

Chapel of the Air - Revival in America?

by J. Edwin Orr

Revival is a grassroots movement of the Holy Spirit that begins with a movement of prayer and leads to individual and collective transformation.

Duration: 12:23

Scripture: Galatians 5:19

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of receiving assurance from God during World War II. He explains that he has been researching and writing about revivals and awakenings throughout history. The speaker discusses the need for revival in America and the misconceptions people have about it. He emphasizes the importance of individual revival, starting with a personal examination of the heart and a desire for cleansing from sin. The speaker also mentions the factors that hinder revival, such as neglect of prayer, disobedience to God's word, and division among believers. He concludes by mentioning that there are churches currently experiencing revival in the United States.

Transcript

If America were to experience revival, what would happen? What would be different from what we now see? Hello, I'm Ted Seeley, and on today's Chapel of the Air, you'll hear those and related questions discussed as I talk with Dr. J. Edwin Orr, a man widely recognized as the foremost living authority on revivals and evangelical awakenings. To begin this third and final broadcast in the series, I asked Dr. Orr how long revivals and the history of revivals had been a subject of interest and study for him. I got interested in the subject in my teens.

Perhaps I had a subconscious interest before that because my grandparents and both sides of the family had experienced conversion in the 1859 revival in Ireland. I also was privileged to know people like Evan Roberts from God's Holy Synod in use in the Welsh Revival, but I could say that from the age of 17 maybe until the present time, that's nearly 50 years, I've been interested in this subject. I've been doing more intensive research.

During World War II, I was on a beach in New Guinea after a heavy air raid, and I wondered if I was going to get home, and I received an assurance, I believe, from above that not only would God spare my life, but he'd permit me to write an account of some of the great works of God. At that time, I thought of the 1858-59 revival, and I hitchhiked all the way from Tokyo to Oxford University to write the history of that

moment, which the university gave me their doctor's degree. But since that time, I've broadened my interest very considerably, and I've been writing on all the great awakenings, right from, say, 1792 to the present time.

So I've been interested in all that extent. Let's think about our country of America. If we were to experience revival, what would it be like? What would happen? The first sign would be a movement of prayer.

You read in the accounts of revival that the first signs of revival were not in great assemblies, but in the multiplication of praying groups of saints. I don't believe that spiritual awakening will begin with trumpets or with great promotion or any such thing. I believe it's a grassroots movement, and the Holy Spirit is the only one who can work so intensely in people's hearts.

The devil seems to like monolithic structures, because through one man he can command a multitude. The Holy Spirit doesn't need monolithic structures. He can do with individuals on the bottom level.

So I believe that the first sign of revival would be a movement of prayer. When you think of the 1858 revival and think that practically every church was filled, and that the main vehicle of the revival is prayer meetings, then you realize what we need. Prayer then, of course, brings us to a matter of humbling and putting things right with God.

None are concerned for what they've lost. Are you saying that the will, the decision to pray, is the initiating step? In other words, let's say there's a church, and three or four people say, we want to see revival in our church, therefore let's begin to pray. Is it possible to cause revival? I personally believe that revival really is tied up with the sovereignty of God.

As Matthew Henry said, when God intends great mercy for his people, he first of all sets them up praying. We can certainly pray, and in one sense we move the elbow of God in prayer, as it were. But I think it must be according to his will, because he may know circumstances that don't know that.

The Holy Spirit, I'm not speaking of individual blessing, or even blessing on a single congregation. I think an individual can get right with God at any time, and his life be transformed. I think that a congregation of God's people can put things right, and would experience a measure of revival.

But when it comes to one of these movements that has national impact, then I believe we have to follow his plan. But the people need educating at this point. I was talking to one man, and I said, the country's in such a mess, don't you think we ought to pray for revival? He said, yes, but nearer the time.

And what do you mean, nearer the time? Well, he said, we always have our revival in August. That's the way things go in Georgia. In other words, they have a revival in August.

What he means is a series of movements. It's not a revival, necessarily. Well, if people are so confused and so objective, how can they pray all right? Another thing is a lot of people think that revival simply means triumph.

You know, there's great meetings, great success. Revival is not success. It begins with a very painful experience.

It may hurt a man, for instance, to have to go back to his college and put things right about cheating. That often happens when people start putting things right. Or to go back to a place of business and pay back

money that he had embezzled.

Or to go and apologize to someone, or even to treat his own family right. That happens, first of all, in revival. And people are sometimes surprised, and sometimes people oppose revival because it is a painful experience.

But it's almost like the travel, when the deliverance comes in, comes with great joy. Is there something about our national life that's withholding revival? There is a great deal. In fact, if God told me his secrets, said there will be no revival, there's going to be punishment, who could quarrel with this? With the wickedness, the violence, the immorality, the cheating, all sorts of things like that.

We can't demand revival if God had decided to punish our nation. But maybe for his own purposes. He's a merciful God.

He's willing to bless. Therefore, I think a lot of things need to be put right. Although I disagree with some of my friends, I heard someone say the other day, until we have social justice, we won't see revival.

History shows it to work the other way. We need revival in order to see social justice. Reducing our conversation to the context or the scope of the local church, what are the most common hindrances in that context that prevent revival coming to a given congregation? Well, I suppose, particularizing what I said, generally, a neglect of prayer, a disobedience to the word of God, division and bickering.

In other words, what is called in the scriptures, the works of the flesh, which are not only murder and adultery, but strife and all these things. Jealousy. These are all put as the works of the flesh.

But when the Holy Spirit comes upon a congregation, these things are put right. And of course, we've seen that happen many a time. You may see times of revival.

It's interesting, of course, that there are churches in the United States that are in a state of revival at the present time. Like deep pools of water in the rocks when the tide is out. There are many, many churches in a state of revival.

And of course, strange things are happening. Not all my hearers will agree with me, but I feel that because of the Biblical movement that began in World War II, that the next world awakening is likely to affect large segments of the Roman Catholic Church. Regarding this church we're talking about that is not having revival because of divisions and so on, to mention that would prompt the people to say, well, if we're going to have revival, we've got to start dealing with some of these divisions and so on.

And limiting the symptoms of low spiritual state. Is that a fruitful pursuit? I don't think we should deal with symptoms, but really with the root causes. And of course, whence come wars and whence come fighting among you? Don't they come from your own lusts, your own desires? And I feel, of course, the main thing is just to get right with God.

If we get right with God and we're filled with the Spirit, we'll want to do the right thing. I don't think that, for instance, we should, it's like a doctor trying to treat, shall we say, a headache, when actually it's a tumor that's the cause of trouble. Perhaps an operation is needed.

But I do believe, of course, you know, it was Father Peyton, a Roman Catholic, who said the family that prays together stays together. I find when Christians pray together, they work together. That's always a

helpful thing.

And of course, among Christians that have suspicion and distrust of each other, they never mean to know. They don't know these people they criticize. That's one remarkable thing about times of revival.

The Christians find they all love each other. For instance, our conference here at Oxford University this present week, we have people from every Christian tradition, no friction at all. I haven't been aware of any friction.

It's because we're all in this one thing, and that is the subject of revival. And I think that's bound to happen where there are divisions. A number of years ago, you wrote the following words, O Holy Spirit, revival comes from thee.

Send a revival. Start the work in me. How does someone listening see that begin? Well, the individual has to experience it in his own heart first.

But I like to think of what Henrietta Mears once said. You don't have to wait for everyone to have the same experience. Begin with those that are ready, but don't make a clique out of the group that is ready.

So I think the individual must simply, perhaps I could answer by quoting the other verses of that hymn that I wrote in New Zealand in 1936. Search me, O God, and know my heart today. That's the beginning.

Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray. See if there be some grieving way in me. Cleanse me from every sin and set me free.

Then I pray thee, Lord, to cleanse me now from sin. Fulfill thy promise, make me pure within. That's the secret.

In other words, we must have individual revival, and then we can share it with others. We've been talking about the possibility of revival in our own country of America. Are you optimistic? Do you think we're going to see this real revival, this outpouring of the Spirit of God in the next few years? It's my conviction that we're getting near the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's also my conviction that we will see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit before he comes. He that hath his hope purifies himself. And I think there'll be a latter rain.

So I'm hopeful, although it might be that the God will punish us first. I don't know. We're all dreading being involved in a thermonuclear war.

But it might take that before people repent of their weakness. I think, you know, at the present time, the Soviet bloc and the Chinese and the Western allies all got together and decided they're going to have peace. Instead of causing righteousness, some people think it was an excuse.

Now there's no trouble to face. And they'll have the time of their lives, so to speak, in sin. So I don't know what God's going to do.

But I do feel that the tide has turned, and there are more people praying for a spiritual awakening today. And that's a good sign. I want to thank you, Dr. Orr, on behalf of our founder director, John D. Jess, and our associate director, David Maines, for participating with us on these three Chapel in the Air programs.

Thank you so much. And God richly bless you. And we'll look forward to having you on the program again.

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