

Praying for Revival

by Brian Edwards

We need to long for revival with passion and remember God's mighty deeds to be encouraged and refreshed spiritually.

Duration: 49:54

Scripture: Genesis 2:3, Exodus 15:11, Deuteronomy 29:24-28, Deuteronomy 30:2, Deuteronomy 30:13-14, Jeremiah 2:19

Topics: "Revival Praying"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the downward spiral of faith in four generations. The great grandparents of the present generation believed in the Christian faith but were indifferent to their belief. They knew the stories of the Bible but did not truly care about them. The speaker emphasizes the need to hold God before us and care about our faith. The psalmist's prayer in Psalm 77 is highlighted as an impertinent prayer, challenging God with questions and accusations. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of remembering God's mighty deeds in the past and how they have led to revival in different parts of the world.

Transcript

Pour out the supplicating grace, and then we in thy spirit groan. The spirit of ceaseless prayer impart, the promised intercessor give. We ask the constant power to pray.

Did you mean it? You sang it. It was a big hymn. They are powerful prayers, strong intercession.

Turn with me if you have your Bible to Psalm 77 and verse 13. Psalm 77 and verse 13. And whatever translation you have in front of you, there's really only one way it can be translated.

And it reads thus, Your ways, O God, are holy. What God is so great as our God? If there's one human reason why revival does not come in our day, I would suggest to you it is that the people belonging to God do not really want it. We say we do.

We occasionally pray for it. We write books. We read books.

We give our lectures, preach our sermons, talk endlessly about the desperate state of the nation, and we hold our meetings and conferences. But we don't long for revival. We can recite the mantra as well as anyone else, Lord send revival.

But actually we're shy of it or indifferent to it. And when we're asked to pray for revival, we don't quite know what we're supposed to pray for. Not because we don't know about revival or mostly because we don't know what it is, but because we don't feel the need.

We don't long for it with passion. And I turn you to Psalm 77, a psalm that Spurgeon commented was only for those experienced in the waters of affliction. So look at it with me just for a moment.

This man was in deep distress. Listen to him. I cried out to God for help.

I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord. At night, I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.

I remembered you, O God, and I groaned. I mused and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing.

I was too troubled to speak. Verse 7. Will the Lord reject forever? Will He never show His favour again? Has His unfailing love vanished forever? Has His promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has He in anger withheld His compassion? This man was desperate. He refused to settle for anything less than a response from God.

Verse 2. Untiring hands. He wanted evidence that God was among his people and it mattered to him more than anything else. Look at him.

Verse 3. I groaned. I felt faint. Verse 4. He has an unbearable burden.

And verses 7 through 9, he has a sense of utter abandonment by God. This, I suggest to you, was not simply an importunate prayer. It was an impertinent prayer.

Look at the rapid fire questions, accusations even, that he hounds out to the Almighty. He is challenging God. Listen to him.

Will He reject us, His very own people? Will He never again show favour? Is it all over? Has the love of the Almighty vanished? Imagine that. Have his promises failed? He said, but he could not deliver. And it gets worse.

Look at verse 9. Has his memory gone so that he has forgotten who we are? Has God forgotten how to be merciful? Is he so angry that he has locked out compassion? Now that's the kind of man we're dealing with this evening. And I for one have to confess there's an experience here that I have rarely reached. But only those who are close to God can make such claims on God and be so impertinent with God or else it is arrogant blasphemy.

But I want you to notice how this man keeps his hope alive. He's sunk so desperately low. It seems that God has gone on long journey and left him behind.

That God has forgotten how to be merciful. That God has forgotten who His people are. It would seem that God is elsewhere and we are alone.

But then, then he has a flash of inspiration. It's in verse 10. Then I thought, it's never a bad thing to think occasionally, to this I will appeal the years of the right hand of the Most High.

The light comes on. He has decided what he's going to do about it. He will recall the ways of God.

Verse 11, I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I'll think about all your works.

I'll consider all your mighty deeds. If God has forgotten, I will remember. And I will remind the God who has forgotten what I have remembered.

I'll put him in remembrance of the things he seems to have forgotten. I repeat, if you talk to God like that, and you are not walking close to Him, it is arrogant blasphemy. There is a holy impertinence with God, and our psalmist reaches for it.

How often the stories of revival have fuelled a longing for revival in the past. I guess that's why you've been dealing with some of the subjects you have on these Mondays. And you would look forward to next Monday and dealing with God working in a country like Peru.

God's stories of what God has done fuels a longing for revival. And our psalmist discovered that the best medicine for his despair was a good story of the work of the church. What God has done with his people.

Or as he puts it in another Psalm 143, I remember the days of long ago. I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. What God did in 1858 across America led to a longing for the same thing to happen in Britain.

What God did here in Wales in 1904 led to a heart cry in India, in Korea, in Madagascar, in Sweden, in Germany, in Denmark, in Belgium, in Hungary, in Bulgaria and elsewhere. I will remember, says the psalmist, God's mighty deeds. Or to put it in the words of the Proverb 2525, like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.

And the distant land may be geographically or chronologically distant. But good news of God's hand is an encouragement to his people. And if we do not frequently remind our people and ourselves of God's way in the past, then how do we expect ourselves and others to know what revival is and pray for it.

So, what will he recall? It's there in verses 13 and 14. He will recall, first of all, the character of God. Your ways, O God, are holy.

What God is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles. You display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob, Jacob and Joseph.

Now, the holiness of God is our incentive. He finds no pleasure in our nation today and neither do you and I. He finds little pleasure in our churches today. He finds precious little pleasure in my life today.

And it is the character of God that is at stake. Above everything else, why we are here, why we are concerned with this subject, is because God and his Son, our precious Redeemer, is ground down. His name is despised.

All kinds of evil and terrible things are said about the purity of the Son of God. They write their books, they shoot their films, they have their documentaries and Christ is ground underfoot. And we don't really care.

And we need to hold God before us and say, Oh God, you care and we must care. And you will notice where the psalmist goes. Did you pick it up in the reading? What was he talking about? The waters saw you, oh God, the waters saw you and writhed.

The very depths were convulsed, the clouds poured out water, the skies resounded with thunder, your arrows flashed back and forth. What's he talking about? You say it sounds very much like the flood in the time of Noah. Sounds like it, but it isn't.

It is nothing less than the crossing of the Red Sea in the time of Moses, which is an interesting commentary on it, because it makes you realise just how frightening and terrifying that crossing was. Don't imagine for one moment that the people sat there and they watched the waters very sweetly heap up on either side and they went through. The Bible here makes it quite clear that as the people sat down there on the shore, one watched what God was doing, it was terrifying.

The waters fled and writhed, the very depths convulsed, here was an inland tsunami, the clouds poured out water, the skies resounded with thunder, your arrows flashed back and forth, there was lightning, there was thunder, God was mightily moving for His people. This is the crossing of the Red Sea in the time of Moses and it excites this man's faith above everything else. And one thing is clear, the psalmist had no doubt this really happened.

None of this nonsense about wading across the Sea of Reeds in six inches of water, this man knew that this happened. This was God at work for His people. Now you know the story of Exodus 14, I hardly need to remind you of it, but if you have your Bible you may want to turn back to that chapter just for a moment, since the psalmist considers that this is something worth meditating on.

God deliberately, you'll remember, hemmed His people in, didn't He? To test the Israelites. Chapter 14 of Exodus verse 1, the Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to turn back and camp near Pihahiroth between Migdol and the sea. They are to camp by the sea directly opposite Baal Ziphon.

Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert, and so he might. In fact, it wasn't only Pharaoh that thought that. The Israelites thought that.

God hemmed them in. He put them in an impossible position. Deliberately.

But will you remember this? The cloud and the pillar of fire were still there. The last verse of the previous chapter will tell you that. In other words, God didn't take away from the evidence of His promises, His promised presence.

They had only to look up, open their eyes. And there was a perpetual reminder that God would keep His promise, though all the evidence was running the other way. They were in an impossible position.

And so the psalmist tells us back in Psalm 77 verse 19, Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, Though Your footprints were not seen, You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now the Israelites, as you well know, were a miserable bunch. Whenever they grumbled, they mentioned Egypt, always.

Always. You can find it there in Exodus 14 and verse 11. They're grouching there and want to go back to Egypt.

It's there again in verse 12. It's there in chapter 16 and verse 3 when they want some meat to eat and they're fed up with the manna called what and every day they have something for dinner and it's called what. And they're fed up with it and they want something else and they want to go back to Egypt.

And then in chapter 17 and verse 3, they don't think there's enough water for them, so they're grumbling about that and they want to go back into Egypt. And this groaning, of course, began in Egypt. You'll find it there in Exodus chapter 5 and verse 21.

But there they were crying to God under their great burden of the suffering of their slavery. And, you know, so often that's what we spend our time doing, just simply complaining about the circumstances. That's Israel.

And Moses was given the reassurance by God back in Exodus 14. And if you look at verse 13, you have some very strong language there. The language that you read in verse 13 is what Moses is passing on to the people.

And he says to them, don't be afraid, stand firm, open your eyes, believe, after today, he goes on, you'll never see the Egyptians again, trust, the Lord will fight for you, and be still, be quiet. It's exactly the same word that is used in Psalm 46 and verse 10 that you all know so well. Be still, listen to what God is saying and watch what God is doing.

Shut up and believe me, is what God is saying through Moses to his people. Paul has something similar to say in 1 Corinthians 15. Therefore, my dear brother, stand firm, let nothing move you.

And for us today, we are facing a very hostile society. I'm not going to spend time outlining that to you. If you don't know what it is, you live in a different planet than the rest of us.

A very hostile society. But I'll tell you how I see it. There are four generations, and we're in the fourth, where there has been a consistently downward spiral.

It began like this. The great-grandparents of a present generation were those who believed but were indifferent to their belief. Oh, they believed in the Christian faith, they believed in the gospel records, they believed in the stories of the Bible, and pretty much they knew the stories of the Bible because most of them went to Sunday school or they were taught it at school.

Some of them were even taught it at home. They actually in those days, believe it or not, had a Bible at home. But they were indifferent to it.

So, they spawned a generation that ceased to believe in the things that their parents believed but sat indifferently to. And they became careless in their unbelief because it was irrelevant. And they spawned a generation that not only were careless and indifferent to the things that their grandparents had believed in but didn't bother about, but they now actually reject what their parents no longer believe in.

They actually reject it. It is not true. It is not for me.

But there's another generation, and it's the one we're entering. A generation of opposition. Where it is a question of saying, I don't even know what my great-grandparents believed and I know that my grandparents were in unbelief.

It was entirely relevant for them. And of course, I've lived with my parents who counted the whole thing as nonsense and they've rejected it. But for this generation, it is opposition.

Not only is it not for me, it's not for you either. And we're living in that generation of total opposition. How else can you explain the fact that so consistently, everything that is Christian and moral and everything that belongs to God's Word is consistently and repeatedly downgraded.

Opposition is where we are. Remember the most, I always feel, the most solemn, serious and frightening words that Jesus ever uttered are found in Matthew chapter 18. You can find them in Luke as well.

But in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus talks about causing one of these little ones to stumble and he says, if anyone does that, it would be better for a great millstone to be hung around his neck and him to be drowned in the depths of the sea. And if there is one text from the New Testament that hangs around the neck of generations of parents in the United Kingdom, it is Matthew 18, a millstone. Don't we care for our children and our young people growing up in this generation of opposition? Do we really care? Isaiah 44 verse 3, I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants.

If God bypasses us, do you care whether He bypasses your children? We mustn't allow ourselves to become accustomed to the present day. We are so familiar with it. I have an itinerant ministry.

I'm all over the place and it means that I'm constantly being asked the question, what's happening elsewhere? I say, what's happening with you? They tell me. I say, that's what's happening elsewhere. Listen, you members here at Heath and I know you're not all from Heath here this evening.

You come from a large church on a Sunday morning. You're pretty full, right? And you can look around and say, it's not too bad. It can't be that bad, look.

I preached to 13 people last Sunday morning. There may be a few more next Sunday. It is that bad.

Do you care? Do you long for the Spirit to be poured out upon your children even if He bypasses you? I sometimes think we are like Israel opposite Balzifon. We're sitting there watching the impossible situation and we have no answer. Did the people get across the sea? Did God keep His promise? What God is so great as our God.

But never forget the ways of God and the character of God. I believe that the Old Testament writers and the prophets held out an expectation all the way through the Old Testament of immediate, anytime revival. By that I mean they did not know when, they did not know the timing, but they knew that God could at any time come in spiritual revival.

The hope that revival could come in their own day and at any time was always with them. I'm not suggesting that it was a constant expectation. The Church in the Old Testament period, like the Church in the New Testament period, went through barren periods when few expected, wanted or were even interested in the subject of spiritual renewal and revival.

But the hope was always there in the Hebrew Scriptures. Their testament was always there in front of them. And God was known as a God of revival promises.

They learned that from the earliest history that God was a regularly revival-giving God. And I'll tell you where I begin, where you may not think I would begin. You will remember the principle of the seventh day

in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 3. And that principle stayed with them all through their history.

It was a pattern to keep and an example to follow, providing them with one day of ceasing from labour each week. But it was not simply a day of rest to stop work. It was more than that.

It was a day on which everyone should be, to use the biblical word, refreshed. You'll find it there in Exodus 23 and verse 12. It's used again in Exodus 31 and verse 17.

And the form of the Hebrew word that is used there is not particularly common. You'll find it actually again only in 2 Samuel 16 and verse 14, when David and his men were running away from Absalom. And they arrived at their destination exhausted.

And there we are told the king refreshed himself. And the particular word that is used, nafash, is derived from the Hebrew word for the soul or the life of a man. And it means to be refreshed, revived.

Now that may be physically, as in Samuel, or it may be mentally, or it may be spiritually. It is a word that is a powerful and a strong word. Now don't misunderstand me.

I'm not suggesting that every Sabbath was a time of spiritual revival in the fullest sense of that word. I'm not suggesting that for one moment. But I am claiming that within the covenant promises of God for his people, he deliberately worked in regular periods of refreshment and recreation, both in the weekly Sabbath and the extended Sabbath.

And his people knew that he was a God who expected them to be regularly revived, refreshed, rejuvenated. That was the kind of God they had. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to hear Moses confidently talking of revival to the Israelites shortly before his death.

Deuteronomy chapter 29. There he is reminding the people of God's covenant of holiness, and he warns that disobedience brings judgment from God and disgrace in the eyes of the nations. Deuteronomy 29, 24 to 28.

And in the next chapter, chapter 30 of Deuteronomy, is a description of what God will do, quote, God's response is not simply one of restoration to their own land, but of giving them, and he says it in verse 6 of chapter 30 Deuteronomy, a new heart and soul. A new heart and soul. God offered the people a simple choice.

At all times, they could choose death and destruction through disobedience, or life and prosperity through obedience. And if they made the wrong choice, God was so gracious that they could at any time move from the bad to the good through spiritual revival via repentance and faith. God's promise in Deuteronomy 30 and verse 3 reads like this.

When you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you. According to the Hebrew scholar Kiel and Delitzsch, that is best translated, the phrase restore your fortunes, will put an end to your distress. Now, this was a vital promise to Israel, and I don't believe it was ever forgotten.

You will find as you travel through the Old Testament that this is a fallback promise for Israel again and again. Three times in Psalm 80, the psalmist says, Restore us, O God. Psalm 85 verse 4, Restore us

again, O God, our Saviour.

I believe there are echoes of this, Deuteronomy 30, in 2 Chronicles 7.14, in the verse you have used in terms of revival, If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land, will restore their fortunes. Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20 verse 9, If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment or plague or famine, and we stand in your presence before this temple that bears your name and cry out to you in our distress, then you will hear and save us. How could he be so sure? Because God had promised through Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 30.

Or Daniel, chapter 9 verse 13, listen to him. Just as it is written in the law of Moses. Where's that, Daniel? Well, he didn't have his Old Testament neatly summed up in chapters and verses like us.

But if he had, he would have said, it's there in chapter 30 verse 3. Just as it is written in the law of Moses. All this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favour of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. Give ear, O God, and hear.

Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name. We don't make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen.

O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hear and act. For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your name.

Here is Daniel reminding God of his promises. He's not making something up. I've got a hunch about the kind of God you are.

He says it is rooted in the law of Moses. He has something in his mind. He knows what God has promised and he is going to hold God to account.

And his language is bold, isn't it? Again, listen to him. Listen, O Lord. Hear us.

Open your eyes. Fancy talking to God like that. But why could he? Because Daniel was praying with a confidence based upon the promises and character of God revealed in the scriptures.

Can you suggest to me this evening a stronger ground of hope than that? Oh, if we come to God on the ground that we, his people, are suffering because it's pretty tough being a Christian in these days, he'll not hear us and why should he? What do we deserve? But if we come to him on the ground of his character, we have something to claim. A ground to stand on. Oh, but listen.

This is not just Old Testament stuff. When in the Acts of the Apostles, the Christians were faced with their first major test, where did they go? The promises of God, of course. Listen to them in Acts 4. It bears a little bit of reading.

Chapter 4 of Acts, verse 23. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. And when they heard this, what did they do? Oh, these are hard days in which we are living.

It's tough being here under Nero. Well, it was probably Tiberius then. And they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. You spake by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David. And then they quote from Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed.

That's the ground they're going to stand on. Then they go on to tell God what's been going on, as if he didn't know. Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed.

They did what your power and will decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, here comes the ground on which they're standing. Consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. And after they had prayed, well, you read it and see what happened after they had prayed. Why were they so confident? They knew their Old Testament and they believed the promise is recorded.

And they believed the promise that God had already given them. Acts 3 verse 19, when the apostle Peter preached, repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out and that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. How could Peter say that? How did he know that? Times of refreshing will come from the Lord.

In fact, he is so confident of it that he is as confident of that, if you look at the context of Acts 3 verse 19, as confident of that as he is that Christ is going to come again in His second coming in glory. He doesn't know the time of that and he doesn't know the time of the refreshings. Refreshings, but he knows that is certain and he knows the times of refreshing are certain as well.

Now, when did your prayer meeting in your church hold God to account like this? I am impressed constantly at the bold audacity of biblical prayers. Hezekiah 2 Kings 19, O Lord God of Israel, open your ears, O Lord, and hear. Open your eyes, O Lord, and see.

If they weren't biblical prayers and somebody prayed that in your prayer meeting, it would be arrogant nonsense, wouldn't it? Lord, open your ears, listen to us. Are you not listening? Lord, see what's happening to your name here. Do I need to rehearse before a congregation like this how often prayer, earnest prayer, desperate prayer has preceded revival? Duncan Campbell.

God frequently brings his people to the point of desperation, he said, before he sends revival. We haven't got there yet, have we? Only then will they learn that, said Duncan Campbell, without me, ye can do nothing. Thomas Charles, December 1791.

Unless we are favoured with frequent revivals and a strong, powerful work of the Spirit of God, we shall in great degree degenerate and have only a name to live. Religion will soon lose its vigour. The ministry will hardly retain its lustre and glory and iniquity will, of consequence, abound.

1791. Where are we? Religion has lost its vigour. The ministry hardly retains its lustre and glory and iniquity will, of consequence, abound.

At the risk of being hounded before I reach the M4 tonight, let me tell you this. Some here in Wales talk and think as if this is a special part of the United Kingdom and God owes you the right to revival. Let me

disabuse you.

He doesn't. Oh, no. Wales may have been a blessed people at times in the past, but you are not a special people.

God owes you no favours. You are no more deserving the blessing of God than anywhere else. Remember Daniel.

For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. For your sake. There's no other ground.

There is a very frightening principle in Scripture that you will know of, I'm sure. You'll find it in Zechariah 7.13, but it's not the only place. God says to his people, when I called, they did not listen.

So when they called, what does he say? I would not listen. I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, he went on, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come.

This is how they made the pleasant land desolate. Look around you, he says. Look at your land, your special land.

It's desolate, isn't it? Shall I tell you why, says God? Because when I called to you, you weren't listening. And then when you called to me, I didn't listen to you. Is it possible that this explains the state of our nation today? We've done it our way.

And we've not been listening to God. Let me be practical. How will we create, and having created, maintain a concerted and united prayer for spiritual revival in our churches? First, you can plan to pray.

William Jenkins, around about 1858, the minister of the Congregational Church at Bryn Mawr, was typical of many ministers at the time. Listen to him. Ever since the news of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the American churches reached our country, I longed and prayed that the Lord would, in His infinite mercy, visit poor Wales.

I immediately brought the subject before the church and earnestly exhorted them to seek the Lord. I related every fact and incident I could glean. You'll be here next Monday, won't you? In order to produce in the mind of my people the desire of a similar visitation.

Some of our aged members, any of those here, prayed as I have never heard them pray before. A new burden seemed to press on their hearts. There were no less than 85 added to the church in about six months after those prayer meetings.

This was the year 1858. For some years, whilst I was the pastor of Hook Evangelical Church in Surbiton in Surrey, we modelled our last Wednesday prayer meeting in the month on the prayer meetings that began in the old North Dutch church in Fulton Street, New York, in September 1857. Remember the story? There, six men met for prayer, among them the city missionary, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists and some Dutch Reformed.

A week later there were 20 people and the next week there were 30 to 40. And at the end of three months, three lecture rooms were filled to capacity and there were meetings elsewhere in New York, Brooklyn, Jersey City and Newark. This was the beginning of such prayer as America has never seen before or

since.

And a revival followed that swept tens of thousands into the Kingdom of God. Now in those prayer meetings, and this is the point of which we modelled it, in those prayer meetings people sent up notes for prayer for specific people, sons and daughters, parents, friends, colleagues, neighbours. We did that at Hook.

People came in and there were little piles of paper and the pencil for them and they scribbled the name of friends and neighbours and parents and sons and daughters and colleagues. And during that evening we prayed for them by name so that 30, 40, 50, even at times 60 names would be brought before God in prayer. When did you last in your church prayer meeting bring names to God for salvation? Oh, I know there's a danger of course that people might learn that they were praying for me last Wednesday in the meeting.

Well, let them learn it if they must. Are you ashamed that you're praying for someone? And of those prayer meetings I've just described, we always began with a brief cameo of some historic revival. Just a brief cameo to wet the appetite, feed the mind, spur the faith, fuel the prayer.

Remind people what we're talking about when we talk about revival. In most of our prayer meetings in our churches across the UK today suggest that you have just five minutes. The next five minutes we'll pray for revival and that's guaranteed to head for silence.

What do you pray for when you pray for revival? People don't know because we haven't told them. So, why not lead by example? Sometimes we're often too squeamish to be effective with God and we don't mention people by name. I can remember parents pleading with God for their children.

In fact, just as I mention this now I'm thinking of one young mother who prayed for her children to be saved because they had wandered from the faith and one of those children has just recently come to know Christ many years after that prayer was offered. Those of you who lead services pray meaningfully in public and I mean meaningfully not just trotting out the words. And how are you going to do that? Well, keep scriptural and historical encouragements in front of you.

Each day I personally have a passage of scripture that focuses on revival and it's in the form of a prayer but it's a passage of scripture. There are no greater prayers than the prayers of the Bible, are there? I used to put them up on the overhead in days before data projectors and we had things called acetates, you know and we put them up on the screen and as people came into the morning service they would be reading a biblical prayer on the screen. I mean try going to Ephesians 1 and pick out a prayer from there or Philippians 1 or Colossians 1 or 1 Thessalonians 1 and read those prayers.

Those are prayers for revival. Or go to Hosea 14 or Psalm 44 or Psalm 77 right in front of us or Psalm 85, Isaiah 44, Isaiah 64, Daniel 9. You can find them. Prayers of revival.

Steep yourself in those so that when you come to publicly pray for revival you're not just praying a mantra but you're praying on the ground of authority. They'll stop you from scratching around in the undergrowth of your own mind and set you on the clear fresh air of the mountains of scripture. So read about revival regularly here and there.

Whatever you can get hold of share it, talk of it. But I need to add a caveat and it's an important one. Pray as if revival must come or all is lost.

Work as if revival will never come. Have you got it? It's vital. There are some gloom and doom people that say there's nothing we can do until revival comes.

I'm not of that ilk. You pray as if revival must come or all is lost. But you work as if revival will never come.

Our task if God chooses not to send revival in our time is to be faithful stewards of the time and the energy He has given us and do what He has called us to do. And I am thrilled at those who are evangelizing and I have some in my mind at the moment who are at the sharp end of evangelism every day of the year and they are seeing so, so very few results to their work. So few who are converted but every day they are out there evangelizing for Jesus Christ.

Thank God for them. They are doing what they have to do. We must do what we have to do.

It's not a lack of faith. It's the realism of faith. All the great movements of God however were preceded by great movements for prayer.

You know the story of David Brainerd praying earnestly for the North American Indians. You know the story of John Wesley praying for the people of England. David Morgan praying for the people of Wales for 10 years before 1858.

He never prayed in public without praying for revival. At the turn of the 19th century Joseph Jenkins of Cardiganshire read Andrew Murray's little book *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. And he was convicted of not praying as a minister for his people.

A minister prays for his people, doesn't he? And he prayed until revival came. The Moravian revival among the Moravians in August 1727, where did it begin? In a prayer meeting. James McQuilkin and a group of four in the old schoolhouse during the winter of 1857-58 led directly to the 1859 Ulster Revival.

In Japan in 1883 a week of prayer for revival was followed by a great outpouring and the next seven years the membership of the churches in Japan grew from 5,000 to 30,000. And in early 1900 churches, the churches there set themselves to pray for revival and a year later missionaries, 1901 were writing of a Pentecost in Japan. And so Edinburgh 1905, India 1905, China 1908, Korea 1909, Borneo 1970s, East Anglia 1921.

Every one of them can be traced back to some who got down to the serious business of holding God to account for his people. Let me leave you with a positive note of encouragement. You know that lovely little allegory of the Lord and his people in the book of Song of Songs? Chapter 7, verse 13.

You who dwell in the garden with friends in attendance, let me hear your voice. And I believe that God is saying to me and to his people in these days, let me hear your voice. This is the day of activity and programmes and meetings.

There are a thousand voices clamouring for our attention but our Lord is waiting for our voice. Now if this tonight had been a prayer meeting for revival, would you have been here? Let me give you five reasons why it's so important that he should hear our voice. Don't worry, I'm not starting again.

Number one, prayer is the expression of our life. It's more comforting to a mother to hear the cry of her baby than never to hear it cry, right? I know some of you mums and dads you're saying, oh I wouldn't mind giving a rest for my baby crying sometimes. You would if you never heard it cry.

Because the cry of your baby tells you one great thing about it. It's alive and normally pretty well too. And the life of the church is measured not in our evangelistic programmes or our good sound Bible teaching or our full pews or great preaching but you know where, don't you? It really is in the prayer meeting.

Secondly, prayer is the expression of our love. Can you imagine a husband and wife who never speak or rarely so? Have you talked with God today? Whenever my Barbara went through an operation and she had many of them, before she was out of anaesthetics, I always determined to be there and talk with her. I just wanted her to hear my voice because that showed I cared.

Is God waiting to see if his people care? He's listening for a voice that doesn't come. Prayer, thirdly, is the expression of our trust. It acknowledges our helplessness, its dependence.

When a child wakes at night with a terrible nightmare, what does it do? It calls mummy, daddy. It is in need and it knows the name to put on its need. And fourthly, prayer is the expression of our obedience.

Jesus commands us to pray. Paul commands us to pray. God through His Spirit commands us to pray.

If you love me, said Jesus to His disciples on one occasion, you will do what I tell you. It's not difficult to be obedient. And fifthly, prayer is the expression of our dignity.

What we are with God, pastors, members, elders, is what we are. Nothing greater than that we should be in conversation with the Almighty Creator. Is there anything better we could do? Anything that more dignifies our human nature than we should be talking to God? The greatest travesty of human nature is idolatry, whether it's the idolatry of greed, or science, or the idolatry of idle comfort, or whatever it may be, that is a travesty of the human nature.

The greatest dignity of human nature is to be talking to the One, True, Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That dignifies us like nothing else does. Nothing in the animal kingdom prays, only human beings.

So, fathers, mothers, children, elders, pastors, members, will you listen to the voice of the bridegroom who says this evening, let me hear your voice? Let's remember his promises and go on remembering them. Let's remind God of his promises and go on reminding Him. Let's believe in the need for God's holiness through His Son Jesus Christ to be seen and known across our nation and go on believing that.

Let's cry and go on crying. Let's believe and go on believing. Let's hope and go on hoping.

Let's pray and go on praying until God comes down. Your ways, O God, are holy. What God is so great as our God? We pause and bow, Almighty God, in Your presence.

For our hearts, our spirits, our minds are rebuked by Your Word. And we confess we are a careless, indifferent people who have forgotten the promises of God and have belittled Your character. And we have accepted things as they are for too long, too often, too easily.

And we ask You to forgive us, our Father. And if here and there this evening You have implanted within our heart, our mind, our soul, the seed of our repentance and a longing for God to work again and to give You no rest and to be bold with You, to be impertinent based upon the Word, then, Lord, may that seed grow that we and the people we influence or the people we belong to will be a people of prayer, a people of hunger and thirsting after righteousness, a people who long for God to come down and deal with this

nation, not in anger and judgment, but in mercy and grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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