***1 Samuel 7:3-4 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtorethsfrom among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.” 4So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.***

We start Revival meetings next week. The word Revival is formed from two Latin words meaning again to live. That which has never lived cannot live again. In order to be revived, we must have been previously alive. Revival is for believers seeking to be refreshed, reinvigorated, reanimated, and re-alived! But in order for any of those things to take place, we must first return to the Lord and humble our hearts. This week, if we haven’t started already, let’s return and pray earnestly for our Revival meetings, that they may serve to spark revival, beginning in our own hearts and spreading to every person we touch. It can be a time of mighty work, but we must prepare, we must return. Let’s pray that the Holy Spirit of God fills us up to overflowing, so much so that we cannot help but spill over onto all we encounter outside these walls.

Verse 3 says *Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtorethsfrom among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”* The start of Revival is always, always, always return. If we were still on fire for the Lord, we’d have no reason to cry out. Growing up, it was my job to be sure that we had firewood in the house to hold us through the night. Early in the morning, long before we were out of the bed, my father would open the door of the wood stove and find a fire, burned down, glowing coals, in the process of dying. The fire, that had been so alive as we fed it and tended to it the night before had, through the night, burned low. My father found the fire low because he returned to the woodstove and checked. Before he revived the fire, he had to return to the fire and examine the fire. We too must return to where our fire burned the brightest and the hottest before we can experience a revival. What does Samuel say – Return! But there is an if… what does that tell us? We can choose to stay away and let the fire continue to die. He says – Put Away! We must Return, but if we Return, we must then Put Away those things that have drawn us from God to begin with – the things that have separated us from God – the things that took our attention from the very Life of God and drew us to a place where we need to be made alive again! Samuel named Ashtoreths and foreign gods, but we call them possessions, positions, places, and people. Whatever has separated, put away. He says – Prepare! Prepare our hearts for the Lord – through repentance, admitting our sin, and seeking His forgiveness. Then, Samuel says – Serve Him only. So we return, we put away, we prepare… now, we remain. Return to God and remain in God – serve Him only. When we serve Him only, it means we are not serving other interests and embracing other distractions. We return and, to stay in a state of Revival… we remain. Then Samuel finishes – *He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines****.*** It doesn’t say – and He will make the Philistines disappear and life will be easy… no, the Philistines are still there, threatening and oppressing. In fact, in verse 7, we learn that the positive move of the children toward God stirred up the Philistines and they came against the very people returning to God. Why? Because they had turned from the world and toward God. Likewise, we can expect the same, as we turn from this world and focus on our first love Christ. The world will notice, and Satan will come against. Return, put away, prepare, remain and watch as God deals with the enemy in a might way.

Verse 4, we see the choice of the people - *So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.* They returned. They put away. They prepared. They served. As we see in verse 7, this stirred up the enemy. Likewise, as we return to God, put away the things separating us from God, prepare our hearts to commune with God, and choose to serve God and remain in Him, this will stir up the enemy! The people were afraid! They told Samuel – do not cease to cry out to God! And verse 13 shows us the result of faithful return and focused service… the Philistines, the enemy, was subdued.

This week, let’s return to God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Let’s put away the things that are standing between us and God. Let’s put away the excuses and the distractions and make a commitment to be in the Revival meetings every single time! Let’s, through prayer and supplication, study and meditation, prepare our hearts for a Reviving message, and let’s serve God and remain faithful to follow Him, as He works mighty works in us and through us.

In the mornings, my father found coals, gray and ashy, waiting to be stirred. He’d stir the coals, feed the fire, and flames would leap again. May God, this week, stir the coals, feed the fire, fan the flames, that our fire for Him might leap and blaze and burn bright again.