

Praying for Revival

by Byron Paulus

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in revival and the need for desperation in prayer to seek God's supernatural power and presence.

Duration: 57:56

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 6:4, Psalm 136:1, Isaiah 61:2-3, Isaiah 64:1, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Revival Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares two stories that illustrate the power of obedience and surrender to God. The first story is about a man who noticed a police car stationed at the entrance of his subdivision every day for six months. He later discovered that crime in the area had dropped significantly. The second story is about a man who turned himself in as a fugitive and ended up serving prison time. Despite feeling disappointed when no one showed up to his ministry launch, he realized that he had done it for God and not for people. The speaker then encourages the audience to pray for surrendered lives and to be moldable like clay in the hands of the potter.

Transcript

I wonder if Michigan is too long of a commute to this church. That's what I'm trying to figure out here tonight. I'm telling you, I don't think you know how much you are blessed to be here this morning, tonight.

I get around, okay, but there's rare that I step into a Sunday evening service that is much heart and God's Spirit is present, has been put into it, and God's Spirit present as I sense tonight. And don't take that for granted. It's an anomaly today, okay? And Russell, is that his name that led in prayer? Thank you.

Because Martin Lloyd-Jones, I don't know if he's familiar with that name, he's a pastor at Westminster Chapel over in England and just a renowned prolific author and spiritual giant, okay? But after he died, somebody asked his widow, do you miss your husband's preaching? And she said, not near as much as his praying because his pastoral prayer was 25 minutes on Sunday mornings. One Rainhill told me one time, he says, Byron, you learn how to pray by listening to godly people pray. It was a praying church because their pastor prayed.

As that gentleman prayed tonight, out of the heart that he prayed, I just thought, you know, that's how you learn to pray, isn't it? By listening and being in the midst of godly people who pray. So I just want you to know, I have been blessed, not just with your southern hospitality, but with your spiritual hospitality as well.

So thank you, thank you, thank you.

And when you came in tonight, you should have received an outline entitled, Praying for Revival. If you did not get one, raise your hand. The ushers will get them into your hands.

Just keep your hand up until they get one to you, along with an index card, okay? And so get that half sheet of paper and an index card. Everybody needs one of each. And on that index card, you understand a little bit more later, if I remember, I want you to write, and don't do this maybe until later in the service or at the end of the service, just one thing that you're believing God for in the next weeks during this season of time that your church is focusing on God doing astonishing works.

If you're here this morning, one thing that you'd like to believe God for that would just astonish you. It may be a wayward child. It may be a marriage that's on the rocks.

It may be going hard. I don't know what it is, but whatever it is, be specific. Because, well, I'll just tell you now, there are over 300 intercessors, and they're going to pray, each one take one, confidentially.

They are going to be praying by name for you every single day, that request between now and when the team leaves in May. I mean, they are serious intercessors, and that's what they do for our ministry. Actually, there's 6,000 of them, but there's over 800 of them that do just this, I think it is.

So they take it seriously. If you want someone that really knows how to pray to take seriously a burden on your heart, I'd suggest you write it on that index card, and you can fold it in half, and I'm going to make you work to do it. I'm not going to collect them.

You come put them on the front row or somehow get them to me at the end of the service. Maybe there's a better way. I don't know.

But anyway, just make sure we get them, and as soon as I get that into their hands, when I get back, they're going to start praying for you, okay? Southern hospitality, okay? I have to confess that your pastor told me tonight on the way into the church that this is... I can't believe he would say... He said this is redneck country. He did. I was commenting.

He has a truck. Another staff member, I think it was, drove up, and I saw some lady driving a truck up here. I said, what gives? He said, it's just redneck country, okay? So I want to show this video at the outset tonight, okay? Only because of what your pastor said, and see if anybody can identify, okay? Here we go.

I think you're 75% to you, Vaughn Ma. And 25% divided between the five of us. Gina, Grobar, myself, Tom, and the baby.

That makes 5% for each one of us. Billy, you're cheating yourself. If there's 25% divided among the five of you, that's 14% apiece.

Oh, no, listen, Bob. I wouldn't cheat you. You know I wouldn't.

Now, look. Look here. I'll show you.

Let me run this out here. Now, 25 divided by 5 is 5. You see, 5 won't go into 2, will it? No. But 5 goes into 25 five times, you see? You're wrong, Billy.

Now, I'm a pretty good mathematician. Now, 5 into 25, 5 won't go into 2, will it? No. But 5 goes into 5 once. Now, we didn't use the 2 before, so we'll bring it down here. Now, 5 into 20 goes four times. There you are. 5 into 25, 14. No, look, Bob. Now, let me prove it to you now by multiplication. 5 times 5. 5 times 5 is 25. Billy, I'm surprised you're learning. Huh? I'm surprised that you're learning. Now, I'll show you. 5 times 14 is 25. 5 times 4 is 20. 5 times 1 is 5. 25. That's it. No, no. Look, Bob. Look, you're wrong there because I'll prove it to you. We'll put down 5 fourteens here. 14, 14, 14. There. Now, I'll prove to you by addition that 5 fourteens is not 25. 4, 8, 12, 16, 20. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. There you are. Better brush up, Billy. I don't want to see you boys cheated. There's significance to that, believe it or not. No matter how many different ways we try to see a revival become a reality, there is really only one answer. And that answer is prayer. There's never been a revival in the history of the world that has either been given birth to, cradled, or nurtured in prayer. That's the one ingredient that is always there in every great movement of God. A number of years ago, I actually had the privilege of having dinner with Chuck Colson. And there's only about six of us sitting around the table. And he asked a question, and he said, How many of you know what an oxymoron is? How many of you know what an oxymoron is? That's great. That's good because I had no clue. Honestly, I thought it was a disease or something, okay? And he could tell I was clueless, so he began to try to help out a little bit. He said, Well, an oxymoron is a statement of opposites. I still didn't quite get it. He said, Well, let me give you an example of an oxymoron. He said, A good example of an oxymoron, he said, would be government intelligence. I mean, he could get away with that, okay? And then he could tell, he said, Another good example would be a legal brief. And I thought, I figured that one out real quickly. You know, there is no such thing as a legal brief. I had a wife, and I had three small children then. And that summer, I did discover what an oxymoron is. It was called a camping vacation. You know, there's another oxymoron. It's called Christian America. At one point, a statement of fact, but now a statement of opposites. But there's one other one. It's called a prayerless revival. It does not exist. A number of years ago, there was a famous prisoner in the former Soviet Union. His name was Petrovich. And Petrovich was just an avid thief. And he would steal, and they would capture him. They put him in prison.

They let him back out. And he would steal and capture, put him in prison, back out again. They did it multiple times.

And one time, they let him out of the prison. And they put him at work at a huge factory there in the Soviet Union. As he was coming to work on the first morning, the security guard stopped him at the gate and said, Petrovich, I just want you to know, I know who you are, and I'm going to be watching you.

That night, Petrovich comes out. He's got a wheelbarrow with a big bag in it. And he gets to the security guard, and he stops him.

He says, Petrovich, what's in that bag? He says, sawdust. He looks through it. Sure enough, it's just sawdust.

Next day, he goes to work. He comes back. Again, wheelbarrow, big bag.

Security guard stops him, looks. Just sawdust. Next night, same thing.

Bag, wheelbarrow, sawdust. Next night, same thing. Finally, it's driving that security guard crazy.

And he stops Petrovich. He says, look, I know you're stealing something. I know you're up to something.

Tell me, what is it? He said, you really want to know? He said, yeah. I said, okay, I'll tell you. I'm stealing wheelbarrows.

You know, I chuckled at that. And then my heart was penetrated with the reality that the all-time thief of the universe, the enemy himself, Satan, has been stealing right before our very eyes, the very foundation of what is necessary for God to come in great power in the church. And that's prayer.

Now, I don't know about you, but I struggle with prayer. Big time. One of the things I struggle with is how do I know when I'm praying that I'm really praying the will of God? You ever struggle with that? And one of the ways you know this, one of the ways you know you're praying the will of God is when you're praying what? The Word of God.

Because the Word of God is never contrary to the will of God. And so in this whole area of praying for revival, I just said, Lord, how do I know when I'm praying for revival that I'm praying the will of God? He said, go to Isaiah 64. And so I did.

And in Isaiah 64, you will find what I believe to be the most powerful prayer for revival that you could ever imagine. And I love this passage in Isaiah 64. But as you begin to read it, you kind of say, what in the world are you saying, Isaiah? One of my favorite preachers is Chuck Swindoll because he uses word pictures so effectively.

What was no different in Isaiah's day when he was living in the midst of a group of people who were familiar with the ways of God, much like us, but no longer walking in the ways of God. And so he gives word pictures. It's literal, but he uses word pictures to help drive home to our hearts the understanding with clarity of what was the condition of that day.

And so what I want to do tonight really is just help us to have a template, just a pattern, if you will, that we can take home with us and pray through Isaiah 64 between now and perhaps when the team arrives. And let God take that biblical prayer and make it our prayer in the days ahead. So I want to invite you to stand

and I'm going to read through this passage again tonight, if you would stand again tonight, rather, and pay honor to the word of God that way.

And I'm just going to read through it quickly and then we're going to walk through this passage, see how far we get. I'll try and get all the blanks filled in. But here's the here's the prayer.

He says, oh, oh, that you would run the heavens and come down, that the mountains might fall down or quake at your presence. As when the fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes waters to boil to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations might tremble at your presence. And when you did awesome things which we looked not for, you came down and the mountains flowed down at your presence.

For from old no one hath heard or perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides you what you have prepared for them that steadfastly trust you. It says wait, but that wait is not a passive term. It's a very proactive term.

Unlike we think of it today, it means to steadfastly trust. Who does God meet with? You meet with him who joyfully work righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you're angry and we sinned in our sins.

We have a long time. Shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous thieves are as a polluted garment. We all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, taken us away.

There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses up himself to take hold of you. For you have hid your face from us and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. Oh, but now, oh, Lord, you are our father.

We are the clay. You are our potter. We are all the work of your hand.

Be not so terribly angry, oh, Lord. And remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please, look, we are all your people.

Your holy cities have become a wilderness. Zion's become a wilderness. Jerusalem a desolation.

You're holy in our beautiful house where our fathers praised you is burned up with fire. And all our pleasant things are laid waste. And wilt you refrain yourself for these things? Oh, Lord, will you keep silent and afflict us so terribly? I've never injected this like this tonight.

This afternoon in a leadership meeting, somebody asked a very important question while you're standing there. Somebody asked a very important question. And he said, Byron, revival always includes desperation.

How do we become desperate? And will God send revival without desperation? And as I was just really reading this passage again right now, it hit me. Look at the words of desperation. Behold, please.

It starts out with oh. You just sense, do you, the desperation in the heart of Isaiah? Why? I can't answer that. Here's what I'll tell you.

About a year and two years ago, this last summer, I was facilitating a revival forum on the topic of revival. Jim Cimbala from Brooklyn Tabernacle, Erwin Lutzer from the Moody Church, Dr. Richard Owen Roberts, a historian on revival, and a young Reformed blogger by the name of Colin Hanson were sitting on the panel. And at the end of some of the questions we interacted on, I had a Q&A time with about 400 pastors sitting out there in the audience at this pastor's conference.

And at the end of that time, one man raised his hand. And he looked like an African American. He was a black individual.

And he raised his hand. The final question, he said, I've got a comment and then I have a question. And I said, OK.

I took the mic to him. He said, I'm from Uganda. We've had revival in Uganda.

About five years ago, God moved dramatically through our nation. But it was a result of devastation, horrible atrocities and devastation. We're now turning our prayers to America that you will experience revival, knowing that if America experiences revival, it will impact the world, including Uganda.

And he said, that's my comment. He said, here's my observation and then my question. God will send revival always, either through devastation or desperation.

What are you doing to make sure it's desperation in America and not devastation? None of us had an answer. But that question is still an impetus in my heart. It's helped me launch one cry and a pulse of other things.

I just said I don't want devastation. And at some level, it's put some desperation in my heart to know that my grandchildren, all ten of them, seven and under, could experience devastation if I do not do whatever I can to try to bring desperation to God's people in America. So, Lord, take this cry of desperation from Isaiah.

Make it our cry of desperation in all of our hearts. In these coming days, I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Verse 1. We're going to walk through this. You may be seated. Verse 1. Oh, that you would run to heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

Now, I said there are word pictures here. If you were to go to the nearest... I said this the other day out in the middle of America. If you go to the nearest mountain... And I can't even think where there is one within five... That's easy here.

If you were to go to the nearest mountain and you were to stand before that mountain and you were to say, Mountain, be removed. It's not that God couldn't do it. He could.

But that's not likely what's going to happen. And it's really not what God is most concerned about, that a physical mountain be removed. Isaiah knew there were mountains in people's hearts, frankly.

He knew there were walls, obstacles standing between them and His presence, His coming down. And there may have been mountains of bitterness, or mountains of broken relationships, or unresolved conflict, or mountains of prayerlessness, or mountains of addictions, or mountains of lostness, or mountains... I don't know if there are mountains standing between God and His people and all He wants to do in giving

us His supernatural power and presence. So mark it down as you get to verse 1. As you're praying through this passage, pray for God's supernatural power and presence.

That He would do it, feeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think. That as His eyes do go to and fro throughout the whole earth, that He would show Himself mighty on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him. That He would do beyond anything that we could ever imagine.

That God would just display, as if He opened up the windows of heaven and came down His power to remove mountains. I asked this historian, Richard Owen Roberts, I referred to earlier one time, what does he see happening in our nation? His answer, I'll never forget. He went to Isaiah 61, 2, and 3, actually, and showed how the manifest presence of God we talked about this morning was removed from the nation.

And that's why Isaiah was so desperate. And that's why he said, Oh, that you would come down as if He's not there. And he told me there were two forms of the judgment of God.

I'd never thought of this before. One form of the judgment of God we are familiar with, aren't we? It's like Sodom and Gomorrah in response to evil or wickedness. God just comes and annihilates or destroys.

That's called an immediate form of the judgment of God. But there's another form of the judgment of God I'd never thought of. That's called a final form of the judgment of God.

It's a remedial form of the judgment of God where God, in response to sin, just gradually withdraws His presence in a remedial fashion from His people. Remember Romans 1? God gives them over. But that's just a remedial form.

God, in response to the sin, isn't just destroying. He's giving them over to His own end or destruction. Let me illustrate for you.

Mr. Roberts said he lives in the suburbs of Chicago at the time. He said he's going to work one day, and he noticed that there was a police car that was stationed at the entrance of this subdivision. He didn't think much about it, except when he came home at night, there it was.

Went the next morning, there it was. Next night, there it was. He said for a period of weeks, he said actually for six months, every morning, every night, there was this police car stationed at the entrance of this subdivision.

And then he said a headline in the newspaper caught his attention. It says, Crime diminishes to one-fourth. So he starts reading the article, and sure enough, there in that development, that subdivision, crime had dropped to one-fourth of what it was previously.

And he learned in the article that those residents just went and bought an old car and painted it like a police car and dressed it up and stationed it at the entrance, and crime drops to one-fourth of what it was previously. But don't miss the point. Wherever there is a presence of an authority, there's a restraint to evil.

Don't look puzzled. When a police car is behind you, I promise you, you may not be speeding. Don't you just intuitively slow down.

At least think about it. That's true, isn't it? But the authority, in a remedial sense, has left with His presence, and that explains how evil, to me, can be so rampant in our nation today. You say, how can this

be happening? How can we be where we are in the nation with the wickedness? Could it be? God's gradually withdrawn His presence and leaving us to our own.

Verse 2. It's when the melting fire burns, it causes the waters to boil. A word picture. What happens when water boils, among other things? It purifies, doesn't it? It cleanses.

So when I get to verse 2, and I'm praying through this passage, I say, oh God, I just pray for a purity among God's people. Because why? Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God.

We want to see God in His presence, but it takes purity. Who shall stand in His holy place? He that has what? Clean hands and a pure heart. The end of the commandment is love out of what? A pure heart and a clear conscience and a faith unfeigned.

So there's something about purity that brings the presence of God. So we need to be praying. God would just turn up the heat of His conviction in that boiling water of God's people, their hearts.

And He would turn up the heat of their conviction to where they can't stand it anymore. And the conviction becomes so intense that they have to respond and repent and turn back to God. Pray for purity among God's people.

It's interesting to me, over the years, the different ways when God turns up the heat of His conviction, how He touches hearts. Sometimes it's a very small thing. I remember one time, God convicted somebody of a 25 cent sin.

You say, oh come on Byron, that's heresy. God doesn't put monetary value. I know that.

But we were in Philadelphia. This obviously was years ago by the price. And somebody was convicted that one time they had taken two newspapers instead of one out of the newspaper.

He was just convicted he's a thief. So he picks up the phone the next morning. He calls the editor of the Philadelphia News.

He said, sir, I've stolen you from your company. Can I come see you? He got an appointment. He walks in there.

He says, look, I'm not trying to be a smart aleck. I just want you to know that God has convicted me. I've been a thief.

And it may seem like a small thing to you, but it's a huge thing to me because it stands between me and fellowship with God. And handed him a quarter to make restitution. The next day, on the front page of the second section, there's a picture of this gentleman.

And it has headlines, News Thief Repents. Tells a whole story of what God was doing in his heart and the church we were at, you know. And I thought, man, that's free advertising.

I mean, it cost him a quarter, but it's free advertising, you know. And what God can do in obedience. But it's not always 25 cents.

We were in Indiana one time, and there was a gentleman there who fled as a fugitive from Canada. He had a wife and three small children. And he knew to obey under the conviction as the waters began to boil

and his heart intensity grew.

He just knew he'd be miserable if he didn't obey. So he went back to Canada, turned himself in, and sure enough, it meant prison time. I'll never forget, about three years later, he got out of prison and he called our office.

And I just asked the question that we had all asked, would you do it all over again? He said, I'd do it all over again because when I was in prison, I was a free man. But when I was out of prison, I was in bondage and behind bars. That gentleman began to lead Bible studies, have influence throughout Canada.

He really could never come back to the states because of his police record. But just about three years ago now, he called and he said, I'm dying of cancer. My kids were all lived in the states.

The authorities let me come back to the states to visit my kids one last time. He stopped by our office. We took time to interview him.

And I asked him the question we did, would you do it all over again? Absolutely. I'd do it all over again. Separated from his kids and his grandkids, from them coming here anyway.

And he'd do it all over again. We need to pray for purity among God's people. It's amazing when the purity takes place, the presence comes.

Hey, verse 3. I was puzzled when I first read this verse. When he said, look, God, You did awesome things which we looked not for. Another version said, I read today for the first time, beyond all expectation.

But here's the point. I asked myself, look, Isaiah, this godly man, why were you not looking for great things? And it hit me. It really doesn't say he wasn't looking for great things.

It just weren't necessarily the things he was looking for. I want to tell you folks, something that I think would withhold the presence of God and stay His presence upon us and His hand of power and might upon us is if we put Him in a box and say, you know, if revival is going to come here to First Baptist Powell, then this is going to have to happen and that's going to have to happen. And this is what it will look like.

And I don't think it will ever be contrary to the Word of God or it's not revival. But it could be extra biblical. And I think what Isaiah is saying, God did all these things.

They weren't a matter of right or wrong. I just weren't expecting it to look like this. And the danger is that we would put God in a box and whatever He did 20 years ago, that's what it's going to look like this year.

God tailors every mood of His Spirit to the needs of our heart, to the needs of that congregation, to the needs of our family. And I'm just praying that we will keep our eyes marked down. Pray that we will keep our focus on Christ.

And however Christ wants to reveal His glory, His personage in our midst, God, You just have Your way in that. And it may not look exactly like You think it will. It may not be a full building.

It may be that we have to move to a larger building. We don't know. I have a dear friend.

His name is Gerard Dettoy. Actually, he joined our ministry and he's out of Canada. What we're doing up there.

But he goes around the world. He's based in Vancouver. But he grew up in South Africa.

And that's where a lot of his ministry takes place today, okay? So, he's out of college. He's getting ready to go to seminary. And he says, God, how can I prepare for seminary? And he says, Like the Lord told me to go up into the mountains where there's godly prayer warriors.

These black men who just know how to meet with God and seek God and hear from God. Go spend some time and fast and pray with them. So, he did for about two weeks.

Then he went off to seminary. And he got out of seminary. And he says, God, what next? Go back to that mountain, Gerard.

And get with those men and be with them until God leads them and tells you what they think is next for you. He said he was there for about six weeks. Much of that time fasting and praying and just trying to hear from God.

And one day, one of those men came to him and said, Gerard, we've been praying. We believe that you need to launch your ministry about 500 miles south of here. There's a host family there that will keep you.

There's a church there. And have a series of meetings beginning on such and such a date. So, Gerard, he told me he fasted for 11 days leading up to that time.

He got there to that church or that home early and met the host mother or the host wife and husband. I guess that's the way it all works, isn't it? Husband and wife and settled in a little bit. Then he said he went to the church two hours early just to pray.

And he's there on his knees. And an hour and a half before the service, he continues to pray. And an hour before the service, he continues to pray.

And about a half hour before the service, he's praying. He looks around. Nobody's there.

And he said about 7 o'clock, the service was to start. And he looked up and nobody else was there. And he thought, well, maybe I had the time wrong.

Maybe it's 7.30, 7.15, 7.30, 8 o'clock. Nobody there. Nobody shows up.

And he says, God, I don't understand it. These are the godliest people I know. They said this is what You wanted for me to launch my ministry.

Lord, what is going on? And he says, like God said to him, Gerard, who are you doing this for? So Gerard opened in prayer. Sang some songs. I guess he took an offering.

He preached his message. Gave an invitation. Did a benediction.

And nobody was there. Because he did it for Jesus. Went home.

The host man met him at the door and said, how did it go tonight, Gerard? He said, oh, great. He says, God was there. He said, how many people came? Gerard said he wasn't smart enough to say four.

God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Him. He said, well, nobody. Well, what did you do? I sang.

I prayed. I preached. I gave an invitation.

And nobody was there? No, because I did it for God. That man was lost. He was influential in the community.

He couldn't sleep that night. So he woke up his wife and said, honey, I can't sleep. And she said, what's the matter? He said, it's that preacher downstairs.

Well, what do you mean? Well, you don't know what he did tonight. Well, what did he do tonight? Well, he sang and he prayed and so what? But nobody was there and he did it anyway because he did it for God. That wife led her husband to the Lord that night.

By the end of that crusade, 46 people came to Christ. And Gerard told me just several years ago he went back and there's a flourishing church of 450 people where it began really when he preached to nobody. You talk about keeping your focus on Christ.

When God did great things which we looked not for. Verse 4. Eyes have not seen nor ears heard, neither has the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that steadfastly trust Him. That's repeated obviously over in Corinthians.

We always think that's talking about heaven. It's not. It's going back to Isaiah 64.

He's saying, look, eyes have not seen nor ears heard. I just get to that verse. I say, pray for an increased faith in God.

I believe with all of my heart, okay, folks, that if we were to take these screens somehow tonight and we were to begin to make a list of everything we've ever seen God do. Everything we've ever heard about God doing. Everything we've ever read and throughout history we've seen God do or heard God do.

And we were to collectively put that on the list. Our eyes still will have not seen or ears will not have heard all that God could do on behalf of those who steadfastly trust Him. I believe that.

Somebody asked Helen Keller one time, is there anything worse than not having sight? And she said, yes, there is. Sight without vision. What are you believing God for in these coming weeks that is impossible apart from God? I've just been convicted in the last few days.

Somebody said, you need to write stories on impossible things you've seen God do. And I do. That's unbelievable.

I mean, I could amaze you in some of the unbelievable, unexplainable, supernatural things God has done. But not in the last six months. And I tell our staff that the hand of God isn't evident.

That He's not doing things we can't explain. That I don't want anything a part of it. And I'm crying out, oh God, I need to see your hand.

Not for the sensationalism. Not for the excitement of it all. Just to know that God is doing His work.

I'm sick and tired of the explainable in our nation. Where is God? That when people stand back and say, all I can say is, God did this. Let's go to verse 5. What does it say? Yeah, verse 5. He meets with those

that rejoice.

We did that tonight. Singing thankfulness, etc. And those that remember Him in His ways.

So I get that verse and just pray for a proper view of God. That we'd remember Him in His ways. I find that interesting that Isaiah is saying that.

Because you remember back in a verse I'm sure you're familiar with. Passage in Isaiah 6. You remember He says at the beginning of that chapter. In the year that what? King Uzziah died.

I saw also the Lord. How many of you can remember? You have to be really old like I am. How many of you can remember where you were when President John F. Kennedy was shot? Yeah, so can I. I can tell you the exact chair in junior high band class or whatever.

Where I was sitting the moment I heard the news. How many can tell you exactly where you were when the Twin Towers was bombed? Can't you just tell exactly the moment? That's the same scene here. Look, the nation.

King Uzziah had died. Everybody remembered where they were. How it happened.

They were just stunned. Yet in the midst of that loss and that trauma. They said they saw something else.

They saw the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the temple. And the cherubims cried out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. And then, two verses later is it? He says, Woe is me for I am done.

I am a man of unclean lips. Jump over to Isaiah 57.15. Not literally, but just in your mind here. Where it says, Thus says the high and the lofty one.

The one who inhabits eternity. He says, I dwell in a high and lofty place with Him also. Who is of a broken and contrite spirit to revive the heart of the broken ones.

And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Now get the pattern here. In Isaiah 6, he sees God for who He is.

And then he sees himself for who He is. Woe is me. In Isaiah 57, he sees God as the high and lofty one for who He is.

And all of His holiness and purity and glory. And all of His majesty and everything that He is. And then what? He dwells someplace else.

Not just there, but with those who see themselves for who they are. With a broken and contrite spirit. And the same thing is here in verse 5 and verse 6. Because in verse 5, it says, He meets with those who remember Him in His ways.

And immediately following that. For we are all as an unclean thing. And all our righteousness are as filthy rags.

And our iniquity, like the wind, has taken us away. What happens? The moment he sees God for who He is. He sees himself for who He is.

And like David, I am poor and needy. Folks, we desperately need to see ourselves and all of our neediness. But we can't until we get a picture of God.

That's why when the team comes, you'll notice early on. We're just going to paint a picture of God and who He is. Why? Well, we want to exalt Him.

But more than that, we won't know our hearts until we see His. We'll see ourselves for who we are. And then we'll become desperate.

And then we'll become needy. And then we'll begin to cry out. You know, one of the godliest men I have ever met in my life is the father of the founder of our ministry.

He was an evangelist, saved under Billy Sunday, started a ministry. Just was a worship leader for a while with a traveling evangelist that was well-known. Then started his own evangelistic ministry.

One of the godliest people I know. And I'll never forget, several years ago, when he was in his 80s. He drove up to Michigan from South Carolina.

And he said, Byron, I want to go to lunch. And we went to lunch. And when we sat down, when we sat down, I noticed the tears started to come from his eye.

And then I noticed he just began to weep. And the waitress came. And she just walked away.

And he just began to cry out loud. And then he looked up at me. And he says, oh, Byron, he said, the closer I get to the judgment seat of Christ, the more wicked I see I really am.

And I thought, this is one of the godliest people I know. But then my mind raised to the apostle Paul. You remember early in his journey.

I used to think the older I got and the more mature I got in my walk with Christ, the easier things would come. And I'd feel pretty good about myself. Anybody as old as I am that says that ain't true, it doesn't happen that way.

And that was true with this evangelist. The older he got, the more mature, the more he saw God for who he was. And Paul, early in his ministry, said, I am a sinner.

And then you remember, he says, I am the least of all saints. And then in Timothy, at the end of his ministry, he said, I am the chief of sinner. How did he go from being a sinner to the chief of sinner? By seeing God more and more as he grew older for who he is.

So we get a proper view of God. We get a proper view of ourselves. And then in verse six, seven, pray for others to pray.

He says here, there is no one that stirreth up himself that call upon God to take hold of God, another version says. I read that and I thought, wow, here's Isaiah with his model prayer on revival. And here he is, he feels all alone.

He feels like he's himself. There's nobody else that's crying out. There's nobody else that's praying.

So I just thought, I'll just pray for others to pray. That that wouldn't be the case with us. That wouldn't be the case today.

And so I do. When I pray through this passage, I just say, oh God, would you just raise up an army? And I'm praying for here. God would raise up a host of people, an army of people that would begin to seek him.

You have a prayer coordinator. I don't know how God's going to lead this church in the coming days to pray. I don't really care how it is.

I just pray that God will give direction and show. And when he does, that many will enter into and pray and become prayer warriors for what God wants to do. I was in Singapore one time and one of my missions trips with one of my with my daughter at the time.

And and we were preaching and doing this deal. And somebody came up to me after service and said, I want to invite you to the Friday night prayer meeting over here on the other side of Singapore or whatever. And I said, great.

What time does it start? He said ten o'clock at night. I said, OK, when does it finish? He said six the next morning. I said, OK, what am I going to say? No, I'm not going to go do it.

You know, so we went. And here's what I discovered. They spent most of their time praying for a revival.

In America. So I met with the leader and I said, sir, I just have a question. I said, how long has this prayer meeting been going? Oh, about 10 years.

I said he always had about 50 or so people. Oh, we used to have about 80 or so. And he said that we keep doing and growing back up again.

He said, yeah, we've got about 50 all night long, every Friday night for 10 years. Yes, sir. And then I asked him, I said, do you always pray so much for America? It's because there's some Americans sitting there.

Oh, no, sir. We prefer America most of the time because we realize if God sends revival to America, it will impact the world. And I'm sitting here leading a revival ministry.

I ask myself, when's the last time I prayed all night? And these people on the other side of the world are praying all night long every Friday night for revival in my country, not theirs. Something's wrong. I've just been praying, God, when you raise up some Singaporeans here, that you would put it on their hearts.

And I'm not trying to put you on a guilt trip. The point isn't that they prayed all night on Friday night. The point is they said, God, how do you want us to pray? And they obeyed.

That's it. The same thing is true here. When you get to verse 8, is that where we are? Yeah, verse 8. Well, he says, we are the clay and you are the potter and we are all the work of thy hands.

We talked about this this morning a little bit. But pray for surrendered lives, that we would be like clay, pliable in the hand of the potter, you know, that we could be that moldable and that he could shape us, that that's the type of surrender, that however his hands want to move and shape our lives, that we'd be willing to do it and be that subject to him as clay is in the potter's hand, okay? I told you this morning about one man I met that was really surrendered. And I want to tell you about another one.

I took my oldest son on a mission trip to Romania right after the fall of communism, okay? And so we entered into Romania. And you know all the stories in post-communism, how dark it was and so forth. But now how glorious gospel was starting to intrude.

And so we went through this series of meetings. And, I mean, it was in December again. And it was rainy. It was cold. And just like I always heard stories about but didn't know if it was really. People were standing outside looking in the windows just wanting to hear anything about Jesus.

And that was just fascinating. But on the final night, the pastor of that church, his name was Joseph. He said, I want you to come over to my home after the service tonight.

And I want to have one last meal together. So we did. And this Joseph, by the way, he was in Romania in the days of communism and led an underground church movement and revival movement in the days of communism.

And he was arrested multiple times by Ceaușescu's regime. And he was beaten and persecuted severely. And finally, one time, they brought him into the authorities and said, Look, Joseph, we're going to kill you.

And Joseph said, Go ahead. And when you do, my blood will be like martyr's blood on everything I've ever written. And they said, We know that.

That's why we haven't killed you today. But we can get rid of you. We're going to exile you.

They did. He came to America. Six weeks after I was here, I got to meet Joseph.

He still had scars on his face. So we just asked him that question that I talked about this morning with Larry Burkett. And we said, Joseph, you haven't been over here very long, but is there anything in the West that concerns you since you've been here? He said, There is.

We said, What is it? He said, I fear you've dangerously exchanged some terms. We said, Well, give us an example. He used the word commitment an awful lot here in the West.

And he said, I fear you've exchanged it for the word surrender. And the best way I know how to convey to you what Joseph was telling us is if you were to take a legal contract and you were to read it and you were to turn over and look at all the fine print and sign your name on the bottom line, that's commitment. But if God were to hand us a blank sheet of paper and say, Here, sign your name and let me fill in all the blanks, that's surrender.

So you can imagine when I went there to be in his church and this man of God invited us over to his meal that final night and we walked up to his villa and he stopped and he said, Oh, by the way, this is where Ceausescu lived when he used to come to our community. I'm now living three doors down. He's no longer here.

We ate a meal that night and put our coats on. We're getting ready to leave and walk out the door. And I noticed that Joseph went to the kitchen.

And he came back out and he was carrying a teacup. And we used this and he was carrying a teacup and he said, I want to invite you to sit back down at the table. There was four of us.

He said, I want to tell you a story. So we sat back at the table and he held up a teacup and he began to tell a story. He said there was a pastor and wife who in the days of communism was captured and they took him to Siberia.

And en route to Siberia she escaped, but he, like so many before him, lost his life there in Siberia. But she came to live with us as a widow and we took care of her. But several years ago she moved about a ten hour train ride away to Bucharest.

But then she called about a year or so ago and said, Joseph, Joseph, I'm dying, I'm dying. Would you and Elizabeth come see me one more time before I die? So Joseph and Elizabeth took the train ride. They went to Bucharest and they were sitting around the table.

They were having a meal and Joseph was taking a drink of tea when that widow stopped him and said, Joseph, Joseph, do you know whose cup that is? Joseph, that was my husband's cup. I took it with me when I escaped. Joseph, that's a martyr's cup.

I want you to have it. Would you take the martyr's cup? That night Joseph held up that cup and he said this to us. He said, tonight I want to invite you to take a drink of the martyr's cup, realizing this, those who are most responsible for the fall of communism are not the strategists in Washington, D.C., but those whose bones lie in the cold snows of Siberia.

That night as I took a drink of the martyr's cup, it was like God was saying to my heart, Byron, those who will be most responsible for the fall of evil in the West will also be those who are willing, if necessary, to drink of the martyr's cup. That's surrender. We've heard a lot of 9-11 stories.

I doubt you've heard this one, but a former staff member of ours had started a sister ministry over in Pennsylvania at a camp near Harrisburg. So he was telling me right after 9-11, he says, Byron, you've got to hear this story. And there's a friend of his that had a private airplane on that Tuesday morning, and he was from Lancaster, and he was flying back to Lancaster when the tower radioed him and said, Roger, Roger, you need to land immediately at Harrisburg.

And he just responded and said, No, no, I just want to go a little bit further to Lancaster. And about a minute later, again the radio, Roger, Roger, you need to land immediately at Harrisburg. And again he replied, No, no, I just want to go a little bit more to Lancaster.

And he said a minute later, they radioed again and said, Roger, Roger, look out your right wing. And there was an F-16. He said, I will land immediately at Harrisburg.

And I chuckled at that, and then I thought, you know, God is more powerful than all the F-16s in the universe, isn't He? Why is it when He speaks, we just, No, no, no, I just want to go a little bit more. I just want to surrender as the moment God speaks. He said, God, we trust You.

We're going to land in our walk with You. Well, we get to the next verse where it says, We beseech You, we beg of You, we are all Your people. Pray for urgency.

Just pray for that same sense of urgency. Oh, Lord, be not so terribly angry. Behold, please, look, we are all Your people.

Just pray for urgency. That God would just give us this, as we talked earlier, this desperation. I had a seminary student come into my office right out of seminary one time.

And he just wanted to talk about revival, you know. And so we just talked for a while. And then he said, Can we pray before I leave? And I said, Sure, let's pray.

He went prostrate on the floor in front of my desk. And as he prayed, I'll never forget, he said, Oh, God. He said, I want revival more than I want to breathe.

And I just sat there saying, I'm not there, Lord, you know. But that's the kind of desperation, isn't it, that God wants us to have. To realize His presence, His breath is more important than me even having breath.

Leonard Ravenhill, I think the most powerful revivalist in the last 75, maybe 100 years. I got blessed to get to know him just a little bit before he went home to be with the Lord. I think he was, say, 84 years old.

Prolific author and writer. Why revival? Terry's a number of books like that. On his deathbed at 4 o'clock in the morning, he penned his final words.

And it was in a poem, and it went like this. Lord, engage my heart today with a passion that will not pass away. Now torch it with Thy holy fire that never more shall earth's desire invade or quench the heaven-born power.

He said, I would be trapped within Thine holy will, Thine every holy purpose to fulfill, that every effort of my life shall bring rapturous praise to my eternal King. And then he said, I pledge from this day to the grave to be Thine own unquestionable slave. I thought, wow, on my deathbed, that kind of urgency, that kind of passion, that kind of desperation.

I want that until the day I die. I wrote something down. I twittered something the other day.

I don't know if I can say it again, but it was something like this. If I focus on looking back in my life and what God has done, instead of looking forward to what He wants done, I'm done. And some of you that are older, isn't there a tendency to look back and say, well, look how God may have used me a little bit here and there.

And the moment we get to that place, not forgetting we need to rejoice in His goodness, but if we aren't looking forward to what He wants to do, we're finished. Leonard Ravenhill looked forward to what God wanted to do until his very dying breath. Urgency.

Verse 9, 10. Pray for our cities. Jerusalem is a desolation.

Zion is a desolation. He's talking about the cities he's praying for. A number of years ago, and I'm just going to move quickly here.

A number of years ago, I was in Denver, Colorado. I'm immediately following the morning service. Somebody came up to me.

It's the strangest thing. He opened up his Bible. I can't imagine people really do this.

And he pulled out a clipping of the Denver Post, okay? Dated 1904 and 05. The guy's carrying it around in his Bible. And here, I want you to have this, he said.

And I want to read to you just the headlines and the first couple paragraphs of the Denver Post dated 1904 and 05. And Denver wasn't an exception to many cities at that time. Headlines.

Entire city pauses for prayer at the high tide of business as the soul rises above sordid thoughts. A remarkable outburst of gospel sentiment is provoked by revival. Evangelist Chapman and his associates

cause a hush to spread over the populace while the noonday meetings draw congregations unprecedented numbers.

For two hours at midday, all Denver was held in a spell. The marks of trade were deserted between noon and two o'clock this afternoon. All worldly affairs were forgotten and the entire city was given over to the meditation of higher things.

The spirit of the Almighty pervaded every nook. Going to and coming from the great meetings of thousands of men and women radiated this spirit which filled them. And a clear Colorado sunshine was made brighter by the reflected glow of the light of God shining on happy faces.

Seldom has such a remarkable sight been witnessed. An entire great city in the middle of a busy weekday bowing before the throne of heaven and asking and receiving the blessing of the king of the universe. That's just a little over a hundred years ago.

Can you imagine the Knoxville headlines? Entire city pauses for prayer at the high tide of business as the soul rises above sordid thoughts. Can you imagine newspaper headlines all across the nation? It happened before, it can happen again. Pray for our churches, our holy and our beautiful house, for our fathers praised thee as burned up with fire, verse 11.

Pray for the church. Let me just tell you how I pray for the church. I love to pray in acronyms.

I pray for my family in acronyms. I pray an acronym every morning that I rise up. I pray an acronym when I go to sleep.

I pray acronyms. That means I'm old. I've got to remember it.

Here's how I pray for the church. Oh God, would you take the cold, callous, complacent and carnal hearts in the church and oftentimes in my own heart. And God, would you help us to get honest and humble us.

And God, help us to be hungry and fill us with the hope of what you can do on the age. And then I get to you and I say, oh God, give us an understanding of your ways and help us to see the ugliness of our sin. And God, help us to have unity because how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

And then I get to the R and I say, God, help there to be repentance and reconciliation and restitution and regeneration that leads to many conversions on the sea and consciences cleared and conflicts resolved and the great commission embraced so that there can be a whole harvest that takes place and that we have a heavenly mindedness and may it be on earth as it is in heaven and most of all may be you honored. I just pray through the acronym of church. Anybody can do that.

Put your own words to it. Powerful sequence there, however. Pray for the church when I'm not out on the road on Sunday mornings.

And I know I can do this because of my travels. But, you know, I just kind of, in my mind, go through from the East Coast to the West Coast in between the pastors I know and churches I know. And I just pray for them on Sunday mornings.

I mean, lots of them. From Maine to San Diego and David Jeremiah to Hayes Wicker and First Baptist Church of Naples to Bob Bakke in Minneapolis to Mark Driscoll. I don't care.

All over the country, just pray. You can do that. From the few or however many you know.

And then finally on verse 12, Wilt thou refrain thyself from these things, O Lord? Wilt thou continue to afflict us very so? Just pray for a release of God's mercy. That He won't refrain Himself. That He'll just release His mercy.

You know, the Bible says He's rich in mercy. He's abundant in mercy. He's bountiful in mercy.

His mercy endures forever. His mercy is everlasting. But there's this one little phrase in Psalm that says He delights in giving mercy.

I hang on to that big time, okay? But I picture this reservoir of mercy in heaven. And God delighting to give His mercy. And I say, God, would you release that reservoir of abundant and bountiful and plenteous mercy that you have in heaven.

Maybe we can sum it up this way. Little prayer, little power. More prayer, more power.

Much prayer, much power. Little prayer, little power. More prayer, much more power.

Much prayer, much power. Here's what I want to ask you to do in a moment. I'm going to ask you just to raise your hand to Him.

Not to me, but from your heart, but physically. Raise your hand to Him in a moment if you will make this commitment. I will ask God how He wants me to pray in these coming days.

And however He leads me, I'll obey. That's simple. He may ask you to get up an hour earlier for these next six weeks and pray.

He may ask you to get on the phone and call somebody and just pray over the phone. He may want you to set up a conference number and get a group of people praying together every day on a conference number like I do every Tuesday night at 8 o'clock with people from across the nation. He may ask you to start a prayer meeting over lunch and fast over prayer and get people to pray with you over lunch.

He may ask you to open up your home between now and the summit and however the church leads. And it's prayer efforts and entering into that. He may ask you to come and just walk around this church building regularly or walk in this auditorium.

He may want you to be just simply... I believe He wants you to be an Abe. You say, Byron, what do you mean Abe? I've never met Abe, but I heard about Abe. Apparently Abe was somebody that graduated from seminary and he said, God, what do you want from me? And God led Abe to just get in a car and travel across the nation.

And wherever God would lead him, he would pray. He'll go into a town, he'll go to church parking lots and he'll just pray for revival in those churches. He'll go in front of homes where he knows there's deacons or leaders or pastors and he'll pray for those pastors.

He'll go in front of businesses where he knows there's Christian businessmen and he'll pray for revival in those Christian businessmen. He made it his life mission to basically say, God, however you lead me, I'll obey. And he did.

And the reason I know so much about Abe is somebody came to me, a Canadian revivalist one time, and just said, Byron, have you ever met Abe? And I said, no. He said, well, I haven't either, but I've always heard in different places where we've been, where you saw God move so powerfully, sooner or later somebody will come up to me and say, did you know Abe was here? Did you know Abe was here praying? And I still not met Abe, but I'll tell you, I've often wondered if Abe hasn't preceded us some places where God moved. That he hasn't been on this church parking lot.

I don't know. In front of your home. I have no clue.

I don't know. But we don't need to wait on Abe to come. We can be Abe's, can't we, for six weeks, eight weeks, until the team gets here at the end of April.

However God leads you to pray. Pray.

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