

**September 24, 2006**

**“Revive Us, O Lord” (Part 2: What is the heart of Revival?)**

**Isaiah 49: 8- 50: 3**

Based on *The Heart of Revival* by Nicky Gumbel

[\*\*Click here for the notes that were in the bulletin.\*\*](#)

Isa 49:8-9a NLT

8 This is what the LORD says: "At just the right time, I will respond to you. On the day of salvation, I will help you. I will give you as a token and pledge to Israel. This will prove that I will reestablish the land of Israel and reassign it to its own people again. 9 Through you I am saying to the prisoners of darkness, 'Come out! I am giving you your freedom!'

Today I want to talk to you again about revival. Revival is when God's Spirit is poured out and times of spiritual refreshing come upon individuals, the church and society. Individuals will become interested in God and religion and will desire to live for God in Holiness. The church will become a community saturated with God, therefore, bringing God, His love, and the message of Jesus to the community, thus the community is renewed. Restitutions are made. Broken homes are reunited. Public moral standards improve.

We are looking at the second half of the book of Isaiah (ch. 40-66). During this time in Israel's history the Israelites are in exile in Babylon. They are in exile because of their sin. Sin always separates us from God. It is the same today. You, and the church, and society have been banished from the presence of God because of sin. But, God wants to restore us. Why? The answer to that question is the same answer to the question that is the title of the message today: What is the heart of revival? And the answer is God's love is the heart of revival.

Do you know that "God loves you unconditionally, wholeheartedly and continually." There is a man (Alex Buchanan) who speaks to Christian leaders and he often gets them to repeat that over and over again, saying it to one another until they finally get the point. He also adds, "God approves of you." I don't know about you, but I am so aware of my weaknesses that I have a hard time accepting that. We all have weaknesses and may be conscious of them, but God wants you to know that He loves you and approves of you. He wants to revive you and restore your relationship with Him, just as He wanted to do with the Israelites when they were in exile from God.

In the OT God made a covenant with His people because of His unconditional, wholehearted and continual love for them. In effect He said to them (and to us), "You have become the people of Yahweh, ("Yahweh" is a Hebrew name for God), therefore be the people of Yahweh. God chose the Hebrew people and through Jesus chooses all people, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us.

(Deut 7:7-8a NLT) "The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! It was simply because the LORD loves you..."

God gives us His Word, the Bible, to guide us in how we should live. Obeying His Word is an expression of our faith and devotion to God. But we, like the Israelites, fail to keep His Word and their disloyalty and rebellion had disastrous results and it does in our lives as well. The prophets indicated that God had every right to terminate His covenant with His people. But instead God promises restoration, renewal, and revival. He says, (Isa 49:8-9a NIV) "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'"

And what follows that statement are expressions and analogies of God's love. God is a God of love and compassion Who demonstrates that love for His people. He loves us...because... He loves us and His love is the heart of revival. It is the reason He will restore your relationship with Him.

#### 1. God loves us: Like a Shepherd

Isa 49:9-13 NLT: They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare. 10 They will neither hunger nor thirst. The searing sun and scorching desert winds will not reach them anymore. For the LORD in his mercy will lead them beside cool waters. 11 And I will make my mountains into level paths for them. The highways will be raised above the valleys. 12 See, my people will return from far away, from lands to the north and west, and from as far south as Egypt." 13 Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their sorrow.

In Biblical times there was a relationship built between the sheep and their shepherd. That's quite different than today. Today we raise sheep so that we can eat lamb chops, which makes it difficult for the sheep to trust us. It was not like that in Biblical times when they raised sheep for their wool. Thus shepherds had the sheep for many years. They actually had a relationship with their sheep even given them individual names. In the same way God loves, cares for, and provides for His people...like a shepherd.

(vs 9-10a) "They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare. They will neither hunger nor thirst. The searing sun and scorching desert winds will not reach them anymore."

- a. First we see a picture of provision. God *provides* for us. If we could really grasp this it would save us a love of unnecessary anxiety. Why do you worry

when God promises to provide for you? Maybe you struggle with anxiety. God loves you, come to Him, trust Him.

b. Second these verses indicate that the Shepherd *protects* his sheep.

Two men were walking through the woods and came upon a big black, deep hole. One man picked up a rock and tossed it into the hole and stood listening for the rock to hit bottom. There was no sound. He turned to the other guy and said "that must be a deep hole...let's throw a bigger rock in there and listen for it to hit bottom." The men found a bigger rock and both picked it up and lugged it to the hole and dropped it in. They listened for some time and never heard a sound. Again, they agreed that this must be one deep hole and maybe they should throw something even bigger into it. One man spotted a rail-road tie nearby. They picked up the tie, grunting and groaning, and lugged it to the hole. They tossed it in. No sound. All of a sudden, a lamb came flying out of the woods, running like the wind, and flew past the men and jumped straight into the hole. The men were amazed. About that time, an old shepherd came out of the woods and asked the men if they had seen a lamb. One man told the farmer of the incredible incident they had just witnessed...they had just seen this lamb fly out of the woods and run and leap into the big hole. The man asked the farmer if this could have been his lamb. The old shepherd said "naw, that can't be my lamb...he was chained to a railroad tie."

In Biblical times they did a much better job of protecting the sheep. Sometimes a shepherd would take his life in his hands to defend his flock from wild animals, and thieves. They would give their lives for their sheep. This, of course is how Jesus described Himself: (John 10:11 NLT) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Again, if we could grasp this it would save us from many of our fears. What do you fear today? God is able and will protect you. His love for you can cast out your fear.

c. Third, the shepherd *guides* the sheep. (v10b) "For the LORD in his mercy will lead them." The shepherd would walk in front of the sheep to see if the path was safe, sometimes he had to encourage the sheep to follow him. God wants to lead His people out of exile. Trust and follow Him. He will even use obstacles in our lives to serve His purpose (v11) "And I will make my mountains into level paths for them. The highways will be raised above the valleys." This is the same thought Paul had when he wrote, (Rom 8:28 NLT) "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Even when life throws seemingly obstacles in our way, we will discover that God uses them to fulfill His plan for us.

The second analogy of God's love is...

2. God loves us: Like a Parent.

Isa 49:14-15 NLT: Yet Jerusalem says, "The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us."

15 "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!"

Notice that the Israelites did not believe that God was going to restore them. They felt He had forsaken and forgotten all about them...as if God did not care about them: (v14) "The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us." Perhaps you feel that way. But listen to how God responds through the prophet: (v15) "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!"

Is it possible for a parent to forget a child. I remember years ago, after Sunday services I was ready to close up the church and found a child standing outside the front door. I said to him, "where are your parents?" He said, "They left without me. I think they forgot about me." But it turned out there was a confusion, they thought he was going with someone else. Though I guess it is possible to forget a child, it is impossible for God to forget His people.

3. God loves us: Like an Engraver

Isa 49:16 NLT: "See, I have written your name on my hand."

NIV: "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

The Babylonians, as many do today, used tattoos to remind them of the people they loved. A tattoo demonstrates commitment. Of course, many people later break those commitments and then regret getting the tattoo (I guess that's why the most popular tattoo is, "Mother" (or it use to be). Although extremely difficult, tattoo can be removed today with plastic surgery. But if something is *engraved* on your hand it isn't easily removed. God is using this analogy in His commitment to us. I can't help but think of the cross and the nails that went into the hands of Jesus. On the cross He died for our sins. His love for us kept Him on that cross, His wounds are evident for all to see. When Thomas saw Jesus' palms he cried out, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Will God restore you, revive you...of course He will. Jesus says to you, "See, I have written your name on my hand."

4. God loves us: Like a Conqueror

Isa 49:24-26 NLT: Who can snatch the plunder of war from the hands of a warrior? Who can demand that a tyrant let his captives go? 25 But the LORD says, "The captives of warriors will be released, and the plunder of tyrants will be retrieved. For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children. 26 I will feed your enemies with their own flesh. They will be drunk with rivers of their own blood. All the world will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel."

Is there any doubt that God is strong enough to restore us? God's love is like a conqueror. He is strong enough to carry out His purposes. He assures us that He can and will revive us. God's love is strong and determined.

5. God loves us: Like a Husband

Isa 50:1-3 NLT: The LORD asks, "Did I sell you as slaves to my creditors? Is that why you are not here? Is your mother gone because I divorced her and sent her away? No, you went away as captives because of your sins. And your mother, too, was taken because of your sins. 2 Was I too weak to save you? Is that why the house is silent and empty when I come home? Is it because I have no power to rescue? No, that is not the reason! For I can speak to the sea and make it dry! I can turn rivers into deserts covered with dying fish. 3 I am the one who sends darkness out across the skies, bringing it to a state of mourning."

You, like the Israelites may object that God will not bring revival. The answer to that is God's love. Because of He loves you like a Shepherd and like a parent, and your name is engraved on His hand, yes, *He will restore you*. You like the Israelites may object that God can not bring revival. The answer to that is God's love. Because He loves you like a Conqueror *He can restore you*. Or like the Israelites you may object that God should not bring restoration and revival. The Israelites were saying God had divorced them because of their sin. But God says through the prophet that, although it was sin which caused the exile, God loves them like a husband and will not divorce them or sell them as slaves. They were saying He should not restore us, but *He should restore you*.

The heart of revival is God's love for His people and His people love Him in return. The outpouring of God's love through the Holy Spirit leads to revival. As you experience God's love you will receive a new love for Him. God wants to restore His relationship with you. "God loves you unconditionally, wholeheartedly and continually. God approves of you."