people. HEAR ME – If Christians don't do what they are supposed to do, the enemy will prevail. God says, *"If MY people, which are called by MY name..."* So, this is NOT a verse to lost people. Lost people do not need revival, they need to be saved! If you are not saved, you need to come to Jesus Christ. You need to confess your sins and call on Him for your soul's salvation. If you DO know the Lord today, then God has something to say to you from this verse. He will help us, if we will allow Him to. Here are the enemies of revival.

1. PRIDE is the Enemy of Revival. The people of God are told to *"HUMBLE THEMSELVES."* What is the opposite of humility? PRIDE. This phrase deals with the area of our pride. The word translated "pride" in the Old Testament means "to rise or to swell up." It refers to the rising of the waves of the sea. It speaks of men thinking more of themselves and their abilities than they do of God. Pride says, "I do not need God. I know best. I call the shots in my life." Too many churches are eaten up with pride. We have adopted the "Laodicean mentality." Revelation 3:17, NIV – *"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' ('But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.')* We have learned how to function WITHOUT the help of the Lord, and it has destroyed the power of the church! When we compare ourselves to the world, we

may look okay, but when we lay the modern church alongside the early church, we don't look so good. Acts 2:42-47, NIV – ⁴²*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the BREAKING OF BREAD and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They BROKE BREAD in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”* God hates PRIDE! Proverbs 6:16-19, NIV – ¹⁶*“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: ¹⁷Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, ¹⁹a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”* Each sin mentioned in that list is a result of pride! Here is God's Word on pride: Proverbs 8:13, NIV – *“To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”* Proverbs 11:2, NIV – *“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”* Proverbs 16:5, NIV – *“The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”* Proverbs 16:18-19, NIV – *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. ¹⁹Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.”* HOW can you tell if you have a pride problem? Here are some evidences of pride in a life: 1. Pride refuses to listen; it always interrupts others. 2. Pride likes to talk about itself all the time. 3. Pride has an intense desire to be noticed. 4. Pride believes that it deserves everything it gets. 5. Pride is not thankful. 6. Pride does not like to follow instructions. 7. Pride exalts itself in the presence of others; it brags. 8. Pride criticizes and tries to make itself look better by putting others down. 9. Pride thinks of its own needs first. ILLUSTRATION: Muhammad Ali Quotes: “Float like a butterfly. Sting like a bee. You can't hit what your eyes don't see.” He bragged on his speed. “I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was. I figured that if I said it enough, I would convince the world that I was really the greatest.” A STORY is told – Muhammad Ali was on an airplane once and he was standing up in the aisle, talking and laughing and entertaining the passengers. Finally, the stewardess came back to him and said, “Mr. Ali, you'll have to take a seat and fasten your seat belt because the plane is about to take off.” Mohammed Ali looked at her with a snarl, and said, “Honey, Superman don't need no seat belt.” She looked at him and said, “Yeah, and Superman don't need no airplane either. Now sit down and buckle up.” God has a better plan! He calls on His people to “HUMBLE themselves.” The word “humble” means “to bend the knee; to bring down; to place self under another.” Pride will not allow the prideful person to bow their knee to the Lord! God desires His people to take whatever steps are necessary to bring themselves under His authority. He wants us to know that we cannot do it on our own. He wants us to know that we are dependent upon Him for what we have. He wants us to bend the knee to HIS authority in our lives. STORY: (I've changed a few things in this story for illustration sake.) A Marlowe ROYAL RANGER (Christian scout) was on a plane with a PILOT, a MINISTER, and a COMPUTER WHIZ. The plane was beginning to dive. They realized they had to put on parachutes and jump. The only problem was there were only THREE parachutes and there were 4 people. The pilot said, “Look, I've got a wife and 4 kids. I NEED a parachute.” So, he grabbed a parachute and jumped. The computer whiz said, “I've got all this knowledge that the world desperately needs for the 21st century, and I can't have it die with me.” So, HE grabbed a parachute and jumped. The minister looked at the young man and said, “Son, I've lived a long, full life and you're just a young man. You take the parachute and I'll go down with the plane.” The young Ranger looked at the minister and said, “Mr. Minister, don't worry about it. The BRILLIANT computer whiz just took my knapsack and jumped out of the plane.” Sometimes we are too smart for our own britches. We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. We think we are a life whiz and every time we jump out to do right, we fall flat on our face. God has what we need in order to land on our feet. All we have to do is HUMBLE OURSELVES and submit to Him. When Jonah entered Nineveh and preached his message of impending judgment, the king of that city proclaimed a fast and all the people HUMBLed themselves under God's mighty hand (Jonah 3:1-8a). THAT is what the church needs to do today. God's people need to realize – that we were nothing when He found us; that we would be nothing without Him and that we can accomplish nothing of eternal significance apart from His power in our lives. John 15:5, NIV – *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him; he will bear much fruit; APART FROM ME YOU CAN*

DO NOTHING.” If we are going to have revival, then PRIDE, an enemy of revival, MUST be dealt with!

2. PRAYERLESSNESS is the Enemy of Revival. The people of God are challenged to “PRAY.” Prayerlessness is the first cousin to pride. Prayerlessness says, “I do not need to call on the Lord, I do just fine by myself.” Prayerlessness does not say, “HE is all I need”; but “I am all I need.” Prayerlessness relies on SELF and the resources SELF can produce and refuses to lean on Jesus alone. Prayerlessness is the enemy of revival! It IS true that we can pray and NOT have revival; but we will NEVER have a revival APART FROM PRAYER! Prayer looks to God and says, “I can’t, but YOU can!” Prayer acknowledges personal dependence upon the Lord. We do not have revival as we ought because we do not pray or ask as we ought! James 4:2-3, NIV – *“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”* Charles Finney (of the 2nd Great Awakening) said, “Prayer is the essential link in the chain of events that leads to revival!” It appears the church has lost the art of waiting before the Lord in prayer! Too much of our praying is anemic, formal, repetitious, and long-winded. We pray around issues and seldom really get down to trusting God by faith. Too often our prayers leave our mouths, but they do not move God in Heaven. We pray for a few minutes and think we are ready for meeting. We recite our list of wants to the Lord and make our requests for our fleshly, material desires and we think God is going to move in mighty revival power. I don’t think so! We have to come to the place where we sacrifice our pride on God’s altar. We must declare our helplessness; and we must cling to Him until He moves in power in our lives and church. Leonard Ravenhill said it well, “The church is dying on its feet because it is not living on its knees!” (I put a form of that on our church sign.) When Jonah’s message came to Nineveh, the people humbled themselves and they began to pray. Jonah 3:8, NIV – *“But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. LET EVERYONE CALL URGENTLY ON GOD. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.”* When they did, God moved in power and sent a revival! Another example of revival praying can be found in Nehemiah 9:1-2. When we call on God from a pure, humble heart, we will see revival follow! How is your prayer life?

3. PRIORITIES are the Enemy of Revival (Misplaced priorities and Wrong priorities). God’s people are told to “SEEK HIS FACE.” The word “seek” means “to search out by any method; especially by worship and prayer.” The word “face” refers to “the countenance; to turn toward HIS direction.” This little phrase is a call for God’s people to stop looking for help and purpose in EVERY OTHER thing in life. WE are called upon to make GOD our PRIMARY focus and our FIRST priority. You see, revival does NOT come to people who seek REVIVAL; but to people who SEEK GOD! Far too many people are caught up in what God can do for them, BUT... Seeking HIS FACE means that we hunger FOR HIM more than for what He can do. He wants us to love HIM for Who He is! The essence of genuine revival is falling in love with Jesus all over again. Revelation 2:2-4, NIV (spoken to the church at Ephesus) – *“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴Yet I hold this against you: YOU HAVE FORSAKEN YOUR FIRST LOVE.”* James 4:8, NIV – *“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”* If you had to be really honest today, WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY in your life? Is it your JOB? Is it your BANK ACCOUNTS, your INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO or RETIREMENT? Is it your FAMILY? Is it your CHURCH? Is it your SPOUSE? Is it your HOBBY? Or is it THE LORD? ILLUSTRATION: A wealthy man was driving his BMW and had an accident – a VERY BAD accident. The car was totaled. A policeman came on the scene and got the man out of the car. As the man came to, he said, “My BMW, oh my BMW!” The policeman said, “Sir, I’m sorry but you don’t have time to worry about your BMW. It’s JUST a car. We’ve got to rush you to the hospital because your arm has been severed at the elbow.” The wealthy man said, “Oh my Rolex, oh my Rolex.” He had messed up priorities. He had greater concerns than a Rolex. When anything but God is the NUMBER ONE priority in your life, you have messed up priorities. When God is our FIRST priority, the things HE cares about are the things WE will care about. When we are seeking GOD’S face, we will be able to see what has GOD’S attention. And... What has His attention needs to be that which has our attention. He wants us to – love what He loves, hate what He hates, and do what He does. He

wants us to develop the attitude Jesus adopted while He was here on earth. John 5:19-20, NIV – *“Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.’²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.”* If you really want to know what your priorities are today, then ask yourself three questions: 1. On WHAT ACTIVITY do you spend most of your TIME? 2. On what do you spend the bulk of your MONEY? 3. On what do you focus your THOUGHTS? Look at WHERE YOU GO, WHAT YOU DO and WHERE YOU SPEND YOUR MONEY. Do that and you will have a rather good idea of your priorities. Where does God fit in the equation of your life? Is He in first place? If He isn't then you are not a candidate for revival! Misplaced priorities are the enemy of real revival. The priorities of Nineveh were all messed up. Then, Jonah came to town and delivered the Word of the Lord. The people of Nineveh, from the king on down, got their priorities fixed and they began to seek the Lord. They got interested in the things that interested the Lord. Things like prayer, holiness, and worship became the priority and God sent them a revival. He can and will do the same for us when our priorities are what they ought to be.

4. PRESUMPTION is the Enemy of Revival. Finally, God's people are told to *“TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS.”* That is, we are to forsake our sins and embrace holiness. The problem in Israel was that they were guilty of presuming upon the grace and goodness of the Lord. The same trend is so evident in the church TODAY. We say, *“I am saved and some of the things I do don't matter!”* Oh YES, they do! Sin keeps us out of the presence of the Lord. Isaiah 59:2, NIV – *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”* Sin closes GOD'S EARS to our prayers. Psalm 66:18, NIV – *“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”* Proverbs 15:8, NIV – *“The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.”* Proverbs 15:29, NIV – *“The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.”* It is rather easy to see the hypocrisy and sins of our nation. We need more money for schools, so we legalize and promote gambling. We need to stop teen pregnancy, so we give out condoms and open abortion clinics. We want to balance the budget, so we raise taxes. We want to stop the spread of Aids and sexual disease, so we promote “safe sex.” And we wonder why we don't see more evidence of revival in America. What about the church? We may be as guilty as the world! Church people sin! They drink, they steal, they lie, they cheat, they commit adultery, they engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, they carry hate in their hearts, they walk in pride, they walk in hypocrisy, they drag the precious name of Jesus through the mud and God CAN'T and WON'T bless such a mess! We are saved by GRACE, BUT... Grace is NEVER a license to sin! What we need is a season of repentance. We are so good with our excuses, and we are quick to rationalize our behavior; but We are SLOW to FALL ON OUR FACES and CONFESS OUR SINS. BUT... HE WILL NOT BLESS US WITH REVIVAL UNTIL WE DO! We must come clean about our sins, before He can bless us. Proverbs 28:13, NIV – *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”* 1 John 1:9, NIV – *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* James 5:16b says, *“The effectual fervent prayer of a RIGHTEOUS man availeth much.”* The key word in that verse is *“righteous.”* The word refers to a person who is “holy, upright and keeps the commandments of the Lord.” Does that describe you? Are you a RIGHTEOUS man or woman? Can God hear your prayers, and could you be an instrument of revival in His hands? We need revival, but revival will NEVER come to a presumptuous people. It will ONLY come to those who get honest about their sin, who confess them, forsake them, and turn to God with all their hearts. Jeremiah 29:13 – *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”* Revival will come when God's people adopt the attitude that gripped the hearts of the people of Nineveh. They dealt with their sin problem and God moved in a great revival (Jonah 3:8-10).

CONCLUSION. Yes, there are some ENEMIES that must be defeated. The Good News is – THEY CAN BE DEFEATED, and IF they are and WHEN they are, we can experience God's power. He promised Israel that they would *“hear from heaven, and (he would) forgive their sin, and heal their land.”* That is a description of revival: God hearing. God cleansing. God working. The word “heal” means “to stitch back together; to repair thoroughly.” That is what we need today! Are you a candidate for revival? Here is the invitation: Are you “HIS

PEOPLE?" If not, you need to be saved. God is calling you today! Are the enemies of revival – PRIDE, PRAYERLESSNESS, MISPLACED PRIORITIES and PRESUMPTION active in your life? If they are, you need to make some changes today. Would you like to see God send us a REAL revival? It can happen, BUT... We must meet HIS conditions.