

## PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL

*Preached by Rev. T. G. Oshokoya on  
November 19, 1978*



Our study this morning is **Preparation for Revival.**

***"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 7:3).***

We have read here that the Philistines waged war against the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel were in this trouble for some time and could not defeat the Philistines because Israel had departed from their God, and were worshipping idols. However, at this time, they had started to receive inspiration from above, which is conviction for sin, the foundation of repentance, not to be regretted, but which results in salvation.

Samuel made them to understand that if they truly wanted to return to God, they must return with all their heart, and not just half-heartedly.

Many people make empty promises which they never keep. Likewise, some people's repentance is not from their heart; we call such a momentous or short-lived repentance, a repentance which is not deep. This does not help them at all. Samuel made them to understand that,

***"If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."***

Many people think that it is not difficult to obtain salvation. If they wanted it, they could just claim it. No one ever obtains salvation that way. It is not bought with money, not to talk of having enough money to buy it. It cannot be received through stubbornness; one cannot say that when he insists on his own way for long, he would be saved. Not at all.

There is something we have to do; there is a way to receive salvation. From Genesis to Revelation, the condition is laid down for man by God. God says, 'If a person would take heed to the Word, if he would obey.' Man cannot receive anything from God without doing His will.

God declared to the Children of Israel through Prophet Jeremiah:

***"And ye shall seek me; and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).***

In like manner, He said in the book of Chronicles:

***"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"(2 Chronicles 7:14).***

Samuel told the Children of Israel here that the condition was, **"If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts."** What would they do to prove that they had returned unto God with all their heart?

***"Put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you and prepare your hearts unto the LORD."***

**"Put away the strange gods"** That means it is not enough for a person to say, "I have returned, I have repented." No. One has to do something to prove that he has truly returned. He must put away the strange gods he has been serving, whatever he has used to substitute God, those things in which he has trusted, or those customs with which God is not pleased. He must forsake the things God does not want.

**"And prepare your hearts unto the LORD."** Man has much to do if he really wants to serve God. There are some important and specific things for a person to do to prove that he has certainly repented and prepared his heart for God.

This also agrees with John's sermon. When he was preaching repentance, people came to him for baptism, and he was baptising them. Some came because they were religious — lawyers, who had studied the Bible from cover to cover — and were descendants of Abraham. Their thinking was: 'There is no place we reach and we will not be recognised. In the matter of religion or the Law, we were born into it. We were also circumcised. We cannot be under-rated, because our father was the standard bearer.' John told them that they should bring forth fruit meet for repentance, and not think within themselves that they had Abraham as their father.

In other words, God's plan for revival and acceptable prayer has not changed.

***"AND God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.***

***"Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:***

***"And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will 'make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.***

***"And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.***

***"And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (Genesis 35:1-5).***

This event took place after Jacob had been blessed by God when he tarried, alone before Him. All possessions and treasures that men trust and cling to, he pushed to the other side of the brook Jabbok in order to talk with God. He had settled his problem with God. There, something happened to him which is a type of sanctification. Now, God spoke to him in a dream, saying, 'Rise up and go to Bethel and build an altar there for me.' That means that God wanted to speak to him again. He called his wives and children, and said, 'My people, God says we should go to Bethel and what God dislikes must not go with us. All strange gods and jewelries: earrings, necklaces, nose rings and bangles, in your possession, should be

surrendered 'to me immediately.' And the people gathered all of them. Some people say they cannot find in' the Bible where God said they should not wear gold. Here is an example. Quickly, Jacob's wives removed all earrings and other ornaments from their bodies. And Jacob disposed of them accordingly.

***"Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments."***

God let Jacob know that they must go to Bethel in holiness, because He wanted to speak with them there. The people co-operated with Jacob and conformed. They removed all the things that would not allow the manifestation of God among them.

Many are found with mini dresses, dresses that do not cover their nakedness, and they claim to be saved. God told these people to change their garments. Many wear expensive dresses, that are so costly they could make dresses for ten people. They claim that Christianity does not forbid them to wear such, and that they are using them to glorify God. God does not want superfluity. God wants moderation. God told them to change their garments. God of those days is the God of the present time.

***" And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;***

***"That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee"(Deuteronomy 30:2,3).***

God brought the Children of Israel to the mount of blessing, and said that a group should read the blessings of God upon those who did what God wanted. The other group were to say "Amen." Those on the other side would pronounce the curses on anybody who did not keep the commandment of God, anyone who did not do as God instructed, and the people would say, "Amen". Here, God made them to understand that if they truly would wholeheartedly return unto Him, they would not put themselves under a curse. A change that results in blessing from God is available for each person who returns unto God with his whole heart. No wonder God demands that people should repent! It is because God wants to turn away the curse and the judgment of death, which He placed on the people who commit sin.

God led the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt through the Red Sea, and brought them to the place where the water was bitter. He brought them into a covenant.

***"And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).***

Then God put His name as a witness to it. He signed and sealed it for them that He is the God Who heals. In other words, a wicked person should turn from his way, change his thought, and turn his mind to the things which God wants, so that God can give him a blessing. That is why we are told in the book of Proverbs that,

***"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).***

God told the Children of Israel that if they repented, He would give them innumerable blessings.

***"That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations,***

***whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.***

***"If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts ,of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee "Deuteronomy 30: 3,4).***

These two verses make us understand that if running away or backsliding from God has made you a slave or bondman, or if the devil has tied you down, making you a captive, God says, if you will consider and repent, if you can make up your mind that you will obey God from now on, He will be merciful to you. He had abandoned you before to be taken away captive. You have been chained with all fetters which you did not know where they came from. You wanted to do the will of God, you could not. You even wanted to sing at home, but you could not, and you had it in mind, that if you went to Church you would join them in singing. You came to Church, but were unable to open your mouth to sing. You wanted to pray at home, you could not. You had it in mind that when you got to Church where prayer was fervent, you would get inspiration. When you got there, you dozed off. It was because you had been chained somewhere, and you are not yet delivered.

What you have to do is that the idol which you have allowed to overwhelm your heart, the one which you have yielded yourself to worship, which has held you bound, and you have become its slave, God wants you personally to reject it, despise it, and then turn to God. God says, He will gather you. Not only you, your possessions which have fallen into other people's hands because you forsook God, your children and their offspring, He will restore to you.

***"And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.***

***"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deuteronomy 30:5, 6).***

Here, God made it known to the Children of Israel that He would restore them to the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, the possession of their fathers. God also said that He would circumcise their heart, which is a type of being made entirely holy unto God. This means that when we confess all our short- comings to God, and forsake those idols, God has great favour which He wants to restore to us by making us citizens of the Kingdom of God. This is what is called being born again, having one's name written in the Book of Life.

***"And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.***

***"And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 30: 8,9).***

In these verses, uncountable are the blessings which God has promised for the Children of Israel: blessing of eternal life, peace and fruitfulness. But do you know on what condition -- what they must do for these promises to accrue to them? He says, they just must repent. It is whole-hearted repentance that precedes revival. Many would want to remain in their old ways which are contrary to all the ordinances of God. Is it in your backslidden condition from all the righteousness and truth of the Living God that you want revival? One cannot remain in unrighteousness and get revival. The fire that has gone out needs to be rekindled. He says all those things with which you have replaced the will and the Word of God in your heart, should be removed altogether. This was the same procedure which God asked Joel to follow in his time, so that the Children of Israel might repent.

***"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:***

***"And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12, 13).***

This is not different from what the Children of Israel did in response to Samuel's invitation.

***"And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.***

***"And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh" (1 Samuel 7:5,6).***

Samuel did not do contrary to the plan of God for revival. He did not behave as the modern-day prophet who gathers people and asks them to contribute money, that he would pray and fast on their behalf, so that they might experience revival. Neither did he do as others who would specify a fast for the people, and the people would merely be afflicting themselves, punishing themselves, without true repentance.

Samuel asked the Israelites to forsake Ashtaroah and Baal. Not only that, they fetched water, and poured it on the ground. They opened their heart unto God with godly sorrow and fasted in the presence of God, until God answered their prayer for forgiveness. Prophet Joel told the Israelites the same thing:

***"Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."***

We need to thank God that the Children of Israel had a man like Samuel, who told them what it would cost them in order to meet God's conditions. Maybe we have people in this congregation who might think that they could serve God without repentance, and that there would be no problem. My friend, you need to repent. All those things which you have to forsake, but are still embracing, you have to forsake them. If it is money which you have got, and you are no longer able to pray, or maybe you used to pray fervently before you got married, now that you are married, you are no longer able to pray, won't you tell God to restore your first love for Him? You had been busy for God before you got married, now that you have a wife, you have become caged at home! It is the devil that has caged you. Is it the love of your wife or the love of your child? Won't you tell God, "Deliver me, I just want revival?"

***"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.***

***"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" ( 2 Timothy 2:20,21).***

If you do not want to be a bench warmer in the house of God, all the things that will not allow you to be out and out for God, or prove what is the acceptable will of God, you need to tear yourself away from. Wash yourself in the Blood of the Lamb of Calvary. Purge your soul also. It is then that revival can begin in your heart. This is the time of revival. It is left to you. It is within your power to cast away the idol, to separate yourself from the world and its customs, and from all the things which are contrary to sound doctrine, so that God will revive you.