

Recover Us Again

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes God's role as the great Recoverer, illustrating recovery through the story of Hezekiah and encouraging believers to seek restoration and worship Him.

Scripture: Psalm 22:29, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 57:15, Jeremiah 2:2, Amos 5:5, Zephaniah 3:20, John 4:23, Ephesians 5:2, Colossians 1:18, Revelation 22:16

Topics: "Revival And Recovery", "Spiritual Restoration"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the theme of recovery and revival, drawing from Psalms 85:6 and Isaiah 57:15 to emphasize God as the great Recoverer who restores the contrite and humble. The sermon highlights the importance of turning to God for recovery, the promise of something higher after restoration, and the need for personal and collective revival. Through the story of Hezekiah's recovery, the preacher illustrates the process of overcoming difficulties, seeking God's grace, and experiencing joy in the Lord. The sermon concludes with a focus on the assembly's recovery to the Lord, the shining path of the just, and the anticipation of Christ's return for His bride.

Transcript

There is a response awakened in many hearts by that deep-toned chord of Psalm 85:6, "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee." The word "revive" could be read "recover" (khaw-yaw, the same as in Isaiah 38:9).

The answer of God in Isaiah 57:15 is rich with encouragement. There the same word is again used, "Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to recover the spirit of the humble, and to recover the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever."

Recovery is His own work. We are shut up to Him for this. We may desire it, and pray for it, but He Himself is the great Recoverer. "None can recover (khaw-yaw) his own soul" (Ps. 22:29). We are therefore to turn to Him, and to none other. Happy, however, is the man that sings, "He restoreth my soul."

Nor is it the way of God to simply recover to the former state, but rather to something higher and more blessed than was experienced before. Nevertheless, there are instances where there is no recovery at all. When those fell, who were connected with that remarkable system of angelic administration, which has

Satan for its chief, there was no word of recovery for them that we have recorded, but the opposite. Nor do we read of any for apostate Christendom. It becomes Babylon eventually; and the cry is heard in Revelation, Babylon is fallen, is fallen! In one hour her judgment comes and the smoke of her torment rises up for ever. There is no recovery.

On the other hand, when man fell through Satan's deception, recovery through our Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, is at once promised; and that, not to a state of innocence as before, but to holiness, in a paradise no longer upon earth, but above--"the paradise of God." Also to the nation of Israel, when it failed as to the purpose for which God took it up, promise was given through the seed of David, our blessed Lord and Saviour after the flesh, of recovery to glory and blessing beyond anything they have yet known. Having said these few words as to the main facts of recovery, we may pass on to the more particular.

Recovery Illustrated

The outstanding illustration in the Old Testament is Hezekiah. The Spirit significantly presents this thrice in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah. A miraculous sign was also given in connection with Hezekiah's recovery, on the sundial of Ahaz (Isa. 38:8, 22). He was recovered to rejoice in and to praise the Lord. "He had been sick, and was recovered (khaw-yaw) of his sickness"; and he said, "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day." It was a blessed instance of recovery to the Lord, to rejoice in Him. In the ways of God--with Israel particularly, this vividly painted picture is presented to us by the Spirit, to depict those ways illustratively for our encouragement and edification--"written for our learning." It is framed in the central division of Isaiah, as an historical section, between the public and the moral divisions of that threefold book.

The understanding of this illustration is a rebuke to unbelief, and to the lips that say, "There is no hope of recovery." Such words, though the users themselves may not mean it, limit the blessed God. The miraculous sign, and the recovery of Hezekiah, picture for us that which God does through Christ, through His death and resurrection, so that we may rejoice in Him. What can He not do for our blessing and for His own glory? He has already raised our Lord, Leader and Head from among the dead! Are the saints of God to lie down and repine in an unhealthy state of soul sickness? or are they, in spite of the breakdown in the assemblies, to heed the word, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice"? He is the Head of the assembly. Our eyes are to be directed to Him, and the Spirit is here to do this for us. He is our hope, and not one good thing promised in connection with Him shall fail. All is Yea and Amen in Him.

We have said that Hezekiah was recovered to rejoice in the Lord. Ahaz, his father, had not done that which was right in the sight of the Lord; but Hezekiah did not therefore say, Israel has failed and all hope is over! He looked first to himself, and "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chr. 29:2); going back, not to such bright examples as Joash and others, but to the beginning, to David, "according to all that David his father had done." We are not left in doubt as to where the beginning is to be found for the saints of God today. We are told in Colossians 1:18, "He is the Head of the body, the assembly: who is THE BEGINNING, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." The beginning for us is Christ, the Son of the Father's love, risen from the dead.

Then Hezekiah opened the doors of the house of the Lord (v. 3), which his father had shut (28:24); and, mark, he did this in view of "all Israel" (v. 24), although he was king of but two tribes. God's original thought filled his heart and mind. "Love to all the saints" necessarily fills the hearts of those who know the love of

Christ, for He loves all the members of the body of which He is the risen and glorified Head. What sanctification and cleansing followed Hezekiah's action! and how rich was the offering made to the Lord! Seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he-goats for a sin offering; all speaking of the perfection of Christ in His work of putting away sin. This lies at the foundation of all true recovery, and must be entered into experimentally. Reconciliation and atonement were made for all His own in the blood of that offering. We read, They made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel; for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel." The Lord and all His people were in view. Notice the wealthy burnt offering that went up wholly as a sweet smelling savour to the Lord. Seventy bullocks, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs (v. 32)! "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped." We are also moved to worship today, as we see CHRIST, WHO IN HIS GREAT LOVE GAVE "HIMSELF FOR US AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD FOR A SWEET-SMELLING SAVOUR" (Eph. 5:2).

Difficulties Overcome

Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people. Then he sent letters to "all Israel," that they should come to the place of Jehovah's Name, to Jerusalem, to "keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel." Mark again, "to the Lord," not simply to have a good feast for themselves! Some scorned the letter-bearers and laughed (30:10); needless to say, they missed the revival; but others responded. "Let Hezekiah look after the few in Judah," the mockers might say, "we belong to the ten tribes." Others, however, recognized that the House of God--the place of Jehovah's name and presence--was at Jerusalem, and they went up out of the ten tribes. The Levites outvied the priests in sanctifying themselves. Humbling and confession marked the people gathered before the Lord. Some, though their hearts were right, were not "cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (v. 19), "yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it was written." This was a serious matter; "but Hezekiah"--like the Lord who intercedes for His own today at God's right hand--"prayed for them." And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah (v. 20). Is it any wonder that we read, "So there was great joy in Jerusalem (v. 26)?"

God gave them one heart, and difficulties were surmounted. The recovery was very bright and blessed. It was to the Lord, as we said, not the recovery of the nation of Israel, that is still to come when Christ returns; but we are told, "Since the time of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem." A later revival under Josiah went even beyond this, notwithstanding that the reign of wicked Manasseh intervened, for "there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (35:18). Hezekiah's revival was blessed; Josiah's was more blessed; but the most blessed is yet to come, when our Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's true King, shall return to them, and when they shall return to Him. Like Thomas, they will worship, saying, Our Lord and our God. Their restoration will be like life from the dead. He will be as the dew to Israel, and they shall be like the lily; their roots shall spread like the cedar's, while the branches of Israel's tree shall be beautiful; the children shall rest beneath its shadow; and with the corn, and the oil, and the wine, they shall be filled abundantly with the blessing of the Lord. He shall be their delight, and they shall bless His holy Name. He will rejoice over them with singing; and they shall rejoice in Him, and worship with gladness of heart. So far will this recovery surpass all others, that we read, they shall be "a name and a praise among all the people of the earth" (Zeph. 3:20).

Now what are we taught by all this which is recorded for our learning?

Surely, first that there is such a thing as recovery, and that God Himself is the great Recoverer: also, that though the greatest is still in the future, yet, like Hezekiah, we may first do the right thing ourselves before the Lord, and then act in the sense of God's grace for the blessing of "all" His own. As we have seen, the Lord and all Israel were before Hezekiah when he opened the closed doors of the house of God. The assembly is the house of God today, not a building of cold stones. Difficulties arose in Hezekiah's time, and so they have ever since; but their hearts were right Godward, and in answer to prayer, healing was granted by the Lord; faith triumphed, and the sound of their joy, of their blessing, and of the voice of their prayer, reached up to heaven. Entering into the divine favour into which we are taken in Christ today, our hearts also may well exclaim: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him, before He even chose Israel--before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless BEFORE HIM in love.

"Return unto ME," He said over and over again to Israel. He remembered them, the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, when they went after Him (Jer. 2:2); and when they were far from Him, He chastened them in His faithfulness to bring them back. "Yet," five times He says in one chapter, "have ye not returned unto ME" (see Amos 4:6, 8-11). All was in view of that, as He reiterated again and again. "Seek ye ME, and ye shall live," said the Lord; "but seek not Bethel" (the house of God); seek HIM who made the seven stars and Orion, the Lord is His Name (5:5-8). In our Lord Jesus Christ He is now made known to us. He is fully revealed now; as He said, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"; and in Him, raised from among the dead, we have redemption through His blood, and are brought to God in the One who makes Him known. It is therefore our privilege to rejoice in Him. Well may we worship and adore.

The Shining Path

The path of the just shineth more and more to the perfect day. The apostasy of Christendom cannot alter that. Clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, as the darkness is passing, shineth that blessed path till the full perfection of the day of glory breaks. The downward way of evil men and seducers may become blacker and blacker; the upward path of the just is shining more and more. And hark! when the night is darkest about the world around--Jesus speaks! What does He say to His assembly, the bride? He speaks of that which is dearer than all else to her heart--dearer than herself. Of Himself He speaks! for He knows she loves Him, and like music divine in the stillness of night the sweetest of strains reach her ears and her heart, "I JESUS, . . . the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star." At once she responds, in harmony with the Spirit who is here to glorify the blessed Son of God. "Come," say the Spirit and the bride in response to the presentation of the Bridegroom. With deep spirit-begotten desire she calls for Him to come.

What a blessed result from the work of the Spirit of God throughout the long centuries since Pentecost, and that after He has been grieved so much. Now He has the heart of the assembly for the Lord. She is recovered to Him. He is all in all to her. And is not this last view of the assembly in the Bible disclosed for the encouragement of those who know the precious love of Christ? Most surely! And is not God by His Spirit recovering us to the Lord Himself today, so that, filled with His love and glory, our hearts may be set a-longing to see Him; and as we await the rapturous moment of His coming, we may be assembling together before Him even now, to worship in spirit and in truth; and that the melody of our praise, the glad notes of the true worshippers, may be welcomed, along with our rejoicings in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus before our God and Father?

"While we wait the Bridegroom's coming,
We would joy before Thy face,
Bless Thee for Thy rich redeeming,
Sing the glory of Thy grace."

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