

# A New Testament Revival

by John McGregor

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*This sermon delves into the theme of revival in the New Testament, emphasizing the power of God at work in the early church. It highlights the importance of prayer preceding and sustaining revival, the display of God's power within the church, the provision of the Holy Spirit, unity in prayer, and bold proclamation of the gospel message. The sermon encourages personal intimacy with Jesus, united prayer, reliance on the Holy Spirit, and fervent proclamation of the truth.*

**Scripture:** Acts 4:13, Psalm 2:1, Galatians 5:22, John 10:10, 2 Peter 3:9, James 2:10, Isaiah 2:25, Mark 16:15, Ephesians 4:3, Psalm 51:10

**Topics:** "Revival", "Power of Prayer"

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## Description

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## Transcript

A joy once again to open the Word of God in thinking about revival and some of the wonderful things that we discover in God's Word about revival. This time we want to look at a New Testament revival, and it's amazing just to see the hand of God at work. And you know there's this thought sometimes that revival is only something that's happened in the last few hundred years.

But the church in its infancy also experienced revival in certain times and ways and experiences and circumstances for sure. So as we think about this I want to encourage you just take your Bible on your phone or tablet or the actual book, whichever you use, and turn with me to the Acts of the Apostles and the fourth chapter. And as you know this is a history of the acts of God through his church in those very early days.

And here in chapter four we're going to read a little longer section, so please bear with me as we look at that. We'll be reading chapter four verse 13 through the end of verse 33, and then we're just going to consider some things together looking at this New Testament revival. Acts chapter four and verse 13 says, Now when they, that's the Sanhedrin, saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled and they realized that they had been with Jesus.

And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For indeed that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. You see, when God does something you cannot deny it.

Reading on at verse 17, But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, and from now on they speak to no man in this name. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the mouth of your servant David have said, Why did the nations rage and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For truly against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of were gathered together to you, whatever your hand and your purpose determined before to be done.

Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word by stretching out your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus. When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now, the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, neither did anyone say that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Heavenly Father, take this your word and fill our hearts with it. Cleanse our minds with it.

Draw us into that ever closer intimacy with you through your word and by your Spirit. Grant to us, Lord, that just as you brought revival into the church that day, you would bring revival into us this day. In Jesus' strong name we pray, amen.

As you look at revival in the New Testament, we see these amazing things are happening. The word reveals answers to our questions about God and about people, about salvation and sin, about revival and that touch of, oh, the life of God, so what work within us, that like those two on the Emmaus road, we would say our hearts are burning within us as he speaks the word to us, that is Jesus. And as you think of the work of the Holy Spirit, there are some odd notions about revival.

Some people think that it's all about emotion. It's about getting all happy and all, you know, but revival, it can exhibit that, but it is so much more and so much deeper than those surface things that can be seen. It is a sovereign act of God.

It is not something that is produced by man. It does not happen because we call a series of revival meetings. It happens because God in his strength and power moves, and it is glorious and brings great glory to him and to his kingdom and to his children as well.

I loved what the Soterra twins and Bill McLeod taught me years ago about revival. They said, you know, a sailor cannot control the wind. He can only raise his sail to catch it, and revival is like that.

We do not control it. It is God who is in complete charge, but there are things that we can do that raise the sail to catch the wind of the Spirit as God is at work, just as there are things that can get in the way and oppose that work of the Spirit. There are things that we can do and see and know, just as it is here in this text.

So, we want to observe the text, and the first thing that I want you to see is that there is a personal intimacy between the disciples and the Lord Jesus. When they have been threatened and beaten and so on, they do not run out and go to the press and say, oh, we have been beat up and all these things. No, they go to the Lord, and that sense of intimacy and revival brings within us a transformation of knowing that when God moves, all of those barriers and so on are just set aside and his work comes through.

So, as we observe in our text, first of all, let's notice that prayer precedes revival. You'll find that's true in all the examples of Scripture and of history, that prayer precedes revival. It is prayer that sustains revival, and when prayer starts to diminish and cease, revival stops.

Oh, my dear friends, as you look at verses 24 to 31 in here, when they go to God in prayer, amazing things happen. But what kind of prayer was it? Because, you know, sometimes we think, well, I just need to pray and God will do it just like that. But we need to follow his word, and we need to see what was happening here, and the first thing that I want you to see is it was united prayer.

By that I mean it was corporate prayer. It was the church of those very early days gathering together to seek the Lord together. Now, there's no nice, easy way to say this, but it is simply stated that in most of the Western churches today, prayer is an hour or so on one evening for a handful of people.

But if we want to see God move and work, we need to become biblical in all these things, and they did not just take a few. They got everybody together. It was united prayer.

It was corporate prayer. If you study the Great Awakening in America, you will see that Jonathan Edwards, that wonderful theologian, called for united prayer across the land, and so it is still. It was corporate.

It was the body, the core, coming together to lift up the situation to God, knowing that they have been told, you can't do this anymore, and experiencing God's answer. Wow! Now, you know, my son-in-law and daughter were visiting in New York. They had a trip to New York, and I had said to them, when you're in New York, if you're there over a Tuesday night, you need to go to Brooklyn Tabernacle and experience the prayer meeting, but phone ahead and book a spot, otherwise you may not get in.

Now, that's the kind of prayer meeting that this was like, where everybody wanted to be there, because everybody needed God to answer and to work. When my kids came home, my daughter said to me, Dad, I've never been in a prayer meeting like that. The presence of God was so real, and the sense of God answering prayer, even in the midst of that meeting, was incredible.

Years ago, I asked the pastor, Jim Cimbala, how do you get two or three thousand people to come to a prayer meeting? And he simply said, John, if you saw God answering prayer like these people do, you'd see the same thing. You see, we've lost our enthusiasm of bringing our needs to God instead of to the world and to this and to that and to something else. So it is humble, dependent prayer, and God answers.

Scripture is the foundation of prayer. You know, the world hasn't changed. We read in Psalm 2 that they were against the Lord and his anointed.

It's in this text also, in verse 25 and 26. The world hasn't changed. It doesn't want God's kingdom to thrive.

The evil one seeks to do all that he can to shut it out and close it down. But dear friends, when we come together and seek the Lord in prayer, prayer precedes revival. What was it that they were asking? Well, it was very specific.

They are saying, Lord, stretch out your hand. It was not about how the sermons they could preach or the good deeds that they could do or how they could demonstrate the church was necessary. It was simply saying, Lord, stretch out your hand.

Now, when God stretches out his hand, there is no power on earth, in hell, or anywhere else that can stop his work. And so it is that his work is not stopped here either. Prayer precedes revival, and prayer sustains it.

Ah, my dear friends, think about this as you think about a revival in the New Testament, because the Lord has not changed, and he answers prayer. There is one thing that my heart longs for, and it would be to see the church really pray, to come together in a united way like this and petition heaven's gates until they open. And the Lord answers by stretching out his hand.

The second thing that we see in this text is that the power of God is displayed in revival, and it happens first in the church. Now why would I say that? Because it is here in the church that the place where they were praying is shaken. That sense of shaking.

God is just saying, I hear you! And there's a sense of knowing that they have gotten through, as it were, in seeking God's answer. The presence of God is filling the place. Oh, you know, there is opposition to the gospel and the church in this text, and there still is today, isn't there? So much opposition through the media and this and that and our world and all the rest.

But dear ones, God hasn't changed. When you think about it, what God does here, can you imagine walking out of that prayer meeting and being afraid of anyone? I don't think so. When God shook the place, there was a sense of his power, and it is amazing to see what happens as they go out with boldness and so on.

Opposition always seeks to shut things down and to close things up. Years ago I was directing a crusade in Calgary for the Billy Graham Association, and we had wanted to do a prayer walk, and people would walk from the north and from the south, and they would assemble then at City Hall, at the City Hall in Calgary. But we had a problem.

We could not get a permit for it, and the guy who was trying sat outside an office all day and got no interview with the person who could do it. And the next day went back and was seeing much the same thing, until there was an opening of the door, and he slipped in there and sat and spoke to the person and

said, I want to get a permit for this. And the person said, well, I'm of another religion, and if you think I'm going to give you a permit to walk these streets and talk about Jesus, think again.

And our dear friend simply said, well, I suppose I'll just go out and talk to the press and let them know that City Hall is against Christianity, and we're being discriminated against. That permit was written out in a hurry and thrown across the desk at him. You see, when God is in it, he will provide an answer.

It's his power. It's him who can address all of these things. People and governments and all kinds of things have tried to snuff out the message of the gospel and the truth of Christ in his church for centuries.

But when God stretches out his hand, and we see him at work, and I just want you to think with me for a moment. Is Jesus going to return to earth for a church that is beaten and defeated and demolished and pushed out of the way? I think not. For my Bible says he comes for a bride without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish.

A bride that has stood the test of time and fire and all of the rest, that is strong in the love of God, in the power of the Spirit of God. Verse 27, the ruling authorities conspired against him, but God is bigger than them, and he still is. God is sovereign in all of these events, just as verse 28 reminds us.

Do whatever your hand and your purpose determined before to be done. Nothing will stop his purpose. We read, do we not, in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 9, he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to him.

How can that happen without a church that is vocal about the love of God and the power of God? The power of God is seen in this New Testament revival. His power responds to the threats, and his work goes ahead. There is tremendous power in his name.

Years ago I read a wonderful book by Andrew Murray called *The Two Covenants*, and it simply boils down to say this. In the old covenant where the law was given, obedience was required. The one thing that was missing was the power in us to keep the law.

It is still the same today, isn't it? Sometimes people say to me, I try to live by the Ten Commandments, and I like to say, how are you getting along? Well, I do okay on this one and this one, maybe not so good on that. But in James chapter 2 we read, if we have broken one, we are guilty of them all. The power is not in us, but in the new covenant.

In the New Testament, the new covenant with God, he sent the power of the Holy Spirit to dwell in every believer, that we might know his strength and his ability, not just the things that we can do or expect. As you look at this New Testament revival, you see there is the provision of the Holy Spirit, and he is at work and active. All present in that prayer meeting were filled with the Spirit.

What a day that would have been to see the church so full of the Spirit of God they couldn't contain it. There is something to pray for, isn't it, in this day and in our time? Love is the greatest motivator that you can find. Some people try to motivate us by guilt.

That doesn't really work well. Others try to motivate us by greed. That doesn't work well either.

Still others try to motivate us with this or that, but love is the greatest motivation. Jesus loves you with an eternal and everlasting love, and you must love him with all of your being in the power of his Holy Spirit.

We saw in crusade after crusade with the Billy Graham team the power of love at work as people would pray for three friends or relatives who did not know Christ, and who then saw those people walk forward in the meetings to say, I'm sorry for my sin.

I want to know Jesus as my Savior. I want to experience the peace of forgiveness. I want to know the truth of God.

I want to walk with him. Ah, dear friends, you see the provision of the Holy Spirit makes all the difference, doesn't it? We read in Galatians 5 and verse 22 about the fruit of the Spirit, and the very first word in that says the fruit of the Spirit is love. We need revival so desperately because if ever a world needed the love of God, it is our world.

Broken, betrayed, miserable, all of the things that you could possibly think of that wound human beings in this world. That God in his love sent his Son so that the church could boldly proclaim there is someone to turn to. There is a place to go.

There is one who can turn that circumstance all around. There is one who can overcome all the threats and all the rest, and his name is Jesus. But you know, the self-life gets in the way.

We grow too comfortable. Well, I maybe should talk to somebody, but I'll do it next week. I probably should go to that prayer meeting, but I know so-and-so will be there.

I don't get along good with them. You see, we begin to build excuse after excuse after excuse, but God provided the Spirit of God to indwell every believer so that they could walk in honesty and integrity and walk in the fullness of life that Jesus spoke about in John 10.10. The thief comes to kill and steal and destroy, but I am come, said Jesus, that they might have life and have it more abundantly. May I ask you, do you have that abundant life, or is there bitterness, resentment, disappointment, depression, discouragement, defeat? The list goes on and on and on.

When we come under the full influence and control of the Spirit of God, he will not lead us wrong. He will equip us, just as the Scriptures say. He will enable us for the circumstance, whatever it is, however it might be.

We see in this text the provision of the Spirit. That's what made the difference, and that is what makes the difference between the church and the social club. It is the presence of the living God in the hearts of his people.

As they're fully surrendered to him, setting aside the self-life and putting on the new man, as the New Testament tells us, dressed in righteousness and holiness and truth. You know, you never have to worry if you tell the truth. If you tell lies, you have to remember what you said.

But when you tell the truth, you have peace on the inside. The provision of the Holy Spirit, so important. And there is unity here as they pray and seek God.

There's no jealousies, there's no implications about personality clashes and all of those kind of things. There's just that sense of unity. You know, when God is at work, it's amazing the things that can be set aside.

In 1970 when revival came to Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, Walter Bolt, the pastor, lead pastor of Circle Drive Alliance Church, biggest church in the city, was having a missions conference. It was going great guns, but when he heard about the revival and the fact that they needed a bigger building, he just said, come here. Even that conference was set aside so that God could do all that he wanted to do in the hearts and lives of people everywhere.

Fourthly, we see in this text that proclamation is also included in revival. From verse 31 down through 33, it speaks to us about the fact that they spoke the word of God boldly, declaring the gospel, speaking to people and saying, there is a way that God has given that all the wrong, all the misery can be washed and cleaned, and you can be free to live who God created you to be. So much emphasis in our day is on finding yourself, find Jesus, and you'll find yourself, and all that God has for you.

They were declaring this word of repentance and regeneration. When you turn away from all of the things that are wrong, and you turn to Christ, the righteous one, and he comes to live in your heart, there is a sense of peace and grace that comes from God that is outstanding. Boldly they are confronting the lies of the world and their culture.

May we not do the same in this day, and in love proclaim that Christ is the only Savior that this world will ever have. For the very same book tells us that there is no other name given under heaven among men by which we must be saved. There is no other one to go to.

There is no other way but the way of Christ. In verse 33, it tells us that there was great power in their proclamation, and with great power, it says, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord. They weren't giving witness to themselves and the things that they were doing.

They were speaking about the resurrection of Jesus who died on that cross and who walked out of the grave on that first day of the week, and who spoke to his disciples and taught them and gave them the Holy Spirit to enable them to boldly proclaim. There is such power in the proclamation of the gospel. George Whitefield, a preacher in the 1700s when there was no technology, spoke to more than 20,000 people one day.

Many of them were coal miners and their faces were black from working in the pit, and the journals and so on of the day say that looking at the faces they were streaked white where the tears had come because of the power of proclaiming the gospel, of saying that's not the way. Jesus is the way to salvation, and Jesus is the way to revival. Men and women who were called to preach and to teach, oh what a difference it makes.

How about you? What is God saying to you today? What's he saying to you about your prayer life? Would you allow him to put his burden for revival in your heart? Would you begin to pray for revival that is heaven-sent and Holy Spirit-directed? Would you begin to surrender afresh and anew to the Spirit of God and set aside all the things that seem so important at the time, begin to share boldly what you know of Jesus and his salvation? We need that kind of praying. We need this Holy Spirit enabling. We need that kind of preaching, just like that day.

We need the power of God to touch our lives and our services. It begins as we do what they did. Despite our circumstances and discouragements, we turn to God in prayer and begin to seek what he will do.

Would you pray with me? I can't invite you to the altar, but I can invite you to meet Christ in the altar of your heart, right where you are, wherever you're sitting, wherever you may be as you catch this live stream. However you receive this message, would you turn to God just now? The church needs the power of the love of God, needs the power of the Holy Spirit, needs the surrendered individual who seeks God alone for every circumstance. You and I today could say to the Lord, Lord, I want to be that person.

I want to be that one seeking you, even in my circumstances, even in my family. I want to see you at work in my life, in your church, and in your world. Heavenly Father, we come to you.

Thank you that we can draw near through the shed blood of Jesus. Thank you that as we look at this New Testament revival, we see they prayed, and we can do that. We see that your power was displayed, and we can trust you for that.

We see that there was the provision of your Holy Spirit, and you still do that day by day. We see, Father, that they proclaimed, and we can do that with your enabling. Father, as we come to you, we come to surrender.

Fill us, and use us, and lead us. Enable us to set aside all the things of the flesh, and just to draw near to the one who has loved us, and washed us, and who makes us follow. And if I'm speaking to someone today, and you don't know Jesus as your Savior, there was religion in this chapter that we looked at, but it wasn't taking anybody to heaven, only a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can do that.

And you can find that by simply turning to him, and saying, Dear Lord Jesus, I repent or turn away from my sin from my own way, and I turn to you, and I ask you, forgive me. Come and live in my heart. Live in my life.

Fill me with your Spirit, and enable me to walk with you, and serve you in your church. Lord, send revival, and let it begin. In Jesus' name.

Thank you, and God bless you. Once again, we encourage you, if you have a prayer request or a need, shoot an email to us. They can come to me if you simply send them to Heritage Alliance Church through Pastor Shea at [ourheritage.ca](mailto:ourheritage.ca). May the Lord bless you, as you seek revival and find it in Jesus.

Amen.

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