

# True Revival

by David Guzik

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*This sermon by Pastor John focuses on the concept of revival, emphasizing the need for a deep work of cleansing and a genuine desire for God's mercy. The message highlights the historical and biblical examples of revival, showcasing how it begins with a transformation among believers before impacting the community. The sermon stresses the importance of prayer as a key component in seeking revival and acknowledges that true revival is a work of God's mercy and power.*

**Duration:** 30:33

**Scripture:** Habakkuk 3:2, Acts 19:17

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## Description

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## Transcript

Pastor John, thank you so much. And thank you for the invitation to come speak here. And thank you just to be with such a group of men who love Jesus so much and excited about coming together.

A lot of respect for all you guys coming from distance and grinding together here for a wonderful time together. This is my first time to South Carolina. I'm so impressed by the hospitality.

I try to observe things everywhere new place I go. And I come here and I see all these little like orange paw prints. What's that like for a girls softball team or something like that? I'm just joking.

They're all respect to the Clemson Tigers and whatever else football team you're affiliated with. It's my great privilege to speak this evening and give an overview of the idea of revival. Before that, I'd like you to turn in your Bibles please to the book of Habakkuk chapter three, verse two.

Don't be shy about using your table of contents for Habakkuk. It's one of the minor prophets kind of in the middle of your Bible. A little bit hard to find.

Use a table of contents if you need to. It's a short book so there's no shame of having to flip through to find it. While you're finding that, let me pray and ask for God's blessing on our time in the word.

Father in heaven, that's exactly what we ask for. Lord, in fact, we plead for it. We feel like in this subject of revival there's something so needful, so desperate, so important that it's beyond my ability or actually, Lord, the ability of any man here to adequately express but your Holy Spirit can do it.

So we ask that you would speak not only in me and through me, Lord, but would you speak to each individual heart directly in the way that only your Holy Spirit can. Speak to us now, Lord, through your word and by your spirit we pray in Jesus' name, amen. Haggai, did I say Haggai? I meant Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is what I meant. Habakkuk chapter three, verse two. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet on Shigionov.

Most people believe that was some kind of musical instrument that accompanied this prayer. Oh, Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid. Oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years.

In the midst of the years make it known. In wrath, remember mercy. This was a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet.

You see, the first two chapters of the book of Habakkuk give us the prophet's question of mercy. The prophet's question and answer with God. And it's always a good thing for us to bring our questions to God and have him speak to us and get his answers.

We get that from his word. We get that from time with God, where God, we bring him our questions and he gives us his answers. You see, Habakkuk couldn't understand why difficult times had come upon the kingdom of Judah.

But God spoke upon his heart and he said, listen, there's a plan, there's a purpose. I haven't abandoned my people just because difficult times have come upon them. And as a result of all that, in the first two chapters, now in chapter three, the prophet Habakkuk prays and he has a simple cry of his heart.

And I think it's the cry of our heart as well. He says, oh, Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. He simply prayed for revival.

What it was was he remembered, either from his own memory or from what he had read before. He remembered how God had worked before and how he had moved among his people. He remembered how God's people once responded to the Lord and he says, I want that all over again.

That ancient Hebrew word that we translate revive, it's the word, and I don't know if I'm exactly pronouncing this right, but it's haya. In general, it means to live, but in the context and the grammatical form that it has here, it means to revive, to bring back to life. Lord, would you bring it back to life? We have a sense that your hand was more evident at one time.

We have a sense that your people responded to you in a different way in times or generations past. Lord, would you do it again? We gotta ask ourselves, what is revival? Now I know here, in particular in the South, it's not unusual for you to drive by a church and you see the sign revival. And they'll have a revival during a week.

And sometimes it's said, we had our week of revival, but nobody got revived. That's not much of a revival there, is it? Biblically speaking and historically speaking, a revival is not a week of meetings held by an evangelist. Putting up a sign and scheduling revival meetings does not mean that revival happens.

I got a book in my library, and it's titled, *How to Have a Revival*. And it's filled with all kinds of helpful hints and instructions. It'll give you step-by-step, you do A, B, C, and D, and revival will come.

Well friends, it just doesn't work like that. I think that's the kind of book you could use and have a revival where nobody gets revived. But you see, I think that in one sense, that word revival has been hopelessly polluted in our present day.

When people speak today of any season of spiritual excitement and have you seen some of the foolishness that's on the internet and on Christian television that people call revival. It has nothing to do with the biblical idea of revival. It has nothing to do with the historical idea of revival, all it is is a season of spiritual excitement.

And when you have all the hype, we have all the palm in the pump, and all the false stuff, all this stuff, next year we're gonna see the greatest work of God ever, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It just degenerates the term. Now some people like using the phrase spiritual awakening instead of revival.

Some people like to use the term the outpouring of the spirit. But if we remember what revival really is, I don't think we need to jettison the term. I think maybe we just might be able to reclaim it and get a better biblical and historical idea of what it is.

You can't deny it happens. You do your research and the second great awakening, which happened in the United States, it happened during the years 1857 and 1858 in the United States, out of a population of about 30 million in the United States, there were one million documented conversions in the US. Out of a population of 30 million.

And those weren't Christians getting right with God again. Those were unbelievers added to the kingdom. Now that work spread to Great Britain in the years 1859 and 1860.

And in a population of about 27 million, there was another million conversions in one year. Now think about that happening in an area like South Carolina. In South Carolina, I looked it up, you guys got a population of about five million.

That would mean in one calendar year, 200,000 people coming to real relationship with Jesus Christ. Not counting, not counting all the people who are already believers who are brought back to a right on on fire relationship with God. That's radical.

You see what revival is, it's the restoration of life and vitality. Sometimes we say, you can never be revived unless you were vibed to begin with. First you have spiritual life, and then it's restored, it's amplified.

In this kind of pure sense, revival isn't conversion or awakening. Those are the outflows of revival or the partners of revival. In a sense, true revival can only happen among the church.

Sometimes we'll separate the terms, we'll say there's revival among the church, there's spiritual awakening among the community. But when there is this true outpouring of the spirit of God, a true awakening, it's an amazing thing. It's not the same thing as a good or effective evangelistic campaign.

They'll praise the Lord for good and effective evangelistic campaigns. We need them and we need more and more of them. Listen, religious revival is different.

You see, what revival sees is it sees first of all, a remarkable sense of the presence of God. Both the converted and the unconverted sense it. Secondly, there's an unusual interest in the things of God.

People would rather be at church than just about anything else. Third, there's an evident urgency in getting right with God. You know, during normal times, the evangelist seeks the sinner.

And that's good, it's what we're supposed to do. Jesus told us to be fishers of men. But brothers, there's time documented in the Bible and in church history, where it's not the evangelist seeking the sinner, the sinners are seeking the evangelist.

It's like the fish are jumping into the boat. There's a great work of the conviction of sin and cleansing among God's people. And there's a very high level of experience and participation from everyday Christians, not just those who are employed in the ministry.

Now I could quickly give you, for example, four Old Testament examples of revival. Exodus chapter 33 is a special example of personal revival that affected a nation. God did a deep work in Moses' life.

When Moses cried out to God, show me your glory. And God did a work in him and it affected all of Israel. That's Exodus chapter 33.

In 1 Samuel chapter seven, you have an amazing work of revival in the days of Samuel, when the nation was turned back to God and averted great catastrophe coming upon it. Another well-known Old Testament example of revival is under the reign of King Josiah. That's in 2 Kings chapters 22 and 23.

And by any measure, what happened in Nineveh was a remarkable and unusual example of revival. You look at Jonah chapter three. Brothers, when the farm animals are repenting and putting on sackcloth, that's revival.

That's what happened in Nineveh. It was a radical revival. And then there's New Testament examples of revival.

Here's three. You could say that the work that God did in and through John the Baptist was an example of revival. Massively calling people to repentance.

And it was so significant that it said that all of Judea went out to hear John the Baptist. Then, perhaps one of the greatest examples of revival in all of history was what God did on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. 3,000 plus were converted at one time in a truly remarkable outpouring of the Spirit.

I mean, think about what you had on the day of Pentecost. You had an outpouring of the Spirit in Acts chapter two. Then it happened all in the context of prayer.

What were they doing when the Spirit was poured out? They were in prayer. And you see that it affected believers first. The outpouring of the Spirit affected believers first.

There were unusual phenomenon going on. And by the way, that's oftentimes true in a time of revival. There's unusual things going on.

Next, you see that the word of God was preached. That's what Peter did on the day of Pentecost, did he not? He didn't just stand up and say, hey, let's all look at the unusual phenomenon. He brought the word of God.

And then there was a remarkable conviction of sin on the day of Pentecost. Acts chapter two says that it was if they were cut to the heart and they said, what must we do to be saved? And finally, there were remarkable conversions. 3,000 on one day.

Brothers, that's revival. Let me give you one other example. Keep a finger there in Habakkuk, but turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 19.

I just wanna read a few verses to you. Acts chapter 19, starting at verse 17. Again, we're gonna go back to Habakkuk, so keep a marker or something there.

But Acts chapter 19, I'll go over this very briefly, but what a remarkable demonstration of revival. Check this out. Acts 19, verse 17, it says, this became known to both all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all, and they counted up the value of them, and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver, so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Brothers, that's revival.

And notice, it was a work of the Holy Spirit that affected believers first. Believers were hungry to get right with God, and they felt so compelled to do it that voluntarily they burned their books associated with magic and evil practices. And then, if you notice it as well, there was confession of sin, they were getting right with God, and then there was remarkable continuing power in the church.

It all began with what God did among believers. Brothers, these seasons we see in the Bible and in church history of massively effective evangelism, of great conversion, of genuine spiritual awakening among the lost, those are evidences of revival, but revival itself begins with awakening of the church. And that's what God wants to do.

He wants to get ahold of us. Now, back to Habakkuk, chapter three, verse two. I want you to see, and here's just four quick principles give you an overview of revival from Habakkuk chapter three, verse two.

Number one, revival is a broad work. Notice what it says there? It says, revive your work. Brothers, and I want to speak especially to Christian workers here.

I'm telling you, revival doesn't grow in the soil of congregational competition. It doesn't grow in the atmosphere where people are hungry for personal glory, for personal fame, for income or credit. That kind of self-glorying will always squelch revival.

He said, revive your work. And I don't know about you, but in my life in ministry, I've sometimes been guilty of the unspoken prayer of praying, Lord, revive my work. Lord, have revival and let me be known as the revivalist.

Lord, bring revival so that somehow it would be a credit to me. Listen, we gotta have a heart for God's church that's much bigger than our particular portion of it. Charles Spurgeon spoke very powerfully to this.

He said this, quote, shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self or with party and now pray, Lord, revive thy work and let thy work happen to be more in one branch in a church than another. If that's the case, then Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do not let your own purposes be accomplished apart from your work.

Let your own glory come of it and we shall be well-content though we should be forgotten and unknown. Lord, let's revive your work. Now, at the same time, this also must be a personal prayer.

Guys, I don't know, I'm very challenged by the idea that we can't come to this topic of revival by saying, Lord, revive them. That's a prayer full of pride, isn't it? What must it be? Lord, revive me. You see, we too often blame the church for sin and laziness and corruption and prayerlessness and lack of spiritual power or whatever it is and we forget that we are the church.

So check your conduct. Does your walk glorify the Lord as it should? What about your private conduct which the Lord truly sees? Check your conversation. Is your speech profane or impure? Do you talk about Jesus with other people? Check your communion with the Lord.

Are you living a growing, abiding life with Jesus? You see, revival can happen in all different kind of spheres. There can be personal revival, there can be church revival, but there have been many great works of community revival or even national revival. We long for God to do the great big work and I wanna see it.

I wanna see a new Jesus movement. I wanna see a new outpouring of the Spirit. I wanna see God do things that he'd done in biblical times and in historical times, but I gotta realize, it begins with me.

It begins with us. God, forgive us if we have the attitude, Lord, revive them and not me. Secondly, notice that true revival is evident.

That's in the phrase here in Habakkuk 3, verse two, where he says, in the midst of the years, make it known. Habakkuk longed for God to do a work that was evident to everybody. Everybody could see.

Lord, make it known in time and space. Lord, I don't want revival to be just something that's in the history books. I don't want revival to be just something that's an idea out there.

I don't want revival to be something that's the property of hype masters and phony baloney preachers who scream and shout. Lord, make it known right here, right now. I mean, brothers, oftentimes they're younger, not always.

And without articulating it maybe in exactly these words, this is what they say. They say, David, you guys talk about the Jesus movement. You talk about this revival that happened in Wales more than 100 years ago.

You talk about what God did in 1857. What's God gonna do now? Listen, that can be a wonderful attitude of heart. If it drives you to say, I'm gonna pray, I'm gonna seek God for personal revival, Lord, make it known in the midst of the years.

You see, true revival is evident. It's marked by remarkable works of God in the many biblical examples of revival and the things that you have all from church history that show us in the mighty ways that God works. There's so many examples, there's hardly nowhere to begin.

I'll just give you one example. It happened in 1863. William Booth, working in England, he wrote a letter to a friend describing God's work in a place called Cradley Hill, a city of more than 20,000 people.

Booth first spoke there on a Sunday morning and the church was full. It was too full, it was crowded, past comfortable. And he began by calling on the leaders of the church to make a renewed consecration of themselves to God.

And after that, he said, quote, there was a gracious melting and breaking up of heart followed by a blessed number of conversions throughout the chapel. They started having meetings every night that week with many conversions. And at the beginning of one of the prayer meetings, what one big, sturdy looking man who had been coming to the meetings every night but going away, hardening his heart each night, he jumped onto the platform and he spoke out in front of all the people.

And this way, he said, can you imagine a man jumps up to the platform and he says to everybody, do you know me? And they said, yes. He said, what am I then? And they all shouted, you're a backslider. And this is what his answer was.

I'll be a backslider no longer. All of you come to Jesus with me. And he fell on his knees right there in agony to God that God would have mercy on him.

It was too much for him and everybody was so touched that there were numerous conversions. That was a remarkable work of God that started in that city. Again, you don't orchestrate that.

You don't plan it. You don't whip it up into existence. But it's a remarkable thing.

It happens in the midst of the years. Now, part of our difficulty with revival is something I mentioned before but I wanna drill down a little better on it. It's our understanding that revival is just a season of spiritual excitement.

On April 21st, 1987, that's some 30 years ago this year, Dr. J. Edwin Orr preached his last message. He passed away that night. He preached his last message to the Seventh National Conference on Prayer for Spiritual Awakening.

He did it at a place in North Carolina called Ridgecrest, just about three hours north of here. I was fascinated by the message that he preached for several reasons. I wasn't there, of course, but I found out about it later.

Number one, it was Dr. Orr's last message and he died the next day. Number two, in that message, he specifically mentioned his friend, Pastor Chuck Smith. Number three, it was the first time and obviously the last time that he ever preached that message.

Dr. Orr was an itinerant preacher. He preached the same message many different places but this was the first and, of course, the last time he ever preached it. That message was so powerful that the Southern Baptist Convention, their Office of Spiritual Awakening, by the way, I can't help, that cracks me up, nothing against any Baptist brothers who may be here, but to have a Department of Spiritual Awakening in your nomination, it just strikes me as a little funny.

But that's the way those things were. They were so committed, they printed up thousands of copies of that sermon and mailed it to Baptist pastors all over the country. And that message touches me for another

reason.

As of just a few months ago, I happened to have the handwritten preaching notes that Dr. Orr scrawled that day to preach that message almost spontaneously. Here's what the message was titled, the last message he ever preached. It was titled Revival Is Like Judgment Day.

And in it he described the fact that when revival first comes among people, they don't know what to do with it. Matter of fact, revival often begins by such a dramatic cleansing of sin among believers that at first it often feels traumatic. It's not fun and frothy.

Man, we're all in for a season of spiritual excitement. Send it, Lord. But what if God would do what he promised to do, would cleanse his people first? And when I understood that, when I understood that tremendous message that Dr. Orr preached, I understood why so many prayers for revival are never heard by God.

Because they're prayed with no understanding. They're prayed with this idea, Lord, send us excitement. Send us a season of spiritual thrills.

Where actually there is no desire whatsoever for purity in the church and a true confession of sin and getting right with God. You see, they mouth the word, send revival, but in their heart they're saying, Lord, keep it far, far away from us. And God says no.

He makes it no. Well, quickly now, number three, true revival is a work of mercy. Do you see what he says there in verse two of chapter three? He says, in wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk prayed knowing well that they didn't deserve revival, so he prayed for mercy. The idea is like this, Lord, I know we deserve your wrath, so in the midst of your wrath, would you please remember mercy and send revival among us. You see, sometimes we get it into our head that we sort of deserve revival through our diligent work or even through our prayer.

And man, prayer is vitally connected to revival and Frank's gonna talk to us about that in the very next session. But listen, nobody should believe that we earn revival in any way. It is the gracious outpouring of the spirit of God.

It comes not because of merit, but because of mercy. Now, on the one hand, that means put away your idea that we could somehow deserve revival, but secondly, it means we can ask God for it, can't we? A great big group of undeserving men, we can still say, Lord, in the midst of your wrath, remember mercy. Send revival to us.

And then finally, number four, true revival is from God. In wrath, remember mercy. The whole tenor of the prayer shows that Habakkuk relied on the power and the presence of God for revival.

It was gonna come from God and His mercy. It could not be from man's work of deserving or anything man would manufacture. You know, theologically speaking, there's a significant disagreement on that question.

How does revival come? Jonathan Edwards was a significant part of the first great awakening in America, and he said revival's the work of God. Charles Finney was a part of the second great awakening in the 1830s, and he said revival is the right use of the appropriate means. Charles Finney was the kind of guy that said you put this, this, this in place and you'll get revival.

Well, I think that there's things to respect from Charles Finney and his ministry. I think he's wrong on that point. It's the work of God.

But it doesn't mean that we are powerless when it comes to revival. We are left with the thing that Frank's gonna speak to us in a few moments. We are left with prayer.

That's what we can do. Humbly, devotedly, persistently, filled with faith, we can pray for revival. That's what Habakkuk did.

Look at what it says there in chapter three, verse two. It begins, it's a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. That's what he's doing.

He's praying. And that's what we must do because every great awakening, every great revival has also been marked by a great spirit of prayer. So friends, that's our simple conclusion.

We simply cry out to God with our heart and we say, oh Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. We wanna see God do it again and again and again. When you start to think about the great things that God has done, how he has changed the course of nations, how he has transformed cultures, how he's worked so mightily that bars and places of prostitution and corrupt criminal enterprises are shut down, not through legislature, but through lack of business.

Because people just get so right with God. We say, Lord, send it again. Man, I'm not a prophet nor the son of a prophet.

I can't tell you revival will come at such and such time. But don't you feel that God is stirring something? I think just having a conference with this theme is an example of God stirring something. We should be aware, we should be ready, we should be filled with anticipation of what God will do.

And we should pay close heed to what God's gonna speak to us through the rest of these speakers. Because I think God has something special to do with us and for us today. Lord Jesus, that's my prayer.

I pray that you would fill us with your spirit, that you would give us a great sensitivity. And Lord, I pray that we would all be willing for you to do a deep work of cleansing in our midst. Lord, if the beginning of revival means that you have to do a deep work among us, then we say, Lord, we're willing.

And Lord, if we're not willing, we're willing to be made willing. But do it in our midst, Lord God. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen, amen.

Amen. Amen.

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