

A Prayer for Revival

by David Guzik

Revival is the restoration of life and vitality, a work among the church that begins with awakening Christians and convicting them of their worldly lives.

Duration: 51:23

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Habakkuk 3:1-2, Matthew 6:33, James 4:10

Topics: "Revival Prayer", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares two accounts of revival that occurred in different locations. The first account takes place in Kola Rain, Northern Ireland, where a schoolboy was so convicted of sin that he couldn't continue in his classroom. The teacher sent him home with another converted boy, and unexpectedly, 300 thieves came to hear the gospel and many were converted. The second account is from Halifax, England, where a woman praying for her husband's salvation suddenly finds him at a prayer meeting. The preacher emphasizes that revival comes from God's mercy, not from man's efforts, and that it begins with the leaders of the church getting serious and consecrated to God.

Transcript

Habakkuk chapter 3, verse 2, actually verses 1 and 2 is what we're going to look at this evening. A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, on Shignanath. O Lord, I have heard your speech and I was afraid.

O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy.

The first two chapters of the book of Habakkuk give us the prophet having sort of what we might call a question and answer time with God. He asks God a question and God gives him an answer. He does that a few times in the first couple of chapters.

Now that God has answered Habakkuk, the prophet brings the book to a close in chapter 3 with a prayer. And the prayer is very simple. He says, O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid.

O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. Habakkuk simply prayed for revival. He was well aware how God once worked.

He was aware of how God's people once responded to the moving of the Lord. And Habakkuk wanted to see that again. And so he says, revive your work in the midst of the years.

I've been thinking a lot and reading a lot and hearing a lot in the past several months about revival. I think it's very important for us to understand what revival is and what it isn't. Habakkuk prayed for revival, but what was he praying for? Well, first of all, we should understand that revival is not a week of meetings held by an evangelist.

That's a very common way that revival is used in our English vocabulary. You can drive by a church and see a sign and it might say revival this week. Or an evangelist may schedule it and say, we're going to have a revival, you know, this and such week.

Well, there may be a certain sense in which a revival meeting is when evangelists comes to town and they have special music and there's a special emphasis on conversion and rededication. That may be a cultural meaning of the term revival, but it's not a biblical meaning. J. Edwin Orr speaks of a man who told him, Dr. Orr, we had a revival last winter and nobody got revived.

The man told Dr. Orr how they hired an evangelist. They rented facilities, even described to him the budget that they had for public promotion and all the rest of it. But no one got revived.

Now, surely it's a curious thing in America that you can have a revival and nobody gets revived. But that's not what real revival is. Here's a definition from Webster's 1828 dictionary.

Revival, noun from revive. Return, recall or recovery to life from death or apparent death. As in the revival of a drowned person.

In other words, you have something that's dead or apparently dead. Doesn't really matter, does it? Whether it's dead or just apparently dead, it's in bad shape. And revival describes the coming of life again to that thing that was dead or apparently dead.

Here's another definition, the second one. Revival is return or recall to activity from a state of languor, as in the revival of spirits. Somebody's spirits are revived, they're picked up.

They're up when they used to be down. They used to be blue, but now they're happy. Here's a third definition.

Recall, return or recovery from a state of neglect, oblivion, obscurity or depression. As in the revival of letters or learning. If you talk about a revival of Christianity, you're talking about perhaps a time where Christianity and its truth and its strength is obscured, where it's in the background, but it's revived and brought into prominence again.

And then a fourth and final definition that Webster gave in his 1828 dictionary, that it was a renewed and more active attention to religion, an awakening of men to their spiritual concerns. Let me primarily say that revival is the restoration of life and vitality. It is not the creation of life and vitality.

It's the restoration of life and vitality. Therefore, revival, at least in its primary sense, is not conversion, is not awakening. Those are the outflow or the partners of revival.

In this sense, in its most primary sense, revival can only be a work among the church. If a sinner is dead in sin, there's nothing there to revive. There's something there to create.

And if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. All things have passed away and all things have become new. But if a Christian has life, has this new creation living inside of them, and it lapses into death or

apparent death, and let's not worry about whether it's dead or apparently dead, it's in bad shape, then life and vitality can be restored.

So, again, I want to point out that in this sense, at least in its primary sense, revival is not conversion or awakening. Those are the outflow or the partners of revival. It's primarily a work among God's people.

When Habakkuk prayed, Oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years, he was speaking about among the people of Israel. He didn't have in his mind the Babylonians coming to faith, nor the Syrians, nor the Egyptians. He had primarily in mind a work of God among Israel.

Now, revival, especially as we take a look at history, it's often accompanied by massively effective evangelism, a great number of conversions, and a general spiritual awakening among the lost. But I would say that those are the evidence of revival. They're not primarily revival itself.

Revival begins with awakening Christians and convicting them of their worldly and unconsecrated lives. I would have to say that I think that this is primarily one of the largest misunderstandings that there is about revival. There are many people with wonderful intentions and with great heart long for revival, but they primarily see revival as a work that God has to do outside of the church to bring people into the church.

I don't believe that that's where revival begins. In its primary sense, the work of revival is God doing something wonderful and powerful within the church itself. And then it spreads forth from outside of there.

Now, I think we would say that true revival, as we take a look at it in its great sense, true revival is a broad work. This is reflected by how Habakkuk uses this phrase. Look at it here in verse two.

Oh, Lord, revive your work. That speaks of a broad work. And that's a word important for Christian workers to remember.

Revival doesn't grow in the soil of congregational competition or the desire for personal glory, for personal fame, for personal income or credit. The longing after those things will always squelch revival. No, notice that prayer.

Revive your work. And the confession of many Christian workers would actually be that their prayer is, Lord, revive my work. No, I'm not saying that it's wrong to want your work revived, your own work.

But actually, revival has a broader vision than that. Revival has the vision. Oh, Lord, do a great work among us and them and them and them and among all the believers in the community.

Because oftentimes revival is sought out of selfish reasons. Lord, bring great revival and let me be known as a great revival leader. Well, that's just wickedness.

That's just a wicked heart right there. You're desiring to profit off of the work of God. No, the prayer really has to be revive your work.

And Lord, whatever part I am of your work, then revive me. But God, make it a lot bigger than just me. Begin with me, work in me, but extend it far out beyond me as well.

Charles Spurgeon, in preaching on this text, said this. Shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self or with party. And now pray, Lord, revive thy work.

And if thy work happened to be more in one branch of the church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do let thine own purposes be accomplished and let thine own glory come of it. And we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown.

Wouldn't it be remarkable if God said to a church or to a ministry, they said, well, I will bring revival to your community if you will remain completely forgotten and obscured in it. Will you still passionately pray for revival? Well, no, God, I don't want a revival if it's not going to exalt me. You see how important it is to pray, Lord, revive your work.

Now, at the same time, when we think of the broadness of the work of revival, we also have to consider, though, that revival has a very personal, immediate aspect. It is not wrong to pray, Lord, revive me. Because we need to pray that that's where revival needs to begin.

We too often blame the church for sin or corruption or laziness or prayerlessness or lack of spiritual power or whatever. And, you know, we forget when we blame the church for all of those things. We forget who the church is.

It's us. We are the church. Pray for personal revival and diligently search yourself.

God, revive me, not revive me in competition with other people, but Lord, revive me along with everyone else. And so you need to do a diligent check of your own life. If you will really and sincerely, with faith, pray this prayer, Lord, revive your work, then you're going to check your conduct.

Is your walk glorifying the Lord as it should? How about your private conduct, that conduct that the Lord alone sees? Does that glorify the Lord? How about your conversation, your speech? Is your speech profane or impure? Do you talk about Jesus with others? Have you seen it on the television? And it's very common these days. You know, when I was younger, I never recall ever seeing this. But all the time now on the news shows and all kinds of programs, you can call or write in and they'll send you a transcript of the news show that evening if you're interested in it.

Well, what if somebody were to throw down a transcript of everything you said in a day? And they poured over the transcript for evidence whether or not you were really a follower of Jesus Christ. Wow, this person talked about a lot of things today. Look at all that they talked about.

And they're pouring over it. You have, you know, investigators pouring over every line. And it's all in that legal stationary, you know, double space.

They can make notations and all the rest of it. And all the lines are numbered because it's a great investigation. And they're saying we can find hardly any evidence that this person is a Christian based on what they said in this day.

Does your conversation glorify Jesus Christ? Then not just checking your conduct, not just checking your conversation. Check your communion. Are you living a growing, abiding life with Jesus? There's a great passage I turn to time and time again, not a passage as if it's a passage in the Bible.

It's a writing from a guy named Alan Redpath. And it's a set of self-examination questions that he uses. He says one night at his church, they were having an all night prayer meeting or at least a late night of prayer.

And they drew up these questions for self-examination. And I like to read those often because I think we should search ourselves often. We should say, search me, O God.

And one of the things he says in there when he challenges us to examine our own lives, he says, do I enjoy my prayer life? And then he says, that's a OK, that's a tough question on its own. But then he follows it up with the real heart sticker. Did I enjoy it today? Well, I just don't want to know if you pray.

Do you enjoy your prayer life? And did you enjoy it today? That's your communion. Do you have a living, growing, abiding life with Jesus? Friends, when we talk about, Lord, revive your work, we're talking both about a very broad work, but we're also talking about a work that's well, that's just about as big as what can fit in your seat. That's you.

A great old evangelist named Gypsy Smith, he used to say, when you want to see revival, you get a chair, set it in a room, draw a circle in chalk. I guess he was used to floors that you could draw a circle in. Draw a circle in chalk around that chair, sit in the chair and say, Lord, bring revival and let it begin inside of the circle.

You see, that's that's where revival has to come. It has to come with both a broad work and understanding that, but it's also intensely personal and say, Lord, check my conduct, check my conversation, check my communion. You see, you can have personal revival, you can have a church revival.

But there have been many great works of community or national revival in history. That's sort of what Habakkuk refers to. Look at it again here in verse two.

Oh, Lord, I've heard your speech and was afraid. Oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. And if that wasn't enough, he repeats it in the midst of the years.

Make it known. You see, Habakkuk longs for God to do a work that's evident to everyone as a work of God. I want it to be done, Lord, in a time and place in the midst of the years, not just be able to say, oh, Lord, well, it just seems like you're doing a great work.

But to be able to say, well, look at this great thing God did in this great thing. And here's this life that was transformed. And this aspect of God's work to be very specific, that God's great revival would take place in a certain time and in a certain place, not just as an idea in somebody's head.

Not just as a heightened sense of enthusiasm among believers. Well, a heightened sense of enthusiasm is great. I'd rather have a heightened sense of enthusiasm than no enthusiasm, wouldn't you? But that's not necessarily revival.

Revival is when it is, when it's channeled in or when it exhibits itself in definite works. In 1949, Dr. J. Edwin Orr published his doctoral thesis, a work that earned him a Ph.D. at Oxford University. The title of the work was The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain.

It's a book I read fairly recently, and it's just one book among many where many remarkable examples of revival are recorded. What happens exactly? What Habakkuk is talking about in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years, make it known, or described very vividly in this book, that during these times of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christians are first revived and then the community is greatly touched. Here's an example.

In autumn of 1863, William Booth, who was the founder of the Salvation Army. William Booth wrote a letter to a friend describing God's work in Cradley Heath, a city of more than 20,000 people. Booth first spoke on a Sunday morning at the church, and the church was full.

It was too full. It was crowded, packed, comfortable. You know how a room can be crowded, packed, comfortable? That's how it was in that church.

And Booth began by calling on the leaders of the church to make a renewed consecration of themselves to God. You know where revival has to begin in a church. It begins among the leaders.

It begins with the leaders of the church getting serious and consecrated to God. And then after that, and I'm quoting Booth now, a gracious melting and breaking up of heart followed, each blessing a greater number throughout the chapel. Meetings were held each night throughout that week with many conversions.

And he gives one example that at the beginning of one of the prayer meetings, a very sturdy looking man, just a big, strong man. Now, he had been coming to the services every night, but he went away hardening his heart each night. But he came.

And at the very beginning of the prayer meeting, he jumped up onto the platform and he spoke out before the people. He said, do you know me? And all the praying men, it was a prayer meeting. The room was filled with praying men.

I said, yes, we know you. He said, what am I then? Man standing up on the platform. I said, what am I then? You know what they replied back to him? You're a backslider.

Well, then he said, I will be a backslider no longer. All of you come to Jesus with me. And then he fell into an agony of prayer to God to have mercy on him.

And indeed, the anguish and desire of his soul was too much for him, for he swooned away on the floor before us all. His wife was one of the first converted of the previous week, and only that evening sent up a request that God would save her husband, who was a poor, miserable backslider. About 30 that night were converted.

Isn't that remarkable? But it begins with a man like this who was not a new convert, but a backslider coming up and saying, I'll be a backslider no longer. Being honest. You know, putting away the pretense, well, I'll just kind of play it cool and I'll just repent quietly in my own heart and just work it out.

No, he said, I've been a backslider. I've been a hypocrite. You all know it and I know it.

Come to Jesus with me, he said. God greatly used William and his wife, Catherine Booth, in this great revival of 1859, 1860. There was a great work of God happening at Hayley in southern England in August of 1861.

William and Catherine Booth had a meeting at a church, but no actual conversions were reported on the first Sunday. They were kind of disappointed. You know, God had been doing a great work and they come to this one church and nothing really seemed to happen on the first Sunday.

So Monday night he spoke to the believers on hindrances to Christian labor and Christian joy. So something's wrong here. You know, everywhere else I go, something happens, but it's not happening

here.

So that was Sunday. Monday, he says, let's talk to Christians about hindrances. Well, after the regular meeting, they had a prayer meeting afterwards and after meeting and at that prayer meeting afterwards, nearly everybody who came to the service stayed for that prayer meeting.

Booth preached a second message and a woman made her way to what they called back then the anxious seat. Have you ever heard of the anxious seat or the anxious bench? It was something that they used in the early days when they first started giving altar calls and instead of calling people to come up and stand in front of an altar, they would say, if you feel conviction of soul, if you begin to feel anxious about your salvation, you come on up and sit on the anxious bench or in the anxious seat. And what would happen is typically somebody else would come along and personally minister to you if you were there at the anxious seat.

They said, here's a person seeking after salvation. Let's go minister to them and lead them to Christ. Well, this woman came and sat at the anxious beach, but waiting for someone to come and personally minister to him.

And she was saved that night. William Booth said that she that he hoped that this woman would be the first fruits of a glorious harvest. She was in and around that town over the next 18 months, seven thousand people were converted.

Five hundred were converted in the first six weeks. Now that's revival. That's an outpouring of the spirit of God.

But it began with Christians getting right. Christians hearing about hindrances that had to be put out of the way and then moving on from there. It's very interesting when you think about this, oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years, these these markers in time of place of what characterized some of the great revivals of history.

One of the evidence is a revival is a great conviction of sin, first in Christians and then of the unconverted. This conviction of sin brings them to Christ. Again, I'm quoting from this excellent book by J. Edwin Orr.

He talks about a high ranking army officer in Scotland who spoke of the conviction of sin in his Scottish town. Listen to this. He says, those of you who are at ease have little conception of how terrifying a sight it is when the Holy Spirit is pleased to open a man's eyes to see the real state of his heart.

Men who were thought to be and who thought themselves to be good religious people have been led to search into the foundation upon which they were resting and have found all rotten that they were self-satisfied, resting on their own goodness and not upon Christ. Many have turned from open sin to lives of holiness, some weeping for joy, for sins forgiven. It's a remarkable thing.

One of the great works of revival is God seems to open up a window on the soul and people who previously thought, well, you know, sure, I'm a Christian. Suddenly God shines his light upon their lives and they say, oh, I'm I may be a Christian, but if I am, I am a miserable Christian. I am not serving God at all.

I am not consecrated to him. And then their heart and mind is filled with how much Jesus Christ has done for them and how little their response. And they're just so convicted that they must get it right with Jesus.

That happens among believers, and then it happens also in a marvelous way among unbelievers, and it virtually compels them to come to Christ. And it doesn't matter. Rich, poor, noble, weak, you know, great job, no job.

Doesn't matter the race. It doesn't matter the education. It doesn't matter if a person is a fine, upstanding person in the community or if the person is a horrible sinner.

They come to a new recognition of their great need before God and have an absolute urgency to set it right or explains in his book about in the town of Coleraine, Northern Ireland. There was a schoolboy who was under so much conviction of sin that he couldn't go on in his classroom. I know what you're thinking.

You're thinking, well, this was just a classroom prank to get out of a test or something. Teacher, I'm so convicted of sin. Can I go home? Well, this little boy was he was so troubled by his own soul, by the state of his own soul, he just couldn't continue on.

And the teacher very mercifully sent the boy home in the company of another boy who was already converted. You know, Johnny, go take Billy home. Billy is under great conviction of sin.

Johnny, you're saved, boy. You go take him home. Well, on the way home, the two boys noticed an empty house and they stopped there to pray.

And the unhappy boy was saved. He found peace. He returned to the classroom immediately and he told the teacher, I'm so happy I have the Lord Jesus in my heart.

Now, could you imagine what that was like for the teacher? The boy leaves just tormented in heart and soul. It's written all over him. He can't even continue on in class.

And he comes back sometime later. And as he comes back, he just lets everybody know he goes, I have Jesus in my heart. Now, I'm so happy that testimony had such a striking effect on the class.

That boy after boy slipped out of the classroom and then the teacher pretty soon looked outside of the window and saw outside of the window boys kneeling all over the schoolyard, one by one, just praying them and God alone. The teacher was so convicted by this that the teacher asked that first converted boy to come and minister to him. The teacher came to Christ.

It raised such a stir on that day at the school that the administrators sent for pastors and ministers to come to the school and to minister to the students, to the teachers. And then when the parents came to pick up the kids to the parents, people were receiving ministry at that school until 11 o'clock that night. Now, you scratch your head, you say that that's not normal.

That's not everyday occurrence. That's great revival, a great work of the spirit of God. And I think we also have to remember this last line from verse two, that true revival is a work of great mercy.

It says there, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years, make it known in wrath, remember mercy, have a good praise, knowing very well that they don't deserve revival. And so he prays for mercy. The idea is, Lord, I know that we deserve wrath, but in the midst of your wrath, remember mercy and send revival among us.

You know, sometimes we think that we earn revival. Prayer plays an absolutely pivotal place in God's work of revival. But don't think for a moment that great prayer earns revival.

No, not at all. You can't earn revival through diligent prayer or faithful service or by surviving trials. That's nonsense.

Revival is a work of great mercy in the midst of wrath. Remember mercy. We need to realize that none of us deserve a great outpouring of God.

Not the one time this is a great rebuke to ourselves. Sometimes we think, well, you know, Lord, I'm so spiritual and I've got such a heart for spiritual things. I'm obviously way more spiritual than the people around me, Lord.

Matter of fact, could you just bring them up to my level? That'll really spread revival all over the place, Lord. You know, in that kind of heart, Spurgeon said about that, he said sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the brethren. It does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us and the means that God has given us, the church generally, there are blessed exceptions.

The church generally has done so little for Christ that if Ichabod were written right across its brow and it were banished from God's house, it would have its just desserts. Therefore, we cannot appeal to merits. It must be mercy.

We don't deserve such a great outpouring. Even the most godly, the most spiritual, the most spiritually exalted and mature among us, we don't deserve it. Now, on the one hand, that is a great rebuke to our pride, but on the other hand, is a glorious open door into heaven because you don't have to deserve it.

It's not a matter of you getting holy enough for revival to come. It's just a matter of you passionately pursuing Jesus, him being alive and revived in your heart and then praying, praying, praying, knowing that none of it earns God's outpouring of the spirit. You're only appealing to his mercy.

You know, part of this great display of mercy is the spiritual awakening of a community and God mercifully and powerfully draws sinners to himself. I mean, a rank sinner has done nothing to deserve God's intervention in their life to draw him to himself. It's just all mercy.

And so when you say, Lord, in the midst of wrath, remember mercy, pour out that mercy upon the community, God, pour it out, bring people who have no business coming to you. You bring them to yourself, God. Do it wonderfully.

Do it dramatically. Now, again, many examples of this come from the second great awakening in Britain. Now, I'm quoting this not because this revival was unique among historical revivals.

It's just the book I read last. I mean, if you come to me in two months, I'll give you examples from a different book. But in West Bromwich, England, the first revival sermon in one community was preached to eight people.

Well, that's not much. Well, soon there was such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that a thousand people crowded into the hall and hundreds were turned away in the first three months. A hundred people were converted and joined that particular church in three months.

In another nearby town, there was such a work of God that they had to have church in the biggest building in town, which happened to be a theater. But on the first meeting at the theater, so many people were pressing in hundreds of people past the building being filled to capacity past that hundreds of people were

pressing to come in. You know what they had to do? They had to chain the doors so that no more people could come in.

Now, can you imagine that? So many people want to come in to be a part of God's work. You have to lock the doors to keep them out. It's a safety hazard.

It's the church of the locked door because we just can't take anymore. And that's amazing. That's a great work of mercy.

So Edwin Orr writes about an Irish evangelist named Gretan Guinness. He was the most popular evangelist in Northern Ireland during this great time of the 1859-1860 revival. On one occasion, and I'm absolutely amazed by this, Guinness addressed 20,000 people from speaking on top of a cab.

You say, well, what's the big deal about that? You know, go to Promise Keepers or you go to this and there's, you know, 50 or 60 or 70,000 people. Friends, this was before they had public address systems. With his own voice, this man spoke to 20,000 people.

Fifty years later, this man, Gretan Guinness, recalled this great outpouring of the Spirit of God. He said, the predominating feature was the conversion of people of all ranks and positions in ways sudden, startling and amazing. And before that time, I had seen tens or scores brought to Christ under gospel preaching.

But this new movement of 1859 was something quite different. Ministers were occupied until midnight or even two or three o'clock in the morning, conversing with crowds of inquirers who were crying, what shall we do to be saved? That's an amazing work of God. Now, the last issue that I really want to jump on here and I say last, not because I just have a few sentences left, but this is the last heading that we want to consider is to consider that true revival comes from God.

That's been a great question. Where does revival come from? How do you have revival? What do you have to do? Well, first of all, look at what he says at the end of verse two in Remember Mercy. This shows that Habakkuk relied on the power and the presence of God to bring revival.

It would come from God's mercy, not primarily from man's work or man's deserving. It's not like Habakkuk. Lord, you know, look at all we're doing.

Look at the evangelistic campaign. We're starting. Look at all this.

Look at all this. So, Lord, send revival. No, he throws up his hands in prayer towards heaven and he says in wrath, remember mercy, not remember my works, not remember my heart, not remember my intentions.

Remember your own mercy. Oh, Lord. There's a significant theological disagreement on this very question.

The question being, how does revival come? Now, a great American theologian. Some people say that this man was the greatest theologian that America ever produced. His name was Jonathan Edwards.

He lived in colonial America. And Jonathan Edwards was a significant part of a tremendous revival. The first great awakening in America, you know, the days of Wesley and Whitfield and all of that.

Jonathan Edwards was right in the midst of that in colonial America. And Jonathan Edwards has some authority about revival. And he said revival is the work of God.

He stressed that it was a sovereign work of God. Man can't bring it. God just sovereignly sends it at a time known and understood only by God.

God says, I'll send revival there. I'll send it here. I'll send it the other way.

It's just God's work. And that's all there is to it. Well, there was another great theologian of revival.

His name was Charles Finney. And Charles Finney was a part of significant revivals in the United States in the 1830s. Charles Finney had a different opinion about revival.

He said revival is the right use of the appropriate means. In other words, all you have to do to have revival is follow X, Y and Z and you'll have revival. Now, that's almost completely opposite to Jonathan Edwards, isn't it? One of them says, hey, look, man, just God does it.

And there's no there's nothing for man to do. It just sends it. You don't know when you don't know how you don't know where.

And then Finney says, man, you can have a revival right now. Right now, just fulfill X, Y and Z and you've got revival. Well, I think that you can get into error if you take either one of those statements too far.

Now, there's a lot to respect in Charles Finney. But I disagree with him at that point. Revival is not just a cause and effect matter with man being the cause.

Revival comes from God. In wrath, remember mercy. It's a work of mercy, not a work of cause and effect.

However, do we deny for a moment that God moves in response to the prayers of his people? We do not deny that for a second. In other words, revival comes from God. There's no doubt about it.

But prayer is what moves the hand of God. So it is of no use going too far down the way that Jonathan Edwards said, well, revival is just from God. And it's a sovereign work and there's nothing for man to do, nor is it no good to to go down too far the road that Finney went.

Well, it's a cause and effect thing. You do this and this and this and revival comes. No, you say revival is the work of God.

No doubt about it. Have a new debt yet. Yet there's something for man to do in its pray.

Prayer is our recognition that revival does come from God. That's why we're praying. That's why we earnestly pray for it.

If you notice, that's how it all started out in verse one. Did you see that a prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet? You see, this shows that Habakkuk knew what he had to do to bring revival. And that was pray.

The prayer of Habakkuk shows us that revival is a work of God. It's not the achievement of man. But there's something that man can and should do for revival.

And that's simply cry out to God and to plead for his reviving work. Just like Habakkuk did. You can notice this historically, that every great awakening, every great revival has been marked by a great spirit of

prayer.

Revivals are different. Some revivals seem to be predominantly preaching revivals. Some revivals make great note of prominent leaders, like in the first great awakening, there was Wesley and Whitfield, two giants of that awakening.

In the great awakening, the second great awakening of 1858 in America and 59 and 60 in Great Britain, there were no really great names. It was more of a lay movement. So revivals differ greatly from historical time to historical time.

But friends. I don't think you will ever find a revival that you could call the prayerless revival. Because prayer is common to every great revival.

There is a great spirit of prayer. Well, pray, but what do we pray for? Have you ever asked that? Oh, yeah, I want revival. What do I pray for? The primary thing you pray for is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The plea has to be for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, not just on a preacher. Not just on myself. But on the church and on the community.

In other words, I hope you do pray for me. And I hope you do pray, Lord, bless the preacher. Pour out your spirit upon him.

And that's good. But I don't think that goes far enough in what God wants you to pray for, for revival. It's good to pray for yourself to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to keep yourself in that place of constant yieldedness and surrender to the Lord and to say, Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit upon me.

But that doesn't go far enough. Now, friends, what's notably different about revival is there is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon congregations and upon communities. Think of two different spirit filled ministers, each preaching the word.

Here's your two preachers, Peter on the day of Pentecost and Stephen before the Sanhedrin. Were both of them filled with the spirit? Absolutely so. Were both of them preaching the word? You better believe it.

Yet each had very different results. Now, we wouldn't say that Stephen was a failure or had no results, even though he was martyred and nobody was converted on the day that he was martyred. I mean, there you are.

He's preaching before this hostile crowd. He's filled with the Holy Spirit. There he is, just a shining example of Christian witness and testimony.

But nobody was converted on that day. Now, great ministry happened. You know, it's interesting.

That was Stephen. The greatest fruit was not found so much in direct results of his preaching, but in the distant results of his prayer. In his dying prayer, it was answered in the conversion of one of his killers.

And that was Saul of Tarsus. So by no means am I trying to imply that Stephen was a failure and Peter was a success. No, not at all.

But when you look at what happened when Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost and what Stephen was preaching before the Sanhedrin, it was very different results, right? Well, what was the

result? What was the difference? The difference wasn't in the preacher or in his message. Both Peter, both Stephen were filled with the Holy Spirit. Both Peter, both Stephen were preaching the word of God.

The difference was, was that there was a radical outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those people on the day of Pentecost. And if there was any kind of outpouring upon the people who heard Peter at the Sanhedrin, excuse me, Stephen, when he spoke before the Sanhedrin, they hardened their hearts against it. You see, Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost was remarkably fruitful in conversions because the spirit of God was poured out on the hearers.

And so, yes, pray for the preacher, please pray for yourself. Absolutely. But I think one of the great needs is for Christians to come together as broadly as possible and to plead with God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the congregations and upon the community to bring great conviction of sin, great transformation of life and great conversions unto the glory of God.

You see, in seasons of great revival and awakening, people are converted like they were on the day of Pentecost. They're converted in droves and oftentimes they're converted in the strangest ways. Again, J. Edwin Orr cites a few examples.

He says that there was an incredible work of God going on in the city of Manchester. And one of the things that the enthusiastic people of the city of Manchester decided to do was they distributed invitations to a tea meeting. I don't know what we would call today a tea meeting.

You know, we think of that something for women. This wasn't for women. This, I don't know, maybe we would call it, you know, a breakfast or a luncheon or something like that.

You know, a banquet probably. Well, they distributed these invitations for this tea meeting, for this banquet. And they took them.

Where did they take them? They took them to all the dens of vice and immorality in Manchester slumps. It would be like today going to the worst bars, to the crack houses, to anywhere where you could find sin and iniquity. You took those there and you brought invitations and you said, listen, we want you to come to this banquet.

But it was interesting on the invitations. They said clearly on the invitation that nobody but thieves would be admitted. That's all you got to be a thief or you can't come now.

Totally contrary to what a lot of people expected. No less than 300 actual thieves came to hear the gospel. And a lot of them were converted on that meeting.

It's crazy. But it's a great example of a work of God. Another account in Orr's book that I like is happened in the northern England city of Halifax, where there was a daytime prayer meeting.

And a woman who was just recently converted was in earnest prayer for her husband. And she suddenly found that her husband was there at the prayer meeting. Now, again, this is something remarkable about times of great outpouring and revival.

People who you would normally think, well, they would never darken the door of a church. They come, they come. Something of the spirit of God is compelling them to come.

Now, I'm not saying that they're not invited, that they're not brought. Of course they are. But you know, how many people have you ever invited to come to church? And how many of them just, well, you know, they kindly, but they blow you off.

Well, in a time of a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, all of those people come. And not only do they come, they bring other people with them. Well, this woman, she had just gotten saved and she was at the prayer meeting.

And she suddenly found out while she was in prayer at the prayer meeting. I don't know. She looks around.

She saw there's my husband over there. So, you know what? She starts praying. She begins to pray at the top of her voice.

He is here, Lord. Save my husband. Make him as happy as me.

Well, the man came back to church that night to hear the gospel that had changed his wife so much. The prayer meeting began and the wife began to pray for her husband again. I'm sure the same kind of prayer.

He's here again, Lord, to save him, God. When she started praying, the man ran out of the room, running for the door. And some kind men stopped him at the door, talked with him, brought him back into the meeting.

He was trembling from head to foot. He finally gave in to the conviction, surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and was marvelously changed. That's what God can do.

You see the point of it all? Make it your prayer. Oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. Our great God can do these great things.

He does them out of his mercy. And you and I have as much right to appeal to the mercy of God as anybody else does. Does Billy Graham have more right to God's mercy than any of us? Of course not, because it's mercy.

Everybody has a claim on mercy. So Charles Spurgeon said that this is how we should pray. Oh, God, have mercy upon thy poor church and visit her and revive her.

She has but a little strength. She has desired to keep thy word. Refresh her, restore her to thy power and give her yet to be great in this land.

That is our prayer. Father, that's what we pray tonight. Revive your work, Lord.

Revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years, make it known. In wrath, remember mercy.

Oh, how we need this God. How we do not want to be satisfied for a moment with a normal Christian existence in light of what this world thinks is normal. No, Lord, we long for you to do great things in our midst.

We see the end of the age rushing in upon us. God, we plead with you that there would be a great revival to bring back backslidden Christians to bring many into your kingdom before you snatch away your church

to rescue us, Lord, from the coming calamity on this earth. Lord, send a great revival.

This is our prayer, Lord. Oh, God, have mercy upon our poor church and visit us and revive us. We have but a little strength, but we have desired to keep your word.

Oh, refresh us, restore us to thy power. And give us yet to be great in this land, not for our glory, Lord, but for yours. Exalt yourself.

And do it through a great work in our midst. We pray this, Lord, unto you this evening in Jesus name. Amen.

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