

Revival

by Jim Cymbala

This sermon is a passionate call for revival, emphasizing the essential role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about a spiritual awakening. The speaker delves into the significance of revival in the New Testament context, highlighting the need for repentance, confession of sin, and a new obedience to God as precursors to experiencing true revival. The message underscores the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, likening it to fire that penetrates, illuminates, and spreads, igniting a fervent desire for God and a contagious zeal for sharing the Gospel.

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:9, 1 John 1:8, Acts 2:3, Ephesians 5:18, Hebrews 12:29, Luke 24:32, Acts 4:31, Psalm 39:3

Topics: "Revival", "Role of the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

So, how are you doing out there? I want to say hello to Abundant Life Church and Westside Church. I've been asked by Pastor Phil Hopper, who's become a friend over the phone, and we were planning for me and my son-in-law, Brian Petrie, to be out in Kansas City in, I think, June. That went by the boards, but we're still planning to do a leaders conference and then a weeknight prayer rally in Kansas City, and bring people together to encourage pastors, and then to get people to pray together for what's dear to the hearts of these leaders of your two churches, which I'm so thankful for, which is revival.

So, they've asked me to speak on this subject of revival. Revival. That's a popular word, revival.

What's it mean? Where does it come from? You know, in my library and my office, I have a whole section, I don't know how many shelves, of books just about revival, historic revivals, how to experience a revival, the Great Awakening, the second Great Awakening in America, the Welsh Revival, the Azusa Street Revival, the revival in the Hebrides Island in near Great Britain. So, all my life, I've been a student somewhat of this term revival. So, let's dig into it a little bit.

I want to encourage you. I want to whet your appetite. I want to create hunger.

Obviously, I can't bring revival. Only God brings revival, but what we can do is encourage each other. So, revival has many meanings to different people.

For a lot of folks, years ago, it meant a series of protracted meetings. We're going to have a revival. Praise God, Brother Huckleberry's coming in and we're going to have a revival.

So, that's not what the word means. The word revival has nothing to do with meetings. Revival is mentioned in the Old Testament, actually more than the New Testament.

I want to focus on what revival means in the New Testament setting, which is where we're living. We're living in the Gospel Age, the Age of Grace. We're not back with Kings and David and Elijah.

We're with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gospels, the Book of Acts. So, what is revival? Well, revival has to do, obviously, it can be explained many ways, but I want to talk about the essential thing about revival. It's the return of the Holy Spirit to His rightful place in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the lives of His followers.

Can I repeat that? I just made it up, but let me repeat it. Revival is the return of the Holy Spirit, the person of the Holy Spirit, to the Church of Jesus Christ, not buildings, but to the congregations that belong to the Lord, and in the individual lives of the believers. In other words, what Jesus planned for the Holy Spirit to do is now coming into being again, because somehow we've lost touch with Him.

We've lost His presence and His work. That's what revival is. Revival is a new sense of God.

Why? Things changing. Why? Because the Holy Spirit has come. Remember, the Father sent the Son, but before Jesus left this earth, before even doing His work on the cross of dying for our sins, He said, it's good for you that I go, because I'm going to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, and if I don't go, He won't come, and it's better for you that He's there, amazing the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to think about that, because less books have been written about the Holy Spirit over the last 2,000 years, then you can't even compare it with books about God, the Creator, the Father of the Old Testament, the Giver of the Law, and then, of course, Jesus, and the most books and mentions should be made of Him always, our Savior. But the Holy Spirit is throughout the New Testament, especially once you hit the book of and you go into the epistles. Jesus promised them, then He came, and whammo, everything changes.

Now, there are things that precede revival. Repentance of sin, confession of sin. You can't have revival unless you get right with God.

That's for believers. Remember, revival has nothing to do with evangelism directly. It will produce evangelism, but revival is not evangelism.

It's not going door-to-door, telling people about Jesus. We need that, but revival doesn't mean that. It comes from revivify, revive.

Something was alive, something was burning, it's going out now, and now it blazes again. So, prayer, confession of sin, making right with other people that you're fussing with, that we're fussing with, has to precede that, because how can God come and bless when there's discontent, gossip, slander, lying,

stealing, all those things, hatred, prejudice. Number two, from revival will come a new obedience to God.

One of the proofs of revival coming is everybody wants to obey God now. Loose living goes out the window, because why? The name of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. So, when He comes, there's a new consciousness of, like a song that my wife wrote and my daughter sang, my daughter Susan soloed on it.

It's called, Holy Like You. I want to be holy like you. When God is working in your life, there's revival.

That's what people are singing, not, Lord give me a new car, or I need that new cell phone. That's the last thing they're thinking of. They're thinking, I want to be holy like you.

And evangelism. Why? Because the Holy Spirit now has come back to His rightful place. In other words, the Holy Spirit was sent to not only direct the affairs of Christians, led by the Spirit, is the sign of a Christian, and He is the executive officer of all churches.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle is not run, hopefully, please, by Pastor Cymbala and a board. It's supposed to be run by the Holy Spirit. That's who Jesus put in charge when He left.

So, when He was on planet Earth, He was in charge of everything. The disciples looked for His direction, His words of counsel, and they followed. He left, and He sent another helper.

So, all churches are supposed to be run by the direction, and leadings, and promptings, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And leaders within the church are supposed to be feeling after God and praying together, what is God saying to our church? That's God's plan for a church. Now, how you grew up, what I grew up, that's not what we go by.

What you've been taught, what I've been taught, that's not what we go by. We go by this book, the Word of God, and it's clear that the Holy Spirit is the key to a healthy church, a vibrant church, effective evangelism, vibrant Christians, victorious Christians. Without the Holy Spirit, as Samuel Chadwick said, Methodist preacher of a long time ago, Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Ghost.

Did you hear it? Christianity is hopeless. You can have correct doctrine. You go to church.

You can sing hymns. Oh, no, we're not into hymns. We're into new choruses.

Sing new choruses. Sing hymns. It doesn't matter unless the Holy Spirit comes and does His work in us and among us.

So now, I want to read just one verse to you, so that I can close this up and give you the points that I feel God laid on my heart. John the Baptist is talking in Matthew 3, verse 11. I baptize you with water for repentance, but after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.

That meant I can't even be a servant. That's what servants did. They carried the sandals or washed the feet.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. John the Baptist said, look, I was sent before Messiah to bring people to acknowledge their sins and repent. What does repent mean? You're facing this way, pleasing self, living for the world, living by your own impulses, and now you say, no, that's not why God put me on earth.

I make Jesus Christ my Savior. He died for those wrong things I'm doing, those selfish things that I indulge in, and now I follow Him. So he said, I baptize you as a sign of repentance.

When He comes, He will not baptize anyone in water. Did you know, by the way, that all through the ministry of Jesus, He never baptized anyone in water? Thousands were being baptized in water, but He had the disciples do it. Why? He had a unique baptism that He wanted associated with His name, planned by God the Father who sent Him.

What is that? He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. That's the promise. That's the prophecy of John the Baptist.

Well, wait a minute. Are those two baptisms? Oh, I get it. There's baptism in water as a sign you're a believer, and then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you because if anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Christ.

Romans chapter 8. And then there's baptism in the Holy Spirit, and then there's baptism in fire. Did you know in the late 1800s, early 1900s, in Baptist camp meetings, holiness camp meetings, and a lot of diligent, sincere people seeking the Lord, they actually preached that there was a separate baptism. They took that as two different experiences.

Baptism of power, the Holy Spirit, and then baptism of fire. And what was that fire supposed to do? Burn out the old nature, the carnal nature, the sarx, S-A-R-X. The old man was gone, and now some actually thought you can live a perfect life, perfection.

But that contradicts the Word of God. If anyone says he has no sin, he's a liar. The truth is not in him, 1st John says.

So it's not two experiences. It's one. But what is fire then? Fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit that in these few minutes left, I want to talk to you about.

The Holy Spirit has several symbols in the Bible. One is wind. In fact, the same word for wind and spirit in the Greek.

So wind. Remember what Jesus said, the wind blows where it wants, and you don't know when it's coming, going. So is everyone who's born of the Spirit, capital S. So there's power in that wind.

There's unpredictability. You can't put, confine the wind. Then there's oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Everything in the Old Testament used for service to God, including the priest had to be anointed with oil, a symbol of the Spirit. There's water. If anyone's thirsty, let him drink of me, and rivers of living water will flow out of him.

He spoke that about the Spirit, which had not yet come, been sent yet. The Spirit was on the earth when Jesus said that, but he hadn't come in this baptism fire way we're talking about. So fire is this tremendous symbol of God, and now here, especially of the Holy Spirit.

There's a song I heard as a little kid. Oh Lord, send the fire just now. Oh Lord, send the fire just now.

Oh Lord, send the fire just now, and baptize everyone. That might sound crude to you, but it's very biblical, very biblical. Lord, come fill us, refill us, revive us with fire.

See, there's things that the Holy Spirit does that no pastor can do, no teacher, no church program, no computer, no software. Everything has a place, but please, we're dying from a lack of fire. Right now in America, what we need is a revival of the Holy Spirit's fire.

In what way? First thing about quality of fire is fire penetrates. See this Bible? If I pour water on it, it'll be a wet Bible. If I pour oil on it, it'll be an oily Bible.

If the wind blows on it, it might move it or flip the pages. But you set this Bible on fire, en fuego, you take a match and set these pages on fire, fire penetrates. It cuts down to the essential.

In other words, in the sense of this Bible, there'll probably be nothing left by the house. Take some large structure. When fire comes, it takes away everything that's light and surfacy and shallow in its weight, and it cuts down to the very intrinsic nature of the thing.

That's what the Holy Spirit does in revival times. We feel his fire. In other words, he doesn't play around with the surface.

He gets rid of all my pretenses and my defense mechanisms and my pride and everything that a pretense I want to put on a front for people. You know, all of all the image stuff is gone, gone, gone. Shallowness goes when fire comes.

He gets down to the bottom, to our heart, what really matters, who we really are. He burns away everything that's just wood, hay, and stubble. And remember, that's something that's going to be burnt up in the end anyway, according to Scripture.

So the shallow things disappear in my life. He cuts down and he wants to penetrate me, so I see my need of God and I get rid of the superfluous and I hold on to that which is eternal and important. That's what happens when revival comes.

People stop talking Baba and stop talking about nonsense. They start talking about spiritual things. Read about every revival that ever occurred.

Finney's revivals in upstate New York, in Utica, and those other places. The fire of God is so burnt in the city, spiritually speaking, that people would meet in the street and start to cry and pray for each other in the street. Why? The fire had burnt away everything superfluous and now they were like, oh God, I need God, I want more of God.

What's a revival preacher look like? A revival preacher speaks burning words. You know, Mrs. Booth said, General Booth's wife, who founded the Salvation Army, at the end of her life, she said, you know, I travel all over Great Britain and I hear great orators and communicators and oratory and, you know, three points and a conclusion. And she was a woman out of great hunger for God.

But she said, what my soul longs for is burning words, burning words. When a preacher is preaching with the fire of the Holy Spirit, he's not a legalistic shouter and condemner. No, he speaks the truth in love, but it penetrates.

And she said, I want my self-life to be dealt with. I want to hear burning words, not clever communication, not fluff, not pastor as life coach. My goodness, we're talking about life and death and eternity.

How can we waste time in churches talking about things that are non-essential? There's a time for that, those things. But my goodness, when a preacher is anointed by the Holy Spirit, it penetrates. Remember what the two men on the road to Emmaus said about Jesus when he had opened the word to them? Later on, they said, didn't our hearts burn when he opened the scriptures to us? Jesus, his words were fiery, not, weren't we condemned? No, didn't our hearts burn? That's what happens when the revival comes.

Burning happens, but a good burning, that burn out stuff that doesn't belong, burning in a fire that creates a new appetite for God. So that's the first thing about fire that we need to pray for, a revival of fire, so that meetings aren't shallow. I just heard somebody tell me, I think it was my grandson, Luke, that there was, he heard where some minister, some modern contemporary preacher saying, you know, I've really improved my preaching a lot.

You know how I've done it? I've become a better communicator. I've been studying comedians, secular comedians. I watch their timing.

You know, they set up the joke, then they wait, and the look, and then the punchline. I really have improved my communicating. Imagine if you said that to John the Baptist.

Imagine if you said that to the apostle Paul. They'd probably get sick on the spot. Paul said, no, my preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power, i.e. fire of the Holy Spirit, so that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Oh Lord, send the fire on me, and all the pastors in Kansas City, Missouri, and in Kansas, and in these two great churches, and that whole area, Lord. Set us on fire. Number two, fire illuminates.

Do you know that for most of the history of this world, the only light people had was fire? Did you know that? Electricity is really very new compared to the history of the world. If you wanted light, you had a light of fire, and that's the thing about the Holy Spirit. He brings illumination.

He not only penetrates and gets to the bottom of things, He illuminates. Suddenly you see when revival comes, when the Holy Spirit comes, suddenly you see your life in a new way. You get a new sense of purpose.

He saved me. I have a purpose. There's a plan for my life.

Without the Holy Spirit illuminating our eyes, our heart's eyes, we're just drifting around, having fun, hanging out. No. When the Holy Spirit comes, we start thinking about purpose.

We start thinking about the shortness of this life. We start looking at people the way God looks at people. Why? The light of the fire of the Holy Spirit is showing us things we never saw before.

Es verdad. That's Spanish for it's true. We look at eternity.

You know, eternity, no end. We look at people that don't know Jesus Christ. We don't look at them the same way.

Why? Because the Holy Spirit has given us a burden. Why do you think Paul says to a church, I travail like a mother giving birth till Christ be formed in you. Now why would he pray that way? Because illumined by the fire of the Holy Spirit, he saw that false teachers had come in and were going to wreck the work of God.

So he prayed like a woman giving birth. Have you ever gone in a labor room? They're not singing the national anthem in there. They're groaning and praying.

And Paul didn't affect that, make that up. It was a product of the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in him. In this case, a burden for the people that he administered to.

Finally, fire is contagious. Fire sets other things on fire. Water doesn't do that.

Water could seep and drip to other things. And oil can make some other things close by a little bit maybe. But fire? I'm sitting in a beautiful church.

God forbid whatever happened, it won't. But if nobody was in this building and the fire alarms didn't work, just set one pew on fire, get it going. All right, so you burn a pew.

Oh no, no, no, no, no, no. The pew will burn the carpet and the pew will spread to the next pew. And if you just give it a little time, there'll be nothing left.

Why? Fire spreads. It's contagious. When revival comes, folks out in the Midwest, listen, when the fire of the Holy Spirit comes, you don't have to energize and give people a kick in the back end to go out and share Christ.

Did you ever notice that? I've noticed that since I went in the ministry. In the New Testament, there is so little admonition and encouragement like, come on guys, what are you doing? Come on, we got to win souls. Come on, let's go door to door.

Let's hold mass meetings. It's mentioned, do the work of an evangelist is given to Timothy. And we're all workers for the gospel.

But that's hardly mentioned compared to this. Be filled with the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit.

Your book of Acts is just the Spirit set these guys on fire, Paul and Barnabas, later Paul and Silas, that everywhere they went, they were spreading the fire. They were like driven. They were like possessed by God's Spirit, i.e. fire.

So the fire spread. They had to tell people. They had to tell people because the Holy Spirit makes the things of God so joyous and full with peace.

You got to tell people about it. You know, I talked to someone the other day who went to a store and they got something on sale, tremendous price on something. No one had to tell them.

Now, listen, go out and share with everyone how you got 80% off on that. No, they did it because they were excited. The Holy Spirit makes us so excited about Jesus.

We're going to talk. Remember what he said in the first chapter of Acts. Don't worry about my second coming and when I'm going to restore the kingdom to Israel.

It's not for you to know those times or seasons, but you're going to receive power, fire, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. So go back to Jerusalem and wait. And when the Spirit comes, he's going to take weak disciples like Peter, James, and John.

He's going to make you strong. He's going to put my word in your mouth. He's going to penetrate down so you get to the core of the whole thing.

Number two, he's going to give light. When you read the scripture, the Holy Spirit gives illumination and you start seeing things you never saw before. Forgot to mention that.

Along with looking at the world, reading the scripture. How can we read a book and understand it if the author of the book isn't giving us light on it? You can't understand this with your head, with your IQ. You got to have a light from God.

And lastly, it's going to spread. Come on, it's going to spread in the Midwest. I pray that in Jesus' name.

Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas, Abundant Life Church, West Side Church. Come on, let's ask God for revival. Let's ask him for the baptism of fire.

I don't know what your theology is. I'm not interested in arguing with anyone. I just tell you, and I think you'll agree with me, Lord, send the fire.

I know, but there might be excesses. Yeah, there always are excesses. And we got to teach and be patient with that.

But I'd rather have the fire with problems than no fire. And then what do we have? Same old, same old boring church. I was bored with church when I was 10, 10 or 11.

I was like, same old, same old. This thing is so predictable. They even have meetings that are run by a script.

You know exactly what's going to happen, or the leaders do. No, let's open it. Not be crazy, not be fanatical, but let's open the windows to the fire of God, the wind of God.

Let it blow in. Let it set things ablaze. Would you pray with me? Lord, I thank you for the privilege of talking to believers in another part of the country.

Send the fire. Send the fire in my life, Lord. I need your fire.

I'm pastoring. I'm doing the best I can during the pandemic, but I need burning words. I need words that have weight to them.

I just don't want to beat my gums, Lord, and talk. Send the fire to the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Send the fire to West Side Church, Abundant Life Church.

Help the pastors around the country, Lord, and around the world that are Christians. Set us a fire, Lord, so that when we preach, people are going to say, God is surely in that place. Help us not to put you in a box and control the meetings when you're to control the services, and the plans, and the agenda for all our churches.

Let it spread, that fire. Oh God, send the fire that will spread across the land, burning out everything that's evil and wrong. Your fire does more in five minutes than our efforts could do in five years.

So Lord, we say humbly, help us to repent, turn away from anything you convict us about. Take it out of our lives. We humble ourselves before you, and we confess that we are hopeless and helpless without the

fire of God.

We cannot do it. We cannot do it. We humble ourselves.

We cannot do what needs to be done on our own. Lord, send the fire. Give us new light on our lives and what's happening around us, and especially from your word.

And let this fire of the Spirit be contagious, and set other things on fire as we share the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord. We love you God, and we praise you God. Amen.

I don't know what they're going to do next here in this meeting, but I really hope whoever takes it next, you can have a season of prayer. I couldn't do it. You're not in front of me.

If you were in front of me, I'd call you here to the front, and we'd spend time just waiting on God and calling on God. So I pray that you will pray here as we open our hearts to the fire of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for this privilege.

God bless you.

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