

'How We Can Have a Personal Revival'

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer teaches that personal revival is possible and that it can happen regardless of what your church is experiencing.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 5:6, John 15:4-5, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 6:7-9, Ephesians 3:20, James 4:8, 1 Peter 5:6-7

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Personal Revival"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of personal revival, explaining that true revival begins with the individual before it can extend to the church and community. He illustrates that personal revival is akin to a sick person regaining health or a low battery being recharged, and it can occur regardless of the spiritual state of the surrounding church. Tozer encourages individuals to set their hearts on Jesus, expose their lives to His examination, and take holy vows to seek a deeper relationship with God. He stresses that personal revival is possible even in the face of opposition from others, and that individuals should not wait for collective revival to pursue their spiritual renewal. Ultimately, Tozer calls for a commitment to personal transformation and a deeper connection with God.

Transcript

How We Can Have a Personal Revival

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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Now, I want to do, and relax because we'll not be late. I want to do 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 want to talk about how we can have a personal revival. You know that 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 on a community level where the church overflows and the impulse within the church goes out to the community.

Now, a solitary person can enter in and have a revivification of his spiritual life and have an upsurge of power and a down-coming of grace and can enter into an experience that's as wonderful, so wonderful

that 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 resisted or opposed or neglected or considered this person a fanatic or an extremist. And rather, it throws him out.

Now, a church may experience an awakening. On the other hand, other members of the church may catch fire from this individual or increasing numbers of individuals. And the whole church is lifted up and refreshed and the frost gets out of the stream, 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 wakenings and refreshings and times of great grace. But it does not get beyond the church to the community.

But then, there's such as a community revival where it does get out into 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, the individual, 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 individuals in that church have been revived.

Now, by personal revival, what do I mean? Well, it's best taught by analogy I suppose. It's like a sick man returning to abounding health. It is like a man whose blood count is low and who is hardly able to get out of bed; can sit up only an hour at a time, and getting to a place where he's now able to go out and play on the tee and do a hard day's work and do anything he has to do-abounding in health. For it is like a low battery that will barely turn the engine over, being taken in for a recharge, and get to a place where it's simply sizzling 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 been revived, that has had a new uprush of power from God. We had some around here, and I run into them occasionally here and 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. For instance, birth can only happen alone to each single individual as if there had been no other individual in the world. The statistics may say, well, 150 babies were born in this town, this little town last year. But remember, that you cannot and dare not fall a victim to statistics and think of 150 babies being born en masse as though it were one act. No, no, there were 150 of them. Each birth was as unique and single and peculiar and alone 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 the universe, alone.

And so, it is with death. You can only die by yourself. A train wreck comes and fifty people are killed in a train wreck, fifty people are killed in a train wreck and all of it happens at once. And yet while they die at once, they die, alone. And while they're all written off on the newspapers as having occurred within one minute's time. They did not die together, they died apart separately, each individual went out alone to meet his God.

And so, at Pentecost, there were 120 in the upper room, and suddenly the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. That sounds as if it was a mass thing, but the Scripture says that there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire and it sat upon each of them. They could 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. As 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 to you, 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 by himself.

Now, I want to make this very clear, because it's important we think right about this, that there is no abstract church. We pray, O Lord, fall on Thy church. And we imagine there's an abstract church somewhere, the kind of wozy extract of the church, and the Spirit can come on that without individuals being helped. No, no, my brother. The Holy Spirit can only fall on individuals, on people, that's all. 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, Lord, bless Thy mystic church and we imagine, we project a church out of, among the individuals, an ideal church for which Christ died. And nobody gets help and we say, well, God is pouring His spirit out on His church. God can't pour His Spirit out on His church, except as He pours it on individuals within the church.

The Holy Ghost sat upon each of them. And so, He'll sit upon each of us, if He ever comes to the church. This church is only what the individual members are, not one bit better. If God had some IQ tests or spiritual tests, whereby He could test us, or He had some way of taking our spiritual pulse, then we might add up all and divide by our membership and get the average. But the church would be what the average is. Always remember, the average of the many individuals will make what the church is, for the church is composed of the individual.

Now the lone soul can be revived. I'm so glad to be able to tell you that. God can send waves of glory and power and life, a new quickening to the lone individual, that solitary individual as one man wrote, whether anyone else does, 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 will be blessed. My friend, the church can never be blessed until you or other individuals are blessed. And whether the church ever gets any further on or not out, whether we peter out and backslide and turn liberal, you can be blessed as an individual. And not all the rest of us put together can prevent you from being blessed. And you can be blessed whether or not. A man can be blessed alone, whether or not his pastor or his church approves. I 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 my church did not approve 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 maybe that my room was better than my company. I wasn't thrown out, but I was invited not to be around so frequently. 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 whether your church believes or not, you can have all that God has for you as an individual. And whether your wife will go along with you or not, or whether your husband or father or mother or friend, whether they will agree or not, it doesn't make a bit of difference. God always is ready to help the lone individual. And 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 their bedrooms, sometimes to the church basements, sometimes to the caves, sometimes out under trees, and sometimes in haystacks. But one or two or three, or one alone, met God, and then it went on from there.

I say you can be blessed and yet not have revival in your church if the rest resist. But you can be blessed nevertheless. Don't you ever give up to the general, dead level of spirituality in any church, whether it's 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, how. How can I have a personal revival. Well, you want to take some notes on this, any of you? Let me, let me give you, I'll try to make it brief, but I'll give it as much time as I feel I must.

First of all, set your face like a flint that you might have a transformation of your whole life. Weak experimenters are already tagged with defeat. They already have the label of defeat upon them, the taster, the experimenter, the weak fellow that tries it out, like Mr. Pliable who says, I'll go, and then the first trouble he runs into says, I won't go. You set your face like a flint. A plowshare that is going to cut the sod has to have a sharp nose. And a Christian, if he is to go against all the streams and drifts of the world, he has to have our hard nose too. He's got to set his face like a flint and say, regardless of what others do, by the grace of God, I want all the New Testament has for me.

Then second, set your heart on Jesus Christ, and go to Him wherever it takes you. Go to Jesus wherever it takes you. Wherever it takes you, go to Jesus. Wherever it takes you away from, go straight, go to Jesus, not up in heaven but down here on earth. Go to Jesus. And whoever you must ignore and whatever the cost may be, set your face like a flint to be all God wants you to, and then go straight to Jesus. And whoever gets in your way, pay no attention of them. I will always thank God that he put that passage in the Bible where the blind man said, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And His proper disciples in their longtail deacon's coats, they went and said, shoosh, this is not done in churches. Keep still, shoosh, be quiet. And the Scripture says, he cried all the more because of this. Instead of this discouraging him, it fired him up to yell louder. And the Lord heard him and turned around said, what do you want? He said, I want to be healed. He said okay, here, you get it. And he went out a healed man with his eyesight because he had the boldness to pay no attention to the timekeepers and referees that kept people away from Jesus Christ the Lord.

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 long just for the style. It was the story of Christian and how he read that book that got him in trouble, you know. He said, oh, I find by this book that I am living in the city of Destruction and that fire is going to fall 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 news to his wife and 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'm in an awful condition, awful. Well, they said Papa, we know what's wrong with you. You're just tired out. So, they put him to bed, 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 said, worse than ever. I never slept a wink. He said, I couldn't forget that we live in the city of Destruction. Well then, Bunyan says that when they found they couldn't just get him 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. When that wouldn't work, they started to deride him. And then when he wouldn't give up to their scorn, they ignored him.

I thought as I read it, I wrote this down. That's the way they do. First, they sooth you, pat your back and tell you you're excited. And then after that they use harsh words to you and tell you you think you're better than other people. And then, when that won't work, they deride you and start making fun. And when that won't work, they ignore you. That's exactly how it happens, Brother. And if you decide in your heart that

you're going to go through with God and meet Him and 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 spiritual health you've never had before, you will find some people that will say, well, you're excited. You allowed that man Tozer to stir you up. Then when you won't stop, they will start being harsh toward you. Then when that won't do, they'll make fun of you. 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 long season of prayer. You know, that's the way to handle it, Brother.

Well, third now, take this third. Expose your life to His examination. The trouble with us is, we keep ourselves all covered up. We cover our hearts. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. He that covereth his leprosy, shall not have it healed. He then covereth his diseases shall not be delivered. But we habitually cover ourselves. I say, expose your whole life to Jesus Christ. Expose 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 earth. Why can't we think 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 will work out with you.

And then, fourth, take some holy vows. Let me give them. I preached some sermons on this some years ago, but let me just catch them. Take some holy vows before God today. Vow never to own anything. That is, vow to get rid of that infernal bunch of trash you call, your goods. That infernal bunch of trash. Why, there are pack rats out in the West, so I learned, and they gather everything. They go out and bring in everything, little shiny bits. And now, you read in English literature about the magpie, doing 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 shoe horn and a piece of glass and a dime. They can't use them, they just collect them. It's just trash they've collected. And people have that same thing. It's the covetous spirit.

So, they collect around them all of this like the magpie, all of this useless material. I don't mean you're to get rid of it if you can use it. It wouldn't be useless if you could use it, would it? Remember this, that if you feel you own it, it's dragging you down. Get free from the ownership of it, and then God will let you have it. Get cut loose from it inside and God let you have it outside. I've said it's all right for you to get 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 a vow to never own anything. See that God has it, not only a skinny tenth. Don't you imagine for a minute that you keep books with God that way. You've got ninety percent and God's got ten. God's got 100% and he lets you keep a certain percent to look after your family. But, it's all God's and God 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, sir. If there's anything that you own that God can't have, you can't have God. But the moment that God knows that He can have anything 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 cursed. It will be a balloon to 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, but if you 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, nor worry about the opposers nor the enemies. If you try to fight people, you will be bloody and bruised and miserable and you'll stay little and you'll never have a revival. But if you will let God do your fighting for you, you pray, you'll be alright.

And then, vow never to defame a fellow Christian. Never defame a fellow Christian. Never defame him by believing evil about him. Never defame him by spreading an evil report about him. And never defame him in any way, remembering your own past and remembering your own proneness to temptation. So, let's not defame our fellow Christians. I think that sometimes the Spirit of God shuts Himself uptight and cannot fall upon us, because we've defamed our brethren, we've defamed some Christians.

Now, as a pastor, as a member of an executive committee, I am forced under God. If I know that a man has serious charges against his life, I am forced to protect the church of God from that man. But I am not to defame that man or any other man by believing gossip or spreading it.

And then, vow never to seek or accept any glory. Oh, how we love the glory. If we could take just a little of it for ourselves. May God deliver us from it brethren. He shall have all the glory, we sing. Thou shalt have all the glory for He sets me free. And when that comes to us, that all the glory is God's, it will be a new flow of power in our lives.

And then, vow, we will not wait for tragedy to drive us to God. You know, tragedy may never come. There are some maybe listening to me now that started to get cold in your heart and then some tragedy struck you though your family. And out of that terrible tragedy and the stony grief, you raised your Bethel and said, forgive me God and started over. But must it always be like that? Must we always wait for God to chastise us? Must we always come to God with bleeding back? Vow that you won't wait for tragedy to drive you to God, indeed if ever comes. Take your cross voluntarily. Let me give this simple illustration and I'm through.

Many years ago when I was very young preacher, I preached in a town named Despard, West Virginia. Despard, West Virginia was commonly called "tinplate" because the great tinplate factories were there. It was also a coal mining area. We went into a little old wooden 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. And in that meeting, there was a coal miner. A great, tall, handsome blonde, good looking, smiling young fellow as I recall him now after these thirty years, he was. And after it was all over, I learned what had happened. He went home after 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 we need God. We need His help. And he said, Honey, if it's alright with you, I'm going to take tomorrow off and wait on God and pray all day long, and I think "fast," though I would put that in with only a question mark. But he said, I want to pray all day long and wait on God for revival for this town. So, it's all right. So, instead of going to work, that great big fellow got down on his knees and waited on God with his open Bible all the day long.

The next morning, he went to his work. He worked on the tipple. Now, the tipple is a word not many know. He worked on the tipple where little cars brought the coal down. The heaviest pulled the light empties up you know. And he was working on that tipple, and suddenly something went wrong and a car, a number of cars jumped the track and crashed and splintered. They were wooden cars, old fashioned wooden cars and they splintered. And a great, ragged chunk of splinters, sharp as a dagger on the end, ripped through his thigh and cut one of the great veins there. And there he lay on the slag and coal and dirt, this great big, gorgeous fellow, about twenty-seven years old, and bled to death.

The day before, he had spent all day with God. And 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 of course. But wasn't it wonderful

that he was near enough to God that he could carry a burden? And the day before he died, 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 has never allowed me to look over his shoulder at his secret plan. I only know that in the course of things, easily, he could have died anyway. But suppose that 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 had been too greedy for money to listen. Suppose he'd been too cold to hear or too far away. Suppose he had been like some of us, running on routine and couldn't hear from God. He'd have died on the tippie the next day alright, but, oh, what a difference.

Maybe God's calling some of you to do something extraordinary, something that's out of the 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 that you don't hear Him. I hope that the love of money and that the pleasures of the world are not so great that you don't hear Him.

Oh, brother, the biggest thing in the world isn't whether you die tomorrow or live a hundred years. The biggest thing in the world is, can I hear God speaking to me now? That's what counts. Do you hear God saying anything to you, my friends. You can have a revival, whether the rest of us ever get it or not, whether you 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 toward Jesus Christ wherever it takes you. And when you find Him, you'll find floodgates of mercy. You'll find oil poured from the throne above. You will find a wonderfully new revived life for yourself, just yourself. And after that, it's up to God and you what you shall do with what you have, but wonderfully, it can be yours now. I hope you can hear Him speak.

Let's pray. O God, O God, Thou knowest, the world is spinning on. Time is getting less and running out. Children are becoming youth, and youth becoming middle-aged, and middle-aged are getting old and dying. And Thou hast said redeem the time for the days are evil. Lord, please don't let us fail here. Lord, Thou dost want us to be revived again. Thou dost want to revive Thy people, Lord, individual people. And then, if numbers of individual people can band together, then the church has been revived. God, revive Thy people. Grant, Lord, to help.

Now, as we have our heads bowed, dear people, just for a minute more of prayer. Who will say, Mr. Tozer, please pray for me, that I might have in my lonely soul, alone, apart for my relation to others, if I might have a new inflow of God's 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.

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