

## XIX. Revival in Biblical Perspective

*Revive Us Again!*

“A Prophet’s Revival Prayer”

Habakkuk 3:1–2

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We will be looking at the minor prophet Habakkuk in this study. This is our concluding study for this first half of the year in examining what the Bible says about revival as it teaches us and describes them. We will be looking at this revival prayer by the Prophet Habakkuk. This is the Word of God. It’s the truth. Habakkuk 3:1–2 says [1] *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.* [2] *O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There has been a group that has been started specifically during the worship services to encourage revival prayer and while I am preaching now they are praying for the preaching and hearing of the Word and for God to work. I know there are other people praying for revival in various small groups but when I had heard they started this I was not only thrilled because I know of the indispensable importance of prayer in the Lord bringing revival but I was also aware of something early on when I was coming into the ministry.

It was an account of five theological students that were graduating from their theological education headed off into the ministry in England but as they finished their education they had heard about the extraordinary revivals that were taking place in London through the ministry by a man named Charles Spurgeon who pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle. A church that was about to die had experienced revival and now was being used in an extraordinary way reaching thousands of people and bringing them to Christ throughout London. These students wanted to hear Spurgeon and see what was happening in this church so they got to the service early to get a front seat to experience the words and gestures of Spurgeon’s preaching before they got started in their ministry of preaching the Word.

This rather short, dumpy fellow came up to these students and said “We’re glad to have you here.” They said ‘We’re glad to be here because this church is on fire for the Lord and we want to hear the great Spurgeon preach.’ The man said “Can I take a moment and show you how we heat this building? I’ll save your seat, no need to worry about that.” They figured they had a fastidious deacon who was proud of the boiler room in the church so they decided to follow him. He took them downstairs and opened a door where they saw 500 people as the service was beginning, on their knees praying for God’s blessing and the worship and preaching of the Word. He told the young men ‘this is how the fire is stoked in this church, the pulpit may give out the flame but it’s stoked right here.’ The young men quickly found out that this man was actually Charles Spurgeon himself because he was fully aware of his own inadequacies and infallibilities as a preacher and that it was not him but what God would do to him and through him to bring the powerful preaching of the Word from which God empowered the hearing of the Word and the people of God as they were set aflame and on fire for Jesus Christ.

That is why I get excited when I hear of people committed to praying and even during the worship service itself. Why is intercessory prayer so extraordinary? I have gone through 19

studies now on what the Bible says about revival. The very first study was on prayer for revival and it came from Psalm 85:6 which says *[6] Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* It became our theme verse and it was a prayer for revival. This series will now end on a study of a prayer for revival because without prayer there will be no revival.

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. Those two consequences are God-centered worship that rises up and Gospel harvest that goes out throughout all the world. So why did I start with prayer and why am I ending with prayer? I know that when God does a work it's sovereign but the same God who sovereignly appoints the end has sovereignly described the means which is raising up revival leaders and revival preaching but those leaders and that preaching are empowered because of revival prayer.

That is why II Chronicles 7:14 says *[14] if my people who are called by my name 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.* The number I asked you to remember from this verse was 243. Two refers to His people and those are people called by His Name. Four refers to the things His people do – humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their wicked ways. Three are the things the Lord will do in response – hear them, forgive their sin and heal their land. In other words, nothing to the glory of God is going to happen to their (our) nation until something by the power of God happens to them (us). So you'll notice the primacy of prayer.

I have already mentioned that there are 28 revivals recorded in the Bible and arguably more and we've looked at a number of them. I do not know of a revival of God's people that blessed a nation that did not begin with prayer, sustained with prayer and that was consummated with prayer. So if God alone can bring revival and if God never brings revival without prayer, we don't we pray? Why don't we assault the throne of grace and mercy petitioning God for revival? I think the reason is three-fold. One is that we have an inadequate view of God. Two is we have an inflated view of ourselves. Three, we don't really care. Right now we're in a nation in which God-honoring decorum is being exchanged for self-centered decadence and unless it really touches us personally we don't really care. But when you get a right view of God you start caring and when you get a right view of yourself you quit thinking that you can handle this through a program, a specific preacher or anything else.

I believe God uses preachers, preaching, leadership and that God's people put things into place out of love to Him that He uses but it's not a program or an invention or a personality package or anyone person for there is only one way a revival comes. That is when God comes down. When we bend the knee calling upon Him, God comes down to us and then He lifts us up to Him. There will be no revival without prayer. We don't pray because deep down we think we can pull this off whether it be our location, our facility, our preacher or program or sermon and it's always something where we think we can get it done. Bones don't become skeletons that get flesh and become the army of the Lord without the wind of the Spirit coming when the people of God are praying.

Secondly, we have an inadequate view of God for we don't see God as to who He is and thirdly we are just complacent unless the sin of society pinches us. It never pains us as to what is happening to the glory of God unless it pinches us. When God comes complacency disappears and self-confidence is replaced by self-denial and God-centeredness and God's fame becomes our passion. This only comes when God's people pray. That is what Habakkuk learned and what he tells us in his prayer. Let's look at our text for this study.

Habakkuk 3:1 says [1] *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.* Do you know what Shigionoth is or means? I have researched for three weeks and don't have the slightest idea of what it is but here is what I do know. It does have something to do with music and according to Habakkuk this is to be put to music for the praise and exaltation of God. Build this and embed it in the worship of God because prayer is not only an element of worship/praise but prayer is worship/praise.

When did Habakkuk prophesy? It was in the seventh century. He had been given a very specific prophecy about 608/609 BC and that was to tell the people of Israel that is the two remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, because of their sin of engaging in syncretism, meaning meshing the culture's gods into the worship of God due to falling into immorality, prostitution and child sacrifice, and they had abandoned the multiple revivals that God had brought through the kings in II Chronicles, God was coming to bring judgment upon them to purge sin out of them. They would experience the consequences of their sin so they would learn to hate their sin and love their God instead of the false gods and the sins they had embraced. God was going to do this through a nation and God told Habakkuk who that nation was going to be. It would be the Chaldeans/Babylonians.

Habakkuk is aghast over this. First of all he is distressed about what God said He is going to do as the people of Israel are going to be purged of their sin by the captivity of the people through the Babylonian's assault and invasion, especially since this nation was worse than Israel was. Habakkuk wanted to know how God was going to use a nation worse than them to bring judgment upon them. Here is a key for you. When we see God as to who He is, we see us as to who we are and we sin for what it is, we don't play the comparison game i.e. they are worse than us. We only see our sin and confess it. Habakkuk wanted God to grade on a curve but God says 'I grade on holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!' Habakkuk basically tells God he is not going to do anything until God explains how He is going to do this through this other nation. God explains it in Habakkuk 1 and 2.

I don't have time to go into Habakkuk 1 and 2 but I did a series on Habakkuk which can be found on our website but basically God then tells Habakkuk that He is holy and He brings judgment on sin. Ezekiel 18:20a says [20a] *The soul who sins shall die.* Numbers 14:18a says [18a] *'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty (leave the guilty unpunished)...'* God also doesn't make peace treaties with their remaining sin. God goes after sin and we see that great statement that the reformation celebrates found here in Habakkuk which is the just shall live by faith. Those who have been saved by the power of grace don't sign peace treaties with sin, don't invent sin or embrace sin but when they decide that sin is more important than God then God will come into their life because He loves them, to purge the sin out of their life.

God is King and sovereign over all the nations so He can use any nation for His purposes and when He uses them to deal with His people then He will also circle back to deal with that nation He used. Do you remember what He told Moses? He told him He would deliver them and give them a Promised Land but if they embrace the gods of the people that He drives out of the land then He will use a non-covenantal nation, a nation not His people, to discipline His people to bring them to repentance. He is doing what He promised. Now what does Habakkuk do?

Here is what Habakkuk does as God displays it for him. Habakkuk 3:2 says [2] *O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.* God says "I am

what I am, what I was I am, what I will be I am, I am the Lord of glory.” No one else can say this. He is holy, unique, One of a kind. First I want to bring out the three foundational features to Habakkuk’s prayer for revival, then the three prevailing petitions, the three essential elements and then a takeaway from all of this.

The first foundational feature is I have heard the report of You. All prayer starts with a right view of God. Even the preacher, Habakkuk, needs preaching of the Word to get the right view of God. He has heard and been informed of the report of God. He now knows who God is – I Am that I Am. If you have to use one word to describe God what would it be? I want to restrict you to one word with four letters, so what would you write? I think most in the evangelical church would say the word love. By the way, God is love, but if you only have one word you need to use the word that is only used whenever heaven is peeled back and the angels and saints there stand and praise the Lord. They do not cry out ‘love, love, love.’ They cry out, ‘holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is and is to come.’ Then they fall down and worship Him. There is no way we can see that worship without seeing God-centered worship that invigorates the soul with a right view of God and ourselves.

What does holy mean? Holy not only means righteous and pure but its number one meaning is unique. God is one of a kind. There is nothing to compare Him to. It is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who dwells in unapproachable glory and whom I cannot look upon without it consuming me. It is a God who made the angels who stand in His presence and praise Him yet He has made them so they have wings where their feet never touch the ground in His presence because it is holy in His presence. They also have wings to cover their eyes and these angels have not tasted of any sin at all. Their very existence can’t even stand or touch in His presence because there is none like Him – holy, holy, holy. The thresholds tremble and the smoke filled the temple with the presence of God. Even the inanimate objects of the threshold have enough sense to tremble in the presence of this God. This is the God who speaks to Habakkuk. He has heard the report of God and there is none like Him.

The second foundational feature of Habakkuk’s prayer is that he has heard the report of God’s work. He knows what God does, what He does for His glory and wrath as God deals with sin because he has heard that report. He has heard the report of what God did in the days of Noah, Cain, Sodom and Gomorrah, Babel and of the days of the Passover Lamb whereby God’s people escaped His wrath because of a substitute. He has heard the report that the soul that sinneth shall die for the wages of sin is death. He has heard the report of God’s inflexible, nonnegotiable holiness, judgment and wrath against all sin. I have also heard that when You took Your people out of Egypt You took them to a Promised Land, an ark of the covenant and that You put a serpent in the wilderness for I have heard the report of Your grace and mercy that took Your wrath instead of Your people. As You took Your people out of Egypt I also heard what You did with Egypt as You drowned Pharaoh’s army and You brought the plagues upon them. I heard who You used the Philistines to deal with Your people in the Promised Land and then how You used the ark of the covenant to deal with the Philistines. He had heard about how God brought down the Assyrians almost 200 years ago to the ten tribes and then what You did to the Assyrians. So I have heard how You use nations to discipline Your people and then how You deal with those nations.

The third foundational feature of Habakkuk’s prayer is he feared – the fear of the Lord. I desperately want the Gospel of grace to be amazing, loved, believed, shared and preached but I believe the Gospel has been lost as Good News that’s astounding, amazing and astonishing because we not preached the environment of the Gospel which is the astounding holiness of God.

If you preach a God of grace who saves sinners without preaching a God of wrath then the God of grace makes no sense. A God with no wrath, will have no Gospel. If you preach about men who are victims of an environment as victims of syndromes instead of the reality that we are willing sinners, helpless, hopeless and dead, then you have no Gospel to preach. An eternity with no hell, will have no Gospel to preach.

The reality of God's wrath, man's helplessness and the reality of a hell must be preached with a broken heart but it must be preached. Then you can tell people in wrath He remembers mercy. He has found a way to withhold His righteous wrath from those who call upon Him. You can also tell people that sinners are not just helped up but they are born again, saved and brought from death unto life. Also there is a hell whose gates have been shut because Jesus marched into it and grabbed the keys to set you free for a new heavens and a new earth. I fear because I know who You are and Your wrath yet I believe because You are a God of grace and mercy that has found a way for Your wrath to be satisfied and sinners to be saved, not simply from Your wrath in this world but from the world to come.

So then Habakkuk gives the three prevailing petitions. The first one is that in light of who You are, what You do and the fear of the Lord, now revive Your work. Habakkuk 3:2 says *In the midst of the years revive it...* This is a way of saying God, do it right now. The word 'it' here refers to God's work. Revive Your work to bring judgment on sin and to save sinners from the judgment. That is what Habakkuk asks for and it's a powerful thing for us to ask for God's wrath to come down on sin right now because we dwell in a nation in which the innocent blood cries out and if one death of murder, Cain's, cried up to heaven to bring God down, what does 1.5 million a year look like in this nation? Look at what happened when God dealt with the sexual perversion, promiscuity and anarchy of Sodom and Gomorrah so what does the socially approved, applauded sexual aberrations, anarchy, promiscuity, perversion in our culture call from heaven for? If the declaration of arrogance at Babel to build their own god brings God down for judgment then what does the arrogance of our secular humanism do as it rises up to God? Are we ready to say 'God revive Your work for Your glory and if Your glory means the destruction of this nation, then get Your glory'?

God, what about Your church that is increasingly walking into cultural captivity as we walk away from the doctrine of creation, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the doctrine of hell, the doctrine of atonement, personal evangelism and discipleship as Your church walks from that into being another entertainment institution just looking for people to show up, instead of a ship on a rescue mission in the sea of sin to rescue sinners. God what will You do for Your people? This nation won't be reached until we're reached. God, will You revive Your work in a nation by reviving Your work in a people right now, in the midst of this year?

The second prevailing petition is God make it known. For Your glory would You make known what You do for Your glory in this nation and among Your people?

The third petition is that in this wrath that You righteously bring, God, remember mercy. He has got much to remember that for eternity Father, Son and Holy Spirit made an eternal covenant to save sinners. In time the Father said to the Son 'go save these people' and the Son said to the Father 'I delight to do Your will.' The Son comes into this world and His cry of desperation, knowing what He is about to endure, in the Garden of Gethsemane, 'O God, if there is any other way then let this cup of Your wrath depart from Me.' There is no other way, Son. Then we see the cry of dereliction at Calvary, 'My God, My God why has Thou forsaken Me?' As the Father tips the cup of Divine wrath for His glory and His Son drinks it to the last drop, therefore there is mercy to remember.

God has withheld the wrath due to His people because His Son drank it to the bottom. Now revive us again, O Lord! In the midst of this wrath remember Your mercy that is secure in Jesus Christ. Not only did He drink that cup but out of that tomb He arose. The Victorious Christ who has seen the travail of His soul and the wrath of God has been satisfied. We can be saved and we will be saved. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

What are the three essential elements of this? Revival prayer knows who God is, what God does and it's totally committed to God's fame and glory that He would be exalted. At the stroke of midnight, in the darkest moments Habakkuk cries out 'God, send the light of grace and mercy even as You honor Your holiness in judgment, to Your people.'

Here is the takeaway from this revival prayer. The God of glorious wrath who infallibly brings judgment upon sin is also a God of glorious mercy who infallibly revives His people when they pray. Find another revival without prayer and bring it to me. All revivals have revival leaders and revival preaching that awaits revival prayer where God's people who want nothing more than God's glory in the midst of the wrath against sin, call upon God to do a work of grace that remembers the finished work of Jesus Christ who swallowed up the wrath due to our sin. Now on the basis of that, come and revive us again O Lord, so that we have nothing to do with these idols or sin any longer. We know that You are forgiving but Your forgiving and patience is not for us to get careless with our sin but to embrace a full obedience to walk with You. Therefore this cross satisfaction of Your wrath O God, come and finish the story in our life for Your glory that Your fame might be known. Do a work in us that will be felt in our nation. Prayer is an absolute essential instrument appointed by God whereby He brings revival leaders, revival preaching and revival.

In the mid 1800s there was revival prayer meeting at Mount Vernon Church in Boston. A man was moved by God's reviving power and taught his Sunday School class who desperately wanted to know the power of God to be saved. During that revival at this church, this Sunday school teacher wanted everyone to come here his pastor preaching a revival message to come to know Jesus and his pastor's name was Dr. Kirk. He decided to visit every single one of his students from his Sunday school class. The first student he visited was a shoe clerk. The Sunday school teacher's name was Edward Kimble and the shoe clerk was Dwight L. Moody. Moody says of the day he heard the message that it was like he had been walking in darkness all his life and the Son rose. D.L. Moody came to Christ and became a great pastor and evangelist.

Moody went to England to preach and told about the revival prayer meeting at Mount Vernon Baptist that lasted eleven months and how Edward Kimble went to every one of his students to bring them to Christ. There was a preacher in the congregation named Frederick Brotherton Meyer who would become known as F.B. Meyer and God laid upon his heart to become an evangelist in Great Britain with great power and later he was brought over to America where he told the story of revival prayer and power and what it did in his life and D.L. Moody's life. Through Meyer's message a man named J. Wilbur Chapman came to Christ. J. Wilbur Chapman became an evangelist with a heart for students and started the ministry of Youth For Christ. Revival prayer kept doing its work and Chapman led a baseball player to Christ named Billy Sunday. Sunday joined Chapman in his ministry and then handed it off to Sunday. There was a prayer meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina and in 1924 Billy Sunday came to Charlotte, North Carolina to preach. God blessed Sunday's ministry there in a powerful and wonderful way.

The result of his ministry there was a prayer meeting for revival that had three objectives – God bring revival to me, to Charlotte, and to America. That prayer meeting started in 1924

and it continued to 1932 and beyond. I know about that prayer meeting personally because my grandfather and his brothers were in it. Ministries like the Christian Businessmen Association were born from it but from 1924 to 1932 they met in a house to pray. The house was a dairy farm but now is South Park Mall if you go there today. The owner of that dairy farm was a man named Franklin Graham. God began to keep moving in revival prayer. Then God brought to Charlotte, North Carolina, Mordecai Ham who preached and the 8 year old boy who played in the room next to the prayer meeting in that house, now 16 years old, came to Christ. His name was Billy Graham. The answer to their revival prayer was playing in the next room. Billy came back to Charlotte to hold his first evangelist meeting at Calvary Baptist Church which was in 1948. Praise God that an 18 year old man with his 18 year old wife and their two month old baby went forward to give their life to Jesus. That 18 year old man and wife was my dad and mom and that two month old baby was me.

I praise God for Billy Graham. I praise God for Edward Kimble. I praise God for saints I don't know who met for prayer at Mount Vernon Church. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your life about our call to pray for God's glory in revival. O holy God who will not abide with sin but has found a way to satisfy Your holiness at the cross so that sinners saved by grace could abide with You now innocent because of the blood of Jesus and now being changed because of the presence of Jesus. Our nation is at the midnight hour and how I long for a new day of grace but it cannot come to this nation until revival comes to Your church and revival from above does not come without God's people calling upon their God with desperate, persistent, protracted prayer. O God I have heard of who You are. I have heard of Your report of judgment upon sin and I have heard of Your mercy and grace to save Your people. Revive us again! The fear of God has given us reverence and awe, now the faith we have in You gives us boldness to assault the throne of grace and ask You O God, to rend the heavens. Come down and fill us to overflowing for without You we can do nothing but with You we can do all things for Your fame and glory. If you would like to know this God that has so loved You that He gave His Son to satisfy His justice and want to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd be happy to do that with you. I'm available at any time any way you want to talk. May the God of grace and glory fill your soul. Lord, would You allow those of us who know You to call upon You in the midst of the years, revive Your work again for Jesus sake and Your glory, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

- + God-centered Worship
- + Gospel Harvest

"II Chronicles 7:14"

## THE PROPHET'S REVIVAL PRAYER

- I. Three Foundational Facts
- II. Three Prevailing Petitions
- III. Three Essential Elements

## LIFE TAKEAWAY

The God of glorious wrath who infallibly brings judgement upon sin is also a God of glorious mercy who infallibly revives His people—when they pray.