

The Revival Highway

The VISION Newsletter / June 2015

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) *“If who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

This is my fifth article in a series entitled, “God’s Prescription for a Troubled Nation”. America is a troubled nation. America is sick with sin, blinded by pride, deaf to the truth. America is dying and is in need of a cure. God has the prescription for what ails America. The prophet Jeremiah lamented, *“Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?”*¹ Is there hope for America? Is there a cure for what ails America? Yes there is. God’s prescription for a troubled nation is not a change in Washington or Wall Street. God’s prescription for America is revival in the church.

In previous articles I talked about other ingredients in God’s prescription for revival. First, God seeks a godly remnant, a “Revival Core”. Second, the revival core must have the “revival attitude” which is humility. Third, this revival core must pray and thus acknowledge their need and dependency upon God. Fourth, the revival core must have an encounter with truth as they seek God’s face. I call this the “Revival Reformation”. In this article I discuss the requirement of repentance among God’s people. I call this the “Revival Highway”.

The requirement of repentance is found in our key text: “If My people...will TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS”. Repentance means to turn away from those things that offend God and bring His judgment. In order to turn from our wicked ways, we must first acknowledge that our ways are wicked. “Wicked” means “twisted” or “perverted”. It refers to attitudes, words, and behaviors that are contrary to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. In order for God to send revival, God requires us to *repent*, i.e. to turn around and go the other way: *“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’”*²

What is “repentance”? The Greek word translated as “repentance” means to change one’s mind for the better, to amend one’s thoughts and actions. Repentance means more than turning from wrong. It includes a change of mind that begins doing what is right. It is “Stop” (brake), “Turn Around” (steering wheel) and “Accelerate” (accelerator) in the right direction. The English word “repentance” comes from two words “re” which means to “return” and “penitence” which means to be truly sorry for having done wrong and willing to make it right.

Repentance must be made so that judgment may cease and mercy flow. Repentance is doing the right thing. Hosea calls doing the right thing “sowing righteousness”: *“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies...”*³ Sowing righteousness means to sow right things where you once sowed wicked or evil things.

¹ Jeremiah 8:22 (NKJV)

² Mark 1:14–15 (NKJV)

³ Hosea 10:12-13 (NKJV)

What does it mean to “break up your fallow ground”? “Fallow ground” is ground that is left idle for a length of time without cultivation and planting. When this happens the surface becomes packed and very hard because of rain, sun, and wind. When the rain comes it does not soak into the fallow ground but runs off into ditches and gullies. If seed is sown on fallow ground, it will not penetrate the soil and will be washed away with the rain or be eaten by the birds. In order to prepare the soil a “breaking plow” is used to penetrate the soil followed by crisscross disking to break up the clods to receive the seed, oxygen, and rain. In the same way the heart must go through a process of brokenness and repentance so that it will receive and not reject the good seed. Has your heart become hardened? Does your heart resist hearing and responding to the word of God? Does it seem that the word of God is not penetrating your heart? Does it seem that you seldom sense the rain of God’s presence like others around you? It is time to break up the fallow ground of your heart through repentance.

Doing things right is also referred to as the “fruits of repentance”: *“Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” ¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ ¹¹ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ ¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ ¹³ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’ ¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”⁴*

What might John the Baptist say to people who would come to his baptism of repentance today? Consider the following possibilities: “If you are listening to ungodly music, then stop and delete or destroy your music library. If you are buying movies that are filled with sex, violence, foul language, witchcraft, and ungodly themes, then stop watching them and destroy them today. If you are going to movies that do not glorify God, then stop and repent for supporting what undermines the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are looking at pornography, then stop immediately and cut off the source. If you are cursing, then stop and start retraining your heart and lips to speak godly things. If you are tearing other people down with your words, then stop and begin blessing them instead. If you are going to clubs and bars, then stop immediately and help others stop also. If you are allowing laziness, family, or pleasure to keep you from honoring the Lord’s Day, then repent and make the Lord’s Day holy in your heart once again. If you are robbing God in tithes and offerings, then repent and give God what belongs to Him. If you are stealing from others, then stop and return what you have stolen. If you are abusing others verbally or physically, then stop now, ask them to forgive you, and never do it again. If you are abusing drugs, then stop today, ask forgiveness, seek deliverance, or get help. If you are having sex outside of marriage, then stop now and remain pure until marriage. If you are living with someone to whom you are not married, then move out or get married. If you are involved in bisexuality or homosexuality, then repent and recommit your life to God’s created design and plan between the sexes. If you are involved in witchcraft or dabbling with other false religions, then repent and renounce all involvement and affiliation now. If you are holding unforgiveness in your heart, then let go, forgive, and ask God to heal your soul. If you are slothful and living off of the goodwill of others, then repent of your laziness, get a job and start doing something no matter what it pays. If you are not spending time with God each day, then repent of wasting your time on other things and start seeking God now in prayer and Bible study. If you are not a godly example of a Christian, then repent and become that example. If you are not doing what you know God has called you to do in the church and in the kingdom, then repent of your excuses and self-interest, and get about doing the will of God today.”

Repentance prepares a highway for the King of Glory to come in true revival to His church: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway*

⁴ Luke 3:7–14 (NKJV)

for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; ⁵ The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” ⁵ Do you want the King of Glory to come and dwell in our midst? The glory of God is not a cloud, gold dust, angel feathers, or gems. The glory of God is the tangible holy presence of the King of Glory in our midst. When Isaiah saw the King of Glory he was undone, repentant, and then transformed! When the King of Glory comes, the fear of God is restored, backsliders repent, and sinners get right with God.

God’s people are commanded to prepare a highway in the desert for our God to come. That highway is a highway of holiness: *“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.”*⁶ The desert is a place of barrenness, thirst, and hunger. Are you preparing a highway of holiness in the midst of your barrenness?

What does it mean to prepare a highway for our God? Preparing a highway of holiness for our God. First it means that every valley must be exalted. The “valley” speaks of areas of vulnerability and oppression (Psalm 23:4). Those broken by sin and oppressed by the devil must be lifted up, rescued, and restored (Acts 10:38). Revival requires that we care for the weak and oppressed among us.

Second it means that every mountain and hill must be brought low. “Mountains” and “hills” speak of pride. Proud attitudes and behaviors must be brought down and uprooted from our lives. Revival cannot exist where there is pride, and pride cannot exist where there is revival.

Third it means that crooked places must be made straight. “Crooked places” speak of areas of deceit and dishonesty. God requires us to be people of integrity. We must say what we mean and mean what we say. In Psalm 15:4 we read that those who desire to abide in God’s Tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill must swear to their own hurt and not change. Revival cannot exist where there is deceit, and deceit cannot exist where there is revival.

Fourth, it means that the rough places must be made smooth. “Rough places” speak of stumbling blocks or offenses. We must get rid of the stumbling blocks placed in the path of new converts. A stumbling block is something that causes another to stumble into sin and compromise. It is something that weakens the resolve of a new believer to obey God. Jesus declared in Mark 9:42 (NKJV) *“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”* Stumbling blocks would include things such as offering someone an addictive substance, exposing them to questionable activities, movies, music, environments, etc., involving them in things that weaken their commitment to God and to the church, spreading personal offenses, or simply being a bad example.

In order for the church to experience revival, every believer must begin preparing a revival highway through repentance. Are there areas of your life that stand in the way of the King of Glory coming in revival? Have areas of compromise created a hardness in your soul? Embrace genuine repentance so that judgment may cease and mercy flow: *“If My people...will turn from their wicked ways.”*

© Edward Keith Hassell
Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas 75785
(903) 683-6550
www.gracefellowshiprusk.com

⁵ Isaiah 40:3–5 (NKJV)

⁶ Isaiah 35:8 (NKJV)