

Biblical Recipe for Personal Revival

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod's sermon outlines a biblical approach to personal revival, emphasizing humility, grace, and the recognition of our sinful nature.

Duration: 35:25

Scripture: Romans 3:10-11, James 4:5

Topics: "Personal Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the lack of focus on God in many sermons and the need for a biblical revival. He emphasizes the importance of humility and recognizing our sinful nature. The preacher references the book of James, specifically chapter 4 verse 5, which speaks about the spirit within us lusting to envy. He also mentions the two stages of revival, where the first stage involves conviction of sin and finding Christ, and the second stage involves recognizing our own sinfulness and learning from Christ to be meek and humble in heart.

Transcript

I want to speak tonight on the subject of a Biblical recipe for personal revival. I'll be speaking mainly from the book of James, chapter 4, verse 5. Do you think that the Scripture says in vain the spirit that dwells in us lusts us to envy? Does the Scripture ever speak vainly? Yes, sometimes it does. If it's not read, it's vain.

If it's read and not understood, it's vain. If it's read and understood and not practiced, it's vain also. Revival.

One thing the Bible makes extremely clear and plain is the fact that we are deep died sinners. Jonathan Edwards tells how in numbers of the revivals he was involved in, there were two stages to the revival. The first stage, deep conviction of sin, many sinners find in Christ.

And then there was a second stage where the Spirit convicted people of the fact that they were very sinful. Then people have to deal with a self-problem, and I'm glad he shared that because I see the same thing today. Are we really sinners? Do we really have a fallen, sinful nature? In Ecclesiastes there's a verse that says, The Lord has made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.

And I looked that word invention up. It means mental fabrications. To mentally fabricate is to think something that is not really there, not really true.

Before the flood, it says, every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually, and the whole world was corrupt because of this. We're almost to the last nothing new. Isaiah said, Everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks villainy.

And Jeremiah said, Everyone in the nation from the least to the greatest is given the covetousness. He also said, They're all adulterers back then. We have a sinful, fallen nature, and you can't control it yourself.

God never planned that you should. And just in case you think you're not a big sinner, we categorize people big sinner, little sinner. Don't ever do that.

If you do that, then you're neglecting James 2.10, which simply says that if you keep the whole law of God and offend in one point, then you're guilty of everything. Let me ask you a question. Ever thought that through? What does it really mean? It means that you have no right to criticize the worst sinner you ever read or heard about, because you're that person yourself.

If you keep the whole law of God and offend in just one point, God says you're guilty of breaking every law, every commandment I ever gave. Ever faced up to that? You'd better. We need to, because we have such a, you know, propensity to criticize others, to elevate ourselves and push others down, and think we're a pretty good person after all.

In Ecclesiastes, there's a verse that says, ah, let's see, how does it go now? The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Madness. Well, Jeremiah spoke about some people being mad on their idols.

So maybe we can connect the two. Idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

The covetous man is an idolater, and it's madness as far as God is concerned, to put things in the place that God should have. So please remember, don't sit in judgment on the murderer, the idolater, or the adulterer, or anybody else, because you're all of that, so am I. God said so. I never heard a sermon on it.

I never read anything on it. No one's written a book on it. But we don't look up to it.

We don't really accept it. So we keep categorizing ourselves and others. See, we've got to get around that.

And in times of revival, that really happens. Usually it does. It was a powerful movement of God.

And people begin to see that they're not really such a nice person after all. Okay. It goes on to say, but, now we have this but and this fallen nature, but he, that's God, gives more grace.

And thank God he does, or we'd be in real trouble. The Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord gives grace and glory.

No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. And the Bible makes it very clear, and let's see, Proverbs 3, surely he scorns the scornors and gives grace to the lowly, to the lowly, not to the proud, but to the humble. God responds and gives the grace that we need to overcome the rotten nature that we have.

He gives more grace. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. God sits in opposition to the proud.

And I think what Billy Sonny just said, and some people are proud, they're not proud. And he gives God a hard time. Okay.

God gives grace to the humble. But I think it all begins with us recognizing the fact that we have a depraved, fallen, sinful nature, and we're not good. Five times the Bible says there is none good, not even one.

Five times. There is none that seeks after God. That's repeated several times.

Nobody left himself would ever seek God. We seek him because he first seeks us. That's the story, but it's often not believed or overlooked, and it should not be.

Well, there's another verse in Ecclesiastes. There's not a just man upon earth that does good and doesn't sin. There are people doing good, but not a single person doing good that doesn't at the same time sin.

And of course this cancels out the good stuff. None righteous, no not one. So God said.

Psalms 14, Psalm 53, they're almost parallel passages, and there it says that God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that saw him. And he couldn't even find one. Not even one.

And I think that's where it starts. We have to realize, dear people, that apart from God, we're a sinner deserving eternal hell and would be there but for the grace of God. He gives more grace.

Thank God for it. I don't know how I've gotten this far in life had it not been for the grace of God. We're told to come boldly, and I'm sure it means daily, to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy.

That's the first thing. And then find grace to help in time of need. We think more about finding grace to help, but we need to be reminded that daily we need the mercy of God.

But God who is rich in mercy for his great love for which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ. God is rich in mercy. Thank God that he is.

But God resists the proud. There's anything God hates is pride because pride is the devil's sin, remember? Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. That's Satan's sin.

What have we got to be proud about? Money in the bank? Beautiful face or figure? Some pretty smart kids? A \$50,000 car? What does all that stuff mean? Not very much. We really have, you know I was thinking, sometimes we talk about a person, we say great preacher. I don't think there's such a thing as a great preacher.

There's a great God. There were two preachers in London. I forget the name now.

I think it was Parkinson or something. And people used to go to hear him. They'd go to hear Spurgeon.

So they used to ask some people one time, what's with the contract? Oh, they said, Parkinson, he's a mighty, he's a great preacher. But Spurgeon has a great savior. Just a difference.

You hear somebody say, what a voice. You know that same voice probably to the angels of God would sound like a bull moose with a bad cold and his foot caught in a bear trap. You know, it's a different world over there.

There's no room for pride. And remember again, those who walk in pride he is able to obey because God resists the prophet. He's against the prophet.

Christ certainly had no pride. He made himself of no reputation. He gives grace, it says, to the humble.

James said that. 1 Peter 5 says the same thing. And God's looking for people he can give grace to.

So when you go before God, don't tell him about all the money you gave to the work of God or all the time you spent in prayer. Don't tell God that stuff. He knows all that stuff now.

He's not impressed by it. He wants to see humility. Christ said, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

That's not all he said in that context. He said, take my yoke upon you and learn of me. What does he want us to learn? I am meek and lowly in heart.

That's what he wants us to learn. It's not just coming to Christ. It's learning from Christ to be meek and humble in heart.

You know, Praying Hyde was once asked to speak at one of the Deeper Life conferences in England, which is the mother of all the Deeper Life conferences in the world. They didn't know that Praying Hyde was a very slow speaker. It might take him 15 minutes to get warmed up.

They didn't know that. So he began to speak in a slow, halting way of his, and the crowd got restless, and a lady got up after eight minutes, and she announced a hymn, and they sang him down. And he never spoke again.

Listen, preachers, singers here, if that happened to you, how did you feel? Angry? How did he handle it? A friend of his went running up and said, Brother Hyde, that was a terrible thing they did to you. And he smiled ever so sweetly, and he said, it is the Lord. Let him do as seemeth him good.

He wasn't the least bit worried, you know. It didn't bother him. It only bothers us if we're trying to maintain a big name, you know.

So God was just a part. God gives grace to the humble. So verse 7 says, Submit yourselves, therefore.

Whenever you find the word, therefore, where it said something, now they're deducing something from it. So, submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

I'm sure most of us are aware of this, but some of us may not. We can't resist the devil successfully unless, first of all, we submit to God. You understand that? Over the years, we had numerous cases of people, let's just say, here's a man, he's struggling with alcoholism, became a Christian for eight months, drunk once a week after he got saved.

Couldn't get victory. Tried, had people pray for him, lay hands on him, pray, pray, pray. Nothing ever happened.

He was in a meeting I had in New Brunswick, and I quoted this verse and explained, you can't resist the devil if you're not submitted to God. And he said a light went on. And the next day, he made a little journey to St. John's, gave himself up to the police.

He jumped bail and had been running from the police for 22 years. So, he gave himself up. They were so impressed with his testimony, they wrote the record clean and let him go.

And he was back in our meetings, and he could hardly talk because the alcohol thing was completely gone. The minute he submitted to God, then he had the power to resist the devil. There's another case, I know one case where a young man woke up one morning and finally had very strong homosexual tendencies.

He was horrified. He hated the thing. He knew what was wrong in the Bible.

He tried to fight against it, but it kept growing, and he was afraid he was going to fall into this. And he talked to a friend of mine about this. And my friend said to him, what is your attitude to your father and mother? And the kid said, what's that got to do with it? Never mind, he said, just answer the question.

He said, I love my mother, but my father is a skunk. I hate him. So, he took him to Ephesians chapter 6, honor your father and your mother.

And he explained. It doesn't say honor your father, providing he's not a skunk. And he saw it, went home, made things right with his dad, and the next morning the homosexual thing was gone.

My friend checked him out for almost a day, never returned. So, I say again to people, in these things we can't resist the devil if we're not submitted to God. So, submit yourselves therefore to God, whatever God may be asking you to do.

This goes on all through our life as a Christian. God will ask us to do something, to be something, to go somewhere. Sometimes we say no.

Then all of a sudden we discover we don't have victory in certain areas of our life. So, watch it. Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you because then it will be God and you resisting the devil. God has no problem with the devil. Do you think he has? How can God have problems with the devil? You know, sometimes they use the illustration of an ant shaking its fist at an elephant.

But that's not Satan and God. I mean, I have to apologize to the ant for that one. Satan is a created being.

God has no problem with Satan and never has had, can have had. So, when I submit to God, his power comes into my life and God gives me the victory that I need to have. Resist the devil.

He'll flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. How did he draw near to God? Didn't Paul say in him we live and move and have our being? Yes, he did.

He said he's not far from every one of us. God is like an ocean. We're in that ocean from the time we were born as a child.

In him we live, move and have our very existence, the word of God said. So, how do you draw near to God if he's that close? Well, it's kind of a human term. You know, there's about 200, maybe 250 places in the Old Testament where it speaks about people standing before God, praying before God, singing before God, sacrificing before God, sitting before God.

It says David went into the temple of God and sat before the Lord. How do you sit before God? How do you stand before God? Hey, listen, you're sitting before God right now. I'm standing before God.

When I speak, the Bible says we speak before God in Christ. It's just a matter of a second. God is everywhere.

You never have to go looking for God. He's looking for you and he's not far from every one of us. Don't believe the devil's lies when he tells you you've tried for 16 years or something and you can't find God.

Don't try and tell God that. It just can't and it is not true. Draw near to God by faith.

God isn't everywhere. It has nothing to do with how you feel. You know, people often say, man, I sure felt the presence of God in that meeting.

Well, that's nice of you, you did. Maybe I didn't. But maybe God spoke as powerfully to my heart as he did to yours.

It's a faith thing. There are 24 things in the New Testament that happen to us Christians through faith. We know we're saved by faith.

We know we're kept by faith. We're told that in 1 Peter 1. But the Bible says we stand by faith. By faith you stand.

We walk by faith. 2 Corinthians 5. We run the Christian race by faith in Hebrews 12. We draw near to God through faith in Hebrews 10.

And there's 24 things of this kind in the New Testament, all of them through faith. Now take 2 Corinthians 5.7. We walk by faith, not by sight. It's not how you feel.

God is always there. He's never, he cannot be far away. He's always there.

You may deny that. Some of you may be denying it tonight, thinking of your own experience with your people. The fault is never on God's side.

We walk by faith. You can have Him or not have Him, just as you trust. This is the Word of God.

Draw near to God, He will draw near to you, and then something happens. He'll talk to us about our sin. He says, Cleanse your hands, you sinners.

So you say, I'm not a sinner, I'm a Christian. Well, you're a Christian sinner. Because the word sinner sometimes used in believers.

Cleanse your hands. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Are you a double-minded person? The Bible is saying here in James 4, that double-mindedness is the result of impurity of heart.

That's what it says. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. He that has clean hands and a pure heart, that has not lifted up his soul to man, and you are sworn to seek fully.

They are the people who stand on the holy hill of God. So expect that when you're drawn near to God. Maybe something you did years ago and you're worried about a sight.

No one knows but you and God, and God will bring it up. He's a faithful, faithful God. People, when you're drawn near to Him, expect this to happen.

It may not be easy. God may ask you to do some things that are very difficult, but He'll be with you if you obey Him. He said, them that honor me, I will honor.

And those that despise me will be likely esteemed. And God will honor you if you honor Him. Now some of these illustrations I may have used before, pardon me if so, I don't have a memory like Spurgeon.

They said he never repeated himself. That made me feel so bad in Columbia. I read one of his sermons and there was an illustration there he'd used in a different sermon, so he had the same problem I had.

He'll search your heart, he'll search mine. You know what it says in the Bible, the heart is deceitful about all things and desperately wicked. And then this question comes up, who can know it? You don't know your own heart, but you can't know your own heart.

And then it says God knows the heart, and He's the only one who does. When we get honest with God, just in humility, get before God and confess your nothing, and know nothing, and have nothing, and have done nothing, and ask God for mercy, He'll draw very near, and He'll help you. Whatever the sins are or things are that stand in the way of His full blessing in your heart and life.

It says be afflicted, and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. In times of revival, we always have boxes of Kleenex handy, because they get to be very, very needed.

I remember during the revival here, a man from my congregation, he was leaving and he wanted to say something to me, and he began to talk and he couldn't finish, and he fell on his knees and just started to pray. And I never prayed with him for a while. Lots of tears.

Be afflicted, and mourn and weep. In Isaiah 22, God said that He called the nation to mourning, and weeping, and sackcloth and ashes, and what did he get? Slaying oxen, killing sheep, drinking wine, and their philosophy was let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we're going to die, and God said, this will not be purged from you till you die. He called on them to be mourning, weeping.

You know, wherever you live in Winnipeg, there's a lot of mourning doves. And every time I hear a mourning dove doing its little thing, I think of that verse over in Ezekiel, it speaks about Israel being like a bunch of mourning doves, mourning for their sins, you know. But every time I hear one of those verbs, we need to be mourning and weeping to be right with Him.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Many years ago, I got roundly a friend of mine and I, we were invited to a home, a lady had a particular occult problem, and we were asked to come and help, so we went. And finally it was time to pray, and she said to me, Brother Bill, I would prefer it if you didn't do any prayer.

I said, really? Why? Well, she said, you tell all those funny stories, and whenever I think of you, I think of those funny stories you tell, and I like to have the other man pray if you don't mind. How do you think I felt? I learned a big lesson that day. It was many years ago, you know, one Christian worker traveling all across Canada, he stopped here in Saskatoon and spent some time in my office, and we talked about the Lord, and he said, you know, this is only the second time in the last four months the preacher has wanted to talk about God.

He said, they all want to tell funny stories. He said, I've heard a thousand funny stories, you know, but nothing about Jesus. So God had to deal with me.

I'll tell you, I went home that night and wept before God, made promises to God, and tried to keep them by His grace and power. Be afflicted and mourn and weep, let your laughter return to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.

Right? Did he really do it? So I humbled myself completely, and stopped pleading my own interests, and trying to put a better face on something that's too evil to put a face on at all, but to stop doing that and being that kind of person. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. He's the one person you can't deceive.

He's the one person that knows all about you, everything. He's the one person you can't hide from. My question is that, where will I go? How can I flee from God's Spirit? The answer to that is, I flee unto thee to hide me.

That is, I flee to God. Don't run from God, run to God. God will understand, God will forgive, God will cleanse, God will give you power.

Humble yourself under God's mighty hand. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. A recipe, a biblical recipe for revival, it's right here.

Now sometimes, and we've seen this happen occasionally over the years, in meetings, people are sometimes being revived just where they sat. They didn't come forward, they didn't probably go through this in James chapter 4, they just met with God where they sat, poured out their soul where they sat, and experienced a profound revival. I remember being with Life Action Ministries one time, and this was happening, they'd been four or five weeks in this church down in Texas, and God was really working powerfully.

The first night I was there, they asked me, just tell us about the Canadian Revival, and that's what I did. It took about 20 minutes, talked about the Canadian Revival, and afterwards Del Phazenfeld, the leader, said, God told me to give an invitation for salvation, and he did, and 18 adults came forward to get saved. The church was in a state of revival.

I haven't mentioned the gospel, but the Spirit of God was working so powerfully, and that's what we need to see once again. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up. And then a thought.

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brethren, judges his brethren, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There's one lawgiver who's able to save and to destroy. Who are you that judges another? Don't waste your time judging other Christians or Christian workers. You're not to do that.

That's God's business, not yours. You know, we're told in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. And what follows that? Anybody know? And then shall every man have praise of God.

The people you and I were judging and sitting in judgment on will have praise from God in that day. So judge nothing before the time until the Lord come. Yes, the saints will judge the world.

Yes, the saints will judge angels someday. That's not now. So speak not evil one of another, brethren.

John must have defined evil speaking as saying something about a person you wouldn't dare say if they were standing in front of you. That's evil speaking. We're not to do that.

Remember James 2.10. You're as bad as that person that's saying this thing you're criticizing. People are all in the same boat. We're lost sinners, I say again, and headed for hell but for the grace and mercy of our God.

All right. Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, this spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? That is, we've got this envious, lustful nature but he gives more grace. Wherefore he says, God resist the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God.

He will draw near to you. Some of you need to do that probably even tonight. You can begin where you're sitting.

Look up to God. Open your heart to God. Just start drawing near to God and he'll draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands. Purify your hearts. Be afflicted in the morning week.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. You know an example here. Many of you will remember Gordon Bailey.

He and I were very fast friends and he told me one day the hardest thing he ever did as a Christian believer after he met God in the Revival. He asked his family to forgive him for being such a poor Christian. He said it was the hardest thing I ever did in all my life.

But that very night he went out to work in the barn. He had a herd of black Angus cattle and he said, I was working in the barn and God filled me with the Holy Ghost from top to toe. And in the next nine months he led 30 people to Christ.

Nothing like this had happened before. He never witnessed for Christ, he told me, before this. But nothing happened.

He humbled himself and God lifted him up. And he's waiting, I'm sure, for this kind of humility on the parts of many of us in this room tonight. Humble yourself and on the mighty hand of God and he'll exalt you.

He'll lift you up in due time, in his own time, of course. So don't speak evil of one another, brethren. There's one lawgiver who's able to save and destroy.

Who are you that judges another? And then go to now you that say, today or tomorrow we'll go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain, whereas you know not what shall be in tomorrow. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. What is your life? It's just a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

So that you ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. But now you rejoice in your boasting. All such rejoicing is evil, is pride.

Therefore to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin. And that applies to these various verses we've been looking at. We hear it, well we do it, we humble ourselves, we will continue in the old way, fainting and falling and passing by opportunities to witness for Christ to give out a tract.

You know some of us as Christians were, I've used this expression before, but you know we sit like a frozen frog on a frosty stone. We don't even croak once a year for God, you know. Nothing to say, Christians, nothing to say about Jesus.

We need revival, but people it has to start in your heart and mine. Draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. Let's repeat that together, shall we? Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

What's the next word? Cleanse. Cleanse your hands, purify your hearts. Let's pray.

Father we want to thank you for giving us this simple recipe for personal revival. Father it's not difficult, it's only difficult because of our pride and our secret sins. Oh God, draw near in these days, we have a few days Father together.

We want them to be glorious days, bringing honor Father to your great name and your son who died in our place. And Father perhaps you wounded some hearts here tonight, or perhaps weeks ago you began working in some hearts. Oh God, continue your work.

Precious, I think Job said his hand presses me sore, God presses even more we pray. Bless every home, every family, yes every church represented here tonight. Thank you Father again for being so close.

We are in faith Father, we can see you smiling upon us. Your eyes are on the righteous and your ears are open to our prayer. Thank you.

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