

We all want revival... don't we...? (Who doesn't?) ... But what if I were to tell you that revival in our land is like remodeling your house: it takes longer than you hoped... costs more than you planned... and makes a bigger mess than you ever thought possible...? ... Knowing what will come... would you still pray and ask God for one...? But perhaps an even better question to ask ourselves is this: why do we want revival...? ... (I wonder if all the believers who pray for revival knew how much pain and inconvenience we would experience... would they still want it as much...?) We are about to find out from our passage today that life becomes more challenging... There are troubles and difficulties that come with it.

Why do you want revival? Is it because you look around at all the crime and sadness that infects our society... and you want it to stop? Society has (indeed) gotten so crazy (it has become so cruel) and wrongful suffering is all around us... It is threatening ourselves and our families...! But is it our fear... and are we mostly motivated to pray for revival for OUR sake... or is it primarily for the sake of those who are lost...?

When I ask this about my own motive... I am concerned. Do I want revival for God's sake... and the sake of souls who are lost and dying... or am I more selfishly motivated by an ideal picture of a society whose police forces don't have much crime to protect us from... and the lucky officers... who get to keep their jobs... form barbershop quartets and sing happy tunes on public street corners. (This is what I have read from different sources that actually happened during America's Second Great Awakening.)

Yes... we need revival in our land. But we need to have the right motivation in praying for it. We also need to have the right picture of what

will happen... when revival comes. And that is where our passage may be helpful to us.

Last week... in our study through Genesis... we saw the first revival that Scripture records. Jacob demonstrated for us the posture and rhythm that welcomes revival... Briefly... let me repeat what we saw as the posture and rhythm that welcomes revival... There were five elements:

- **Ceasing**—A Putting away of strange gods. We are to put away ANYTHING that harms our walk with God.
- **Cleansing**—"Be clean." If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- **Changing**—"Change your garments." We are to repent of our sin... start fresh... and change the direction we are spiritually going in our life.
- **Committing**—We are to arise and go up to ***our*** Bethel. (That is synonymous with worship.) When we are truly determined to worship and serve the Lord... we will not be easily deterred. Bethel was uphill. ... Revival takes effort. It demands total commitment.
- **Complying**—They gave to Jacob all their strange gods and he hid them. They obeyed Jacob... when he called for them to turn them over to him – so they would no longer have them again.

Jacob led his entire household in doing these five things... and revival ***came***. ... We had just gotten to that point in our passage last week when time ran out. ... So I want to pick up today in Genesis 35... where we had to leave off. ... Revival had come! But look what happened.

Genesis 35:8

Deborah is first mentioned in Scripture as the *"nurse"* of Jacob's mom - Rebekah (in Genesis 24:59.) Deborah went with Rebekah... when Abraham's servant brought her from Haran to meet Jacob's father and become Isaac's wife. This was more than 150 years prior... so Deborah was quite old and had been a crucial part of the family all those years.

We don't know when she came to live with Jacob... but she was with him at the time of her death. ... Her death reminded Jacob and his household that an **era** was ending. ... Change was in the air. ... A new future (because of revival) was here. ... Jacob had to let go of this special person who he so highly revered... and who he had relied on – all his life.

Deborah had meant much to Jacob as a young man. She had nursed him as a baby. (To her he had come as a toddler with his broken toys and bleeding knees.) ... She had taken care of him through his childhood and teenage years. ... Since Scripture regards her death worth recording... she was probably a godly and wise woman... who managed Jacob's household. ... She was perhaps a grandmother to Jacob's children as well as an advisor to him... perhaps counselling him during difficult and trying times.

It wasn't easy for Jacob to say goodbye. We get a sense of this by the name he gave to the place where he buried her. "Allon-bachuth" means "Oak of Weeping."

But why is this told to us... here... in the narrative about Jacob...? Does this have anything to do with revival...? Let me answer this... by way of an illustration.

Years ago... I had a college friend to was learning how to fly a hot air balloon. One day Lonnie asked if I would be part of the ground crew that chases after the balloon in a truck... and retrieves them when they land. He promised a ride in the balloon after his lesson. *Well... you bet! I'm all in for such a memorable life experience.*

Now... when you take off in flight with a hot air balloon... you need to throw out the ballast. These are 50 pound sand bags which keep the craft close to the ground... until everyone is ready to fly. You simply will not soar... if you don't cast away the ballast.

Well that was what was happening to Jacob. The things that weighed him down... (that bound him to earth)... those things were being taken from him. In the same way God will wear us... from very meaningful things (which perhaps go way back into our past)... in order to draw us much closer to Himself. These might be good things... that are painful and inconvenient for us to do away with. But God... Who knows so much better than us... removes them for the sake of revival. (You know)... whenever revival comes... God's plan will include the change of loosening of our earthly ties... and making us yearn for our permanent home in Heaven (with Him.) We can expect this – if revival comes to us.

But... as you well know... there is so much good that also comes with revival. ... What we (at the same time) see in verse 8... is that there is a new power to confront day-to-day trials... symbolized here in the greatest of trials – death!

And with revival comes a deeper sense of God's presence... and a greater appreciation for His mercy. (This is what we see in the next verses.) ...

Here now is one of the greatest characteristics of revival - a deeper sense of God's presence... and a greater appreciation for His mercy.

Genesis 35:9-12

God clearly spoke. He opened up communication! He assured Jacob of His very special presence... the presence of El Shaddai - *God Almighty* (the name for God that is used here.) The name stresses God's power and sufficiency to meet every need that man can have. God was giving Jacob the absolute assurance of His presence and power throughout the remainder of his life. ... God's promises are sure. The believer can rest and be assured of every promise God has made.

God re-iterated the promises that He already made to Jacob. Why does He do it again...? Because here is the clear message: Poor... pitiful... stumbling Jacob... was **still** "Israel." (This is real mercy being shown here!) ... Poor... pitiful... stumbling Jacob... would still be famous. ... Poor... pitiful... stumbling Jacob... would still have nations and kings come from his descendants. ... And to poor... pitiful... stumbling Jacob... (and to his descendants)... would be given the promised land. ... Why...? Because it all rested on **God** and His promises – **not** Poor... Pitiful... Stumbling Jacob...!

Genesis 35:9

Perhaps the most important word in this verse is the **un**assuming adverb "**again**." The word "**again**" emphasizes **mercy**. God had spoken to Jacob at Bethel – before... and had given Jacob much helpful revelation. But Jacob had been delinquent regarding that revelation. Yet when Jacob finally returned to Bethel... God graciously spoke to Jacob "**again**" with another

wonderful revelation. (LISTEN!) How many of us can be grateful to God for His mercy in speaking to us "again." ? ... If God had not given an "again," most of us would not be saved... or be walking closer with Him today.

With revival comes a deeper sense of God's presence... and a greater appreciation for His mercy. ... And even in the midst of revival... we will still have great need of God's mercy. (We will constantly be aware of our sinful nature.) Some people think that by praying for a revival... they are praying for an end to their struggle against their sinful nature. ... Well... there should be significant growth in our life... and less sin. But our sin nature will not disappear.

Notice how God brings up the name change once again with Jacob. When Abraham's name was changed from "Abram"... he is never again called "Abram." ... But we won't see this with Jacob. ... Why does this name-change go back and forth between "Jacob" and "Israel"...?

The use of Jacob and Israel reflect two names... but mostly two characters that dwell in the same person. Jacob is submitted to God... after several defining moments in his life. ... However... he is never fully comfortable... and his submission will be regularly tested. (Abraham... on the other-hand... came to the ultimate moment in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.)

This pattern of going back and forth seems to picture the life of most believers in Christ. We have those moments of commitment... and then we become weak and backslide. ... We question if obedience to the way of God will be best for us. We become attracted to the pleasures of this world and think God may be cheating us. ... We think God is working too

slowly... and we must help... and speed things up in our life. ... Our inability to fully submit to God causes us to act like Christians sometimes... and like non-Christians sometimes. ... Sometimes we are “Jacob”... sometimes we are “Israel.” ... The sad feature of the life of a follower of God is that spiritual life too often emulates Jacob... not Abraham. ... Would it not be wonderful if we could arrive at the point where we are in total and peaceful submission to the will of God? We will always need His mercy.

Here... as revival happens – the name “Israel” replaced “Jacob.”

Genesis 35:14-15

As I mentioned earlier... revival brings a deeper sense of worship. ... Jacob had worshipped at this very spot before – about 30 years before. But this worship is deeper. This time he poured out a drink offering. ... So... what is significant about that...? ... The earliest readers of Genesis probably caught the implication right away. ... A drink offering is associated with a sacrifice and fulfillment of a vow. Moses (in one of his other books) makes that connection as part of the Law (Numbers 15:2-5.)

This worship was different from the last time... as Jacob fulfilled the vow that he made (right there) 30 years prior. The act of pouring out a drink offering tells us that Jacob had just given a tenth of all he had... just as he promised that he would.

Obviously (after all he had been through)... Jacob's worship experience now included an expanded understanding. Once again at Bethel... Jacob's understanding that it was "the house of God" penetrated the depths of his

being... and informed his way of life as never before. A different Jacob was rising.

The angels who Jacob saw climbing up and down the ladder that extended up to Heaven... had been perpetually busy in his behalf over the last thirty years. ... God's promise—that he would never leave Jacob until He had done what He had promised—remained unbroken. ... God had kept His word despite Jacob's self-focused scheming... and halfhearted obedience. A constant grace rained upon him — most often as a gentle mist... and sometimes as a fierce downpour. Grace had etched and watered his stubborn soul — and now Jacob had grown. His worship reflected that.

Jacob's restoration was now complete. #1. He was back in the place of God's choosing... #2. he had offered himself and his sacrifices to the Lord... #3. the Lord had spoken to him... and #4. the covenant promises had been reaffirmed. ... Jacob had come from the house of Laban... to the house of God... and though he still had much to learn about his walk with the Lord... revival was happening. Jacob was starting to be "Israel" and live like a prince... instead of a pauper.

God had just given Jacob and his people a true revival... leading them to genuine repentance. ... They had turned away from the sins of this world... and turned completely to God. ... All this had taken place at Bethel... the house of God. ... Now Jacob was spiritually strengthened as never before. ... He was certainly far more prepared to return to his father... (Isaac)... who was still alive... and to take over the responsibilities of the promised family. ... So... Jacob and his people packed all their possessions... gathered all the herds together... and left Bethel. ... They began the

exhausting journey to Hebron... where Isaac lived. ... But before they had travelled far... a crisis arose that stopped them dead in their tracks.

Experiencing a revival... and getting our life back on track with the Lord has many benefits – but the absence of personal tragedy and the absence of personal grief... is **not** one of them. ... Don't pray for revival because you think that it will bring you an absence of heartache! But having gone through revival... we will see that Jacob has new power to confront the greatest of trials – another significant **death!** (This one even more tragic.)

Genesis 35:16-21

Much later on in Genesis (Genesis 48:7) we read how Jacob lived in tears to his dying day... over the death of his beloved Rachael. Make no mistake about it. Jacob's sorrow was deep.

The awful moments that enter our life at the death of someone we love are deep valleys. ...Those valleys are more often and more terrible for some but thankfully... rare... for most of us. ... The death of a spouse or child is bitter... and changes our lives forever. ... No one can ever be the same after walking through that valley. In this text... Jacob must deal with the death of his beloved Rachel. The writer of Genesis shows the perspective of one who is submitted to the Lord.

Rachel dies in giving birth to her second son. Rachel names her second son '*Benoni*' which means '*son of my sorrow.*' The obvious application is about Rachel's suffering during her dying moments. ... but Jacob (who we now know as "Israel") changes the name of his son... calling him

“Benjamin”... which means *'son of my right hand'*. ... The name signifies a place of honor in the family.

Israel (Jacob) has lost the true love of his life. It could be one of those awful valleys that inspire bitterness. ... Benjamin's birth had cost him his beloved. It is not unusual for one to have many years of tragic resentment towards the child in this kind of situation. ... But because Israel had now submitted to God... he found triumph... and drew Benjamin to himself. ...The clear lesson is the difference that full submission to God can make in our lives... when we are struggling with the hurts and the dark valleys of life.

It is a very tough hill to climb... that hill in the midst of great loss... which requires us to believe God and trust Him. ... Yet... that is the only place life can be rebuilt. Jacob shows us that a heart that has experienced revival... is more likely to do this.

But even a heart that has experienced revival may still have to live with painful consequences of past sins and failures. Revival does not spare us of this. So... next we see an after-effect of Jacob's sinful past.

Genesis 35:22

Those who teach that our dedication to the Lord automatically protects us from troubles and tears... need to read this chapter in Genesis very carefully. ... Certainly God had forgiven Jacob... and certainly Jacob was walking with the Lord in faith and obedience. ... Nevertheless... he still had his share of trials. ... If we obey the Lord (or if we Are praying for revival) only for what we get out of it... and not because He is worthy of our love and obedience... then our hearts and motives are wrong.

Reuben's sin involved much more than the satisfying of a lustful appetite. For a son to take a father's wife in this manner was a declaration that he was now the head of the family.

When Abner took King Saul's concubine... Saul's son and heir (Ishbosheth) protested because it meant Abner was usurping the crown (2 Sam. 3:6-11). When David succeeded Saul as king... he was given Saul's wives as his own (1 Sam. 12:8). ... Rebellious Absalom declared himself ruler... by taking his father's concubines (2 Sam. 16:20-23)... and Adonijah's request to have Abishag as his wife... was the same as challenging Solomon's rights to the throne (1 Kings 2:13-25).

It would appear... then... that Reuben's purpose was to take over the leadership of the family... which made his deed only that much more vile. He completely devalued his father... who did nothing when Dinah was raped. ... Sin's consequences can plague us long after the sin is committed – even if we have experienced revival.

Reuben's sin was costly... although not right away. As the oldest son... he stood to receive a double portion of the family inheritance and a place of leadership among his people. ... Reuben may have thought he had gotten away with his sin.... No more is mentioned of it... until Jacob... on his deathbed... assembled his family for the final blessing. Suddenly Jacob took away Reuben's double portion and gave it to someone else.

Genesis 49:3-4 (ESV)

³ *“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. ⁴ Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!*

Instead of the double portion going to Reuben... Jacob gave the double portion to Joseph.

1 Chronicles 5:1 (ESV)

The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son;

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is in control of the nations. He creates them... and they will serve His purposes – in spite of our sinning... and its consequences.

Genesis 35:23-26

Neither Jacob or Reuben's sin altered the will of God. ... God's purpose will be fulfilled. ... (LISTEN!) ***If*** God brings revival – that would be great! But it is not our only hope for His sovereign will to come to pass. Our society may continue to go downhill. But that does not mean all is lost... God will still accomplish every one of His purposes.

Genesis 35:27-29

The death of Isaac brings us full circle in the life of Jacob. ... God has completed His promise that He made to Jacob... when Jacob was first at Bethel.

Genesis 28:15 (ESV)

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Several events now come together. In the completion of his geographical journey... Jacob has also completed a *spiritual* journey. ... The spiritual journey is the most important. ... In his battles to be ***on top*** of his circumstances... Jacob has learned that ***being on top*** begins with submission to God's authority. (The way to the top is by going to the bottom.) ... He had fled from Esau who swore to kill him at his father's death. ... He now stands *beside* Esau... at his father's funeral without fear.

This (to me) is further evidence of revival. (God works on all of our crippling fear.) ... Jacob has learned that the fear of God which he first encountered at Bethel... is the key to living without fear of all other things.

The Psalmist expressed it:

Psalm 111:10 (ESV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;

The story of Jacob is the story for many believers. We think the struggles of our life are about our need to get ***on top*** of our circumstances... when... in fact... they are actually our struggle ***to submit to God***.

It is a wonderful thing... and a defining moment in a person's life... when he can truly understand the nature of the battles that we face in life. ... Almost all of the major battles of life... can be boiled down to the one thing that Jacob contended with - our struggle to submit to the will of God. ... (And just like Jacob... our problem is that we think we are fighting some other battle.)

Our country sure does need revival. But it has to start in our own hearts. We need to stop trying to get on top of our circumstances... and submit to

the will of God. With all of your challenges this week – may your first response be to turn to the Lord and while asking to know His will... ask Him also for an ability to submit to it.

Then... as we pray for revival... we will want it more for God's sake... instead of our own sake.