

How to Have a Personal Revival

by A.W. Tozer

Personal revival is a new uprising of power from God that can only happen to the individual, and it requires setting your face like a flint, setting your heart on Jesus Christ, exposing your life to Jesus Christ's examination, and taking holy vows.

Duration: 27:40

Scripture: Exodus 23:1, Exodus 23:22, Leviticus 13:45-46, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 16:24, Luke 18:38-39, Hebrews 12:5

Topics: "Personal Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a personal revival. He encourages listeners to set their faces like flint, meaning to have a determined and unwavering commitment to living a godly life. The preacher also emphasizes the need to set one's heart on Jesus Christ and to go to Him in all circumstances. He shares a powerful story of a man who spent his last day with God in prayer and was ready to go to heaven. The preacher urges listeners to expose their lives to Jesus' examination, being open and honest in prayer, scripture study, obedience, confession, and restitution. Finally, he encourages the congregation to make holy vows before God as a commitment to living a revived and dedicated life.

Transcript

Now, I want to do, and relax because we'll not be late, what I promised I would do. I've been speaking on Revival, though I hesitate to use the word. It's fallen into bad use and has been wounded in the house of its friends.

But I wanted to have a personal revival. You know, I have already said that revival can occur on one of three levels. It can occur on a personal level, when the individual is revived.

It can occur on a church level, where a whole church comes under the new spiritual impulse. It can occur in a community, where the church overflows and the impulse within the church goes out to the community. A solitary person can enter in and have a revivification of his spiritual life, a surge of power and a down-coming of grace, and can enter into an experience that's as wonderful, so wonderful his words won't be able to describe it, and yet not affect the church very much where he is.

That has happened. Individuals within pretty cold churches have been greatly revived, and yet that did not extend to the church because the church opposed or neglected or considered this person a fanatic or an extremist, and rather froze him out. A church may experience an awakening.

On the other hand, other members of the church may experience individual or increasing numbers of individuals, and the whole church is lifted up and refreshed and out of the streams and the ice breaks and the waters begin to flow. And yet that can fail to reach the community. Often it does fail to extend beyond the local church.

Many, many local churches have awakenings and refreshings, and time does not get beyond the church to the community. But then there's such as a community revival where it does get to the community and goes from one church to another and the whole city, the whole neighborhood is revived. Now it can occur in that order, extending to the church and the church extending out to the community.

But it can never reverse itself. It can never come to a community unless there has been a church that has been revived, and no church has ever been revived until individual churches have been revived. By personal revival, what do I mean? Well, it's best, I suppose, it's like a sick man returning to abounding health.

It is like a man whose blood counts low, who is hardly able to get out of bed, can sit up only an hour at a time, getting to a place where he is now able to play on the team and do a hard day's work and do anything he has to do, abounding in health. It is like a low battery that will barely turn the engine over, being taken in for recharge, and get to a place where it is simple with power and where a flash of power will fly out from it on the least occasion. Now that's what it is to be a Christian that has had a new uprise of power from God.

We have some around here, and I run into them again, and you know what I mean. Now this can only happen to the individual. This can't happen to a church.

It can't happen to a mass. It can only happen to the individual. My brethren, there are some things that can only happen to an individual.

A person's birth can only happen alone to each single individual as if there had been no other individual in the world. You may say, well, 150 babies were born in this town, this little town, last year. But remember, you cannot and dare not fall victim to statistics and think of 150 babies being born en masse as one act.

No. Though there were 150 of them, each birth was as unique and single and peculiar as if there never had been anybody born before or ever would be again. And even though there are multiple births, twins or triplets, it is still the same.

Each individual comes into the world himself alone, an individual cut out from all alone. And so it is with death. You can only die by yourself.

Now it crashes, but I'll change my figure, brother. A train wreck comes and 50 people are killed in a train wreck. They're killed in a train wreck.

And all happens at once. And yet while they die at once, they die alone. While they're all written off on the newspapers as having occurred within one minute's time, they did not die together.

They died separately. Each individual went out alone to meet his God. And so at Pentecost, there were 120 in the audience, and suddenly the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

That sounds as if it was a fire. But the scripture says that there appeared unto them cloven tongues as a fire, and it sat upon each of them. It can only be filled with the Holy Ghost separately.

Ten men can't be filled with the Holy Ghost as one act of God. They can be filled simultaneously. There might be ten babies born while I've been talking here, but each birth was alone.

There might have been 100 people die while I'm talking, but each death was alone. And so the Holy Spirit falls upon 75 people as it did in Dusseldorf in 1727 for the Moravians, yet each one received the Holy Spirit. I want to make this very clear, because it's important we think right about this, that there is no abstract church.

I pray, O Lord, fall on thy church. We imagine there is an abstract church somewhere, the kind of a rosy-eyed church, and the Spirit can come on that without individuals being helped. No, no, my brother, the Holy Spirit can only fall on individuals.

There is no such thing as a mystic church that can be blessed with the members of the church not touched. No, no. We pray, O Lord, bless thy mystic church.

When we project a church out among the individuals, an ideal church for which Christ died, and he gets help around us, we say, well, God's pouring his Spirit out on his church. God can't pour his Spirit out on his church except as he pours it on within the church. The Holy Ghost sat upon each of them, and so he'll sit upon each of us when he comes to the church.

This church is only what the individual members are, not one bit better. If God had some IQ test whereby he could test us, or he had some way of taking our spiritual pulse, then we might add up all by our membership and get the average. But the church would be what the average is.

Always remember, the average of the men will make what the church is, for the church is composed of the individual. The lone soul can be revived. I'm so glad to be able to tell you that.

God can send waves of glory and new quickening to the lone individual, that solitary individual, as one man wrote. Whether anyone else receives or not, don't you wait around and say, I'd like to see our church blessed, and then hope that when the church is blessed, you'll be blessed. Man can never be blessed until you or other individuals are blessed.

And whether the church ever gets any further on or not, out and back, slide and turn liberal, you can be blessed as an individual, and not all the rest of us put together can be blessed. And you can be blessed whether or not a man can be blessed alone, whether or not his pastor or his church personally know that. When I was a young fellow, about 18 years of age, God came on me in a wonderful way and did wonderful things for me and approved it.

It was not an Alliance Church, but another, and they did not approve it. In fact, they as good as told me that they thought I was a bit extreme and that their room was better than my company. I wasn't thrown out, but I was invited not to be.

And I left and went into the Alliance, and I've never been thrown out of the Alliance yet, though that could happen. But the point is, my brethren, that no matter if the church believes or not, you can have all that God has for you as an individual. And whether your wife believes or not, or whether your husband or father or mother or friend, whether they will agree or not, doesn't make a bit of difference.

God always helped the lone individual. The story of the Old Testament was the story of lone individuals meeting God. Lone men, lone women meeting God.

The story of revival down the years has been the story of lone men meeting God, going out and finding God all alone. Sometimes they went to the church basement, sometimes to the caves, sometimes out under trees, and sometimes in haystacks. But three or one alone met God.

Then it went on from there. I say you can be blessed and yet not have a revival in your church, but you can be blessed nevertheless. Don't you ever give up to the general dead level of spirituality in any church, this one or any other church.

You say, by the grace of God, I'm going to be what I should be regardless. Now how? That's the big question to have, a personal revival. Well, do you want to take some notes on this, any of you? Let me give you, I'll try to make it brief, but I'll give you as little as I must.

First of all, set your face like a flint, that you might have a tranquil life. Weak experimenters are already tagged with defeat. They already have the label of defeat upon them.

The weak fellow that tries it out, like Mr. Pliable, and says, I'll go, and then the first trouble he runs into says, you set your face like a flint. A plow sheriff is going to cut the sod, has to have a sharp nose. And a Christian against all the streams and drifts of the world, he has to have a hard nose too.

He's got to set his face like a flint and say, by the grace of God, I want all the New Testament has for me. Then second, set your heart on Jesus Christ. Wherever it takes you, go to Jesus wherever it takes you.

Wherever it takes you, go to Jesus. Whoever it takes you away from, go straight, go to him. Not up in heaven, but down here on earth.

Go to Jesus. And whoever you must ignore, and the worst may be, set your face like a flint, to be all God wants you to, and then go straight to Jesus. And whoever gets intention of them, I'll always thank God that he put that passage in the Bible where the blind man said, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Disciples in their long-tailed deacon's coats, they went and said, hush, this is not done in churches. Keep still, hush, be quiet. As he cried all the more because of this.

Instead of it discouraging him, it fired him up to yell. The Lord heard him and turned around and said, what do you want? He said, I want to be healed. And he said, okay, here you get it.

And he went out a healed man with his eyesight, because he paid no attention to the timekeepers and referees that kept people away from Jesus. I opened again and read a page or two, just more or less for the style than anything else. But you can't read Bunyan Law just for the style.

It was a story of Christian and how he read that book that got him in trouble. He said, oh, I find by this book that I am living in the city of destruction and all on us and that there's a heavenly home. And he started out.

And he was in such terrible distress before he started that he finally broke the children. And he said, oh, my dear wife and thou the children of my bowels. The old-fashioned English way of putting it.

He said, I've got an awful condition, awful. Well, they said, Papa, we know what's wrong with you. You're just tired out.

So they put him there, there in Bunyan. They put him to bed. And the next morning he got up and they said, how are you feeling, Papa? Oh, he never slept a wink.

He said, I couldn't forget that we live in a city of destruction. Well, then Bunyan says that when they found they could quiet and console him, you know, and pat his back and say, now go to bed and sleep it off. Why, they started being harsh toward him and surly.

They started to deride him. Then when he wouldn't give up to their scorn, they ignored him. I thought as I read it, I wrote this down.

I said, they sued you, pat your back until you're excited. And then after that, they, they use harsh words to you until you think you're better than other people. When that won't work, they deride you and start making fun of when that won't work, they ignore you.

That's exactly how it happens, brother. And if you decide you're going to go through with God and meet him yourself alone and have a new and refreshing from God and get rid of the old barnacles and the old weights and hindrances and get back new spirit before, you'll find some people that'll say, well, you're excited. You've allowed that man toaster to stir you up.

Then when you will start being harsh toward you, then when that won't do, they'll make funny and when that won't do, they'll ignore you. Bunyan said when they treated the Christian like that, he went off by himself and had a long season of prayer. Well, third now, take this third, expose your life to his examination.

The trouble with us is we keep ourselves all covered, cover our hearts. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper. He that covereth his leprosy shall not have it healed.

He that covereth his disease shall never recover. But we habitually cover ourselves. I say expose your whole life to Jesus Christ.

Expose it in prayer. Expose yourself in scriptures. Expose your heart in obedience.

Expose it by confession. Expose it by restitution. Restitution, a forgotten word, a word that nobody uses anymore.

It's gone the way of all the art of another, but it's in the Bible still. Restitution. Get straightened out with people, brothers and sisters, and it'll be amazing how it'll work out with you.

And fourth, take some holy vows. Let me give them, I preached some sermons on this some years ago, but let me just sketch them. Some holy vows before God today.

Vow never to own anything. That is, vow to get rid of that infernal bunch of trash. That infernal bunch of trash.

Why, there are pack rats, I learned, and they gather everything. They go out and bring in everything, little shiny bits. Now you read in English literature about the same thing.

They find a magpie's nest, they'll find a mirror and a coat hanger and a shoe buttoner in the days when they used them, and a piece of glass and a dime. They can't use them, just collect them. It's just trash they've collected.

And the key thing, it's the covetous spirit. So they collect around them all of this, like the magpie, all of this use. I don't mean here to get rid of it, if you can use it.

Wouldn't be useless if you could use it, would it? But smogger, the self-contradictor, Emerson would say, why, remember this, that if you feel you own it, it's dragging you down from the ownership of it, and then God'll let you have it. Get cut loose from it inside, and God'll let you have it outside. I've said it's all in your automobile, and the Lord will bless you.

But if the automobiles get in you, you're ruined. And so with your property, and so with everything you have. Take up anything, see that God has it.

Not only a skinny tent, don't you imagine for a minute, if you keep books with God that way, ninety percent God got ten, God's got a hundred percent, and he leaves, he lets you keep a certain percent to look after your family. But the thought has a right to command it the moment he wants it. And if there's anything you own that God can't have, you never can have a revival.

If there's anything that you own that God can't have, you can't have got. But the moment you, God knows that you can, he can have what you want, that you have, and you, anytime he wants it, then the Lord will let you keep it. Probably, but it'll be blessed now instead of curse.

They help lift you instead of an anchor to weigh you down. Then, take a vow never to defend yourself. That's a tough one for us Americans.

Don't do it, oh I've taken more people to the 23rd chapter of Exodus, and taught them how to trust God, and never worry about your enemies, the opposers, nor the enemies. If you try to fight people, you'll be bloody, and bruised, and miserable, and you'll stay little, and you'll never have a revival. If you will let God do your fighting for you, you pray, you'll be all right.

And then, never defame a fellow Christian. Defame, I mean, a fellow Christian. Never defame a fellow Christian.

Never defame him by believing evil. Never defame him by spreading an evil report about you. And never defame him remembering your own past, and remembering your own proneness to temptation.

Defame our fellow Christians. I think that sometimes the Spirit of God shuts himself up tight, and cannot upon us, because we've defamed our brother. We've defamed some Christian.

Now, as a pastor, as a member of an executive committee, I am forced under God, to find serious charges against his life. I am forced to protect the Church of God from that man, and not to defame that man, or any other man, by believing gossip or spreading it. And then, never to seek or accept any glory.

Oh, how we love the glory. We take just a little of it for ourselves. May God bless you.

He shall have all the glory, we sing. Thou shalt have all the glory. And when that comes to us, that all the glory is God's, there'll be a new life.

And then, thou that wilt not wait for tragedy to drive us to God. You know, tragedy may never. There are some, may be listening to me now, that started to get cold in your heart, and then some tragedy struck you, or your family.

And out of that terror, in the stony grief, you raised your Bethel, and said, forgive me God, and started over. But must it always be like that? Always wait for God to chastise us? Must we always come to God with bleeding backs? Vow that you won't for tragedy to drive you to God, if indeed it ever comes. Take your cross voluntarily.

Let me give you this simple little story. Many years ago, when I was a very young preacher, I preached in a town named Despard, West Virginia. Despard, West Virginia was commonly called Tinsplate, because the great tinsplate factories were there.

It was also a coal mining area. We went into the structure and had our meetings. And it was quite a meeting, although it wasn't what some people thought it should have been, so some people got burdened.

At that meeting, there was a coal miner. A great, tall, handsome, blond, good-looking, smiley. I call him now after these 30 years.

He was. And after it was all over, I learned what had happened. He was in a meeting one night and said to his wife, he said, you know, our people need God, they need God.

This thing isn't going well, and they need God. He said, honey, if it's all right with you, I'm going to take tomorrow off and wait on God and pray all day long. I think fast, though I would put that down.

But he said, I want to pray all day long and wait on God for revival for this town. Oh, it's all right. So he, instead of going to work, fell down on his knees and waited on God with his open Bible all the day long.

He went to his work. He worked on the tinsplate. Now, the tinsplate is a word not many know.

You know the light empties out, you know. And he was working on that tinsplate, and suddenly something went wrong, and the car jumped the track and crashed and splintered. They were wooden cars, old-fashioned wooden cars, and they splintered.

And a great big chunk of splinter, sharp as a dagger on the end, ripped through his thigh. One of the great veins there. And there he lay on the slag and coal and dirt, this great big gorgeous fellow, 57 years old and bled to death.

The day before, he had spent all day with God. That struck me as a message from heaven above. And I thought ever since, dear God, how wonderful it would be to spend your last day with thee alone in prayer.

Now he couldn't continue. He had to work and support his family. But wasn't it wonderful that he was near enough to God that he could carry a burden? And the night before he died, the next day or the day after, he spent all day with God.

You can't spend all day with God, brother, and not be ready to go to heaven the next day. He was all ready to go. Now don't ask me why God took this dear man away.

I don't know that. God never has let me murder at his secret plans. I only know that in the course of things easily he could have died anyway.

But let that day say Wednesday. Suppose when the Spirit of God urged him to spend a day in prayer for his own soul and for his church, suppose he'd been too greedy for money to listen. Suppose he'd been too cold to hear or too far away.

Suppose he'd been like some running on routine and couldn't hear from God. He'd have died on the temple the next day, all right. But oh, what a difference.

Maybe God's calling some of you to do something extraordinary, something that's usual, something that doesn't appear on a calendar or a clock, something to revive your own soul. God may be calling you to do something radical and extreme for your own soul. I hope you're not so far away you don't hear him.

I hope that the world and pleasures are not so great that you don't hear him. Oh, brother, the biggest thing in the world isn't whether you've died a hundred years. The biggest thing in the world is can I hear God speaking to me now.

That's what counts. God saying anything to you, my friends, you can have a revival. Whether the rest of us ever get it or not, accept it or not, in this or any other church, there's no reason why you can't set your face like a flint and start paste, wherever it takes you.

When you find him, you'll find floodgates of mercy, you'll find oil in the boat, you'll find a wonderfully new revived life for yourself, just yourself. And to God in you, what you shall do with what you have, but wonderfully it can be yours now. I hope he speaks to us.

Oh God, oh God, I know the world is spinning on. Time is getting, running out. Children are becoming youth, and youth becoming middle-aged, and middle-aged are getting older and older.

Now has said redeem the time for the days are evil. Lord, let's fail here. Lord, thou dost want us to be revived again.

Revive thy people, Lord, individual people. And if numbers of individual people can band together, revive thy people. Grant, Lord, to help.

Now as we have here, people, just for a minute more of prayer, I would say, Mr. Tozer, please pray for me, that I might have in my soul, alone, apart from my relation to others, that I might have a new inflow of power and purity and grace, that I might be a revived soul. Pray for me, would you raise your hand? God bless you, God bless you, yes. Brother Thomas, would you pray now for these maybe a dozen? Lord, thou dost see my hand with these others.

Lord, together with them, I desire, I desire with great desire, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and that revival that would please thee. Lord, all of us get so in detail of our lives, until we don't wait long enough to hear from thee. Lord, we would hear thy voice this morning.

We would feel the divine presence. We would tarry, we would wait, we would open before thee, our inner being. Come to those of us who desire thee.

In these tremendous days, when there is a coldness in the church, come to those of us who desire thee today. Meet us in Jesus' name.

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