

The First Step Toward Revival

by John McGregor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility as the first step towards personal and corporate revival. It explores how God requires humility, reveals humility through Jesus Christ, and personalizes humility in our lives. The message highlights the need to come to God in repentance, acknowledging His goodness as the catalyst for transformation and revival.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 57:15, Philippians 2:3, Romans 6:11, Luke 18:10, Numbers 12:3, James 4:6, Romans 2:4

Topics: "Humility", "Repentance for Revival"

Description

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Transcript

As we open God's Word today, we want to continue our series on revival, looking in scripture at the things that the Word of God teaches us. And we can be so thankful, whether in troubled times or in good, that our God is the God of revival. He is able to touch and to change circumstances in so many remarkable ways.

If you study the history of revivals, you'll see all kinds of amazing things. Indeed, I encourage you to look up some of the revivals of the past and how they have changed the course of lives, the course of families, the course of nations, and indeed, the course of our world as well. So I'm going to read the most familiar verse about revival, and we're going to begin there today, but we'll read it and then we'll pray together.

Reading from 2 Chronicles chapter seven and verse 14, a verse that is often quoted as people think about revival, and here's what the Word of God says. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. And Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for the instruction of your Word.

You never leave us without your resources and the guidance of your Holy Spirit. And so we pray, Lord, that you would take these thoughts and your Word today and the power of your Spirit and strengthen the lives of your people wherever they may be as they receive this message, whether here or on livestream or

however it goes. May you be glorified, may your Word be exalted, and may our lives be touched and drawn ever closer to you.

In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen. You know, often as we've discussed revival in different places and areas where we've gone to preach the gospel, it's been so interesting if you ask, you know, what is the first step to revival? So many people will say prayer. Prayer is that first step.

We must pray for revival. And you know, it's certainly part of this verse. But I want today to look at the first step that scripture teaches us here about revival.

Now, as you noticed as I read, it says that if my people who are called by my name, so revival is what God will do within his people. And as we stop and just ponder that for a moment, the next thing that is said is the first step for us as his people to take if we would know the touch of God in personal revival or then going on to a corporate revival and beyond that moving out to a revival in our world, in our area where the living Lord is using his people to touch the lives of so many others. So as we think about the first step that we can take toward revival, we find it here.

It goes on to say if my people called by my name will humble themselves. Well, you know, that's not a message that we hear commonly proclaimed these days. The world admires people who are self-confident, ambitious, full of drive, and so on.

But when we look at the scriptures and think about revival, that first step is that we would humble ourselves. And I have oftentimes heard people say, the Lord needs to humble us. But scripture doesn't say that.

It says his people need to humble themselves and pray. So the first step is really humility. And we want to think about that for a few moments in the message today.

First of all, let me just say that when you think about humility, you know, we sometimes in our culture have the idea that that's portraying weakness. But actually, to come humbly before God who is almighty and glorious and majestic is not a sign of weakness. It is to give him his rightful place in our lives, in our world, in our homes, and indeed in the church, which is his instrument here on earth to draw people to himself.

So when we think about this thing of humility, it is not a thing of weakness at all. It is a step in strength into the power of what God can do instead of the mere things that we can do. So as we think about this, first of all, let's consider that God requires humility.

God requires it of us. Here in this verse, we see it established as the first thing that God is saying about revival. And I want to read from Isaiah 57 and verse 15.

And there we find these words. For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in a high and holy place with him who has a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Did you catch that? I dwell in a high and holy place with him who has a contrite and humble spirit.

You see, God requires it. And pride is the opposite of humility. And pride is the single greatest obstacle to revival.

Just as so often, pride is an obstacle to people who would come for salvation. They are filled with that sense of, well, what will other people think? And you know, I can make this on my own. And I can get into heaven because of what I do.

All of that is so wrong compared to the scriptures, the word of the living God. And so we see here, as we see in many other places, that humility is what God is looking for. He requires it.

Pride, you see, is the sin that causes God to oppose us. You can check these scriptures out. I'll just give you a number of references here.

Psalms 10, verse four, Proverbs 8, 13, Proverbs 29 and 23, Matthew 23 and verse 12, and James chapter four and verse six, where it says, God resists the pride, but he gives grace to the humble. There it is again, that sense of being humble before him. You see, humility is required for salvation, isn't it? In Luke's gospel in chapter 18 and verses 10 through 14, we're given a parable that shows this example.

It is Jesus speaking, and he speaks about a Pharisee and a publican who come to the temple to pray. And the Pharisee says, I thank you, God, that I'm not like other people. I'm not like this publican.

I fast, and I give, and I do, and I do. The publican on the other side, he's just beating his breast and saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus said God had respect to his prayer more than the other because, you see, it is humility that allows us into the presence of God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

When we come humbly to God and ask for his salvation, it is there in that instant. A couple of years ago, while in South Africa, speaking in a number of places, I was taken out for coffee with eight different clergy members, and the waitress that day seemed so downcast, and I said to her, what's your name? And she said, my name is Teresa. And I said, you seem sad.

Why are you sad? And she started to cry, and she said, my baby died. And I said, you know, Teresa, the pain that you're experiencing is so hard to deal with. Losing someone that precious.

But you know, there is someone who loves you and who wants to hold you, and he wants to minister to you in this time in your life. And over the course of the next few moments, I watched as Teresa humbly said, Lord, I don't know what to do with the pain and the agony and the loss, and I need to be saved. I need to know that you care about me and that you love me, even now, in my sense of failure and loss.

How interesting it was to watch as the touch of Jesus turned her appearance around, and there was suddenly hope and strength and peace and all of those things. And I had to smile because each of the clergy who were having coffee with me thought that she should go to their church. But you see, it was Jesus who touched her life.

Pride had to be set aside and the hurt and so on. Humility is required because it causes us to depend on God instead of on ourselves. And we see this, don't we, in Matthew 6 and verse 11.

Give us this day our daily bread. You see, Jesus was teaching, even as he taught the Lord's Prayer, that we are to be dependent upon him, humbly trusting him for all things, and that he would give us all things that we need. And indeed, he fulfills all of his promises, and always has, and always will.

Humility is required when we're carrying burdens. We read in 1 Peter 5, verses six and seven, casting all your care upon him because he cares for you. Oh, you see, this thing of humility is really the first step in revival, and so much more because it is that sense of being humble in his presence and dependent upon him that drives us to the right place with the right heart at the right time to embrace all that he can give, and all that he can do instead of merely what we know.

Humility is required for intimacy with God. We read in Isaiah 66, and I just want to read from the beginning of that chapter, and especially in verse two. It says, for all those things my hand has made, and all those things exist, says the Lord, but on this one will I look, on him who is poor and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word.

You know, I believe that in our Western culture and so on, we have lost that sense of the majesty of God, of the fear of God, and the sense of respect for him, in the sense of recognizing who he is, and setting aside my will for his will. Oh, what a difference that makes. As we think about this, you know, those who are contrite in spirit are humble, and they tremble at his word.

Wow. When was the last time you saw someone who trembled at the word of God? I remember preaching one night, and a man in the middle of the congregation beginning to shake and beginning to cry, and everybody around him was trying to shush, shush, shush, and I had to say, leave him alone! God is doing something in his heart. God is touching his life.

My dear friends, humility is the first step toward revival. In Doha, we need again to think about that, and all that it means in our lives. Have we humbled ourselves? Given him his rightful place in our lives, in our homes and marriages, in his church, is he indeed the Lord of all? So God requires humility, and it is obvious from the first verse that we read that it is for his people to humble themselves.

Secondly, we see that God reveals humility to us. In Philippians chapter two, let me read verses three through eight, and let's just think together about this text for a few moments and see how God reveals what true humility is like. I'll read, in fact, from verse one just to help to contextualize it all.

The first eight verses of Philippians chapter two. Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, let nothing be, sorry, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for your own interests, but also the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant and coming in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

If you've ever wondered what does humility look like, think about the steps of humility that God reveals to us through our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. As he comes to this earth to be our savior and redeemer, the one who would lift us from the prison of sin and shame and who would lift us into the kingdom of God as heirs and joint heirs with him of all that he provides in this great salvation. Oh, you know, the problem often for believers is that we begin to take it for granted.

We begin to feel that we're entitled and that these things belong to us. But when you look at the life of Jesus and you think about humility, it is the first step to revival. And it is modeled in Jesus.

It is revealed to us in the Lord Jesus. As we look here at this text, let's just go down the steps where Jesus takes a step downward, where he begins to humble himself all the way to that death on the cross, that death at Calvary, that sense of giving up all things so that you and I could have a place in his kingdom. The first one that we would notice is that he gave up his throne.

He's the king of kings and the Lord of lords. All of heaven buzzed at his presence. But he said, I'll give that up for you, for you, for you.

What an amazing step that is. Oh, how it puts us to shame as we seek and clamber one above the other and so on. There is such a need for this sense of biblical humility in revival.

The second thing that we think about is that he gave up his home. He stepped out of heaven, that eternal dwelling of God, into time, so that as Galatians 4 tells us, in the fullness of time, he could be born into this world and live that perfect life and die that perfect death and rise from the dead so that you and I could have hope and know the wonderful touch of God, not just in salvation, but in a holy life as we draw near to him. Thirdly, we think about the fact that he gave up his position.

Very God, imagine the angels coming to him for instruction and he's saying, I'll set my position aside so that you can find salvation, so that you can know a saving touch, so that you can find healing, so that you can find help, so that you can know the love of God that passes knowledge and is measureless. Oh, position is such a big thing in our world, isn't it? There was a man called John Hyde. He was known as Praying Hyde because he prayed about things and he saw such incredible answers to prayer.

He was invited to speak at a conference in England and so he traveled from India where he ministered to England and you know, he spoke rather slowly and softly and not very dynamically. The leaders of the conference said, this is terrible. Send somebody up to sing.

And so a song leader came and just started a song in the middle of Hyde's message and he just slipped quietly off the stage. Someone came to him afterwards and said, that was terrible what was done to you. Aren't you angry about that? But John Hyde knew the secret of humility because he knew Jesus was Lord.

And so he said, it is the Lord. Let him do what seems him good. He wasn't worried about his reputation or his position or what others might think.

He just wanted to serve Christ with a simple, humble heart. The world does not remember anybody who was at that conference that day except for John Hyde. Who didn't even get to finish the message.

He came to pray. Oh, Jesus gave up these things. The fourth was reputation.

The sinless son of God coming into a sin-filled world. We think our world is sinful, not. It was just the same when Jesus was born into it.

There were all of those sins that are still around today. All of the cheating and lying and immorality and all of those kind of things were there. Addictions, all of that.

He came into that broken world setting aside his reputation. In 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 it says, he, Jesus, who knew no sin became sin so that we might know the righteousness of God in him. You see the

transference that is there? He set aside his reputation.

How about you? He, the creator, takes on the form of the creation. He became not just a man but a servant. That's another step down.

If he'd come to be a ruling king, oh, what that would have looked like. But instead he came to be a servant. In John 13 we read how he washed the disciples' feet and served them.

We see that scripture tells us Jesus is still interceding at the Father's right hand for you and me. He set aside all of those things. And you know, that's amazing, isn't it? But then he set aside his life, humbled and took death for all of us as our substitute.

Not enough preaching is done these days about the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Don't hear often enough about the shed blood that cleanses away our sin and shame. Oh, how we need again to remember that body that was given for you and I. He took death, humbled himself, and not just a peaceful death, but the death of a criminal, punished for the sins that he never committed, but I have, and you have.

Oh, you can see why humility is the first step toward revival. It is so necessary for us to see it in that light, isn't it? He did all of that for you and for me. How could we then believe the lie that he would not save us if we come to him, no matter what we've done? How could we believe the lie that if we honestly in repentance turned to God, that he would say, sorry, I don't want anything to do with you.

What nonsense is that? It comes about because we believe that we still have to do something. But Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, just as the hymn writer says. My dear friends, as you think about Jesus, he personifies humility.

There's another person in the scriptures who is a leading man of God, and before I leave, the fact that God reveals this thing of humility to us. Who did God choose to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt? He chose Moses. Moses said, I don't talk well, I can't speak well, I'm not able to do this, I couldn't.

In fact, when you read in Numbers chapter 12 in verse three, it says that Moses was more humble than any man. You see, when God was searching, he knew that humility was a requirement that would lead on to the finished work and the glory of God. God requires it of us, and God reveals it to us.

And lest we spend too long thinking about it, let me move on quickly to my third thought. Revival, personal revival, personalizes humility. You see, we often want to just take a Band-Aid and put it over the wound, when what we need is to deal with the root of sin, not just the fruit of sin.

What do you mean by that, Pastor John? Well, this is what I mean. So often, we want to just fix it up slightly. Jesus went to the cross, and you and I need to go to the cross, too.

Not just for salvation, we need to go to the cross that there would be that sense of being crucified with Christ. Galatians 2.20, you know, the apostle Paul hit this so clearly. Said, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but it is not me, it is Christ in me.

And the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. You see, personal revival demonstrates that. That sense that we have gone to the cross and said, Lord, crucify my flesh, crucify my pride, crucify my arrogance, crucify my entitlement, take away all those things and fill

me instead with the Spirit of the living God that I might walk humbly and respectfully before you.

In Romans 6 and verse 11, we find these words. Reckon yourselves, therefore, dead to sin, but alive to God. How does that happen? It happens as we apply the cross of Jesus.

Oh, there are so many illustrations and revivals of past times, and you'll find that everyone that the Lord used to encourage people into that revived relationship with him were people who knew what it was, to die to self and to live for Christ. I have a very dear friend in the revival in Western Canada in 1970 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was a pastor in another community, and every night in the weeks that the revival went on, there were amazing things going on, and my pastor friend took a busload of people from his church every night to those meetings, and he watched every night as people in his busload met with God, and marriages were healed, and relationships were healed, and it began to be obvious that God was so at work in his church, and one night after three weeks, my friend, sitting on the bus, said, Lord, I pray you'll speak to the people tonight.

I've been there every night for three weeks, and I know and believe that there's nothing that you want to say to me, and that was the night, my friends, when God broke his heart and said to him, you're a very proud, filled man. Take that pride to the cross. Oh, that man has been used by God to start at least five churches, and he has impacted the lives of thousands of people because of that night when personal revival touched him so deeply and so strongly.

So may I just wrap things up and encourage you to make a decision. It's a decision that simply says, Lord, I don't want to live like this anymore. I don't want to live this half-hearted, limp Christian life.

I want to live in the fullness of your spirit. I want to live in the joy of your salvation. I want to know the strength of the God who revives and who changes lives and hearts and homes and churches and communities.

Well, where do we begin? In Romans chapter two and verse four, there are remarkable words. Let me just turn over there and read that verse as we come to word, closing in prayer. Romans chapter two and verse four.

Or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? Dear friends, that's where to begin, to come with repentance because of his goodness, his forbearance, his love, his desire, and to say, Lord, teach me how to live for you, with you, in you, and teach me. How to touch all those around. Would you take a moment and pray with me just now? Because of the pandemic, we can't invite people to the altar, but I'm inviting you to the altar of your heart and in your heart right now.

Think of those words that God just spoke to us. It is his goodness that leads us to repentance. May we pray together.

Gracious God and Heavenly Father, thank you that as we see in your words so clearly, humility is the first step toward revival. Lord, forgive me, for I have been far from humble. I come in repentance to you.

I ask you, fill me afresh and anew with your Holy Spirit. Teach me all over again who you are, what you long to do in my life and heart. And if today you have never experienced real salvation, it begins in that moment of repentance when you simply say to him, as the man in Luke's gospel said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Cleanse away my sin. Fill me with the joy of intimacy with you. And teach me how to walk humbly in the fellowship of your church.

In Jesus' precious name we pray. If you're watching on livestream or online, I encourage you, write to us as God has been speaking to your spirit. You can do that by emailing the Heritage Alliance Church here in Regina.

If you would mark it, shea at heritagealliance.ca, that would be great. He'll pass it along to me wherever I may be. And may God bless you today, amen.

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