

My Lord and my God, thank you for taking the initiative making it possible for me to be forgiven completely and eternally through the blood of your Son and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Forgive me for all my sins. I receive your forgiveness into my heart that I may forgive others from my heart. I now begin a life of forgiving others as you have forgiven me. In Jesus' name and for his sake I pray, Amen.

Questions to Ponder

1. Could I write a note like Ramona wrote to the other truck driver?
2. Am I “peace-faking” in any of my relationships?
3. Do I need to take the initiative toward forgiveness in any of my relationships?

Chapter 15

From Rest to Revival

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”

(Isaiah 30:15)

As a follower of Christ, you know that self-reformation is futile. Having declared spiritual bankruptcy, you came to Christ asking Him to live His life through you. He is your life; you live day-by-day in dependence upon His strength and presence.¹⁴⁴

(Walter A. Henrichsen)

Church plants are notorious for picking up an assortment of people. Ours was no exception. Having never planted or pastored a congregation before,

I wasn't sure exactly what to expect. I just knew that I was to love the people God brought into the flock and serve them the Word of God the best I knew how.

One parishioner comes to mind. He was a young man named Dan. Dan came to the fledgling group by invitation of a charter member. He was a new believer and fresh out of high school. One middle-aged couple took particular interest in Dan because he reminded them of the college-age son they lost in a construction accident.

Dan announced that he was going to be attending college in another community. The new congregation wanted to put on a farewell party for him before he left. Dan and the congregation agreed on a time and place for the party. Food was purchased and prepared, decorations were hung and tables were set. Everyone anticipated a delightful evening. There was only one problem. Everyone looked around and asked, *where's Dan?* Dan was nowhere to be found. We waited for Dan until the food was cold, then decided to eat without the honored guest.

A few days later Dan showed up. He apologized for having forgotten his own farewell party. After apologies were accepted the same group of people made arrangements for another farewell party for Dan. Once again food was purchased and prepared, tables were set and decorations hung. Everything was in order for the honored guest. There was only one problem. You guessed it. Dan had failed to show up to his own farewell party for a second time.

Dan's youthfulness, singleness, and limited life experience made his absence excusable. As the years have gone by and my experiences with people have accumulated, I attribute Dan's lack of response to another cause. Dan came from a broken home. I doubt that he was a special guest on very many occasions. I don't think he knew how to respond to being the

center of attention. Being honored had escaped him. No one suspected the slightest tinge of guile in Dan's failure to remember those who sought to honor him.

Had this been a deliberate act of neglect by someone who knew better, his absence would have been hard to excuse. Had the honored guest intentionally stayed away to embarrass or even insult those who prepared the event, it may have been called *rebellion*.

SIN'S DELIGHTFUL FLAVORS

Sin has at least four delightful flavors which taste good going down but create severe spiritual illness and multiple consequences. The Hebrew language provides a vivid description of the different categories of sin. The general word for sin is *chataah*. It portrays a person shooting an arrow and *missing the mark*. Paul captured the idea in Romans chapter three when he wrote, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Guilt and punishment which accompany sin are attached to the Hebrew word *avon*. Deceit and falsehood are represented by the Hebrew word *remiyyah*. This would include treachery and perversion, twisting what is good into something evil. Rebellion is represented by the Hebrew word *pasha*, and is typically translated *transgression*. Transgressions are deliberate and often blatant sins.

Imagine not only going through a stop sign, but running it over because you don't think the sign should be there. Transgressions typically come with an attitude which the person expresses without hesitation, fueled by rage. The Boston Tea Party demonstrated defiance toward British oppression. The colonists communicated, *not only are we refusing to pay taxes on your tea, we are throwing your tea out into the sea*.

King David owned up to all of these types of sin in conjunction with receiving God's forgiveness after committing adultery and attempting to cover it up:

How blessed is he whose *transgression* is forgiven,
Whose *sin* is covered
How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute *iniquity*,
And in whose spirit there is no *deceit*!
(Psalm 32:1-2 NASB, italics mine)

REBEL, WHO ME?

The Prophet Isaiah was called by God (Isaiah 6:8-13) to address the rebellion of Israel's Southern Kingdom, Judah, and specifically the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:1). Israel knew better than to reject God's acts of kindness toward them. The Prophet wasted no time reciting flowery introductions. He immediately calls them rebels.

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!
For the LORD has spoken:
I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
(Isaiah 1:2)

Woe to the rebellious children, declares the Lord,
Who execute a plan, but not Mine.
And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,
In order to add to their sin.
(Isaiah 30:1, NASB)

These are a rebellious people, deceitful children,
children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction.

(Isaiah 30:9)

Isaiah continues to confront the nation's rebellion. Chapter thirty describes their rebellion. It is not as overt as the kind that deliberately disobeys by doing the opposite from what God has commanded. Edward J. Young describes Israel's rebellion as a general attitude versus a specific action:

The present prophecy, however, relates not so much to one particular act as to an attitude of mind, which in the face of danger turns to man rather than God; it is this attitude wherever manifested that the prophet condemns....

Earlier Isaiah had characterized the nation's princes as rebellious, but now he applies the epithet to all the people (cf. 1:23). The root idea of the adjective is "turning aside." The people turned aside from Yahweh; they did not wish to hear His Word. Instead they turned unto their own desires and devices, and in so doing revealed their rebelliousness.¹⁴⁵

Rebellious attitudes seep in long before actions have become overtly rebellious. Attitudes change as we exchange confidence in one resource for another. Judah was being threatened from the east by the Assyrians. They could either trust God who had delivered them numerous times in their history or turn to a nearby nation. They were leaning toward Egypt, ironically the nation from which they had once been delivered by God's mighty hand.

Judah's attitude refuses God's tailor-made provision. Like saying, "No thank you!" after someone has gone to the trouble of preparing a special meal specific to your tastes.

**REBELLION HAPPENS AS WE EXCHANGE THE PROMISES
OF GOD FOR THE PLANS OF MAN**

“Woe to the obstinate children,” declares the LORD, “to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin.”

(Isaiah 30:1)

God had promised to protect and prosper his people (Isaiah 1:18-20). He had also promised to “crush the Assyrians” (Isaiah 14:24-27). Through Isaiah’s prophecy Judah had already heard some of the clearest predictions regarding the coming Messiah (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7). The rebellious children chose instead to spin their own plans. They thought themselves to be more intelligent than God. They had a *better* idea, *trust Egypt*. Trust the gods of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped many gods and treated their Pharaohs like gods. In essence the Israelites were exchanging the Living and True God for the gods of Egypt. Impressed with the apparent strength of Egypt they made an alliance with that idolatrous nation. Resting on the promises of God who never failed them was not their choice. They had forgotten God’s mighty deliverance and victory over Egypt through Moses. They didn’t even consult him. Perhaps consulting God didn’t even cross their minds.

Trends in the U.S. are rather disturbing, rebellious I would say. As the United States becomes increasingly secular, divine providence and promise are no longer revered. The prevailing attitude is expressed by the phrase, *we did it all by ourselves!* Battles over long-standing religious memorial symbols and the removal of the Ten Commandments are clear signs of rebellion and refusal to make God our refuge and strength. Given that the U.S. remains as the world’s number one superpower, Americans are less apt to make alliances with other nations than ancient Israel. However, like Judah the U.S. continues to exchange its spiritual foundations for totally secular self-trust. Until recent years the Ten Commandments hung in courtrooms, “America the Beautiful” was sung in classrooms, and religious symbols such as the cross or the Star of David were not controversial.

Now the words “One Nation under God” in the Pledge Allegiance are contested. Never mind that the nation was founded on freedom of religion and freedom of religious expression. Anti-Christian and Jewish sentiment has turned the statement from freedom of religion to freedom from religion. Thomas Jefferson’s statements on separation of church and state were intended to protect the nation from ever endorsing a single denomination as The State Church of the United States. Now this wall of separation has been twisted to mean no religion in the state or public sector.¹⁴⁶ Abraham Lincoln foresaw like a prophet these dangerous trends approximately one hundred and fifty years ago:

We have been the recipients of the choicest of bounties of heaven; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.¹⁴⁷

There is an old slang remark that goes something like this: “Dance with the one who brung yah.” God has brought America to a dance on top of the world, and now we are exchanging partners for someone or something far inferior. I fear the dance is about to end.

I also fear that a similar exchange is permeating churches in the United States. Church leaders, including ministers, are more excited about stimulating church growth through methodology and the latest technology than prayerful dependence on the Almighty. Eugene Peterson expresses his disappointment in this growing trend:

I am in conversation right now with a dozen or so men and women who are prepared to be pastors and who are waiting to be called to a congregation. And I am having the depressing experience of reading congregational descriptions of what these churches want in a pastor. With hardly an exception they don't want pastors at all—they want managers of their religious company. They want a pastor they can follow so they won't have to bother with following Jesus anymore.¹⁴⁸

Management, improved methodology, and technology have their place as long as they are mere tools of service. I design PowerPoint presentations to enhance my sermons and seminars. I have a desktop and a laptop computer. Communication by e-mail is fast and global. Websites provide quick access to information which makes research a breeze. I utilize advanced communication systems so that I can keep up with the changes. Every once in a while there are glitches, gaps, and breakdowns to remind me that technology is a great servant and a terrible master.

Many of the fastest-growing churches in the world are in places void of our management, methods, and technology. They have discovered the promises of God are more precious than the plans of man. Saying, “No thank you!” to God's promises in exchange for methods of growth is a growing rebellion. Subtle beginnings become overt over time.

As the Apostle Paul taught an arrogant congregation in Corinth, “Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow”(I Corinthians 3:7), so it is ours to humbly plant and water and it is God's to grow. From God's creation to God's Kingdom, you and I don't grow a thing. We can plant and we can water but growth is a gift of God that is promised. I find that quite humbling.

Saying, “No thank you!” to God’s promises and opting for trust in human strategies is subtle rebellion. Subtle beginnings become overt over time.

REBELLION HAPPENS AS WE EXCHANGE THE POWER OF GOD FOR THE PROTECTION OF MAN

Historical Israel knew the power of God. The Pentateuch, the Poets, and now the Prophets all spoke of God’s mighty acts in history. But they were out of touch with this history because they were out of touch with the God who acted in history and was on the edge of his throne ready to act again on their behalf. Instead of calling on the God of History, they passed up Divine power for whatever protection Pharaoh had to offer. They didn’t even consult his opinion: “Woe to the obstinate children, ... who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh’s protection, to Egypt’s shade for refuge”(Isaiah 30:2).

How out of touch they were with the Living God. They went through the motions of worship, attending festivals and making sacrifices (Isaiah 1:11-17), but refused to trust in God’s power to protect them from their oppressors.

Rebellion does that to a person. Rebellion erodes away the trail that was once a familiar path to power. Sin, especially rebellion, refuses to utilize the familiar source of power. It is just too embarrassing to return to the one whom we have sinned against. We would have to repent, renounce our belligerent ways, and humble ourselves to ask for help after having wandered from him. Shame causes us to turn away from the reliable Helper. At the moment it is easier to clear a new path than remove the shame by facing the one whom we have slapped in the face. Failure to face God is a recipe for more shame: “But Pharaoh’s protection will be to your shame, Egypt’s shade will bring you disgrace. Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame

because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace”(Isaiah 30:3-5).

INSURANCE, SECURITY, AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Far from the battle lines of war in the heartland of a vast and prosperous country, I can live in fear of catastrophe. Natural disasters, accidents, terminal illnesses, and murder happen in all areas of the country. No place is totally immune to these and other threats to life.

Most Americans do their best to cushion the fall when tragedy strikes. Insurance can be purchased to prevent physical and financial harm for most everything imaginable. Security systems are available to protect both person and property. Social Security was established years ago to protect the elderly and the impaired from abject poverty. I still wonder, *are these measures enough? When do I have enough insurance, security and retirement savings to guard against the unforeseen catastrophe?*

I have trusted insurance policies only to discover that we didn't have coverage for specific *acts of God*. We put our home on the market and failed to sell it before our moving date. Eight months later it still had not sold and our sump pump did not respond to the inflow of water during a storm. The carpet was soaked and the drywall damp. All had to be removed to eliminate mold. When we called the insurance agent he said the damage was not covered. We did not have coverage because a little box followed by the words *sump pump* did not have a check mark in it. The pump worked fine when we left. No one had suggested that we needed sump pump insurance coverage after we finished the basement several years earlier.

Americans trust all levels of government to come to their rescue when disaster strikes. Victims of Hurricane Katrina assumed that local and state governments would organize an evacuation plan if *the big one* hit. When

the levees gave way local levels of government had not arranged for an evacuation. After the fact, Federal assistance could not get there fast enough to meet all the needs.

It is also assumed that Social Security will be able to provide for the retirement of all employees. Disappointment is predictable given the baby boomer bulge that is about to retire. Insurance, security, Social Security, etc., are not foolproof. Try to trust as we may, human agencies are no guarantee against disaster.

As I watch the evening news and communicate with friends and relatives, every week I hear of someone's sudden unexpected death. I wonder *who is with us this week that will be gone next week? Who is living their last day? Who is taking their last breath?* Deaths are frequent enough so that I no longer take a single day of life for granted. I am increasingly aware that God protects beyond what doctors cure or precautionary measures provide. He is able to protect and deliver all who trust in his power.

VISION, VALUES, AND POLICY MANUALS

After a church has survived a crisis, extraordinary effort goes into making sure that it won't happen again. If the problem arose because of lack of vision, a new vision statement is written or the old one revised. If values were askew, they are revisited and clarified. If a job description failed to cover some vital area of responsibility, it is rewritten. Finally if policies are nil or negligent, they will certainly be revised to avoid everything from lawsuits to larceny. There is a compulsion about making sure that crises do not recur.

Compulsive reaction to every crisis that pains a congregation is itself a danger. When avoiding pain becomes the focus of a church, it builds a box for itself. For example a church decides that it will not have small groups

any longer so that no small group leader will ever *cut and run* with the group again. A church makes a policy against certain displays of emotion during worship, because some visitors were offended and left. The youth groups will not invite any other youth groups to take part in activities again, because two kids got in a fight. There will be no more weddings of non-members in the church, because the last wedding party left the church building a mess. Such a church builds a box for itself better known as a coffin. It has nailed down everything to perfection until the lid is nailed shut. The final last words of churches on this path are *that will never happen again!*

How much better it is to exist for a cause than to avoid a crisis. I have spent hours writing vision statements, clarifying core values, and developing policy manuals for the churches I served as a pastor. I am not saying that such documents are not necessary. I am saying that such documents are no guarantee against problems in the future. Too many churches spend an inordinate amount of time producing written documents to protect them from past or future crises. Policies produced out of fear and self-preservation are no substitute for the power of God. One will always wonder if his or her church has locked out every potential threat to tranquility behind its doors. Policies are not the ultimate protection. God gives his powerful protection when he is the focus and cause of the organization. It is safer to put divine cause before crisis management.

Saying “No thank you!” to God’s power in exchange for endless protection policies is a subtle rebellion. Subtle beginnings become overt over time.

REBELLION HAPPENS AS WE EXCHANGE THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE TALENT OF MAN

Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. These are rebellious

people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction.

They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"

(Isaiah 30:8-11)

This time the children of Israel are called a rebellious people for saying "No thank you!" to the seers and prophets sent from God to tell them the truth. I imagine the tone was more like *"Shut up! We have heard enough of your pessimistic rumors of disaster if we don't obey. We don't care if what we want to hear isn't true. If it makes us feel good, we will listen."*

This disdain for truth continues to be the channel of choice. Entertaining lies bring big profits. In the spring of 2006 Dan Brown's best selling *The Da Vinci Code* became a movie. People flocked to the box office to view the novel that became a movie. Both the book and the movie present a perversion of the life of Christ and a distortion of Leonardo da Vinci's painting, The Last Supper. If possible, da Vinci would have turned in his grave many times. People believed it because it was on the big screen. If you want to get rich, write a novel or make a movie laced with lies about Jesus. The Apostle Paul predicted this is how it would be in the last days:

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

(II Timothy 4:3-4)

God loves truth. He is called the God of truth (Isaiah 65:16). He speaks truth (Isaiah 45:19) and cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6) and came in grace and truth (John 1:17). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). No person can knowingly accept a lie and at the same time draw near to God (I John 1:6). We must ruthlessly eliminate lies from our lives and desire truth in the inner person (Psalm 51:6).

The Israelites were attracted to the Egyptians in part because of their talent. They were skilled horsemen and able to refine a swift breed of stags known to this day as the Arabians.

An Egyptian soldier knew how to handle a horse. It didn't matter whether the beast was beneath him or hitched to a chariot. Pity the troops that fled from them. Judah assumed all would flee from them. That was a big assumption: "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD" (Isaiah 31:1).

Good looks never hurt. The Egyptians were "a people tall and smoothskinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers" (Isaiah 18:2).

Years ago Dad and I toured the Middle East together. Our minds were quickly filled with first impressions. As we crossed over into Egypt, Dad commented on the good looks of the Egyptian people. He never lost his eye for good-looking people. Good looks both attract and intimidate. While Judah found the Egyptians attractive, they hoped the Assyrians would find them intimidating. Such hopes were vain.

Judah's misplaced trust was not only rebellion, it was fatal. Returning to Egypt was forbidden as stated in Deuteronomy 17:16. They had definitely

rebelled. Now they would face the consequences of exchanging truth for talent. Judah and Egypt would fall together as the Assyrians would defeat both: “But the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, he who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall; both will perish together” (Isaiah 31:3).

If exchanging divine truth for human talent is rebellion, we are a rebellious nation. Americans as a whole are intoxicated with talent and good looks. We have traded truth for talent.

Our highest-paid people are not those who protect us but those who entertain us. Financial rewards for highly talented athletes, actors, actresses, and recording artists are escalating at an unprecedented rate. In 2004 *Forbes Magazine* compared the incomes of the fifty highest-paid athletes with those of the previous ten years: “Overall, the 50 highest earners pulled in a combined \$1.1 billion, 40% of which came from endorsements. The minimum to make the list was \$15 million versus less than \$5 million in 1994.”¹⁴⁹

The fault lies not with talented people for making money; I blame Americans for our addiction to them. We not only pay talented people disproportionately more than they are worth, we worship them.

American Idol rules as a reality television show. I remember the first time I heard the title “American Idol.” I was filled with mixed emotions. *How pagan to call any human being an idol, an object of worship.* I also thought *how honest to actually admit that we have succumbed to worshipping people.*

I do not fault the show. I do grieve about the idea of idolizing human beings and talent. I admire talented athletes, skilled musicians, good actors and actresses, and highly intelligent people. I praise God for them since he

made them and encourages the development of their innate abilities. However, without God we are nothing; we are not worthy of worship. To worship people is idolatry and the heinous sin of rebellion.

Many congregations are too easily mesmerized by ability to the neglect of character. I have seen where very gifted pastors and laymen were given latitude regarding character because it was believed that *you can't argue with success*.

Unfortunately, bad character goes sour at the worst possible time and in the most public manner. The ecclesiastical empires that such powerful leaders build typically become public embarrassments. Congregations that fail to confront questionable character because they have subtly exchanged truth for talent usually suffer the loss of people, funding, and divine favor.

Isaiah's warning and Judah's defeat warns me to never elevate any person, creature, or thing above God. To compromise truth for human ability or beauty is a dangerous proposition. The subtle exchange of divine truth for human talent is rebellion.

REVIVAL, REPENTING OF OUR REBELLION

I have asked myself; *why doesn't revival happen more frequently and in more places?* I have heard various answers like: *Revival doesn't happen because Christians don't witness more, work harder, or pray more, etc.* Typical answers focus on human shortcomings. I believe the real human shortcoming is failure to own up to personal sin. Repentance, more than goodness or hard work, is the human component in revival. Oswald Chambers said it well: "What our Lord wants us to present to Him is not goodness, nor honesty, nor endeavor, but real solid sin; that is all He can take from us. And what does He give in exchange for our sin? Real solid

righteousness. But we must relinquish all pretense of being anything, all claim of being worthy of God's consideration."¹⁵¹

Revival happens in individuals as they declare themselves spiritually bankrupt, unable to think, work, or plan their way out of their spiritual poverty. As we repent of our sin and spiritual bankruptcy God does his part by sending his Spirit to embrace and regenerate us. Revival happens in any heart that sincerely repents of his or her sins. Isaiah 30:15 is a powerful reminder that repentance is essential for revival: "In repentance and rest is your salvation."

When the Holy Spirit comes upon masses of people, convincing them of their sin, the righteousness of God and the reality of God's judgment (John 16:8), Christian historians recognize that a revival has taken place, declaring it an act of God.

My call to ministry took place in such a setting and time when God was moving powerfully on college campuses in the early seventies. Student after student had life-changing encounters with Christ the spring semester of 1970. It was not a single event but a series of encounters on the campus of Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and similar colleges.

I personally came to see myself as spiritually bankrupt, unable to change myself and live up to God's expectations. For six years I had been trying to please God in my own strength without total surrender to him. I declared myself *unfit* for God. There was only one thing I could do and that was to give him my life without reservation. What occurred in the months that followed stirred like a wave of the Holy Spirit that changed my life and many others.

I returned from college on weekends and began to share every old and new scriptural insight I knew with my college and high school friends. During

the summer months a few of us started a Bible study. One night of the week we studied the Bible and another night of the week we prayed that our believing friends would be revived by the Holy Spirit and our unbelieving acquaintances would come to Christ.

When I returned home from college on weekends the next fall, I discovered that the Bible study had expanded. I clearly remember asking, *who is that person sitting over there? What about those three kids over there?* Consistently the reply was: *These are the kids who repented and received Christ this week.* This went on for months until we crowded many teens and adults in my parents' basement. After that we rented a facility downtown.

Some of those in attendance came from Bible-believing churches, others from not so Bible-believing churches. Many of those new believers had rejected true Christianity altogether, some were delivered from drug and alcohol addictions. The most rebellious found it easier to own up to their sins, since they were so undeniably overt. As the saying goes, *when we are at our worst, grace is at its best.*

A reliable source living in Indonesia witnessed a televised special report shortly after the tsunami had devastated so much of the islands in January of 2004. For four hours Indonesian television showed Muslims repenting of their sins. They were convinced that Allah was judging them for their disobedience. They openly confessed such sins as receiving bribes. The person watching the coverage was grieved that he never heard anyone thank God for forgiving their sins. Accepting forgiveness was not compatible with their belief system. However, repentance prepared many of them for what would occur.

There were reports of visions among Muslims. One man saw a Bible reference on the wall of a mosque, Acts 4:12. When he exited the mosque he asked about Acts 4:12 and someone handed him a Bible. He read the

following reference to Jesus Christ: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

God has ways of bringing repentance followed by massive revivals on cultures formerly thought to be impossible to penetrate with the Gospel. For decades Muslims have been moved toward Christ by dreams and visions. The following is an excerpt from The National & International Religion Report:

More and more Muslims are having dreams and visions of Christ, Christian ministries say. There is increasing evidence that the supernatural is playing a role in drawing Muslims to Christ.

Campus Crusade for Christ has received thousands of letters from Muslims, many of whom claim to have had a similar dream of Christ, according to the ministry’s radio broadcast office in northern Africa. In the dream, Jesus appears and tells people, “I am the way,” Campus Crusade founder and President Bill Bright said. Moved by the dreams, they contact the radio ministry and “freely respond” to the gospel message, he said. In Algeria, an imprisoned Muslim political radical said Jesus appeared to her in her cell. The woman now is a Christian and works with Campus Crusade ministering to Muslims.

In one African Muslim country, a young man violently tore up a Bible tract and threatened the life of the Every Home For Christ worker going door-to-door with the literature, Dick Eastman of Colorado Springs-based EHFC told NIRR. The next afternoon as the worker sat in his home, he was shocked to see the man knock at his door. “I must have another booklet,” the Muslim told him. He explained that the previous night two hands awakened him, and when he turned on the light and asked who was there, a voice said, “You have torn up the truth.” The

voice instructed him to acquire another booklet, directing him to the EHFC worker's home, the young man said. There, the Muslim read the booklet and became a believer. He has since been expelled from his wealthy family, lives with EHFC's Africa director, and is preparing for ministry to Muslims.¹⁵²

Revival is recognized by man when numbers of people repent. Revival is recognized by God when one person repents. That one person needs to be me. That one person needs to be you. Then you and I can take revival to the next person we meet.

REVIVAL, RESTING IN GOD'S PROVISION

Judah's failure to truly rest on the Sabbath bled into all of life. No wonder rest eluded them amidst threats from a militant Assyria. They had underestimated the role of rest in invoking God's protection, "In repentance and rest is your salvation."

Salvation (*yasha*) in this context has a wider application than salvation from sin. Judah's obsession with deliverance from the impending threats of Assyria drove them to consider every human option for survival. After engaging their problem-solving skills, turning to Egypt got the most votes. Their plan rested on Egypt's military power for survival. Whatever rest they experienced through this plan evaporated like fog under the midday sun.

Assyria was not Judah's biggest problem. A more devastating enemy had already infiltrated Judah's ranks. Like a virus attacking an immune system, this enemy had turned the people against their true and powerful Protector. Their perspective was now poisoned so that the Protector looked like the enemy and false help appeared as the tangible solution. As a biological virus invades the body and a computer virus raids a hard drive, this intruder assaults souls. Sin is a ravaging terrorist.

Sin was the real reason for defeat at the hand of the Assyrians. Sin had to be conquered before Judah could defeat any other enemy. This enemy refuses to bow to human plans and efforts. The sinner must rest in God's plan and power to defeat sin. This is the ultimate salvation.

Revival happens as we rest in the power of God for salvation. God has endowed man with tremendous problem-solving abilities. Sin, however, lurks beyond human ability. Try as we may to solve the problem of sin with money, education, or planning, sin prevails. God gave mankind amazing abilities, but we cannot save ourselves. Walter Henrichsen points out the irony of being an able, self-reliant, self-made, self-sufficient person in light of eternity:

The worse thing that can happen to the non-Christian is for him to be able to solve his own problems. Nothing is more deadly than self-reformation. The great Physician heals those who cannot heal themselves. If people conclude that they can solve their own problems, or at least learn to accommodate them in their lives, they lose their incentive to turn to Christ for help, and that is a short path to hell.¹⁵³

Appalled as some may be at the thought of man's inability to save himself, there is no recourse but to trust in God's plan. The gospel about Christ's death for sin remains forever as the only answer to the problem of sin: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." ²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of

the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

(I Corinthians 1:18-21)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

If salvation were achieved by bloodline, education, ability, or determination, the Apostle Paul had a huge advantage over the rest of us. Paul trashed all attempts to save himself by human advantage once he accepted the saving power of Christ.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

(Philippians 3:7-9)

If you want to be saved, don't do something, stand there! Receive God's provision of salvation through Christ. Rest in what God has done for you. Saying "No thank you!" to God's provision for salvation and opting for trust in human strategies is rebellion.

QUIETNESS AND TRUST

Lois and I learned to enjoy soccer through our sons, Scott and Nate. Soccer was a sport we knew little about in our own childhoods. Both boys started at age five. Nate played through college and continues to play, coach, and referee the game. We have spent many vacations following soccer tournaments over the years.

Once while traveling with a load of boys to a tournament, we began to talk about behavior on the field. One player volunteered that some opposing players attempt to intimidate with chatter. Such players may talk about how many goals they have scored, or their team's superior record. They may challenge, "Bet yah can't get around me." Another volunteered that some players talk a lot of trash to intimidate you. *Sometimes it's racial; some of it's about your ancestry.* The lads agree that the players that got under their skin the most were the ones who said nothing; *they just stare at you with a somber look of confidence. They look you in the eye and say nothing. They're the most intimidating.* Quietness does not necessarily communicate timidity. It can be a sign of strength.

In contrast, constant chatter, profanity, and macho behavior reflect insecurity. Such mannerisms camouflage discomfort. They operate like an alarm system warning all challengers to back off while hinting that there is something fragile inside. The hair on the back of a small dog rises when in the presence of larger dogs. Anxiety works in the small dog to make it look bigger than its actual size. Threatened people also have ways of making themselves look bigger than reality.

Anxiety attempts to hide in a blizzard of activity. I met a girl in high school who competed in everything. She strove to be the best in music competitions, gymnastics, and horsemanship. I asked her why she chose so many activities. She replied, "When I am quiet and have time to think about myself I get depressed." Rather than face the pain within her, she mothered it with activity. Her perpetual motion hid her insecurities, so she thought.

The only horse races I have ever watched have been on television, but my general observation is that the horses that walk to the gates without getting lathered up usually rank better than those that stomp around, resisting their trainers and jockeys when entering the gates.

An inability to be still and quiet on the outside may indicate a disturbance on the inside. This disturbance may reflect anxiety generated by a lack of trust in objects or persons worthy of trust. Trust is as good as the object or person in which it is placed.

Judah had been busy making alliances with countries that were not trustworthy. The Lord through Isaiah had this to say about Egypt: “Look now, you are depending on Egypt that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man’s hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to all who depend on him” (Isaiah 36:6).

Isaiah had warned Judah not to trust the nation the Lord once defeated through Moses. Now that they had trusted Egypt, there was still time to transfer their trust to the Lord. He was willing to meet them more than halfway. Calmness would come as they trusted him. The Lord intended that quietness and trust be their strength. He made it clear that trusting in him would provide a life of grace through the verses that followed.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

(Isaiah 30:18-21)

QUIETNESS AND TRUST SPEAK VOLUMES

Today many occupations encourage verbosity. If you can talk louder, faster, and over the voices of others you are a lead candidate for a job as a lawyer, teacher, talk show host, politician or preacher. Obviously many careers require verbal skills. They also require listening. Talking without listening produces answers to questions that have not been asked.

I have a couple of seminary degrees and work with pastors who have attended seminary. A seminary education focuses on verbal skills as applied to preaching and teaching. Seminaries would do students and churches a favor by enhancing the seminarians' listening skills. Christian education teaches students how to do ministry through activity better than they teach how to be ministers by listening and being quiet. Quietness and trust speak volumes.

Trusting God in major areas of life has been a long journey. One painful step after another God has expanded my trust in him. The pain was what I experienced as I trusted myself and those unworthy of trust. Pleasure followed as I found him trustworthy. It has been a long process of getting free from insecurities. I only regret that I didn't learn to trust God in more areas earlier in life.

Today I thank God for the freedom to relax and laugh because the big tickets are paid for—the biggest of all being forgiveness of my sins through the death of Christ, my Savior. If this temporal life should end without warning, I know where I will spend eternity. I could not relax on earth without assurance of my heavenward destiny.

King David had many troubles. Some were induced by God's special calling on his life, such as Saul's sin of envy against him. Saul was enraged by God's powerful anointing on David. Some troubles were the consequences of David's own sin, such as his adultery with Bathsheba and prideful act of numbering the people. But David found rest in his eternal hope. He proclaimed, "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him" (Psalm 62:1). Within the Psalm David reminds himself where he can find deep rest. I find that I need to remind myself as well that the Lord is the source of rest because he is trustworthy. David called God his "Mighty Rock," a figure of speech communicating security and trustworthiness.

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge. Selah.
(Psalm 62:5-8)

I was about nine years old the first time I went duck hunting with my grandfather, father, and older brother. Since I was too young to legally hunt, I was the only one not carrying a gun. My senses were on overload just taking in the pre-dawn experience. I remember walking on a snow fence that had been laid down to make a path on the swampy bog. Without the fence one would sink deep into the mud. Even with the fence one could get stuck if he didn't watch his step. I had to be very careful since my legs were short and my boots only went up to my knees; everyone else wore hip boots.

The object was to walk out on the snow fence a half mile into the bog to our hunting positions. The law permitted hunters to start shooting one-half hour before sunrise. Since the best opportunities were before sunrise, all hunters wanted to be at their positions on time.

That morning the air was crisp and cool. Reeds overhead swayed back and forth with the gentle breeze. The eastern sky was beginning to glow with first light and the sky was beginning to hum from the sound of duck wings in flight overhead. It was a stimulating experience. However, one thing made me uneasy. Every time I took a step on the submerged snow fence my foot sank down three or four inches and sometimes more. Furthermore it was pretty dark. It was like reading Braille with my feet. On occasion the person ahead of me pointed out a hole in the snow fence that I should avoid if I wanted to stay dry. The water temperature was not very inviting in Minnesota during October. If I got wet on the walk out, it might be five or six hours before I was able to put on a dry set of clothes.

The morning hunt had been enough of a success that I immediately longed for the day I turned twelve and could carry a gun like the rest of our hunting party. The entire experience deserved a return trip as soon as possible. The only thing I wasn't sure about was the walk on the snow fence in the dark. Now that the hunt was over, it felt so good to be back on hard ground. The gravel road was packed with rock. It did not sink when I drove my foot into it. I felt my body relax. I could rest now that my feet were on solid ground. I took a deep breath and a sigh of relief. I trusted the hard ground.

Trust is as good as the object of trust. Churning up greater trust in a slippery soggy snow fence wouldn't turn it into a slab of granite. The Lord God is a Mighty Rock.

David's advice was available for all of Judah to read. Unfortunately their trust had shifted from rest in God alone to a tenuous relationship with Egypt. God sent Isaiah with the same plea, find rest in the Almighty alone. Isaiah 30:15 ends with a sobering bottom line, "But you would have none of it."

Is that your bottom line—"But you would have none of it?" Providing that you have read *For God's Sake, Rest!* from the beginning, you have seen the value of rest from my personal experiences, the references of others, and above all, the Word of God. Will it be said of you, "But you would have none of it," or will you "For God's sake, rest"?

I am afraid that Voltaire knew something that we have forgotten when he said, "I can never hope to destroy Christianity until I first destroy the Christian Sabbath."¹⁵⁵

Rest as God intends invigorates his people to rise and serve with a refreshed perspective and renewed obedience. Rest remains a key to revival!

Prayer

Dear Lord God, forgive my rebellious ways. I admit that I have rebelled overtly by consciously disobeying your commands. I admit that I have rebelled subconsciously by responding with a "No thank you!" after you have offered what is best for me and pleasing to you. Lord, I repent of my rebellion and enter your rest as my deliverance in keeping with your salvation. I quiet myself as I trust in you as my strength now and forever. I want all of it, Lord. In Jesus' name and for his sake I pray, Amen.

Questions to Ponder

1. Am I rebelling overtly or passively against the Lord in any way?

2. Have I identified in my life any of the forms of rebellion mentioned in this chapter?

List which ones:

3. Am I repentant about my rebellion?

4. Do I need to be revived through the key words of Isaiah 30:15: repentance, rest, quietness and trust?

Conclusion:

Rest, A Core Value

Much emphasis has been placed on values in recent years. Corporations, educational institutions, churches, and charities have been identifying and defining their core values. In his book, *Values Driven Leadership*, Aubrey Malphurs defines a church's core values as "its constant, passionate, sacred core beliefs that drive its ministry."¹⁵⁶ Malphurs makes reference to two other definitions of values. A more general definition by Charles O'Reilly, et al, reads as follows: "Basic values may be thought of as internalized normative beliefs that can guide behavior."¹⁵⁷ Malphurs makes reference to another definition by Patrick Lencioni that is fitting for corporations: "deeply ingrained principles that guide all of a company's actions."¹⁵⁸ After years of studying the theme of rest in the Scriptures, I have come to believe that *rest is a core value with God*. In my mind that is the statement that best summarizes *For God's Sake, Rest!*

Rest is a core value with God, so much so that he modeled it for us at the completion of Creation (Genesis 2:1-3).

Rest is a core value with God, so much so that he blessed rest (Genesis 2:3).