

The need for revival

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[0 : 00] Let's turn this evening to the passages that we read in the Old Testament in 2nd Chronicles and consider together various aspects that we find in this portion concerning the features necessary or the features that bring about the need for spiritual restoration and revival.

We read in verse 19 of chapter 28, for instance, that the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord.

The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz. It's a strange thing when you sit down late at night that your mind sometimes runs away with you and ponders many things that at other times during the day it mightn't otherwise engage itself in.

Last night as I was sitting quite late up in the study and looking out over Tarbird, I reached out to a book in the library by Kenneth Macrae, the diaries of Kenneth Macrae.

Many of you here might have read that particular book of that minister who, a good number of years ago now, a good number of years ago now, and who now is in glory, ministered in Loch Gilpied.

[1 : 55] And it was strange when I deliberately turned to the pages of that diary, or that book of his diary, that took into account the years in which he ministered in Loch Gilpied and surrounding areas.

And when you read through the thoughts of that man, what struck you was how sad it is that, I can't make the calculation offhand, how many years later the situation in this part of Scotland has deteriorated spiritually from what it was then.

It seems that when he went to Loch Gilpied Free Church, on the first night that he preached there, the congregation, including the church, including the gallery, was packed to capacity.

And it wasn't uncommon for the church to be packed to capacity. You hear him speak of places such as Clachen, Tarbert, Teviallet.

You hear him speak of places such as Eilie, which this evening, as far as our own work is concerned, is at a pathetic all-time low.

[3 : 21] And in desperate need of the power of our God, again breaking in. And it's when you read such accounts by such men who knew the situation all too well, that the heart is saddened when you think how things have developed in the cause of Christ in this part of the world.

And as I thought on these things last night, and of late, I must admit, my heart turned to the scriptures and turned to ponder what it is we need to learn in our own generation.

What it is we need to recapture in our own generation, in order that the tide which seems to be slowly or in places hurriedly gaining momentum, how that tide can be reversed.

And when you turn your mind to such a thing, the question is always, or always comes back to, the issue of revival. Now I know there's one lady in this congregation, and there's others who maybe have many friends in Lewis, but who, because of her age, can remember, and remember first-hand possibly, some of the movings of God's Spirit on that island.

When I was in Wales last year in holiday, I was able to speak with ministers of denominations, who could recall, and who could account, or recount from their history books, days in Wales, when that similar experience was the lot of the Christian church.

[5 : 20] Now what is it that has caused, or what is it that has gone wrong, to bring about such a dearth in the Christian church, in our own day?

What is it that we need to do to again bring about a change in the pattern? Because there is no doubt, and anyone with any sensitivity, and any common sense songs, spiritual common sense, looking out, forget Loch Gilkhead, forget Campbelltown, forget Clachen for the moment, anyone looking out on our own village, will come to the place where it must be admitted that we

desperately, desperately need these days again.

We need days of spiritual quickening and reviving. There was a minister once who did a brave thing. Outside his church, he hung a placard.

This church is going to either have a revival, or a funeral. Now it was the despair of the man that motivated him to do that.

But it was that kind of despair that moved the heart and the love of God in heaven. Because that is the alternative all too often sadly, facing us in our own generation.

[7 : 00] We are either to know these days of spiritual quickening and reviving in our midst, or we are going to know congregational funerals.

We are going to know the days when the windows are boarded up, when the doors are closed and the heating's never relighted. When the lights are never put on and the pulpit is never filled and the pews are never visited.

Now I don't know of any of you who have ever entered into churches that have closed. There is something tremendously sad, isn't there, about it? Particularly if these church buildings and churches were at one time thriving congregations.

It is sad. when you walk in and you see the dampness and you see the cobwebs and you see the falling paint and the broken windows and falling masonry.

My mind goes back to one congregation that we had to go to as students very often in Kutter. And that building at one time was a packed congregation.

[8 : 19] the minister at one time of that congregation I can remember speaking with in my own lifetime. He is still living. Professor Finlayson.

But when you go to that church today you do not find the pews full. You do not find the building with lovely painting or carpets or even pews within them.

you find a building that is not fit to be lived in and you find a building that would be better torn down than kept standing. And what you find sadly is three elderly people gathering in a small room less than the size of the vestry of this congregation.

congregation. Now we need revival because if we do not have revival then that's the prospect of ourselves as a congregation.

It's the prospect not only of this church but it is the prospect of every church in Scotland today that unless we know days of God's power amongst us there are days ahead of congregational funerals.

[9 : 40] Now in our own community I say we need it. I don't know if you agree but I say we need it. We have two churches and two churches which may be on certain days in the year well attended but we have two churches which by and large could house or could up with Tarbert twice over but they never know that kind of visitation to the church.

We have two congregations that also attended and also other people need many many many more people to go through their walls.

We have two ministers and we have two ministers ministers that are just human beings after all. Two ministers that cannot bring about these days in and of themselves.

We have two ministers that need constantly to be dying to self and giving Christ the glory. We have two ministers that constantly need to be placing themselves under the authority and the influence of the living God.

We have two ministers that need constantly to be about the business of pastoring the flock. We have two ministers that need constantly in their lives and in their ministry to be exemplifying the person and the life of Christ.

[11 : 19] And we have two ministers in this community which constantly need to be filled with nothing other than apostolic piety and apostolic power.

Why do I say that? Because we can come into our pulpits both here and in the high church Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday.

We can have done our homework every day of the week. But unless we have subjected ourselves to the God who has commissioned us and the God that we are proclaiming the Savior that we are beseeching men to receive unless we have subjected ourselves to him it is all useless.

We have two ministers that need constantly to be aware that they are not professionals doing a professional job they are men who are the agents the mouthpieces of the living God with his glorious salvation to proclaim.

We need constantly us two ministers in this community to allow ourselves be filled with the power and with the piety that characterized the apostles in the New Testament church.

[12 : 34] In the New Testament church when Peter stood he spoke with authority. He spoke the truth as it is in Christ. He spoke the truth beseeching men to receive it.

He spoke the truth challenging men to respond. the apostle Paul was the same. He might have admitted that he didn't come with a lovely fluency of speech.

But the apostle Paul as a minister of the gospel came with moving power. He came with city shaking power because he subjected himself to the power and the influence of his Savior.

Now there's not only a church or two churches that need this moving of God's spirit. But we have two ministers that need the influence and the moving of God's spirit.

For without it we are just sounding brass, tinkling cymbals. We are nothing. But then we've not only got two churches and we've not only got two ministers, we have also got a community of people.

[13 : 48] And a community of people that needs this gospel. Where in this, whereabouts in this community this evening is the piety and the spirituality and the conviction and the dedication to the risen Christ that you find in the New Testament church.

Where is the desire to learn and to hunger after righteousness? Where is the moving in the hearts of the people of Tarbert to pray and to beseech the God of heaven to move in power?

We have people by the score in Tarbert. But we have people in Tarbert who need this gospel because they do not come under the sound of it.

And they give themselves to everything that they imagine will satisfy and please. But they haven't got what it takes to secure their eternal salvation.

And because we have people in Tarbert, Tarbert needs revival. Needs it. We have old people. We have maybe a higher proportion of old people than we have young people.

[15 : 01] But where is the sincerity and the dedication and the piety in our old people that ought to be there amongst our old people? We have old people that have lived and now they're lying back and they're living out their remaining days.

The sunset is near for so, so many. But where is the hungering and the thirsting after righteousness? We have younger people, middle-aged people, who are involved in work, in creating a home, in giving security to the home, in establishing their ambitions and their jobs.

And we have so many in that category and bracket giving themselves to the things that are important, yes, maybe. But where in our community is the young families and the middle-aged people that ought also to be giving God and his kingdom the priority in their lives?

We need revival in this community. we need it for our young people. Where is the young people in this congregation this evening? The teenagers, the children, the 20-year-olds, that in every place but in the church of Jesus Christ, that at home this evening in front of the television, that they're down at the hotel, they're down at the street corner, they're maybe in some of the amusement arcades.

They may be up in Loch Gilford at some disco, they may be anywhere this evening but they are not in the church and because they are not in the church, they are not coming under the influence and the power of the risen Christ.

[16 : 44] They are not being challenged by the most important thing of all. Therefore we say we need revival. We need it.

And if you cannot see that we need it, I say to you, you have blinkers on and I say to you, you're insensitive of the situation and I say to you, you have no vision for the cause of Christ.

Look around our congregation this evening. Now we praise God for the number that is here and for the steady number that has been here over recent weeks and months.

But we cannot stop there, nor can we leave it there, nor can we say, well done boys, we've arrived, we don't need to do any more. We need to see these doors opened and men and women, all middle aged and young, coming through the morning and evening and whatever other day of the week they decide to come under the influence and the sound and the challenge and the changing power of Jesus Christ.

What I want us to do this evening with the time that's left, in the light of that need that we see, obviously locally, is turn to the passage which we read and see the reasons why revival is necessary or was necessary in the days of Hezekiah.

[18 : 17] Now you notice that Hezekiah came after his father Ahaz and Ahaz was an infamous king.

king. He was a king that had given himself to idolatry and to the worship of everything that was not true worship. He had given himself to idolatry, he had thrown himself head over heels into the sacrifice of children in the valley of Hinnah.

He had built the high places, he had sought coalition with other nations rather than dependence upon Jehovah. and the result was that the nation declined.

The result being that all was in decline in Judah and all reached rock bottom. All reached rock bottom.

But king Ahaz died and in the providence of God came along Hezekiah. Now the amazing contrast between Hezekiah and Ahaz is immediate to you.

[19 : 27] Because when Hezekiah became king at 25 and he reigned for 42 years, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. You notice king Ahaz, they didn't even bring him and bury him at the tomb of the kings of Israel.

They didn't do that. But Hezekiah was a different man altogether. And he received the accolade that he did that which his father David had done.

He was one of that elite men in Judah who loved God, who followed God, and who was constantly about the business of establishing true worship and true obedience from the people to God.

Now in Hezekiah's day, or at least when Hezekiah came to power, he came to power with Judah at this low air. And there was need, drastic need, of restoration and re-establishing of the people.

There was desperate need for revival. But the things that caused the need, that is what I want us to look at this evening. And in the light of the causes, apply them to ourselves, and thus confirm why it is in Tarbert in 1985, we need to be beseeching God to be reviving His work.

[21 : 01] Now the first thing that you notice is in verse 24 of chapter 28, that the holy vessels, or those things given to a holy worship, were desecrated.

In verse 24 we read, Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God. He destroyed, he abused, he spoiled that which was set apart for the worship of the true God.

And that despoiling, that desecrating, that was the result of Ahaz's hatred for all that God represented.

And his hatred was turned on these things, and thus he destroyed them. Now there is a sense in which when we take that alone and apply it to our own generation, we have reason to see why we need spiritual revival.

we do not have King Hayes in 1985 in Tarbo, but we have many who are like, many who are like, and many who because they have turned their backs on God, are despoiling and abusing all these things that God has set apart for his worship.

[22 : 36] Take for example, the preaching of the word. Take for example, the preaching of the word. The preaching of the word is something that God has set in the midst of his church, to bless and to be of good and to be the means of drawing men unto him.

But that gift to the Christian church is a gift that is constantly being abused by those who fill the pulpit. Because from the pulpit what is so often preached is pleasant platitudes with no power and no conviction and no direction.

But not only can you apply it to the preaching of God's word, you apply it to God's word as well. And the word of God which is his only revelation to the church is again something that is constantly under a top and constantly sought discrediting.

to be discredited. It is something that from week in week out is under the gaze of all who would seek it. It's undermining.

And it's interesting when you actually reflect on the men who are constantly chipping away at the scriptures in our generation. Are they men of more genius than the men of nineteen centuries who never found the scriptures such a difficult book to accept?

[24 : 09] It's not that they are men of more genius nor that they are men who have more access to more material. They are merely men who cannot in their hearts accept the truth of this revelation nor do they want to accept the God that is supernaturally conveyed and communicated and challenging us as people in that.

people in the world. But not only can we say to preachers, not only do we consider it in relation to the Bible, we can say that the need is reflected in also this sense.

Let's say the communion is something that again is grossly abused and grossly misrepresented, grossly misunderstood and as a result bringing about a gross grave need for God to spiritually awaken.

In our own day, the communion is either something that people are frightened of or on the other hand what so many abuse.

And I say abuse in this sense. That it is something that is entered into lightly and something that is gone through as a religious exercise without really understanding or really applying oneself to what it really is.

[25 : 35] Communion table is a commemoration of the Lord's death. It's a commemoration of all that that death represents and signifies and means to the individual partaking.

But we can honestly say without fear of over judging or overstatement that the very use of this means of grace in the Christian church is something that has been grossly, grossly abused.

In as much as many partake of what God has set aside for holy purposes, men have partaken of it.

And women, not for what it signifies, and not for what it represents, and not for what it means to them individually, but for what it establishes them as in the community.

It is a mark of respectability and a mark of religiosity. But we do not want religiosity, and we do not just want respectability in the Christian church.

And therefore we need this spiritual moving of God to enter in and quicken and reestablish the truth and the relevancy of the community. We could go on to baptism.

[26 : 54] and again another area given to the church for the good and for the welfare of the Christian church. But again the abuse is seen.

Men and women entering into the baptism of children without really entering in commitment to what the vows represent and in understanding what the covenant means.

Hezekiah, was confronted by this problem in his own generation in Judah. The holy things that were there for the glory of the worship of God were cast asunder and destroyed and despised by King Ahaz.

But you notice secondly in verse 7 of chapter 29 that access to God, we could say access to God was denied.

Access was barred. In verse 7 there you read they have also shut up the doors of the vestibule or the temple. They have shut up the doors doors.

[28 : 10] And Ahaz thought that if only he could shut all the doors and close them all down, he then could divert the people to worship what he wanted them to worship and to worship where he wanted them to worship.

And again Hezekiah is confronted with this great problem. Great problem. And it's a problem that again reflects the need for reviving.

Now we lift that same problem out of Hezekiah's day. And we lift it into our own situation. And again the need is confirmed by the fact that access to the God of the temple is so often debarred and kept from the people.

And it is done so in various ways. It is done by the attitude all too often of the congregations. It is done by the minister preaching the word.

It is done through a misrepresenting and misteaching of all that is true. Men crying peace, peace to a world that has no peace.

[29 : 28] The problem that the prophets often faced in the Old Testament was the problem of prophets who carried the name prophet but who in point of fact were not God appointed prophets at all but were men who only spoke what the people wanted to hear and what the people wanted them to say.

You have it vividly exposed in the encounter between Micaiah and Ahab as Jehoshaphat and Ahab came into an alliance. Ahab asking whether it is right to go up.

Let us turn to the prophets and after all the prophets have had their turn and the matter has been discussed. Is there not a prophet of Jehovah left? And Micaiah is brought and as soon as Micaiah is brought Ahab is resentful.

Ahab doesn't want to hear what he has to say because he speaks the truth. He speaks the words that only God has given him. And so often in our own generation the access to the God of all grace

access to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ the real need of salvation is not conveyed. The challenge of the gospel is not conveyed or laid heavy upon the shoulders of men and the need to repent is not impressed because men do not speak.

[31 : 00] All too often God the Lord would have them speak. But that wasn't all that Hezekiah encountered. He also noticed and had this problem that the lights or the lights or not just the lights but all that was given to the worship of God was put away.

They've put out the lights and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place of Israel. They have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place of Israel.

All that was demanded of this people all that was asked of them by their God in terms of adoration and commitment and worship all that was asked of them in terms of obedience it wasn't given.

They didn't give a hope to Jehovah. Let us live as we please. We do not need or we do not see the desperate need to worship him.

And as a result the lights of the place was put out. No longer did the oil lamps burn and no longer did they burn incense and no longer was burnt offerings in the holy place of God presented.

[32 : 29] And that is the same difficult situation in our own day. We have old people who have almost gone senile in their thinking and imagining that they need no God in their experience.

We have got young people who do not want this God even if he is God to have any role over their lives. They live with the attitude of the man described in Psalm 14 as a fool who says in his heart there is no God.

They live with that. He might be but it doesn't matter. I don't want him. I do not want him to roll over me. And because of this attitude and because of this indifference because of this lazy fear approach to religion there is no lamp burning and there is no incense on the altar and there is no burnt offering sacrifice.

That is one reason why our own pews are possibly so empty. That is one reason why the churches in Tarbert are so weak when they should be so so strong.

There is nothing given in worship in adoration in commitment in love in thanksgiving. Men and women living for the moment and for themselves like the rich farmer who imagined he controlled all things.

[34 : 13] Didn't give a thought for eternity. Didn't give a thought for meeting his making. Didn't give a thought for anyone else but himself. I will build bigger barns.

I will please myself. But then one last thing that Hezekiah confronted which confirms our great need of revival is found in the fact that there was a general general turning away from God.

And we find that in verse 6 where it says for our fathers have transgressed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord.

They have forsaken him have turned their faces away from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs on him. Isn't that a sad commentary of men in Hezekiah's day who so first hand had experienced the power of almighty God who had seen God so faithfully handle them and deal with them and protect them but who now forsook him turned their faces from him and turned their backs on him.

They were doing the Judas in Hezekiah's day as we do the Judas in 1985 and in Tarbert this evening that same sad commentary is a reason why we need and need it badly the reviving of God in our midst where is your fathers where was the seal and the spirituality and the religiosity of your fathers where is the dedication and the commitment now of our generation those of us that are young where is it seen in those who are our parents and who are our elders and who are our relatives but the only doesn't just fall on our fathers and those who have responsibility for us it falls on all of us who now come to this stage where we all turn our backs on him and in our community tonight if we have 100 people between our two churches we are possibly doing well 100 people out of a population of 2000 is not enough and indicates why we need

[36 : 59] God's revival and 100 out of 2000 not only indicates why we need revival it indicates also that we have turned that we have forsaken the Lord our God and we have not glorified his holy name we have not turned and thanked him for his goodness we have not lived in obedience and commitment and love as the way we ought nor do we this evening want to face him we sooner turn our backs on him and it not only is that a sad commentary but it is also confirmed in the New Testament in the statement that men love darkness rather than light and they love darkness rather than light even though they know there is a right and a wrong they love darkness knowing the difference between right and wrong and it's that loving of darkness resulting in 100 maybe out of

2000 in this community worshipping this evening that indicates the need and the demand for God to break in in a powerful and dynamic way my closing shot is this we need it and these factors indicate why we need it but when it comes can we handle it when it comes can we handle it isn't it a fact that when a child is born that child innocent helpless if it's going to really survive in this world of ours it needs the chemistry between the mother and father that is going to not only give it love and care and commitment but it needs that chemistry between mother and father that is for a lifetime going to look after it going to protect it going to nurture it going to lead it going to direct and it's the same in the spiritual sense when the babes in Christ start appearing in this community are we as a congregation spiritually enough spiritually capable to handle it is the chemistry here spiritually that will enable us cope with that movement of God's spirit which can come and which we pray God will come we do need it because when God does move we have that responsibility that parents have for children for those who are young in Christ may God help us therefore not only to pray for that day but to prepare for that day pray pray for it and prepare for it seeing the great need for it let us pray oh gracious and eternal God we do need your moving and your power because we cannot convince men of their sinfulness and their spiritual need without it not only can we not convince but we cannot convert so Lord we leave our attempts this evening our pleadings and our aspirations this evening at your throne give us the faith to believe when we ask for revival you are a God who will bring it about prepare us for it in heart and in soul as a congregation for Jesus sake Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen