

## **PRAY FOR REVIVAL!**

*32 Look! A king will reign with righteousness, and his officials will rule with justice! 2[This] man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, [he will be] like streams of water in the desert, like the shadow of a great rock in a dry land. 3And the eyes of those who can see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who can hear will listen. 4And the mind of the rash will comprehend knowledge, and the stammering tongue will be able to speak fluently. 5No longer will the fool be called noble, nor will the scoundrel be respected—6for the fool speaks folly and his heart desires to do what is wicked so as to practice godlessness and to cause men to stray from Jehovah; as a consequence, he empties the soul of the hungry and deprives the thirsty of drink. 7The scoundrel's methods are evil; he devises wicked schemes [intended] to destroy the poor by means of lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. 8But the noble man makes noble plans, and by his noble conduct he shall prevail. 9Rise up, you women who live in comfort, and listen to me. You complacent daughters, pay attention to my words. 10In little more than a year you will be troubled, you complacent women, because the grape harvest will fail and there will be no ingathering [of the fruit]. 11Tremble, you women who live in comfort! Be troubled, you who are [so] complacent! Strip yourselves, make yourselves naked; wrap yourselves in sackcloth. 12They will beat their breasts on account of [what has happened to] the pleasant fields and the fruitful vines. 13Thorns and briers will overrun my people's land; indeed, [they will overrun] all the happy homes in the [whole] joyful city—14the palace will be abandoned, the populous city will be forsaken; the citadel and watchtower will become a perpetual wasteland, a delightful place for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks. 15[Such will be the state of the land] until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, then the wilderness will be turned into a fertile field, and the fertile field will seem like a forest. 16Then justice will dwell [even] in the wilderness; and righteousness will live in the fertile field. 17The result of righteousness will be peace; indeed, the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. 18My people will reside in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, and in undisturbed places of rest. 19But hail will flatten the forest, and the city will be completely leveled. 20[But] how blessed you will be, sowing your seed beside every stream and letting your cattle and donkeys range freely! (Isa. 32:1-20)*

### **Introduction**

“In the decade between 1730 and 1740 the life of England was foul with moral corruption and crippled by spiritual decay—conditions remarkably similar to those of the English-speaking world today.” So writes Arnold Dallimore, in his biography of the eighteenth-century evangelist, George Whitefield (*George Whitefield*, Cornerstone Books, Westchester IL, 1970, p.19.)

This state of moral corruption and spiritual decay was arrived at after eighty years of violent rejection of the Christian religion and the casting off of all moral restraint. The church no longer served as salt and light to the nation; it had become powerless, irrelevant, and almost non-Christian.

The nation of England at this period of history was wallowing, indeed, drowning in their sins. The abuse of alcohol was a major social problem. The English people had become so callous that they could look upon cruelty, suffering, and violence as a form of entertainment. It was publicly advocated that homosexuality was not a moral perversion, but merely an alternative lifestyle. In addition, there was the incredible extent of gambling, as well as the obscene filth that filled the theatres and literature, masquerading as art.

Then, in the year 1738,

England was startled by the sound of a voice. It was the voice of a preacher, George Whitefield ... who was declaring the gospel in the pulpits of London with such fervor and power, that no church could hold the multitudes that flocked to hear. His voice continued to be heard, and then was joined by the voices of John and Charles Wesley and of many others, in a tremendous chorus of praise and preaching that rang throughout the land and was sustained in strength for more than half a century. (Dalimore, pp. 31-32.)

Dalimore describes the effect of the Great Awakening in these words:

... a religious revival burst forth ... which changed in a few years the whole temper of English society. The Church was restored to life and activity. Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education. (*A Short History of the English People*, J. R. Green, pp.736-737; as quoted by Arnold Dallimore, pp. 31-32.)

In the passage of Scripture presently before us, we find a similar scene. When His Old Testament people found themselves in a state of severe moral and spiritual decline, the LORD promised the outpouring of His Holy Spirit in revival—a promise that was fulfilled in the days of King Hezekiah.

In this present day, when the church of Jesus Christ in the Western world finds herself and the surrounding society in the midst of severe moral and spiritual decline, let us pray for the LORD to pour out His Holy Spirit in revival again.

### **I. Pray for Revival, When Sin and Its Consequences Fill the Land (Isa. 32:5-7,9)**

Verse 5 describes the moral and spiritual condition of the nation. At the time Isaiah delivered this message from the LORD, *“the fool”* was called *“noble,”* and *“the scoundrel”* was *“respected.”* There was a failure on the part of the people to appreciate or even recognize the most basic moral distinctions.

How could this possibly have happened? The answer lies in the fact that the nation had forsaken the law of God, as is indicated in Isaiah 5:24b, *“they have*

*rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel"*

In place of the moral law of God as their standard, the nation had substituted their own human standards, note Isaiah 5: 21, "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*" By so doing, the most elementary and fundamental moral precepts (the black and white of ethics and morality) were being turned upside down, with the result being that perversity was honored and righteousness was abased: "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*" (vs. 20.) Isaiah 5:21 describes an arrogance that causes a man to forsake the fear of God and the law of God as a monitor upon his behavior and as a guardian over his decisions; man's own wisdom and reason are made to be the standards for ethical decisions, rather than the moral law of God.

Returning our attention to Isaiah 32, verse 6 describes the counsel of the fool, and its consequences. The fool speaks "*folly*" (the Hebrew term, גְּבֻלָּה, means that which is "impious" or "ungodly") and "*his heart desires to do what is wicked;*" note Romans 8:7, "*the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*" Consequently, he advocates that the nation "*practice godlessness;*" i.e.; that it become secular, operating apart from God, and that it follow a course that ignores and is even contrary to God's standard. Consider a contemporary example of such secularism:

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.—A religious group leader convicted of having sex with a teen-age follower won a new trial because a juror read a Bible passage about circumcision aloud during the deliberations. Circuit Judge Virginia Gay Broome, who threw out the conviction ... ruled that "consulting a Bible during jury deliberations breaches the separation of church and state guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution." (*The Sheboygan Press*, 10/17/93)

The effect of the fool's counsel upon the nation is acute oppression: "*he empties the soul of the hungry, and deprives the thirsty of drink.*" When a nation departs from God's moral law as its standard, freedom under God is inevitably replaced with oppression and tyranny apart from God.

Verse 7 describes the practices of the scoundrel, who thrives in the immoral environment created by the fool: "*The scoundrel's methods are evil; he devises wicked schemes [intended] to destroy the poor by means of lies, even when the plea of the needy is just.*" Everything about the scoundrel is unscrupulous and deceitful, with a total disregard for justice or mercy.

Verse 9 describes the material condition of the nation (prior to the combined Israel/Syria invasion): "*Rise up, you women who live in comfort, and listen to me. You complacent daughters, pay attention to my words.*" The society was characterized by abundance of material prosperity and a state of peaceful tranquility—for those who could escape the violence and oppression that was

being practiced against the poor and defenseless. There was a sense of self-confidence, based on financial and societal security and the assumption that such conditions would continue to prevail into the distant future, and carelessness—moral and spiritual laxity. Note the fuller description given in Isaiah 3:16-23,

*Furthermore, Jehovah declares, Because the daughters of Zion are arrogant, and walk around with heads held high and seductive eyes, and go about with mincing steps as ornaments jingle from their ankles, <sup>17</sup>therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs and Jehovah will expose the private parts [of their bodies]. <sup>18</sup>On that day the Lord will take away all that makes them beautiful: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, <sup>19</sup>the earrings and bracelets and veils, <sup>20</sup>the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and [magic] charms, <sup>21</sup>the signet rings and nose rings, <sup>22</sup>the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses <sup>23</sup>and the mirrors, the linen garments and the tiaras and the shawls. (Isa. 3:16-23)*

Verse 10 issues the warning that in the very near future the state of tranquility would be turned into a state of turmoil and trouble: *"In little more than a year you will be troubled, you complacent women; because the grape harvest will fail and there will be no ingathering [of the fruit]."* Verse 10b declares that the vintage shall fail and the ingathering of the harvest shall not come—the LORD will deprive the nation of its bountiful harvest that was its source of sustenance and prosperity. The nation, which is again described as being careless and at ease, is commanded to tremble and shudder in holy fear of the LORD and enter voluntarily into a state of mourning for their sins: *"Tremble, you women who live in comfort! Be troubled, you who are so complacent! Strip yourselves, make yourselves naked; wrap yourselves in sackcloth"* (vs. 11.)

Verse 12 describes the deep grief the nation will experience over the loss of *"the pleasant fields"* and *"the fruitful vines."* Rather than yielding a harvest of good crops, the land shall become infested with thorns and briars—as the thorns swallow up the fruit of the fields so will they swallow up the joy of the people (vs. 13.) With the loss of the harvest comes the ruin of the entire economy and the ruin of the society itself. Scripture reveals that the devastation was due to crop failure, note Isaiah 5:10, *"a ten-acre vineyard will produce [only] ten gallons of wine, and ten bushels of seed [will produce only] one bushel of grain."* It was also due to the ruinous effects of a foreign invader: *"Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire. Foreigners devour your land in your [very] presence; it is left desolate, overrun by strangers"* (Isa. 1:7.)

Verse 15 indicates that this state of degeneration and the consequent devastation would continue *"until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high."* Man is neither able nor inclined to return to the LORD his God and truly reform his life, there is the need for the operation of the Holy Spirit. The LORD here promises to His Old Testament people just such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray for revival, because at present in so much of the Western world, sin and its devastating consequences fill the land, the church of Christ, and our own lives, making us ripe for the judgment of God.

## II. Pray for Revival, So that Righteousness May Return to the Land (Isa. 32:1-8)

One great result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival is a return to righteous living. Verse one is describing a government that returns to its true position of accountability to God and of being a legislator of His moral law: *“a king will reign with righteousness, and his officials will rule with justice.”* The picture is that of a thoroughly righteous government involving both the highest authority in the land and all of his officials. This word of prophecy was referring to the godly rule of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah *“did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, just as his father David had done”* (2 Chron. 29:2.) His godly reign is summarized in these words: *“[he did] what was good and right and faithful before Jehovah his God. <sup>21</sup>In everything that he undertook in the service of God’s temple and in obedience to the law and the commandments, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly”* (2 Chron. 31:20-21.)

Consider the reviving work of the Holy Spirit in eighteenth century England:

... a religious revival burst forth, ... which changed in a few years the whole temper of English society. The Church was restored to life and activity. Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education. (*A Short History of the English People*, J. R. Green, pp.736-737; as quoted by Arnold Dallimore, pp. 31-32).

Consider the reviving work of the Holy Spirit as it was manifested in the former Soviet Union in the last decade of the twentieth century:

Christian leaders were called to a meeting with the Secretary of the Constitutional Commission ... The Commission was to present the final draft of the new Constitution to Parliament the next day ... At the conclusion of the meeting, the Secretary asked if the Christian leaders would be willing to take a copy of his rough draft and give recommendations on how it could be restructured around Biblical principles. (ATIA Newsletter, March, 1992)

Russian President Boris Yeltsin returned to the Russian Orthodox Church on Sunday, seeking spiritual renewal for himself and his nation. Mr. Yeltsin ... attended Pentecost services in a move that is not only personal but symbolized Russia’s return to its strong religious heritage. Mr. Yeltsin called upon the nation ... to strive for spiritual purification after more than seven

decades of Communism ... (from the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, June 15, 1992)

Verse 2 indicates that such a return to righteousness brings about moral and spiritual refreshment to the nation. Referring to King Hezekiah and his godly reign of righteousness, we are told that he *“will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, [he will be] like streams of water in the desert, like the shadow of a great rock in a dry land.”* The righteous rule of King Hezekiah would prove to be a refuge for the oppressed and refreshment to their souls. The state of tyranny apart from God would be reversed back to the state of justice and liberty under God.

Verses 3-4 reveal that the people themselves become characterized by a renewed spiritual perception (understanding) and responsiveness: *“And the eyes of those who can see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who can hear will listen. <sup>4</sup>And the mind of the rash will comprehend knowledge, and the stammering tongue will be able to speak fluently.”* The condition of spiritual blindness, gullibility and apathy is completely reversed.

Verses 5-8 go on to describe the results of this spiritual transformation, which itself is the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival:

*No longer will the fool be called noble, nor will the scoundrel be respected—<sup>6</sup>for the fool speaks folly and his heart desires to do what is wicked so as to practice godlessness and to cause men to stray from Jehovah; as a consequence, he empties the soul of the hungry and deprives the thirsty of drink. <sup>7</sup>The scoundrel’s methods are evil; he devises wicked schemes [intended] to destroy the poor by means of lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. <sup>8</sup>But the noble man makes noble plans, and by his noble conduct he shall prevail. (Isa. 32:5-8)*

There is now a clear discernment between good and evil (vs. 5): the fool and the scoundrel are recognized for what they are. There is the acceptance of what is good and true (vs. 8): the noble man is honored and supported.

Let us pray for revival, so that righteousness may return to the land, so that many may be converted to Christ the Savior, so that the name of the LORD may be exalted.

### **III. Pray for Revival, So that We May Experience a Taste of Heaven (Isa. 32:15-20)**

As noted previously, what is being described in Isaiah 32 is an account of the revival that took place in the days of King Hezekiah. As 2 Chronicles testifies,

*Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people. (2 Chron. 29:36)*

*... in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of Jehovah. (2 Chron. 30:12.)*

But notice that what is presented in Isaiah 32 is an idealized account of that revival, note especially verses 15-20. As a result of the peoples' repentance and return to the LORD their God, the wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field producing the abundance of a forest (vs. 15)—here is a poetic depiction of the superabundance of the covenantal blessing. Justice and righteousness permeate the nation to such an extent that they are even found in the uninhabited wilderness (vs. 16)—no place is exempt from the righteousness of the LORD. The people of God are portrayed as dwelling in a state of perfect and undisturbed peace (vs. 17-18.)

The condition of the people of God is vividly contrasted to the condition of those who remain in their sins and continue in their animosity to the LORD their God (vs. 19-20.) Hail shall flatten the forest, and the ungodly city of man shall be completely leveled by the storm of God's judgment. But the people who live in covenant with the LORD shall enjoy a blessed and tranquil life: sowing their seed by every stream, letting their animals range freely (so vast and fertile will be the land that there will be no concern that the animals will eat up or trample down the harvest.)

What is the significance of this? When the LORD pours out His Holy Spirit in revival what results is a foretaste of heaven. The righteousness of God is exalted in the land and in the lives of His people; the LORD draws near and dispenses the blessings that result from righteousness.

But note that such times are only **a taste** of heaven. The nation and the world are not permanently transformed into the kingdom of God—that must await the day of Christ's return. On the contrary, the church of Christ is increased and fortified to withstand what still lies ahead in this world before that final Day of Judgment and glory. The bright days of Hezekiah would yet be followed by the dark days of Manasseh:

*Hezekiah rested with his fathers and was buried on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honored him when he died. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king. Manasseh ... did evil in the eyes of Jehovah, following the detestable practices of the nations Jehovah had driven out before the Israelites ... <sup>10</sup>Jehovah spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. <sup>11</sup>So Jehovah brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. (2 Chron. 32:33, 33:1-2,10-11)*

The Great Awakening of the eighteenth century served to fortify England and America and the church against the incredible upheaval that would follow in the decades ahead; namely, the American and the French Revolutions:

... the revival ... was ... a merciful provision against the dangers of that day [i.e.; the day of the American Revolution]. The demoralizing influence of war awaited the land ... The country was about to be brought into close alliance ... with France, where infidelity was already rife, and was soon to be openly predominant ... The religious principles of the country needed to be strengthened in advance, against all these dangers. (*The Great Awakening*, Joseph Tracey, The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 621 Carlisle PA, pp.420-421)

Let us pray for revival, so that we may experience a foretaste of heaven, so that precious souls may be brought into Christ, so that the church of Christ may be fortified to face whatever trials still lie ahead before the consummation of history and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the age.

### **Conclusion**

When His Old Testament people found themselves in a state of severe moral and spiritual decline, the LORD promised the outpouring of His Holy Spirit in revival.

In this present day, when the church of Jesus Christ finds herself and her surrounding society in a state of severe moral and spiritual decline, let us pray for the LORD to pour out His Holy Spirit in revival again.