

November 19, 2006

“Revive Us, O God”(Part 9)

“Choose Life” - Isa 65 NLT

Based on *The Heart of Revival* by Nicky Gumbel

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For the last two months we have been talking about revival. What is revival? “A community (or a person) saturated with God.” It is the outpouring of God’s Spirit, renewing, refreshing, reviving faith and changing individuals, churches, and society.

God Alone Can Satisfy The Hunger In Our Souls

God Has A Purpose For Our Lives

God has Great Love and Mercy toward us

God’s power alone can truly Transform us

God is speaking with intense love to His people, speaking to their hearts. He keeps telling them you are pardoned, Jesus has paid the price for your sins, now live for Me.

God loves us unconditionally, wholeheartedly, and continually. Love is His motive for wanting to revive/reform us. Jesus transforms lives, but He expects nothing less than our full commitment to Him. God longs for a response from you. Will you be totally committed to God? History is “His – Story” and it is moving toward a culmination, a conclusion. The struggle in this world is between good and evil and ultimately God and good will triumph. God wants you to be on the winning side. Will you choose to be?

In these messages on revival, all based on the book of Isaiah, we have seen among other things: The greatness of God, the extent of His plan, the love of God, His plan of salvation, and His invitation to come. That invitation requires a response. God is trying to reach all people. There is a difference between those who choose for God and those who choose against God.

1. Those Who Respond and Those Who Do Not (v1-7)

The LORD says, "People who never before inquired about me are now asking about me. I am being found by people who were not looking for me. To them I have said, 'I am here!'

2 "I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts. 3 All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on the rooftops of their homes. 4 At night they go out among the graves and secret places to worship evil spirits. They also eat pork and other forbidden foods. 5 Yet they say to each other, 'Don't come too close or you will defile me! I am holier than you!' They are a stench in my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away.

6 "Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them-- 7 both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors,"

says the LORD. "For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!"

(v1) The LORD says, "People who never before inquired about me are now asking about me. I am being found by people who were not looking for me. To them I have said, 'I am here!'"

God invites all people to come to Him. Jesus in Matt 11:28 also invited everyone when He said, "Come to Me." However, Jesus also said (Matt 7:21-23) "Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as 'Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized.'"

What is the problem? Jesus tells us. Although they say they *believe*, the decisive issue is whether they *obey* God. (v2-3a God says) "I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts. All day long they insult me to my face ..."

Jesus is looking for a new breed of followers. Not those who are trying to squeeze God into their already packed schedule, but those who build their schedule around Him. He is looking for those who are not willing to play religious games. They want more of God – much more- in their lives, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to get it. They realize that life is not about living for themselves, it's about living for God. They are warriors, soldiers, revolutionaries who want a reformation, a revival, for themselves and others. These are people who are devout followers of Jesus Christ, who are serious about their faith. They are constantly worshipping and interacting with God. Everything they do is centered on their belief in Christ. Every moment of life is viewed through a spiritual lens and every decision is made in light of biblical principles. These are people who are determined to honor and glorify God every day through every thought, word, and deed.

(v6-7) "Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them-- both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors," says the LORD. "For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!"

God is talking here about religious practices that He did not authorize. The people Isaiah was writing about were involved in forbidden practices, occult practices, they disobeyed God's Word, and yet were filled with spiritual pride and arrogance (see v3-5). God says it was like smoke in His nostrils. I use to own a hair cutting shop, sometimes people would light up a cigarette and when the smoke got in my eyes and nostrils it was annoying, irritating, and offensive. I would ask them to please put the cigarette out. Let me say this clearly, it is not the case that all religions lead to the same God. No where in the Bible does it teach (universalism) that everyone in the world goes to heaven.

However, God's invitation is extended to all people. All who believe in Jesus and live the principles of His Word will be in heaven. God longs for each of us to respond to Him, but not all do.

2. Those Who Seek and Those Who Forsake (v8-12)

"But I will not destroy them all," says the LORD. "For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away--there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there. 9 I will preserve a remnant of the people of Israel and of Judah to possess my land. Those I choose will inherit it and serve me there. 10 For my people who have searched for me, the plain of Sharon will again be filled with flocks, and the valley of Achor will be a place to pasture herds.

11 "But because the rest of you have forsaken the LORD and his Temple and worship the gods of Fate and Destiny, 12 I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned--before my very eyes--and chose to do what you know I despise."

A farmer is about to chop down a vine, then suddenly notices a cluster of grapes and decides not to destroy it. So the Lord says, "I will preserve a remnant of those who serve Me." They will not be destroyed as a matter of fact He will bless them. For those who seek God there will be peace and blessing. The division here is between those who seek God and those who forsake God.

Verse 11 says that those who have forsaken the Lord or who have forgot God have instead sought someone or something else. In particular two gods are mentioned. The first is a Babylonian god of Fate or Fortune. Those whose priority has become fortune have forsaken God. Jesus said in Matt 6:24, "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

The second god of the unfaithful that's mentioned is Destiny. A modern day equivalent would be something like those who practice astrology. Again the point is that they seek someone or something other than God and the Word of God to direct their life. God says, *"when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned--before my very eyes--and chose to do what you know I despise."*

3. Those Who Serve God and Those Who Do Not (vs 13-16)

Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You will starve, but my servants will eat. You will be thirsty, but they will drink. You will be sad and ashamed, but they will rejoice. 14 You will cry in sorrow and despair, while my servants sing for joy. 15 Your name will be a curse word among my people, for the Sovereign LORD will destroy you and call his true servants by another name. 16 All who invoke a blessing or take an oath will do so by the God of truth. For I will put aside my anger and forget the evil of earlier days.

Actions have consequences. Those who will not serve God, by being committed followers of Jesus Christ, will go hungry and thirsty, that is, they will be unfulfilled. They will be sad and ashamed, a picture of disappointment. They will cry in sorrow and despair. Ultimately they will be separated from God, spiritually dead.

God's servants, on the other hand, will eat and drink. Their needs will be met. They will rejoice with joy in their hearts. There is fulfillment and emotional satisfaction, which can only be found in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

In verse 15 Isaiah foresees that the servants of the Lord will receive a new name. We have a clue as to what that name will be in the next verse where God is called the God of truth. Who else was called "The Truth?" Jesus! We will be called by His name. We are called Christians. Imitating Christ because we belong to Christ.

4. Those Who Choose Heaven and Those Who Choose Hell (v17-19)

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth--so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore. 18 Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more."

This chapter ends with a picture of the new heavens and a new earth. The next chapter ends with a picture of hell. (Isa 66:24 NCV) "They will go out and see the dead bodies of the people who sinned against me. The worms that eat them will never die, and the fires that burn them will never stop, and everyone will hate to see those bodies." There is no doubt about the reality of hell. Likewise, there is no doubt about the reality of heaven. We can't even imagine how wonderful heaven will be. Heaven is a place of laughter and joy. Martin Luther once said, "If you're not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there." It will be a place of gladness, happiness and rejoicing. There will be no crying, no sickness and no death. Choose life, choose heaven, choose not to be in hell. It is after all your choice where you will spend eternity. God has done all He can for you to enjoy heaven, the rest is up to you.

Revival begins through faith and commitment to Jesus. Where does it all end? In heaven. Respond to God, seek God, serve God and choose heaven.