

Introduction: In 1907, God did a mighty work in Korea (The Korean Pentecost, William Blair and Bruce Hunt) – bringing revival. It was a powerful working of the gospel, brought about through Korean believers and Presbyterian missionaries from the U.S. But there was also a very sad part of the story, as one elder of the Korean church wanted nothing to do with the repentance which was central to that reviving work. That man later fell away from the faith. Today, let's look at the revival that came to Nineveh and consider what we might learn from it.

A. Revival comes as God's messengers go

1. In chapter 1, we saw that Jonah was willing to be cast overboard. Though we aren't overwhelmed by Jonah's concern for the others on the ship, God used Jonah's choice to bring the storm to an end and move many pagan sailors to humble faith.
2. In chapter 3, we see Jonah's presence in Nineveh leading to a great turning to God. Obviously, Jonah was a most reluctant messenger, but God used his presence.
3. Where is this idea of 'going' most clearly seen? In Jesus Himself! He left heaven to come to earth and chose to suffer death itself in order to rescue sinners. And unlike some of God's messengers, past or present, Jesus was not reluctant, but joined in the Father's eternal purpose to save. His work brings life to the world!

[You will soon celebrate Christ's coming, and I just want to urge you to be careful that you not allow the special things we like about our celebrations (decorations, delicious food , and delightful company) to overshadow the point of the incarnation, which was that the Lord Jesus came to give himself to save others.]

4. Clearly, you and I are called to be involved in this work that God uses to bring revival. We are not called to live for ourselves, but we are called to follow Jesus! Read Luke 9:23-26 (this includes being unashamed of His words!).

B. Revival comes when sin becomes unbearable and mercy is grasped

1. The people of Nineveh knew that their sin deserved judgment – v.4-5 – and they knew this from Jonah. He clearly wanted them to get that message (and he wanted that judgment to come, as we'll see in chapter 4)!
2. But evidently they knew something else from Jonah, even though he didn't want them to act on it! They knew that sin must be forsaken – this is clear in v.6-8. How did they know this? Luke 11:30 tells us that Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh. I don't think this can mean any less than that somewhere along the way, Jonah communicated to someone his own experience of gross disobedience to God, and the Lord's response to it (maybe he said this to emphasize God's power to judge). Even if he said no more, Jonah was standing there!

They also knew that God might turn from His wrath (v.9). In other words, they understood something of mercy – How? Because Jonah was there!

[Repeat ‘B’, above. Today, let me remind you that the gospel itself involves a call to repent: Mark 1:14-15 (Jesus proclaimed the gospel of God...”repent and believe the good news”), Luke 24:47 (repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in [Christ’s] name to all nations), Acts 2:38 (Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins), Acts 20:21 (Paul summarized his 3 year ministry in Ephesus as “testifying....of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus”).

C. Revival comes when God is lifted up and His Glory becomes central to sinners

1. The sorrow over sin that leads to true repentance must be God-centered (2 Cor.7:10). I think this is clear from our text. Sadly, there are some modern versions of what claims to be the gospel that don’t have much of this God-centered perspective in them. Avoid these, but make sure your identity has to do with the truth you believe and confess and live, and not simply the error which you avoid.
2. What does this mean in practice? For the Ninevites it meant receiving God’s warning and turning from their evil ways. For Reformed believers, it also means turning from evil and then being sincerely delighted in the Savior, in awe of our God, and rejoicing in His being honored, as we strive to be lights in this world by being joyful, trusting people in our day-to-day lives (unlike Jonah).
3. For, you see, revival comes when God is lifted up and His glory means everything to us. (And maybe we’ll get to look together at Psalm 67 early next year!)

Conclusion: Do you want revival (personal or corporate)? Do ‘A’, practice the repentance and faith of ‘B’, and pursue the God-centeredness of ‘C’.