

IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD

Hosea 10:12-13

INTRODUCTION: Leonard Ravenhill said, "The Church is either supernatural or superficial." It can be said that Christians are either authentic or artificial. The world needs to see the supernatural church full of authentic Christians. We need a revival. □

Vance Havner: "Real revival does not begin with joyous singing. It begins with conviction and repentance on the part of Christians."

Henry Blackaby: "Revival is when God's people return to God and God returns to them, and everyone sees the difference." **Charles Spurgeon:** "It is not our eloquence, our learning, our fame, or our wealth, that can commend Christ to the world: it is only the holy living of Christians."

The moral and spiritual collapse was destroying Israel. The Book of Hosea describes Israel's observance of religious rituals without genuine devotion and commitment to the Lord. This is true of too many Christians in America. The prophet Hosea said to Israel, "it is time to seek the Lord."

I. SOWING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. PLOWING OF THE PAST. (v. 13)

1. Reaping from the plowing. "reaped iniquity"

Israel had sown her sins in the past, and she was now reaping from her iniquity. The sinner plows, sows, and harvests the seeds of wickedness he has planted. Paul reminds us of God's principle of sowing and reaping. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

2. Result from the plowing. "fruit of lies"

The promises of sin are nothing but lies. Satan is the "father of lies." He lied to Adam and Eve when he told them, "Ye shall not surely die," and "Ye shall be as God." Sin can appear appealing and good. Sin has deceived all of us in different ways. The human race has reaped the fruit from Satan's lies. Sin never profits, it does not satisfy in the end.

3. Reason for the plowing. "trust in thy way"

Israel forsook God's way and followed the way of wickedness. She rebelled against God and worshiped the gods of the heathens. Like Israel, we trust in our ways, and we will reap the same. "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:6)

Solomon gave us some words of wisdom that we need to heed. "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Proverbs 4:19)

"In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." (Proverbs 12:2)

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." (Proverbs 14:14) God's way is always right. (Hosea 14:9)

B. PREPARING FOR REVIVAL. (v. 12)

1. Involves repentance. "break up your fallow ground"

The heart can become hardened and calloused from sin. A hard heart resists the seed of God's Word like hard soil that resists the farmer's seed. God says, "break up your fallow ground." We break up fallow ground by turning from sin. Repentance is required for a revival to happen. "The LORD is nigh unto

them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." (Psalm 34:18) There must be brokenness over sin and faith in God for a heart to be revived.

2. Involves righteousness. "sow to yourselves in righteousness" □

Sowing righteousness means to sow the Word of God in one's heart and to practice righteousness. Righteousness is the fruit in the life of a person who is right with God. In 1 John 3:7, we read, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." □

Adrian Rogers said, "Religion without righteousness is repugnant to God."

Charles Spurgeon said, "The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul."

3. Involves reaping. "reap in mercy"

The person who repents and looks to God will reap the mercy of God. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) It is God's nature to be merciful.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:4 that God "is rich in mercy." David wrote, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." (Psalm 86:15)

The person who receives mercy from God will show mercy to his fellow man. It is the outflow from a heart full of the love of God. You show mercy to others because God has been merciful to you.

II. SEEKING THE LORD

A. URGENT IN THE SEEKING. "it is time to seek the LORD"

God spoke to Israel through the prophet Hosea saying, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hosea 5:15) God was going to redraw His favor from Israel until they felt the consequence of their sin.

Hosea stressed the urgent need to seek the LORD in verse 12. We are in need of seeking God's face today. Isaiah the prophet said, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6) Seeking the Lord means to seek His presence. We are to seek the Lord with all our heart and soul.

It is time for us to repent in our nation, in our churches, and in our individual lives. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). □

The Psalmist said, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." (Psalm 119:2)

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

B. UNRELENTING IN THE SEEKING. "till He come"

Revival is not a onetime seeking of the Lord. We are to live every day seeking His face till He comes.

Listen to what the Bible says about seeking the LORD.

"Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually." (1 Chronicles 16:11)

"Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore." (Psalm 105:4)

We are to watch and avoid temptation. Jesus said, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:38)

We are to watch for His coming. Jesus gave us this warning. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matthew 24:42)

Jesus reminded the church of Sardis: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Revelation 3:3)

The last recorded promise of Jesus is found in Revelation 22:20. "Surely, I come quickly." David said in Psalm 9:10, "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

III. SHOWERS FROM THE LORD

A. GIFT IN THE SEEKING.

The LORD will rain down righteousness on those who sincerely seek Him. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." (Hosea 6:3)

Righteousness comes from the Lord. Saved people have the imputed righteousness of Christ. We have no righteousness of our own. "There is none righteous, no not one." (Romans 3:10) People who will seek the Lord will be saved. They receive the gift of salvation. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21) "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17)

Salvation is the greatest gift a person can receive from the Lord. A repentant sinner receives forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life, and a home in heaven.

The backslidden Christian who repents and seeks the Lord will be forgiven and restored in his/her relationship with the Lord. They will have their joy and peace restored.

B. GRACE IN THE SEEKING.

We read of God's invitation to Israel in 14:1. "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." (Hosea 14:1)

In Hosea 14:2, God called them to repentance. "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." (Hosea 14:2) God offers grace to those who repent. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." (Hosea 14:4)

Genuine repentance for sin begins when a sinner acknowledges his need for God's grace. God has made it possible for any sinner to be saved. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11)

If we want to experience the times of refreshing as promised by the Lord, then we must return to the Lord with our whole heart.

It is time for individual Christians to seek the Lord. We all have sinned. It is time for the church to repent. It is time for our nation to repent. If we are going to survive, there has to be a heaven-sent revival. We cannot manufacture a revival, but we can prepare our hearts for revival. A true revival is a work of God's mercy and grace. □

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

1. It is easier to complain about how bad things are than to seek the Lord who can make things right. □
2. God is looking for individuals who are seeking Him with all their hearts.
3. It is time to seek the Lord. Are you one of those individuals that God is looking for?

