

The First Condition of Revival Is Humility

If pride is the first main obstacle to revival, then how do we deal with it?

2 Chronicles 7:14 [NIV] *“If my people, who are called by my name, [Christians] **will humble themselves...**”*

God tells us to humble ourselves.

It is **no** use praying *“Lord, make me humble.”*

Coming to a place of humility is something **we** must do.

So it is our choice whether we become humble and tender in heart or remain proud, stone-hearted and self-centred.

How do we “humble ourselves”?

2 Chronicles 7:14 [NIV] *“... and pray and seek my face.”*

We humble ourselves by praying and seeking God’s face

Pride makes us think we can manage our lives and our duties in our church on our own.

John 15:4-5 [NIV] *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. **Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

We must realise we can do **nothing** without God.

This humbling before God in earnest prayer has always been part of revival in the past history of the church, and it is still an essential condition of revival today.

We humble ourselves by coming before God with a contrite heart

Psalms 51:1-5, 16-17 [NIV] *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” ... “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**”*

It is one thing to pray and seek God’s face, but it is another to come before God with a right attitude of heart.

Luke 18:9-14 [NIV] *“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. **For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**”*

Even in the act of fasting, when we are supposedly humbling ourselves before God, pride can rear its ugly head and destroy the very purpose for which we fast.

Matthew 6:16-18 [NIV] *“When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for **they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.** I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

We can secretly want others to know we are fasting so they will think more highly of our spiritual devotion.

We may fast often; we may spend hours in prayer, bringing our requests to God, but **if we come to God without a humble and repentant heart, it is all for nothing.**

It is **not** what we pray but **how** we pray that matters.

How often have we come to God in prayer, yet gone away untouched and unchanged because we have come to God full of ourselves, our needs?

That is not seeking God’s face with a contrite attitude of mind, but seeking His handout of blessings.

Duncan Campbell, who was a part of the Hebrides Revival in Scotland in 1949, tells the story of a group of people praying in a barn and kneeling on the straw. One of them, a young deacon, opened up his Bible and read from **Psalms 24:3-4** [NIV] *“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? **He who has clean hands and a pure heart,** who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”*

After reading the passage of scripture twice, the young man said, *“brethren, it is just so much humbug to be waiting in prayer before God asking for revival if we are not right with God. Is my heart pure? Are my hands clean?”*

He got no further. They all prostrated themselves to the floor. An awareness of God filled the barn and a stream of supernatural power was let loose in their lives. They all moved into a new sphere of *“God-realisation”* ... and that was the start of revival.

We all need to ask the same questions of our own selves.

The story of revivals both past and present shows that a spirit of humility, godly sorrow and repentance always comes before God will move in blessings and power.

Humble ourselves by confessing our faults to one another

Pride stops us from owning our sins, confessing our wrongs and seeking to put things right.

Such pride can destroy family relationships and church fellowships.

Such pride keeps wounds unhealed.

Healing will only come when we humble ourselves and take the first step to admit our wrongs, confess our faults, apologise and repent of our actions, seeking forgiveness.

James 5:16 [NIV] *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

To admit our wrongs before others is very humbling, but that is exactly what is needed to break the pride barrier and develop humility within us.

Once sin is brought out into the light, it can be properly dealt with, its power has been broken.

This humbling before others is the key that opens the door for the Holy Spirit to work deeply in our lives and among God’s people.

And that working of the Holy Spirit is exactly what is needed for revival to come!

We humble ourselves by being willing to forgive

When we have been wronged by another person our natural reaction is to stand on our pride and insist that the offence is dealt with.

To forgive such an offence means we have to die to our self-life that is crying out for justice and retribution.

Our human nature, rather than forgiving another person, would rather keep them in our debt and make them pay for what they have done.

To release other people through forgiveness requires divine grace and true personal humility.

Luke 23:32-34 [NIV] *“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. **Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”*

Jesus was physically abused, unjustly treated and murdered by being nailed to a cross. Yet Christ offered forgiveness to all who treated Him in the evil way.

1 Peter 2:21-23 [NIV] *“To this you were called, because **Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”*

Jesus offered forgiveness to those who didn’t deserve it or even ask for it.

Matthew 6:14-15 [NIV] *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

There is a strong incentive to forgive, for when we release a person who has wronged us we also release ourselves and healing of relationships, godly and human beings.

The healing power of forgiveness

When we have been wrongly treated, releasing forgiveness is like ointment on your wound.

The grace we need will come to us through indwelling of the Holy Spirit if we invite Him to run our lives.

Holding unforgiveness in our heart will block the flow of God's grace and forgiveness coming into our lives and will hinder the healing needed.

Romans 12:19-21 [NIV] *“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: **‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’** says the Lord. On the contrary: **‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’** Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good.**”*

Release people by forgiving them and handing them over to God to deal with.

Matthew 18:21-22 [NIV] *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, **‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’** Jesus answered, **‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’**”*

Just as a physical wound needs to be anointed with ointment to heal, so we need to repeatedly forgive people for mental and spiritual healing.

Forgiveness is at the core and is the essence of revival itself.

We humble ourselves by serving one another

Philippians 2:1-7 [NIV] *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the **same as that of Christ Jesus:** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very **nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**”*

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of such humble service.

John 13:3-17 [NIV] *“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, **‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’** Jesus replied, **‘You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’** **‘No,’** said Peter, **‘you shall never wash my feet.’** Jesus answered, **‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’** **‘Then, Lord,’** Simon Peter replied, **‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’** Jesus answered, **‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.’** For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. **‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’** he asked them. **‘You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.’**”*

This is something the then proud disciples would never have done for each other, yet Jesus did it for them.

Matthew 20:25-28 [NIV] *“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant**, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

When we follow this example of Christ, when we are willing to **humble ourselves by taking every opportunity to serve others in love** (even though others may not notice it), we open our lives to rivers of blessings and revival that flows from God’s presence.

Micah 6:8 [NIV] *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

Pause and consider our relationships with God and other humans.

Ask God to reveal any of these areas we need to work on, write them down, then do it this week.