

Chapel of the Air - Interview With Dr. Orr (Part 1)

by J. Edwin Orr

Revival is an awakening in or of religion, where people already in a relationship with God experience a renewed sense of purpose and passion for their faith.

Duration: 15:31

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:44, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 57:15, Jeremiah 33:3, Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker discusses the challenge of passing on the message of God from one generation to the next. He emphasizes that each generation must understand the reason for God's blessings and not become focused on material possessions. The speaker also mentions the importance of revival and awakening in Baptist circles, particularly in relation to prayer. He highlights the significance of open meetings where prayer, confession, restitution, and reconciliation take place. The speaker also mentions the role of emotionalism in these meetings, noting that it depends on individual talent and inhibitions.

Transcript

If you want to learn about the history of revivals, the man with whom to speak is Dr. J. Edwin Orr, and he's our guest this visit in the Chapel of the Air. David Mays greeting you, my friend. Some years ago, Ted Seely here did three Chapel of the Air interviews with Dr. J. Edwin Orr.

They were recorded in England at the yearly conference on revival, which Dr. Orr conducts at Oxford University, from which he also holds a PhD. Now, it's again our privilege to have him as a chapel guest. Dr. Orr has traveled in more than 150 countries of the world, collecting materials for how many books now, Dr. Orr? Well, I suppose I've written about 35, of which about 15 would be on the subject of spiritual awakening.

That's a lot of books, isn't it? From your extensive studies regarding the history of spiritual awakenings, I want you, Dr. Orr, to evaluate the present day in terms of a possible revival throughout North America. I would say from my more recent travels, there seems to be more prayer this past five years than I've known for 35 years, which is a very encouraging sign. But, of course, there are certain handicaps.

Some people don't know what the word revival means. I talked to a man in Griffin, Georgia, and I said, the country's in such a mess, don't you think we ought to pray for a revival? He said, yes, but closer to the time. I said, well, run that past me again.

Well, he said, we always hold our revival in August. What's the good of starting to pray until July? That's a misconception, but it's a great hindrance, especially in the Bible Belt. Yes, yes.

Could you give us from your studies any discernible pattern to revival, how it normally develops? Is it possible to talk in those terms? Yes, I think that although the promise was given to Solomon for the nation of Israel, the outline there is true and applies to God's people in any given country, not only the United States and Canada. If my people, called by my name, shall humble themselves, that comes before prayer, a humbling, a taking of the responsibility and blame, and then pray, then seek God's face, God's plan, and so forth, and turn it from evil into sin. Then God does hear from heaven and forgives our sins and heals our community.

So there's in some sense an identifying with the problem as Christians even participating in it, and there is a turning to the Lord in repentance. Is that what I'm understanding you're saying? Yes, most decidedly. How would you say that you could name encouraging signs then that might begin to develop in North America that would indicate something good is on the horizon? I'll give a typical example.

I've spoken four years running now at national conferences for the Southern Baptists. I'm an outsider, I mean a brother but not a Southern Baptist, but this has been an entirely new development in that great denomination. The manager of one of those great conference grounds said ten years ago it was unthinkable to have a national conference on prayer for revival.

There seems to be a turning to God in Southern Baptist circles. That's typical of what's happening in denominations. Of course they prefer to call it awakening because they use the word revival for these efforts of evangelism.

Do you see in your own ministry tears as people listen to you talk about revival? It seems like tears are so often a good sign of revival. I see a deep moving, really deep moving, but the seed has to be sown, has to bear fruit that way. I don't think we're at a place of repentance yet.

Talk about the place of prayer, you mentioned that before. Has there ever been a time of genuine revival without God's people turning to prayer? I haven't known of any. I will say this, that sometimes some people will pray for years.

Evan Roberts prayed for 11 years. But then once revival begins, people catch up on the time factor. They hear the revival in a neighboring state or some neighboring community, and they quicken their prayers and sometimes experience results without having to go through the 11 years of agonizing.

But somewhere somebody's paying that price it seems like. That's right. You said before that the Southern Baptists talk about awakenings as opposed to revivals.

Do you ever try to come up with a different term than revival just because of maybe the bad faith the term bears? I'm trying to redeem the word. Every time I speak or lecture on the subject, I first of all ridicule the common American use of the term, you know, revival every Monday or revival every night except Monday, that type of thing. I put a score on that because it's a ridiculous idea.

But then in the Bible they talk about real revival. I say, well, is the other unreal? And I think it is unreal to call a revival whether you revive or not. I just was reading about Moody.

Moody didn't like to be told he was conducting revival meetings unless revival occurred. But I talk about the outpouring of the Spirit. That's the point.

It's not a sidestepping. It's a pre-stepping. No man can organize an outpouring of the Spirit.

It is exclusive work of God. And the result is the reviving of the church. The result is also the awakening of the people.

You said you're redeeming this word revival. I like that very much. Could you tell us how you define the term as you use it, revival? Well, I think you can do it both etymologically and scripturally.

Scripturally first in the Old Testament the word is chadash and chaya. Both are translated revive. One means to restore.

The other means to bring to life again. And in every case it applies to people already in a relationship with God. Then as far as the dictionary definition is concerned, the word came into the English language about 1702, revival.

Of course the word revival is in the language already since the Bible was translated. But a revival is defined as an awakening in or of religion. And evangelical religion was understood.

Then the word revivalist came in about a hundred years later, defined as one who participates in or promotes such revival. And then the word revival is in the state of religion prevailing and such. And that's standard definition in dictionaries to this day.

But in American dictionaries there's been a second choice added since about 1930. It says A, an awakening in or of religion. B, also a week of meetings, especially in the south.

So actually that is a legitimate use of the term, which is not the use that you want when you talk about revival. Well, I think it's not a legitimate sense because, you see, it's so often referred to evangelism, there's no reviving it at all. I mean, I talk to people as when you refurnish a house, it hasn't been furnished before.

If you repaint a wall, it's been painted before. The word revive always suggests an addition to something that's already taken place. So basically then you're saying the revival preaching is geared to the Christian primarily as opposed to the non-Christian.

Exactly. That's interesting. I think you would say that it's in God's heart to sing revival.

What barriers might there be that we put up that would prohibit him from doing so? Well, one is unbelief, another is prayerlessness, another, of course, is allowing sin and worryness to come into the life of the church. I think that that's a tendency. Even after great revival, there's always a cooling off and a running down.

The effects of revival may continue for 40 years. It revives individuals, but as far as the general body is concerned, the movement does slow down. That's a natural consequence.

It certainly seems like that's the pattern in Scripture, doesn't it? It's almost like one generation has a very difficult time passing it on to the next generation because God blesses the people and then the children don't understand the reason for the blessing and they begin to look at what they've been given as opposed to the Lord. I think it was David du Plessis who said God has no grandchildren. That's an interesting statement and it certainly pertains, doesn't it? Again, drawing on your study of the past, I think you have four earned doctorates.

Is that correct? Well, that's what we call classified. No, I've more than that, but I did my doctorate first at Northern on the subject of revival. Then I went to Oxford after the war.

I have a doctorate from UCLA and I've got two others overseas. Oh, my. I think that's thrilling.

It comes out very quickly when I begin talking to you, just in listening to your vast knowledge in the field. Tell my Campus Crusade friends, some who have introduced me, hold on a moment, you introduced some sergeant. You didn't say this man's been sergeant five times.

You want to look for another guy. Well, I'm glad it came out because I think it adds credence to what we're talking about. I want you to draw on your study of the past again and describe what revival might look like if we were to experience it today in our land.

I was asked a question the other day about the relationship of the electronic church to revival. I said it may be a means of spreading good news if it comes, but it will never take the place of movement of God's Holy Spirit in bodies of believers. Also, another thing is this, and this would be borne out by, say, the feature of the Canadian Prairie's revival of 1971, the afterglow.

In other words, not by stereotyped invitations. That's for evangelism. But through continuing on in the presence of God and everyone free to speak.

There's a movement of God's Spirit that way. But the meetings would simply continue on as afterglow with open testimony. And that's typical of the rush revival.

There are unstructured meetings with people expressing things. And it took me right back to the outbreak of revival in Hamilton, Ontario in 1857. There was only one message given by Walter and Phoebe Palmer, and then what believers took over.

It became open meetings after that. Now, when you get complaints, some people complain about the rush revival. There wasn't enough preaching.

The Welsh people said we were preached at to the utmost, but we never obeyed the word, and this was our obedience to the word. So I would say that that's one of the first features, open meetings where there's prayer and confession and restitution, reconciliation, and the like. I've seen it in the mission field myself.

Is it typical in these meetings where one moves to confession that there's emotionalism, or is that unfair? It depends entirely on people's inhibitions. There are human factors. Some people think that confession is the work of the Holy Spirit.

No, no. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit. Confession is our response.

It depends on our education, inhibitions, culture, and all the rest of it. So it will take different ramifications depending on where it happens. I remember reading in your book about the revivals in the early 1800s,

how in the Eastern Ivy League schools it was very different than what happened out on the prairies in the camp meetings.

That's right. I presume it's hard for the Spirit to touch people who have been hardened without them responding to some degree emotionally. That's right.

Strictly on a feeling level, Dr. J.F. Murray, do you expect to witness another great moving of God's Spirit in your lifetime? I've had that conviction ever since I started the ministry 50 years ago. And of course I had to hold it against a lot of popular naysayers. When I came to the States first in 1935, I remember a lady getting up in one of my meetings in Orange, New Jersey to say, It's interesting to hear about revival, but don't you think it's fair to tell the people there won't be another revival until the Lord comes and there will be more Jews? Of course I don't hold that view at all.

I'm glad you don't. And your life has influenced many lives, including mine, for which I'm grateful. The next two days, Dr. J. Edwin R. will again be my guest, and I have more than enough questions to ask.

Tomorrow we'll look at revival throughout the world, and then we'll reduce that grand scale to just the personal. Here's Ted Seely now to close. I'd be happy to, David.

But I'm anxious to hear more of Dr. R.'s perspective on revival tomorrow. My own conviction about revival has been confirmed by Dr. R.'s thoughts today. In order for revival to take place, it must be preceded by persistent prayer.

Here at the Chapel of the Year, we've created some practical reminders that will enable you to join us in praying for revival. And they're coordinated with the broadcast theme David will start preaching on this coming Monday. You recall the story of Elijah's servant seeing the little cloud like a man's hand on the horizon over the sea? Well, as a reminder to pray for revival in our day, we've prepared some little clouds like a man's hand for you as well.

In three different sizes, these clouds are printed on pressure-sensitive stickers, which you can place in convenient locations to remind you to pray for a coming time of great spiritual refreshment. And a full card of these special cloud like a man's hand stickers are yours for the asking when you write to us here. The address is the Chapel of the Year, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189.

In Canada, Box 2000, Waterdown, Ontario, LOR2HO. We view these clouds as much more than just a clever idea. I think you know that.

And will join us in our prayers for revival. We'll send these stickers to you at no cost. But we do encourage you to remember our financial needs during the summer.

In August, our financial support usually drops. But with your help, we can carry through this time without a serious shortfall. So be faithful in your giving, won't you? Once again, our address is the Chapel of the Year, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189.

And in Canada, the Chapel of the Year, Box 2000, Waterdown, Ontario, LOR2HO. Your radio ministry is an inspiration to my newfound life in Christ, writes a Duluth, Minnesota, listener. This new Christian who hears us on WWJC is one of many who write the same thing.

And if we experience revival, letters like this will be coming in the thousands. Let's pray it will be so. Join us tomorrow when David and Dr. Orr again discuss our August topic of revival.

Right here in the Chapel of the Air.

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