



PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

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There are a lot of things in life. You cannot make them happen, but you can be ready for them when they do happen. As experienced as a farmer may be, and as advanced as the tools may be, he cannot make it rain, not this rain, but the other rain, okay, but he can be prepared for the rain. He can remove the rocks. He can plow the field. He can plant seeds and wait for the rain. Though, he can't create the rain. He can decide if his land will resist the rain or receive the rain. As experienced as a sailor might be, he can't cause the wind to blow, but he can raise a sail, he can remove excessive weight from the boat. He can set the rudder, put the boat in the right direction, so that if the wind comes, the boat is ready to be propelled in the direction of his destination. You can't make it happen, but you can be ready for it. Same is true about revivals. You cannot cause, you cannot force, you cannot manufacture a revival. You can't make it happen. But you and I, our church, we can be ready whenever God decides to move. But here is where that analogy of the rain and the wind breaks down. God is not an impersonal force like the wind or the rain. God is actually a relational being. He sees you, he knows you, He loves you. So you're not helplessly, hoping, wondering if God will ever move. No, no. Something about our preparedness causes God out of love and compassion to move on the earth. So when he sees his church praying, when he sees our heart being ready, open, confessing of sins, creating space for God to move, something about that is attractive, and God out of love, moves on the earth, it's the question I want you to think about is not, how can I make revival happen, but rather, how do we prepare? How can we be ready? How can we prepare for revival? To help us answer that question, I want to jump into a familiar passage of scripture from the Old Testament, Second Chronicles, chapter seven. And if you've grown up in church, you've probably heard this passage preached on. Maybe you've heard it in the context of revival. This passage comes to us after Israel, the people of God have experienced an amazing time of revival. By now. In Second Chronicles, the temple of God has been built. Solomon has built the temple. It's been dedicated. And in his dedication, the presence of God fell so much so that the priest could not even stand and minister fire from heaven, literally, not metaphorically, literally, fell and consumed the sacrifices people celebrated for days. And I don't know about you, but I would call that a revival. If fire descended, we would say man church was different today. I'm really sure people wouldn't like it, but it would be amazing. It's a time of revival. But in the midst of that, God visits Solomon at night, and God has a private conversation with Solomon, in a sense, here in this conversation, God is saying Solomon. I know things are looking good right now. People are excited. There is a revival, but there will be a time of decline. My people will forget me. They will fall into sin, they'll get off mission, but I want to in the good days, tell you how they can come back to me in the bad days, I think just so kind of God that God wasn't shocked by the failures of his people, just like he's not shocked by our failures today. He anticipated the future sins of His people, and yet God made a remedy. He prescribed a way for them to return in their hearts to Him. So what you have in Second Chronicles, Chapter Seven is a revival plan, even before the people wandered away. So God says in verse 12, then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple of sacrifice. If I shut the sky so that there is no rain, or if I command a grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on my people, all of these are consequences of sin that God was describing. If I do any of that but my people and my people, or if my people who bear my name will call according to my name, will humble themselves, pray and seek my face and. Turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven forgive their sin and heal their land. My eyes will now be open and my ears attentive to the prayer from this place that's God's remedy, his revival plan. It's actually an invitation of how people can be prepared for a move of God. Three things from this passage I want to bring to you. First of all, we prepare for revival, but recognizing our calling. Calling, our calling is God's invitation to us. Notice the passage in verse 14, begins with If My people, who are called by my name, who bear my name, so revival doesn't begin with the world seeking God. It begins with the church, if his people call by his name, that's where it starts. It always starts in me. It starts in us. It is when the people of God

recognize that they have been called out by God, chosen by God, picked by God, to be a part of a great move on the earth. It is hearing his invitation for what he wants to do on the earth. When you look from Genesis to Revelation, the people of God who brought in a season of revival. It began with a calling. Moses heard his calling at a burning bush, and though he was afraid and felt completely inadequate, God used to use Moses to revive a nation out of slavery and bring them to worship God. Samuel was just a little boy, when he heard the voice of God in the middle of the night, he didn't even recognize it at first, but yet he responded, was, here, I am. Send me. I'm available. God. Use me. Jonah heard God's call to go to Nineveh, and he got as far as the way he could reluctant, and yet he found himself in Nineveh, obedient, trusting God. He preaches a message of repentance, perhaps the shortest message in the Bible, and a whole city experiences revival. Thinking shorter messages causes more revival. Maybe, I know that's good news for some of you. Don't Say, Amen to that. Don't say Amen, watch your words. Esther hears God's call, though she feels voiceless and powerless in the kingdom, and yet she becomes an instrument to save a people from massacre. The apostles, the disciples. They heard Jesus say, Follow me, and they heard him say, Go and wait for the Holy Spirit to fill you, and you will be sent into the places you don't want to go to. Judea Samaria, to the ends of the earth to celebrate Dr King tomorrow. The path he went on was not convenient. It was not a career move. It was a calling. Came with cost and sacrifice. Dr King described his life as now been summoned by God. Can't shake this off other great reformers, like William Wilberforce, as soon as he came to Christ, God arrested his soul to end slavery in the empire that he was a part of. It's a calling, think, a calling for you and I, towards revival begins with a holy burden, a kind of discontent we saw in Nehemiah. We heard the news of Jerusalem, and he felt this heaviness he could not numb. He wept for days. A holy burden isn't just cynicism. It's not skepticism, it's not just curiosity. A holy burden is a Holy Spirit infused dissatisfaction of what is, because he gives you a vision of what should be, a Holy Spirit infused dissatisfaction. There's got to be something different. There's got to be more. God must want to do something about this person or this issue or this place. It is a Holy Spirit infused dissatisfaction of what is because you get a glimpse of what should be. Author John Eldridge wrote it like this. John said Christianity has nothing to say to the person who is completely happy with the way things are. Its message is for those who hunger and thirst, for those who desire life as it was meant to be. Why do you go on a mission trip? Why do our partners give their lives because they desire, their hunger, their thirst for life as it was meant to be, wanting people to experience healing and wholeness and revival, to come into the farthest parts of the earth. We desire for things to be the way it was meant to be. What has God given you? A holy dissatisfaction, for a burden, for, as

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we were in our Nehemiah series, one of the couples in our church told me the story of what happened in their neighborhood. They said, You know, they live in Carrollton, in a neighborhood. And they said, Every year our neighborhood, our neighbors, they have this Hindu parade. Where they march down the streets with their gods and beat the drum, and it's loud, it's festive, and it's like a three day parade, and it's happened for many years. And she said, I was just so, like, annoyed by it because I couldn't sleep at night. She's actually from India, so she knows the nature of this. She said I just couldn't sleep. And this year, she was even more annoyed because they had a baby, an infant, and and they're trying to sleep train the baby, and they're like, this is going to interfere with the baby. Interfere with the baby's sleep training. And then God began to change her inconvenience to a burden. He said, Do you care about your neighbors? Would you carry my anguish for people I love, people who just don't know truth yet? So she began to pray. She carried this anguish and began to go to God in fasting and pray. She said it was amazing. The chat went out on the neighborhood chat, and they said, here are the three days they were planning for parade and the festive and festival. And she began to pray, and she said, You wouldn't believe a living it rained like crazy all three days, and they could not do the parade. It just rained out of nowhere, like rain flooded our neighborhood, and they couldn't do the parade. She says, After the rain was over, we went prayer walking, and we noticed there was a group of vultures who were surrounding a house, the house that was kind of the host of the parade. They usually organized the parade. See, what? If you don't know, for the Hindu community, they really revere cows. They don't necessarily worship cows, but they see cows as a symbol that points to the Divine, and so they consider them sacred and kind of holy. And she said, what happened was there was a farm a couple of miles away, and a cow roamed out of the farm, walked to their neighborhood and landed dead on their driveway, and these vultures came to eat the remains of the cow. Says that it was like God was exposing the false idols and showing them there is one living God who is alive and cannot die. Amen, all of that because an inconvenience became a holy burden, causing them to pray and anguish over neighbors wanted to see revival happening in their neighborhood, If my people who bear my name called by my name to be called by his name, to be marked by the name of God, means that we are directly connected to who God is and what God's doing, directly connected to who he is and what he's doing. So really, the question that leads us to our calling does not start with what am I called to? The question doesn't start with what am I called to, but rather, what is Jesus doing already, and how can I join him? What's he up to in my day? What's he up to in my city, at my workplace? What's he already doing? And how

can I join him? If you wonder, well, what is Jesus doing? What could he be doing? Read through the Gospels. What are the kinds of stuff you see Jesus doing. How does he minister to the broken? How does he invite the sinners to himself? How does he administer God's heart for righteousness and justice? How does he love deeply notice the characteristics of what Jesus did in the Gospel. And guess what? The same spirit that empowered Jesus? Where does he live? It's out of all of you and all in me. So if Jesus did those things in the gospels, then we make ourselves available to live in the same spirit of Christ, doing what he did, seeing people as he saw them, loving people as he loved them. So discern what God's doing and join him in that begins with a calling. Second of all we see in the passage, it leads to consecration. Preparing for revival starts with calling, but then it leads to consecration. Consecration simply means you are becoming fully available to God, fully completely available to what God is doing and what he invites you to. Verse 14 continues. If my people call by my name, bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their evil ways, this is invitation, humble themselves, seek His face and turn from their evil ways. Maybe you're looking at that's like, well, I don't know that I'm doing anything evil. I'm doing any crime. I'm not murdering anybody, I'm not doing anything evil. But how are you doing with humility? Humility is the resistance to self sufficiency and independence from God, this turning from evil ways. It's not just I'm gonna stop sinning, but it is a return to God. It is an alignment of the heart and of the soul to the passions of God, to the desires of God. It is becoming fully available for what God wants to do in our life. The moment we place our faith in Christ, we are holy. There is this thing called positional holiness. We are. The righteousness of God. We are the perfection of Jesus. We are holy. But that positional holiness then leads to practical holiness, because we are holy now we live holy. We think holy thoughts. We have holy relationships, the way we manage our finances, the way we manage relationships, a sense of holiness about the behavior of our life, and they're both to be true. In fact, even in Leviticus, even before the New Covenant, notice how God invites us to holiness. Consecrate yourselves. This is Leviticus, 20, verse seven, consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decree and follow them. I am the Lord who makes you holy. Isn't that interesting? So which is it? Is it God who makes us holy, or is it we who are holy? Yes, He makes us holy, position of holiness, and we're called to live holy, to live out his heart, his way his word consecration in the Old Testament, consecration was not just mere sin management, because we think, well, consecration is just sinning less well, that's part of it, but that's actually not the full meaning of consecration. Consecration had to do with set apartness for God's holy use, consecration had to do with not just being pulled out of a sinful life, but from a common life, an ordinary life, and being called into the purposes of a holy God. So when priests entered the service of God, they were washed. They were cleansed. They were anointed. They were called away from an ordinary life and called to minister to the presence of God. The vessels of the temple, whether it be altar or lamps or bowls, they were washed and cleansed, brought out of ordinary, common, mundane things. They were brought into the holy service of God. It meant set apartness that we are invited to be a part of being fully available to what God wants to do in our day. Hebrews 12, I love the way the writer of Hebrews defines consecration therefore and therefore is because of who Jesus is, because of his sufficient sacrifice, Jesus was greater than Moses, David, the prophets, angels, all that because of Jesus' finished work. Since we also have a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside and notice two key words, let us lay aside. Let us consecrate every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. So what do we lay aside every hindrance and the sin two different words, two different categories of things to lay aside. We know we ought to lay aside sin because sin definitely ensnares us, holds us captive. But there are things that are not sin that can still be hindrance, and a hindrance can still ensnare you. Some of your translations may read every weight, extra weight, morally good things can actually be a hindrance because it veers you from the race He's called you to. There are morally neutral things that could be a hindrance, not sinful, things can still be a hindrance that prevents you from the race God has set you on. So maybe you're not dealing with a sin issue. Are you carrying some extra weight? Question about consecration isn't just is it sinful or not, but does it help me in my race, or does it hinder me in my race? We live in perhaps one of the most distracted times in all history, 24 hour news notifications popping up everywhere, Doom, scrolling, complete access to everything at any time. Distractions may not be evil, but they do pull our gaze away from Jesus, don't they? Comparison doesn't have to be evil, but comparison can rob you of your calling and of your joy. The American dream is amazing. It is a land of opportunity, but the American dream can make you comfortable and complacent. That dulls your hunger for God, if you deal with unforgiveness or the wounds in your life man, it was justified. Maybe there's a reason to not let it go, but if it becomes a way,

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a hindrance that eats you up, it's preventing you from the race God has for you, we don't not just need to be aware of the sin that ensnares us. But is there a hindrance, a non sinful, morally neutral, even morally good. Thing that actually can become ensnaring consecration has to do with us becoming fully available, freed to run the race he has set out for us. I think about availability. I think there's a spectrum of availability, and you might find yourself in one of these categories, I think it

can begin with passive availability. Passive availability says, God, I'm here if you need me. That's what you say to people when you don't really want to do what they're asking. Someone could have literally asked you for a ride to the airport. Like, yeah, I'll be here if you need me. They told you they need you. Put that if in just try to find somebody else. But if you can't find somebody else, call me passive availability, you welcome God, but you're not actually seeking him. You're not resisting God, but you're also not creating the space and the time you need to hear God. Passive availability is available, open in theory, but not so much in posture. Passive availability, or there is conditional availability. Conditional availability says, God, I'm available, as long as if it's in my comfort zone, as long as it doesn't cost me much. Conditional availability is availability. It is surrender with a little bit of fine print. Let me illustrate how it might sound like conditional availability. It might sound like this, Lord, I give you some of my heart. I give you almost all my soul. I live for you alone, except on Friday nights and Saturday nights, we sing the right words, even, but your heart may actually put some fine print around your surrender, or there is convenient availability, where we actually create the parameters of what God can do, and we try to fit him into our margin and into our space. Okay, God, here is where you can work this neat little box. I'll go here, but not there. I'll speak to that person, but, man, I really don't like that person, so just save them for somebody else, right? It's convenient. Here's what my convenience is. And some of us, we may be one of these categories, but then what actually allows us to be consecrated is we step over the line into the next category of availability. So instead of passive availability, we have intentional availability. We're not just saying, God, I'm here if you need me, but we actually take the step to say, God, what do you want from me? What do you long from me? What are you saying? I'm creating the space and the time to listen and a heed to your word you're asking the hard question, like when Nehemiah asked, How is Jerusalem a kind of question that could put you on a whole different path in life. And there is not conditional availability, but responsive availability. This is an availability of obedient trust. Soon as the Spirit prompts, first response is yes. You don't even know where it leads you. You don't know the outcome, but you start with a yes, not if, but yes, it is your release of control and plans, and you're saying, God, I just want to respond with a yes, sort of like Isaiah. Here I am. God send me. I'm here. Attentional availability, responsive and instead of convenient, we actually have sacrificial availability, a kind of availability that's willing to pay a price. You're okay with the cost. You're okay with how it reorganizes your schedule and priority and even relationships. You're okay with the cost. A heart that is preparing for revival crosses the line into intentional, responsive and sacrificial availability. Somebody told me this last day, if you want to, if you need help remembering that, just think, IRS. Okay. IRS availability, intentional, responsive and sacrificial begins with the calling, moves into consecration. And here's the third thing, contending, praying until breakthrough, praying until God moves. God rescues, God heals. God saves, going back to our anchoring text in Second Chronicles, verse 14 of chapter seven, and if my people who bear my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven forgive their sins and heal their land. Let me just ask you an obvious question, does our land need healing? Does the world need healing? Do people need healing from the brokenness we've caused, from the hurt and the hostility we've brought about, from tribalism all we. Need Healing on the land, but God says it's actually dependent. The condition of the land is dependent on the condition of my people. My people call by my name, humble themselves, seek my face. That's the kind of prayer he's talking about. When you set out to seek something, you don't stop till you find it. Our kids will not stop playing hide and seek until they find me and I find a good spot if I need to take a nap and they need a little while, you seek till you find so this is not a sporadic prayer. It's not a casual prayer. No, no. It is a desperate kind of praying that is pursuing prayer, a seeking of his face, a longing for him, and a discontent until he shows up and until he heals the land. But see, contending prayer isn't necessarily a fruit of consecration. It could actually be the means of consecration. Going back to our Hebrews 12 passage, notice what he said, lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so ensnares easily ensnares us. And how do we do that? Keeping our eyes on Jesus. Remember, seek my face says, God. And now the writer of Hebrews says, here's how you do it. Keep your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. This is how we are consecrated, not by more willpower, but by a clearer focus on Jesus, when we recognize the things that have quietly removed our gaze off of him, and now in prayer, we fix it on him. We gaze at his wonder and beauty. A church isn't consecrated by trying harder. A church is consecrated by fixing our eyes on Jesus. No other distraction, no other idols. We put our affection and passion on him, and he makes us fully available, contending in prayer, seeking his face, praying until things happen. Word prayer is spelled, push Pray Until Something Happens. Contending prayer. Jesus once told a parable about contending prayer. We know this as the parable of the persistent widow, but it's actually a parable about contending prayer. Because notice how Jesus, in Luke 18 opens up this parable. He says, Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. That's in the mouth of Jesus, that we should always pray. CSB says we, we are in need to always pray, not in the option of prayer. Prayer is not a luxury. It is not for some. No, no, we, everyone. We should always pray and not give up. That's the hardest thing about prayer, not giving up. 2620 26 started, you're like, Man, I'm going to pray for this every day. Now we're 18 days in. You're like, I'm done praying about that thing because that ain't happening. And Jesus will say, No, no, we should always pray and not give up. What have you given

up? What have you given up? Praying? Always pray and not give up. And then he goes into the parable. And here's the parable, the parable that Jesus talks about. He says, Look, there was once a cruel judge, an unjust judge, who didn't fear God, nor did he respect people. He was all about himself, his power. Didn't care about people at all, an unjust, cruel judge. And also there's a helpless widow, a widow in those days, no power, no influence, no might, no wealth, completely, utterly helpless. But this widow goes to this cruel, just, unjust judge, and she's asking for justice. So this means that this widow has been poorly treated, been taken advantage of. She has been treated unjustly. So this helpless widow goes to this cruel judge, and the judge shows no care for her, rejects her, sends her home. But though she is helpless, she is relentless. So what does she do the next day, she comes back in, even at night, she knocks on the door of the judge's house, pleading her case, asking for justice against her adversary. And the story concludes, the judge eventually gets sworn down. Man, I don't care about God. I don't care about her, but because she keeps pestering

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me, literally, that's the word pestering me, I'm going to give her what she needs. Told this parable to my kids yesterday, and everybody's like, Okay, notice, I'm going to keep asking for a puppy until you give and say, Okay, how? That's not the point, but it is kind of the point, though, too. May I ask you a question, is God like this unjust judge? Yes, or No, no, he isn't. He's not cruel. He's not unjust. You see, sometimes Jesus told parables to bring comparison. Here's what it's like. And sometimes he told parables to build a contrast. Here's what I'm not like. This is one of those moments where Jesus said, I'm not like this judge. I'm a loving Heavenly Father. I'm a kind and compassionate God who cares about you. So we know God is not like this unjust judge. Here's my second question, are we like this helpless widow? Yes or no. Okay, mixed reviews. Some ways we might feel helpless. We're human, but I think we're actually not like this helpless widow. You're not someone who doesn't have an advocate for you. Are you? You have a great high priest who pleads your case. You have a direct access to the throne of God. Any moment that Hebrew says, Come boldly with confidence. You don't have to plead wondering if he's going to hear you. No, no. You have a loving father. You are filled with His Spirit. You are marked by his son. You have direct access into the presence of God any moment. So this parable is about a contrast. I think Jesus is saying this, look, if a helpless, poor, pitied widow can get her needs answered by an unjust, cruel judge, then how much more you children of the living God get your answers from your loving Heavenly Father? Amen, that's the contrast. If she's pleading at the door, if she's knocking, persisting every day, night and day when she doesn't feel worthy, when she feels helpless. And how much do you children of God have confidence to keep asking God and not give up? Because he's not this judge. He's a loving father. In fact, Jesus states that as a point of this parable, And the Lord said, listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God, Your God, your father, will he not bring about justice for his chosen ones, not helpless people, but his chosen elect, his people that he has hand picked, poured his life into. If this unjust judge would do that, how much more is God willing to for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night. And that's the point. If she can do that, how much more do we cry out day and night? Will he keep putting them off? And then he ends with a question, I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly, however, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith? Will he find faith on the earth? Will he find faith in me? Will he find faith in you? Will he find a kind of faith that contends travails, fights in prayer? Will he find a faith that does not give up? Will he find a faith that trusts in their God and comes carrying the privileges we have to this king? Will he find faith? And I think the question at the core of revival is, does the church have faith Enough? Enough faith to believe that God can move on the earth? Enough faith to believe that he can save the lost, deliver the captives, bring good news to the poor. Wonder what's robbed you of your faith. Is it the time it's been of not seeing an answer. Is it a misunderstanding of the very nature of God? Is it a misunderstanding of how you see yourselves? Will he find faith contending prayer? This is what has ushered in revivals all throughout the centuries. Evans Roberts, who was pivotal in the Welsh Revival. He prayed nightly for revival in Wales for 11 years, and didn't give up. And then revival came. Perhaps you've heard about the Hebrides revival of 1949 to 1952 it happened all across Scotland. It didn't actually begin with a pastor or with some leader of a church. It began with two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith. Here are the pictures. Peggy was 84 and Christine was 82 okay, all the senior adults in the room. This is where it begins. Don't just give revival to the young people you have a part of. Play Amen. What you may not know is that Peggy, she was blind, and Christine, she had severe arthritis and a bent over spine. Because of their physical limitations, they couldn't get to church. So they made the home their church. They were confined to their home, and here's what they did for years. They devoted multiple nights, from 10pm to 4am to pray for revival across Scotland every night, multiple nights, from 10pm to three or 4am they prayed for years, and eventually they asked their pastor, would you come join us? Just have a heart for revival. And he came, and he began to pray. And for months they gathered, just three of them, praying for revival. And then one young man walked into the barn where they were praying, and he felt under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repented of his sins, gave his life to Jesus, and the Spirit of God fell, and a revival broke out. It said about the Herbert's revival that people driving on the road will fall under the conviction of God and

pull to the side of the road, fall on their knees and give their life to Jesus. Bars emptied people because people didn't look to substances to numb their pain. They filled up the pews of the church say we need new and real life. Everything else disappoints. It said about those three years that the local courts had no cases to try because the land was filled with righteousness and justice, oh, it looked like in Carrollton and Plano all around North Dallas, a revival emptied out the court systems because justice and peace and righteousness reigned on our land. But all of that began two elderly women contending in prayer, and the moment the movement that started there would go into Canada, Northern Ireland, all across the world, send great missionaries out because of contending prayer. Would you stand with me? We can't make revival happen, but sure, we can prepare for it. We can prepare our heart for it. Can't We? We can be a part of the called out ones. Say, God, it begins with us. We can consecrate our lives, our hearts, our minds, our resources. We can contend in prayer. So can we end with the song I misquoted? And let's say these words, and let's mean these words. Let's sing, Lord, I give you my heart. You.