

Growth Follows Revival

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod emphasizes that true growth in a Christian's life is a direct result of experiencing personal revival and being rooted in God's love.

Duration: 35:51

Scripture: 2 Samuel 9:1, Job 20:12-13, Job 34:12, Proverbs 24:12, Matthew 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:6, 1 John 3:16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, B. Earl shares a personal story about his struggles as an evangelist. He describes how he prepared tough and hard-hitting sermons in an attempt to reach stubborn people, but saw no response. After seeking God's guidance, he realized that the problem was with himself and not the people. He spent a night in prayer and experienced a transformation, being filled with the fullness of Christ's love. As a result, his ministry became fruitful, leading 150,000 people to find Christ. The sermon emphasizes the importance of total submission to Christ and the need to see others through God's love in order to effectively share the Gospel.

Transcript

In the book of Hosea, chapter 14, verse 7, there's an important verse that says, They that dwell under his shadow shall return. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Did you notice something? That growth follows revival. Let's listen again. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.

They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. So growth follows personal revival.

And that's quite normal, I think. Many times we're trying to grow as a Christian when we can't grow because we're not rooted and grounded in love, as Paul tells us we must be over there in Ephesians chapter 3. And we're vainly, we're doing our best, trying to grow, yet painfully aware of the fact that we're really not growing, we're not stronger, we don't have more light and wisdom from God. In some cases we might even have to sadly confess we're sort of slowly sliding back, in spite of all our prayers to the contrary.

You see, it's after we give ourselves completely to God and experience a personal renewal, that's when growth starts. That's when growth begins. In the Old Testament there are numerous places where God is likened to a tree, under which tree people come to rest, to rest in the shade and to eat of the fruit.

And in Isaiah there's a prophecy of the Lord Jesus that says, and the man is Jesus Christ, as the context clearly shows, And Jesus Christ is all that and a thousand times more. The shadow of a great rock in a weary land, he's that. He's that.

A cover from the tempest, the storm from the wind, he's all that. So they that dwell under his shadow shall return, that is return to God. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine, the center of shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

In the book of Job there's a very challenging, to me, challenging scripture. In Job chapter 36 it goes like this. It says that God never takes his eyes off the righteous.

Isn't that comforting? A little scary if you're living in sin, brother. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. But God never takes his eyes off the righteous.

So you can go to sleep and forget about it. There's a burglar going to come in, brother, he's going to be in trouble. He's going to have to deal with God, you know, so don't worry about it.

He never takes his eyes off the righteous. Then it says, Now that's Old Testament, but the New Testament makes it quite clear that we are kings and priests unto God. With kings.

Romans 5, Paul talks about they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. We are kings on a throne by the grace of God. With kings are they on the throne.

Yes, it goes on to say he establishes them forever and they are exalted. And we are exalted in Christ. And then comes the if.

And if they be bound in fetters. Who? The righteous. And held in cords of affliction.

Then what? Listen. Then he shows them their work. He shows them what's wrong.

He shows us what we're doing that is grieving his Holy Spirit. Then he shows them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded. And he opens their ear to discipline.

And he commands that they return from iniquity. All these things God works oftentimes with man. It says elsewhere in the book of Job.

Are you listening? Are you bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction? You're all tied up. You can't really sing the song Jesus sets me absolutely free because it's not true. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

You're not free indeed. What's wrong? It says he shows them their work. But you know what the problem is? It's not with God's ability to communicate.

It's my listening process. I turn my ears off. I don't want to hear what God is saying because I know what's wrong.

So I just don't listen to God. I avoid that. I don't pray that prayer that Gordon mentioned.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. I'm afraid to pray that prayer because I know God's going to uncover some things that I'm going to have to deal with. And I just don't want to do that.

So God can't communicate. So then what do people say? They said it to me. They say, well, you know, I've asked God a thousand times to show me what the problem is and he never does.

You know what I say when people tell me that? I say it with a smile. I say, so who's lying? You or God? That's what I tell them. Who's lying? You or God? My Bible says he shows them their work and their transcriptions.

He shows them. So the problem is not on God's side. He's trying to communicate, but you don't want to listen.

You shut your ears off. You've made up your mind. A certain thing you're doing is not wrong.

God's been troubling you about it. You've kept saying no, no, no, no, no. So now God doesn't trouble you about it.

So now you think it's yes, yes, yes. It's okay now, you know, you know, everything's fine. Nothing wrong there.

This is what we do. And then we wonder why it is that God isn't speaking powerfully to our heart. What does it say? He shows them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded.

You and I. And he opens our ear to discipline. And he commands that they return from iniquity. It says if they obey God, they'll be blessed.

If they disobey God, they will not be blessed. That's what it says. Also in Job, there's a story there.

It's about a man and he's called a hypocrite. And his problem is secret sin. And the secret sin is likened to a candy.

It's called a sweet morsel in the King James Version. A candy which he has in his mouth, which he's rolling under his tongue. And no one else knows he's got that sweet candy in his mouth.

See, nobody knows it's there. But you know what it goes on to say? It says this man, he will never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. He'll never see John 7 38.

He that believes on me as the scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. He'll never see that. Because there's secret sin.

He's a hypocrite. God knows it. And God can't bless him.

They that dwell under his shadow shall return. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The center of shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Remember Hosea 14 7. The song of Solomon by carnal minds is looked on as being some kind of a, of a fleshly love thing, you know, a song. And that's, they dismiss it this way. Think of it this way.

To a spiritual mind, it's Christ the bridegroom. And the church, his bride, that's what the song of Solomon is all about. So the second chapter, the bridegroom is speaking and he says, Jesus is speaking.

And he says, I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. He doesn't say I'm one of many beautiful roses. I am the rose.

There's no rose like Christ. You know, in the desert, they tell us there are millions of tiny microscopic in size. You can't see them with your eyes, but they can see them with microscopes.

Tiny roses that are so beautiful. They say if they could ever grow them to be the size of the roses we have now, it would put our roses totally out of business forever. Nobody would even look at them.

These roses are so beautiful, but you can't see them except with a microscope. And Jesus is like that. He's the rose of Sharon, fragrance and beauty.

The fairest among 10,000. We could expand that to say the fairest that ever lived. Because the Bible says that thou art fairer than the children of men.

Grace is poured into thy lips. It wasn't how he looked. It's what he was.

And consequently, what he was gave power to what he said. I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. The lily stands for purity.

They accuse Christ of being an illegitimate child. He didn't deny that, although it was not, of course, true. But all he said was, which of you convinces me of sin? In other words, you're convincing or trying to convince or accuse my mother of sin.

Why don't you accuse me of sin? No one ever tried to do that. Because he knew no sin. He had no sin.

He was separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. The lily of the valley. The next verse says, as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

You can think of the highest example of human love in the history of man. And it's like a thorn compared to a lily. If you compare that human love to the love of Jesus Christ, who died on a cross, so you wouldn't have to go to hell.

It was more, dear people, than just a physical death on the cross. It was the fact that God made Christ to be sin for us. That is, God regarded Christ as sin.

That's why in anguish he cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because, you see, Jesus experienced on the cross what the sinner experiences in hell. Total lostness, separation from God, that's hell. Wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, that's hell.

Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, that's hell. And Christ experienced that on the cross in those hours. For you, whoever you are, for me, in spite of our sin, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

And it all began in what we call the incarnation, when Jesus Christ came and was born of a woman. To me, one of the greatest mysteries and miracles of all is God, God, nursing at a woman's breast, humility. He's so great, the Bible says he has to humble himself to behold the things that are in heaven and the

things that are on earth.

He has to humble himself to even look at the things that are going on in the world. He is such a transcendent, such a great God. Then, to be encased inside a woman's body and to be born as a man, it says, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.

My dear friend, he had to. Or he could never have remained in the body of flesh. He did all of that for you.

Do you know of any love like that? And then to allow them to drive the spikes, the nails through his hands and feet and hang him on that cross for your sins, the Bible says, for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Love story, it's the greatest that was ever told. Love found a way to redeem my soul.

The righteous are saved, the Bible says, with great difficulty. The word scarcely doesn't convey the meaning of the word there at all. It's not that we're just sort of scarcely saved, it's called so great salvation.

But it was with great difficulty that you were saved. And with great difficulty that I was saved. But Christ saw us as that story in Ezekiel 16, where the Lord is walking through the field and saw that child that was cast out, unwanted, unwashed, forsaken by its mother, cast out in the field, covered with blood, and God was passing by.

And he said, it was the time of love. And I cast my skirt over you, and I took you, and I washed you, and you became mine. And I entered into covenant with you.

That's why he never takes his eyes off the righteous. He paid such a big price for you. He'll never take his eyes off you.

He'll never let you go. He'll spank you, he'll correct you, he'll never let you go. If you be without chastisement, Rolf, all our partakers, then are you illegitimate children and not sons.

Whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. But to go back again to Solomon chapter 2, as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

He could have at any moment come off that cross. His love for you, for me, was too great. Love for you and I held him on the cross until he died.

God made his soul an offering for sin, for your sin and for mine. As the apple tree, the next verse says, among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. Now the church is speaking, the Christian is responding to all of this.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. There's nobody to compare with Jesus, and I hope he's got your whole heart, your whole life. All you are and have, I hope he has it, in return for what he did for you on the cross.

Whose old self, bear our sins in his body. To the tree, literally in the Greek language, to the wood, to the wood, it wasn't a beautiful golden cross, it was a piece of wood he was nailed to. That we being dead to sins, are we? Should live unto righteousness, do we? By whose stripes you were healed, before you were a sheep going astray, but are now returned.

Unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls. So the cry of my heart is, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight.

Do you? Do you have fellowship with Jesus? Do you know what the essence of prayer is? The essence of prayer is fellowship with Jesus Christ. If it's anything less than that, you don't understand prayer. It's friendship with Jesus, fellowship with Jesus Christ.

That's what it's all about. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. The fruit of the spirit of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.

What beautiful fruits Jesus offers us. You can't get them anywhere else. You can't learn them.

In a sense, you get them from Jesus by the power of his spirit in your heart and life. He brought me, notice the words now, he brought me to the banqueting house. We sing about that sometimes.

Notice the marginal reading. It says that the Hebrew language says, he brought me to the house of wine. And wine is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God.

You want to be filled with God's Holy Spirit, only Jesus Christ can do that. The spirit came through Christ. Pentecost was a Jesus Christ happening.

Pentecost came through Christ. He said, I will pray the Father, and he'll give you another comforter. The comforter whom the Father will send in my name.

Then on the day of Pentecost, Peter said about Jesus, therefore, being by the right hand of God and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this which you now see and hear, Pentecost. Christ shed forth Pentecost. He had done it before in embryo form with the disciples when he breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

But they didn't really receive the spirit then. That was Pentecost. Pentecost.

Before Christ was resurrected from the dead and declared to be the Son of God with power, all power. Then when he was resurrected, then as the resurrected Son of God, he breathed on the church. It was like a rushing mighty wind that filled the place.

And they were filled with the Spirit of God. He brought me to the house of wine. He filled me with the Holy Spirit.

And his banner over me was love. It was love. We read about the dynamic filling of the Spirit that Charles Finney experienced.

And people talk about that. I read about it. And almost without exception, they overlook a very important thing that Finney said.

He said, I felt as if I were being fanned with gigantic wings of love. Or you read about Moody's great experience. Filled with the Spirit walking down the street in Chicago, Illinois years ago.

Because two women had prayed for him to be filled with the Spirit for eight months. Oh, he had the largest Sunday evening crowd of any church in Chicago at the time. But he wasn't filled with the Spirit.

And he didn't know that. They knew it and they prayed for him. And walking down the street it happened.

And he said, I felt as if I could take the whole world into my heart. It was a lovely experience. J.B. Earl, author of *Bringing in the Sheaves*, a book by that name, a song by that title.

J.B. Earl tells a story briefly. It went like this. He was an evangelist spinning his wheels.

He didn't use that expression. I'm using it. He was getting nowhere.

People were not finding Christ. Nothing was happening in his meetings. And he was to have a series in a church.

So he prepared it. Was it seven or eight sermons or something? He prepared these sermons and he made them as tough and as hard as he could. He thought they're so stubborn I'm going to have to beat them over the head.

I'm going to have to beat them to death. And that's what he did. But nobody responded.

So he took his last sermon and reworked it and put in cactus and barbed wire and everything you think of, you know. And then he just smote the congregation with that sermon of his and nobody responded. That night he got alone with God and he said, Lord, what's wrong with those people? And God said, nothing, but there's a lot wrong with you.

And he said, me? God, don't you realize, don't you remember I often cry when I preach? And the Lord said, yes, you do, but it's water off an iceberg. That's what God said to him. It's water off an iceberg.

They call it slush, you know. And he stayed in his knees until two o'clock in the morning. And then all he says is, I was suddenly filled with the fullness of Christ's love.

And he went out from there, a transformed man. 150,000 people found Christ as their Savior through his ministry before he died. He was one of the great evangelists.

We'd have never heard of J.B. Earl if he hadn't have met Christ that night in total submission. You know, when John the Baptist said, as he said, it's recorded in the Gospels, the three Gospels, he said, I indeed baptize you with literally in water, but he that comes after me is mightier than I. The latchet of his shoes I'm not with, you're stooped down and I'm loose. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire, in fire.

The spirit of judgment, Isaiah said, and the spirit of burning, the spirit of judgment to convict me of my sins, the spirit of burning to purge the sin out of my life. Isaiah 125, God said, I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin. When you become a Christian, you get in God's fire, you don't get out of it till you die.

The fire keeps burning away, gently burning, burning out the dross. That's what God is doing. It's a painful work sometimes, a painful process, but it's beautiful, don't ever complain.

Thank God that he loves us enough that he never lets go and he keeps working and working and working to transform us into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. You sit down under his shadow with great delight. Is prayer, fellowship of Jesus Christ to you, friendship of Jesus? Two people I know, one Dr. Gordon Johnson, dean of a seminar, he's retired now, but they were in Saskatoon.

He was speaking in our church years ago and this fellow from our church told me what happened afterwards. They went to a restaurant and they each had a soft drink and Gordon Johnson gave thanks before he drank his soft drink. And so the other fellow told me, I said to him, well, Gordon, did you always give thanks for a soft drink? Oh, he said, it's not that.

It was just another chance to talk to Jesus. I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.

Is that our experience? Rooted and grounded in love that you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is their breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. There it is. That Christ, that God would strengthen you with power by his spirit in the inner man is how it begins.

In Ephesians chapter three, read verse 14 to the end. Jesus Christ, our savior is also Jesus Christ, our sanctifier, our Lord, our God, our King who only has immortality dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto whom no man has seen or can see to be honor and power everlasting Jesus. But he's revealed himself to us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

God has, God did, God is through the scriptures even today. So Paul wrote to a preacher who was getting cold. Timothy was getting cold.

And either Paul had heard it from somebody or he sensed it in his spirit or God had revealed it to him. We don't know why. But when he wrote the second letter to Timothy, he referred to it and said, Timothy, you need a revival.

That's what he said. You need a revival. He said, Timothy, stir into flame.

One translation says stir into flame. One says rekindle a fire. The Spanish Bible, remember it says, revive the gift of God which is in you.

And he's not talking about one of the gifts of the spirit because he goes on to say God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power. Now there was a transitional period where Jews and Samaritans received the spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands, but nobody, no Gentile believer in the New Testament ever received the spirit in that way. In the house of Cornelius, when Peter preached, the spirit came as they believed the gospel, the spirit came and filled their hearts.

That's how it is today. We have received not a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, that's authority, and love, and love. Not just a cozy inside feeling, but the love of God working out through me on the horizontal level, blessing other people.

We should live to bless others, to be a channel for God's love to flow out through our life. To other people. That's what God planned.

When David became Israel's king, you know what kings used to do in those days when they became king? The first thing they did was slaughter all the opposition. Anybody who might ever turn out to be a rival claiming for the throne, you murdered him. That's what they did in the Old Testament.

And sometimes the carnage was awful. When David became king, he said, are there any left of the house of Saul? Saul had been king and David's mortal enemy for years. David had to run for seven years or

more in the wilderness to hide from him, to save his life.

Now he's king. So he says, are there any left of the house of Saul? And someone told him about Mephibosheth, who was in Lodabar. And they sent for Mephibosheth and brought him before the king.

And poor Mephibosheth, he was just shaking from head to foot. Because he knew what kings did. He knew how his father had treated David so despicably.

And I'm sure he fully expected to die. But you know what David told him? He went like this, Mephibosheth, I'm going to pay all your bills. You're going to eat bread at my table from now until you die.

I'll take care of everything and I'm going to restore all the lands your father owned I'm going to give to you. Do you know what David said in that context? He said, are there any left of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him? How do people see the kindness of God? By reading it in the Bible? No. By seeing it through you.

By seeing God's love actively working in your life. By seeing you lay down your life for the brethren. Hereby we perceive the love of God because he laid down his life for us.

And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Let's forget all the tinsel and the fancy stuff and think in terms of giving our lives completely to God. Is there anything less we can do in the light of what he has done for us? There isn't.

There can't be. But sometimes we're so dead to this. So Paul said, Timothy, stir into flame, revive the gift of God which is in you.

Well, I can't revive the agent of revival, the Holy Ghost. No. But I can stop doing the things that are grieving him and quenching him and preventing him from filling me with the love of God and from flowing through me and blessing other people.

I can stop doing those things. I can deal with them, confess them to God, get rid of them. I can do that.

And that's what I have to do. What would you think if you saw a fellow on a beach and here he had a pile of asbestos and some stones and rocks and some tin, some tin cans, a couple of rusty old chains, some few cleavices, and he had a match in his hand. He was striking this match and holding it under the tin.

He'd say, hey, chum, what are you doing? I'm lighting a fire, he says. Well, you say, well, why don't you use combustible material? I mean, that chunk won't burn. He tells you to get lost.

But you know, sometimes that's what we're doing. We're using material that won't burn and we're trying to light a fire. We'd better use combustible material.

God said my word is like a fire. God's spirit is a fire. If you put the two together, you'll experience revival.

That's all it takes. Timothy, revive the gift of God. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a disciplined mind.

You can't discipline yourself. People often tell us that. I can't discipline myself to prayer or to this or that or something else.

Well, I can't either. But there lives within us one who can. That is, one who can discipline us because he's a spirit of discipline.

He can do it. He can transform us. He can change us.

He can make us the kind of Christian we ought to be. Are you willing? They that dwell under his shadow. Oh, someone should go to the prayer meeting tonight and get under the shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask him to forgive us that for so long we've looked on him as being a celestial errand boy.

We've gone to him daily with our grocery list, but we've never looked on him as being a friend. Prayer has not been friendship or fellowship with God. We haven't sat under his shadow with great delight.

We've given him five minutes a day and some days not at all. In the meetings in Steinbeck, a church leader confessed to the church. He said, I sometimes go whole weeks and never touch the Bible, never read it once.

He needed to confess that. How does Christ feel? Is he satisfied with the kind of fellowship he has with you? Or is he still knocking at the door trying to get in, trying to get your attention, trying to get you to spend some time with him? Who is there in the world? What is there under the sun that can engage your attention when Jesus is asking for it? What could there be? Oh, how blind we are at times. How blind.

Will we ever see? Will we ever see Jesus? You remember the man that Jesus healed and he asked him if he saw anything and he said, I see men as trees walking. He needed a second touch from God. Jesus touched him a second time and then he saw every man clearly.

Some of us see men as trees walking. We have no more love for them or interest in them than if they were a tree. And we need to be filled with God's spirit so we see men clearly made in the image of God.

It's time to spend eternity in heaven or hell. And our Savior will make the difference. And they're going to have to hear it from us and see him in us in order for it to become real.

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