

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Proverbs 14:12

The heart of revival in almost all cases over the last 400 years has focused on revealing the hidden sins which stop the revival fire. Once revealed, the conviction of them and the confession of them opens the possibility of revival and new beginnings. This happened in the Welsh revival -

‘The revival movement is characterised by the most remarkable confession of sin, confessions that must be costly. I heard some of them, men rising who have been members of the church and officers of the church confessing hidden sin in their hearts and seeking prayer for its putting away. The whole movement is marvellously marked by a confession of Jesus Christ, testimony to his power and his goodness.’

Why conviction? The danger of unconfessed sin

As the Lord was preparing his people to capture Jericho, he said this -

“But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.”

Sadly –

Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel.

There were consequences of this sin -

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So the men went up and spied out Ai...So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, ⁵ who killed about thirty-six of them.

Joshua had to find out the reason for this loss -

And Joshua said, “Alas, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! Pardon your servant, Lord. What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?”

The Lord said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.

Sin is such a dangerous disease with dangerous consequences

*** Sin destroys – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)**

As we learned last week, the church cannot reflect the glory of God until it is convicted of its own sin and confesses. If there is unconfessed sin in the church, it breaks the relationship with God and the church begins to stray from the path the Lord has prepared for it. The fire of the Spirit burns low, faith is low, and the church loses its salt and its light. Much more seriously, the Spirit cannot work in such an environment. Nor can it fall in reviving fire unless the sin is dealt with.

*** Sin separates - It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. (Isaiah 59:2.NLT)**

Sin separates God's people from his covering, his healing, and his direction. Many churches and many leaders have pressed ahead in the works of God while the spirit of God is far from them. Unconfessed sin separates the church from the close walk with God which is so necessary for its survival.

*** Sin pollutes - Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. (Numbers 35:33)**

The spilling of innocent blood pollutes the land making it unholy. In the same way unconfessed sin pollutes the spiritual foundations of the church. The church becomes unholy and a holy God cannot tolerate this.

*** Sin Destroys everything - The one who sins is the one who will die (Ezekiel 18:20)**

National sins have national consequences

Achan's sin appeared to be so small. A little plunder from a great city - many soldiers after him have done the same. Its consequences were devastating, and if Joshua had not dealt with them, they would have been catastrophic. God is a God of love and he only judges to put things right, but judge he does and will if sin begins to take its terrible toll unrecognised and unconfessed.

It is not just individual settings which caused the problem. It is the sin of the church as a national body which is bringing so much damage to the nation. In every broadcast I make these clear and here they are again -

The first great sin which the church must face up to is that it has not cared for the nation and consequently the nation has gone its own way. The church went after comfort and ease, prosperity and success, and the nation has made this its goals. The central focus of the Lord, his cross and a passionate love for the nation he created has been lost. The size of this sin can only be understood when spiritual history is understood.

Africa protected the Lord when he was a baby. Africa protected the Lord from the violence of Herod and in the background Satan's desire to kill the child Jesus. Satan has been taking out his anger on Africa ever since for its protection of Jesus.

There is a deeper issue. Satan feared that one day the Lord would raise up a nation which would break him. He feared that day and tried to destroy Africa before it could happen.

That nation was Ghana. Ghana's destiny was to be a channel by which the spirit would flow into all West Africa, into wider Africa and into the world. The church in Ghana has not loved this nation or protected it. The destiny of Africa is in danger because of the laziness and failure of the church.

This will bring the judgement of God on Ghana. It is a sin he cannot overlook unless the church is convicted of its sin and confesses. This process has to begin with the leadership with the conviction of its own sinfulness both personal, within the church and within the nation. The only hope is revival.

Such a revival will not be the comfortable Fiesta clapping experience which so many expect. It will penetrate to the very depths of sin and expose the hearts of many - and that will include the hearts of many leaders. Personal sinfulness and unholiness, the focus on self-success, the hidden sins which fill the church - these have given the enemy a hold over the nation. These will have to be exposed if the revival fire is to fall. Revival is a deeply uncomfortable and frightening experience, revealing the heart as it truly is.

Unless the Lord blesses us in revival - a conviction led revival -judgement will surely come for the failure of the church to protect the land.

If the great sin of the church was not to protect the nation, the second great sin was not being willing to bear the burden of the broken nation before the Lord. Caught up in success, achievement and pride but churches failed to bear the agony of the Lord for Ghana in its heart. Success driven Fiesta religion leaves no room for seeing the agony of the land and no willingness to take up such a burden. After all what success is there in bearing a bleeding broken child to the Lord - one that has been broken by the neglect of the ones that try to bear it.?

Conviction

Achan finally got the message, but look how hard it was for him to reach the point of conviction –

Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was chosen. The clans of Judah came forward, and the Zerahites were chosen. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was chosen. Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen.

Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and honour him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.” (Joshua 7:16-19)

In the face of this probing by the spirit of God -

Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

It is very hard for the spirit of God to convict the heart of a human being and the higher they are up in the church the harder it is.

Adam blamed Eve.

“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” (Genesis 3:12)

The Pharisees hid behind their history.

“And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.” (Matthew 3:9)

Many refuse to listen, and many refused to respond through shame, embarrassment, or arrogance and pride. And the Spirit does not fall.

There is another way

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-13)

There is a choice to be made. Allow the spirit to convict and hope and pray that this will lead to reviving fire or stay unconvicted and the nation will.