

The Road To Spiritual Maturity ***Is 40:3-5***

Intro: I want us all to remember that this weekend is Memorial Day week end. To help us remember what today means here is a little video...

I am not going to preach the traditional Memorial Day message something about remembering – what we are going to talk about today is priorities. About what the Lord will do in our lives if we will only make growing spiritually a priority in our life. So stand with me as we read...

[Read Is 40:3-5/pray]

The Road To Spiritual Maturity is a hard road to travel but it is a road worth taking. The good news is that we don't have to travel this road alone. In fact, if we will only *"Prepare the way of the Lord, [and] make straight in the desert a highway for God"* then he will do all the work and make the trip so much easier.

But why is spiritual maturity so important? Because Spiritual maturity is what God desires for all his people in fact that is what is at the heart of the meaning of Romans 8:29 *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..."* and the only way we will ever be conformed into the image of Christ is to allow God to have a real priority in our life and that takes Spiritual Growth. It is through our making spiritual growth a priority that we begin to open our lives up to God's Holy Spirit to begin to change us from the inside out.

Spiritual Growth always results in revival. We can't grow spiritually without that growth reviving us. Revival is the return of the people

of God to the Word of God in the house of God, by the power of God, according to the plan of God, under the direction of God, and thus receiving the blessings of God. It is possible that every person here could experience revival except you. Wouldn't that be a tragedy?

In Vs. 4 we see what is necessary for building the highway, to prepare the way for the Lord to have real impact in our lives.

The Road to Spiritual Maturity requires that we prepare in the dry spiritual desert of our hearts a highway for God to begin to work on us

To Pare The Way We Have To...

I. EXALT EVERY VALLEY

- A. This is the filling process.
 - 1. A Valley Is A Crevice, A Gutter, A Low Place.
- B. This filling begins when we receive Christ as our savior and daily surrender to the spirit that dwells within.
 - 1. Acts 24 says that **“they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”**
 - 2. Paul tells the church at Ephesus that they were not to **“be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”** (Eph 5:18)
- C. The filling doesn't stop there however.
 - 1. Paul instructs the church at Philippi that they are to be **“filled with the fruits of righteousness”**
 - 2. The fruits here are those acts which righteousness in the heart produces
 - 3. Those fruits, or results, will be seen in the life of a mature Christian; and those fruits are:
 - a) honesty,
 - b) truth,

- c) charity,
 - d) kindness,
 - e) meekness,
 - f) goodness
- 4. We are to show abundantly by our lives that they we are truly righteous
 - 5. This is the Lord filling us with the knowledge of His will for us
 - a) Paul prayed for the Christians at Colossae **“that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”** (Col 1:9)
 - b) Just like in our day the Christians in Paul’s wanted to know what God’s will for their life was once they got saved
- D. The filling also includes the Lord’s intimate involvement in our lives as He “fills in the troubled spots in our Christian life
- 1. The empty places;
 - 2. The lacking places;
 - 3. The places that seem bogged down
 - 4. Spiritual growth will fill these places
 - 5. When this happens our Sunday School classes will begin to grow and our Sunday morning and evening and even our Wednesday night services will begin to grow
 - 6. There will be no more empty altars and no more empty hearts.
- E. Once the valleys are filled, the low places raised up, the troubled spots touched and made right by the Lord, then you will be experiencing the glory of the Lord all of the time and that is real **Spiritual Maturity**.
- F. What are some of your Valleys?

1. Is it some area of failure?
 2. Is it some hardship you are experiencing?
 3. Is it financial?
 4. Is it marital?
 5. Is it your past?
- G. No matter what it is Spiritual Growth can make it right for you and we will see real revival break out in our church
- H. Like a tooth hollowed out by rotteness...sometimes we need a "filling" in our valleys. Food will stick in a tooth cavity, and the junk of this world washes down into the valleys of your soul...we need God to fill in some low places and revive us!

If we would just put some real effort into our Spiritual Growth every valley in every member's life would be filled and we would be on level ground

To Pare The Way We Have To...

II. LEVEL EVERY MOUNTAIN

- A. First we had the filling process, now the leveling process.
1. These are the Roadblocks on our Journey to being true followers of Jesus Christ
 2. Those things that stand in the way of our Spiritual Growth
- B. What are your roadblocks?
1. Is disbelief a roadblock?
 - a) The writer of Hebrews tells us that the Jews wondering in the wilderness for 40 years, "**could not enter in because of unbelief**" (Heb 3:19)
 - b) They were not allowed to see their promised land because of their unbelief
 2. Is laziness a roadblock?
 3. Is there some habit that is your roadblock?
 4. Maybe your roadblock is:

- a) Pride
 - b) Indifference
 - c) Self will
 - d) Wrong priorities
 - e) Lack of motivation
 - f) Selfishness? Greed?
 - g) Depression?
5. Even some of your low places valleys/deserts can be a roadblock
- a) A low place can be an obstacle too
 - b) Some places need filling, some need drilling, others need leveling, etc
 - c) The Israelites took 40 years to make an eleven day journey. That's a mountain, an obstacle in their path.
 - d) Lust, Jealousy, Bitterness, Worldly friends, Addictions, TV, video games, Bad thought, Disobedience w/ the tithe, Angry w/ God over something, Resisting the Lord in some area, Prayerlessness, Debt, Marital problems the list is nearly endless of the things that can be roadblocks to Spiritual Growth
6. The bottom line is that if you are not growing Spiritually then there is some obstacle standing in your way
7. Everyone has at least one, some have several.
8. Everyone Has A Mountain.
9. When we begin to make our Spiritual health a priority the Mountains Will Be Made Low
- C. **ILL:** A couple weeks ago I spoke to you about our trip driving the Alcan Highway back in 1994. One of the things that make that trip so difficult is you really don't know how many miles it is going to be. They are always working on

the road making improvements from the original because in 1944 when they built the road it was an emergency, the military had to get to Alaska right away so they took the route of least resistance; along river banks, through valleys, along lake shores and around mountains. Today they are filling in or bridging the low valleys and cutting through mountains or knocking them down to size so you can drive over them. In addition they are straightening out all those curves which brings us to the third thing God will do for us if we make Spiritual Growth a priority

To Pare The Way We Have To...

III. STRAIGHTEN EVERY THE CROOKED PLACE

- A.** This is the straightening process – if we make Spiritual Growth a priority all of these, the filling, the leveling, and the straightening will take place
- B.** When you read the word crooked you might expect to find names of crooked people but they aren't there
 - 1.** If HE was talking about crooked people this would have been a good opportunity to name some "Crooked" people
 - 2.** We don't find any names because the Lord is talking about "things" rather than "people"
- C.** What Is The Crooked Talking about Here?
 - 1.** Well the word here actually "denotes to be behind; to come from behind; or to be elevated"
 - a)** It can also mean '*deceitful, sly, insidious, slippery*'
 - b)** It is translated here as crooked, but elsewhere deceitful and polluted.
 - 2.** Throughout the Old Testament there are references made to "the high places" of these high places Albert Barnes says, "*There is no doubt that the word here [he is talking about high places] denotes elevated spots*"

dedicated to false worship and especially...to that of Baal”

- a) Nearly all of the references to “High Places” in the Old Testament are speaking of a place where the pagans conducted their Idol worship
 - b) It makes perfect sense then to conclude that the Lord is talking about His activity in straightening out our thinking about our idols.
3. He is saying that the idols in our life – those “high places” that we put as a higher priority than God.
- a) Anything that has a greater priority in our life that God is an idol to us – it is our “high place”
 - b) Your crooked places that need straightening out – your high place may be:
 - (1) Your Job/career
 - (2) Your money
 - (3) Your retirement
 - (4) Your family
 - (5) Your sports
 - (6) Your TV
 - (7) Your Computer
 - (8) Your health
 - (9) Anything that has a higher priority in your daily life that Growing in grace can/will become a high place
 - c) If we are going to “Prepare the Lord a straight highway in the wilderness of our lives then we need to realign our priorities – we know they have been realigned when...
 - (1) God is more important than our career, money or retirement
 - (2) God is more important than family, friends, sports, TV, computer even your health

To Pare The Way We Have To...

IV. SMOOTH OUT THE ROUGH PLACES

- A.** This is the smoothing process - This Is Taking The Bumps Out Of Your Spiritual Life.
- 1.** Making Spiritual Growth a priority will smooth out a marriage.
 - a)** When a couple is having marital problems, if you can get them to center their life around the Lord their problems will lessen and lessen until they are gone.
 - 2.** Making Spiritual growth a priority will smooth out your finances.
 - a)** When you get your heart right with God your wallet will get right with God,
 - b)** You will see what God can do with an open heart and an open wallet
 - 3.** Making Spiritual growth a priority will smooth out your bad temper
 - a)** Some say, "I can't control my temper."
 - b)** God can.
 - c)** Making Spiritual Growth a priority will go a long way in controlling that temper.
 - 4.** Making Spiritual growth a priority will smooth out your tongue
 - a)** Gossip will go away
 - b)** Complaining will stop
 - c)** Swearing will cease
 - d)** Talk about a highway that needs to be prepared...some Baptists have tongues w/ four lanes, in both directions!
 - 5.** Making Spiritual growth a priority will smooth out your disposition.

- a) When we begin to really grow spiritually, even our pets will not recognize us
- b) They will think we are strangers

Conclusion: What is the result of Making Spiritual Growth a Priority? Revival! Personal revival comes when we are reawakened to the spiritual need Christians have in their lives. That’s why it is called revival – you revive the sick not the dead. And if ever there was a time in the history of the Lord’s church when the church needs to be revived now is the time.

What all of us need is a spiritual bulldozer to build a revival road for the glory of God.

If we will build a highway and make it straight in the dry desert of our Spiritual life He will bring revival; and then He will reveal His glory. If we don’t build it, well, it’s “highway robbery!” No, it revival robbery!!

You know, it is a comforting thing to know that if we would only surrender our own will to do the will of the Father; to be obedient to his word our lives would be must less stressful, our homes would be much more enjoyable, our families much more peaceful and our church much more impactful. I think that might have been on Isaiah’s mind when he wrote at the end of the chapter, “... *they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*” (Isa 40:31)

INVITATION