

Revival Lectures Series - Short

by Leonard Ravenhill

Revival is a sovereign act of God that requires brokenness, discipline, and a recognition of sin's offensiveness to God.

Duration: 28:15

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:4, Joel 1:13, Joel 2:11, Joel 2:13, Joel 2:17

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a vision and burden for the lost souls in the world. He highlights the alarming fact that there are more lost people now than ever before, even 2,000 years after Jesus Christ came into the world. The speaker urges listeners to turn to the Lord with fasting, weeping, and mourning, and to rend their hearts in repentance. He also calls on the priests and ministers to intercede for the people and plead with God to spare them from reproach and the rule of the heathens. The sermon emphasizes the need for brokenness and discipline in order to experience the awesomeness of God's presence and power.

Transcript

Another definition would be that it means to recover, or repair, or restore. In Hosea, chapter 10 and verse 12, it says, So to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and reign righteousness upon you. That's Hosea, chapter 10 and verse 12.

So to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground. Now, the question is, what is fallow ground? Well, fallow ground is ground that has been fruitful, and then it's been ploughed over, and no seed has been sown in it, and therefore it's become unproductive. Now, notice there's a human emphasis here, it says that we are to break up.

You break up your fallow ground. Now, take another aspect of it here in Psalm 85. Psalm 85, verse 6 says, So therefore, there's an absence of joy, there's an absence of ecstasy.

Again, the very word revive presupposes life. There has been life which has become, oh, what could you say? Thick, or weak, or apathetic. You can only revive what has already had vitality.

It means to revitalize. I think the nearest analogy I can give you is somebody who's, well, been drowning, and they're on the edge of death, and somebody comes along and resuscitates them. Now, you don't do

that with a corpse.

You've never seen anybody resuscitate a corpse. You don't go when somebody's been dead a day or two and try and revive it, you say it's dead. But if there's still life there, you can resuscitate life.

It's amazing how many cases there have been of people who have sometimes been declared to be clinically dead, and yet somebody has worked on them. Recently, there was a case of somebody who apparently was drowned, had been under the water for, you know, an incredible amount of time, and somebody pulled him out and worked on him and worked on him. People said, give up, he's dead, he's dead.

And eventually, life came again. Well, this is actually what it means to revive, means to revitalize. It means to restore lost power.

It means to recover energy. In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, I think the verse is 19, Acts 3, 19, repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Now, whatever else we say about revival, we have to recognize this, that revival is an act of mercy in the sovereignty of God.

Again, if you want to put it in another context, Paul made plants and abolished water, but God gave us the increase. Now, there's a vast difference between revival and evangelism. When we speak of revival in America so often, we think of a, well, in fact, you see a church advertising, our revival will begin next Sunday night at a certain time and it's going to finish the next Sunday night at a certain time, which obviously is something which is purely mechanical.

It's something which men have engineered. I think one of the offenses, there's more than one offense of revival. I am not thinking, when I talk about revival, I'm thinking of revival in the historic sense.

As Dr. Tozer said, when revival comes, it changes the moral climate of a community. You can have revival which, shall we say, this is the spire of a church, all right, this is the church. You can have a revival which covers a church like that.

Spurgeon had that. You can have revival which will cover maybe a city like this and you can have a revival which covers a whole nation. And I'm thinking in this context more than in the other context, though sometimes one spreads from there to there to there, you know, like fire spreads.

One offense, again, I say of revival is this, that one thing, it cannot be organized. Revival in the historic sense I'm talking of, it cannot be organized. Evangelism can be organized.

Revival cannot be organized. Now, look, again, if you make an abbreviation like that, if you put R-E-V for revival, like that, and then over here you just put a E, Eva, and remember it's not a girl, it's evangelism. You can put all your notes under here on revival and all under here on evangelism.

All right. Revival cannot be organized. Evangelism can.

Revival cannot be subsidized. Evangelism can, and it must be, usually. It may cost millions of dollars, as it often does, at least one or two millions, to have one of our huge, modern, what are sometimes called revivals, for the simple reason you have to engage the media.

You have to pay vast sums of money for time on TV, say. You know, somebody says, I'm going to have three meetings this week on national TV, a million dollars a night. That's incredible.

That's unthinkable to me in the context of biblical revival or even historic revival, either in America or again there in Europe. So revival cannot be organized, revival cannot be subsidized, revival cannot be advertised. Evangelism can.

Why doesn't revival need to be advertised? For the simple reason that, again, to use the definition of Mr. Chadwick's, there is nothing, there is nothing anywhere more attractive than a fire. You wait till the coal knights come and see. You put a fire in the room, it somehow seems to change the whole of the room.

Fire is the most self-advertising thing that there is. Whether it is a physical fire or whether it is a revival fire, it is self-advertising. It is magnetic.

To bring this down to modern technology, revival cannot be computerized. There's information you can put in computer and hey, presto, you get the answer like that. But you cannot computerize it.

Evangelism, it cannot be computerized. It cannot be regularized. There are high spots and low spots, even in revival.

There are periods in which one thing is, alright, the revival is totally taken over sometimes, shall we say, by sorrow. There are times when a revival is taken over totally by joy, ecstasy, till you don't know whether you're in the flesh or you've gone out of earth or not. There are times when revival is taken over by stillness.

There are two kinds of stillness. One is killing. The other is creative.

You go to a prayer meeting sometimes and suddenly the praying stops and it's like an icy bath. There are times when you go to a prayer meeting and the power of God is there and there's a stillness and you feel it's creative. Now somebody's building up round here.

Somebody's going to come out shortly with a heart bursting, with, you know, some agonizing prayer or something so there's a killing, a stillness or a silence which is killing and there's a silence which is creative. We'll come to some of these things of course later. It cannot be rationalized.

One of the offensive things about revival again is you can't put your finger on the spot usually as to how or why or where it began. It is supremely an act of God. You find a man would go with a series of messages say to a community and hey presto, before long, that community's alive.

It's throbbing. He goes to another town with exactly the same group of men, shall we say. The same type of prayer is poured out.

The same sweat, if you like, soul travel and there's no response. And if you're not careful, you get introspective and say, why, now what have I done? And the old accuser comes, but wait a minute, remember, there were some places where Jesus went and he did nothing because of what? Their unbelief. And when these boys talk about faith can do anything, faith can't do anything, are you going to charge God, Jesus with having no faith? As a matter of fact, he went to Nazareth which was where he was raised and they turned him down.

A prophet is not without honor saving his own country. Again, it cannot be denominationalized. I don't think the world has ever been in a more, in a greater state of turmoil than it is at this given moment.

I don't think our nation has. Now, whatever we shall say about revival, we've got to recognize, as I've said previously, there are three things about natural birth, conception, gestation and birth. You can't alter the program.

There never has been revival that I can trace that has not been preceded by agonizing prayer. Well, you might ask, I haven't got to that stage yet of agonizing prayer. How does it come? Well, it comes through vision.

Well, then you may ask, how does vision come? It comes from various sources. About 15 years ago, my dear wife and I and the boys worked with Teen Challenge in New York. Not a very desirable place, working in Brooklyn.

It's a very hot spot, very wild spot. And I remember one night talking with David, and he said, you know, I'm beginning to feel a bit of coldness. I've got to get out and walk the streets.

I need to get down, you know, 111th Street or West 44th or West 42nd Street and see human degradation. See, it's one thing to sit and read about it, though that can be helpful. There's nothing more disturbing, I think, than reading some of the modern missionary magazines, something like World Vision or Brother Andrew's book, what's his paper called, Open Doors or something, and getting first-hand information of not only the condition, the tremendous challenge that there is, but also of how people have been able to penetrate into these areas already that are cells operating in what are called closed countries.

Well, you know, it's like somebody said, you know, I've discovered this, the devil can wall me in, but he can't roof me in. That's a good thing to keep in mind. And folk are very stupid when they think they're going to keep the Holy Ghost out of any country, whether it's Russia or China or anywhere else.

Again, I said that you can't, you can't predict, you can't organize revival where? Because you can't organize where the wind is coming from. Now, yesterday there was a forecast, it's going to be a cold day and it will get down to 25 today. It was 71 degrees yesterday.

Somebody missed it by a long spot. Well now, by the same token, the wind, the spirit, just as you can't say the wind will be this, it may be, it may not be. There's nothing more sad, I think, than a bigger job than being a weather forecaster unless it's being a preacher, because they're always making predictions that don't come off.

Well then, the wind blows where it lives. If you say it's going to come this way, it comes this way. If you say God's going to use that man, very often he doesn't even bother with that man.

Revivalists so often come through unknown characters. It's impossible to think in that gap between the Testaments, which happened to be 400 years, which again, could be again classified as fallow ground. They had known the glory of God.

Have you ever wondered, you know, when you got into a cold spot, have you ever wondered when you got there, how did I get here? And then when you wondered how, you wondered why. I mean, you know, God delivered you there, God delivered you somewhere else, God did a miracle in your life, and now

you're sitting under a tree, you know, like poor old Elijah. Elijah says, oh, you know, I wish you could die, get out of this, and the Lord says, all right, I accept your resignation.

I've got Elisha in the wings. I don't think he expected that, so you'd better not serve your notice to the Lord. He may take you up on that.

But when you think that this, let me go a bit further back. You see, if we're going to really get a concept of revival, we've got to get a concept of God's sorrow over sin. We've got to get a concept of how day by day we offend God.

As a nation, we offend God in millions of ways. I used an illustration before, I think, of when I was praying in the Bahamas, and one day I saw a great column of smoke. Shall we say it's like this? Of course, it will be all wriggly, wriggly, wriggly like this.

But here it was, it was going up, and it was as black as black could be. And over here, I saw a wisp of smoke like this going from the ground. I didn't think much of it until about a year after I was praying, and the Lord said that that volume of thick smoke which happened to be coming from tires that were being burned, and you know how horrible they are, they smell, and they look terrible.

And that black smoke going up there was a volume of sin that goes up every day, well, from England, but America, since we're in America. All the blasphemy, all the unbelief, all the dirty stories, all the lying, all the deception, all sex perversion, all drunkenness, this tremendous column of iniquity goes up in the sight of God. And here you have a little thin wisp of what? What is that? That's the praise that God gets out of his people.

Now, if we're going to realize how much we need revival, we've got to recognize again the awesomeness of sin. We've got to recognize that sin offends God. Again, going back to, is it Psalm 85? Yeah, in Psalm 85 verse 4, Turn us, O God, of our salvation and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Wilt thou be angry with us forever? The 80th Psalm, Psalm 80 verse 3, Turn us again O God, cause thy face to shine. Well, therefore, God's face had turned away. Notice it's repeated again in verse 7, O God of hosts, cause thy face to shine.

Notice it's reiterated again in verse 19, O Lord of God of hosts, cause thy face to shine. You know, I think one of the awesome tragedies of our day is this, that the people of Israel could not live if God turned his face away from them. It seems now we can't live if God turns his face on us.

The awesomeness of God's presence, the awesomeness of God's majesty. We had meetings in the last month particularly, where I would sit down at the end of a meeting, I didn't know what to do with it. And the pastors close said, well, I can't handle a meeting like this, what do you do? The invasion of God's power was so awesome that there was no way you could handle it.

So you just let the meeting ride itself out. So we were having meetings five hours long. Beginning at seven at night and finishing at midnight.

With college students, university people, business people. But you see, when God comes your social distinctions don't matter, your intellectual distinctions don't matter. There's an overwhelming sense that God is dealing not with my intellect, not with my body, not with my emotions so much as the inner man, the inner being, the inner temple.

Which he wants to indwell. I said to the editor of one of the most famous magazines in this country, three or four years ago, why doesn't your big chief or some other big chief call together 500 pastors say, in the Los Angeles area, Los Angeles and San Diego and Frisco. Bring in 500 pastors for prayer.

Bring in 500 in St. Paul, 500 in Chicago, 500 in Philadelphia, 500 in New York, 500 in St. Louis, 500 in Atlanta, 500 in Dallas, 500 in somewhere in Florida, 500 in Houston. Bring them all together at quarter of five on Monday. And tell them that we're not dismissing till a quarter of five on Friday.

And tell them the only comfort they have is to bring a sleeping bag and get a local motel. And there's going to be no meals except a cup of coffee and donuts. And there's going to be 24 hour day service, 24 hour a day waiting on God.

For the simple reason the nation is in the sad station. Isn't it amazing that with all this insane man, as they say, Ayatollah Khomeini has done, he's done some good things. He kicked liquor out of the country.

We didn't, our president didn't do that. Born again and not born again. He doesn't kick it out.

He told the women, get some skirts on and don't get these modern style dresses showing half your body and get back to the office. And then another thing he did last week, he called the whole nation to five days of prayer and fasting. And we consider he's a heathen.

Do you think there's anybody in Washington that has enough insight to do that? With all the talk of spirituality there's not enough sense to do that. I say that the pastors should go because if you look there in the prophecy of Joel, where is it, in about the, about the third chapter of Joel, isn't it? Or Joel chapter two? Where it speaks about the priests, the ministers of God. Look at Joel chapter one and verse thirteen.

Gird yourselves and lament ye priests. How ye ministers of the altar come lie all night in sackcloth ye ministers of my God. Now every bit of literature I get from around the world on revival always has the same old thing on it.

2 Chronicles 7, 14. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face either God will hear from heaven. Well that's a valid scripture.

I don't think it's a scripture for today. This scripture very definitely has a time tag on it. Because it speaks in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

If you read through the chapters. But notice there in verse thirteen. Gird yourselves and lament ye priests how ye ministers of the Lord.

Come lie all night in sackcloth ye ministers of my God. Now go over to verse eleven of the second chapter. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army for his camp is very great he is strong and executes his word for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can abide it.

Therefore also now saith the Lord turn ye even to me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Verse thirteen and rend your heart and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God for he is gracious merciful slow to anger of great kindness and repenteth of evil. Now come down to verse seventeen let the priests the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar and let them say spare thy people O Lord and give not thine heritage to reproach that the heathens should rejoice over them or rule over them therefore wherefore should they say among the people where is your God.

Now how do you get to that state I mean if you're not in that state this morning you won't get in that state at the end of this lecture for sure. I mean there's no way you can jump from this level to that level in ten minutes. It's an operation it's a process it's a preparation there has to be individually breaking up a fallow ground in me.

What is there in my individual life that obstructs the flow of the spirit have I for instance got some secret grudges. You see when we talk about revival the average people want revival. Why? To fill up empty pews that's not what God wants.

He's not concerned about filling empty churches he's concerned about filling empty hearts and empty lives and empty eyes that have no vision and empty hearts that have no passion and empty wills that have no purpose. But there's no way of getting there unless there comes previously brokenness. If you're going to break up fallow ground well there you've got it.

It doesn't say brokenness it's implied obviously. You break up that fallow ground. You've got to get your own life into a state of discipline and we're the most undisciplined generation of believers ever.

You see the danger even in a lovely school like this or any other school is you go along with the herd we're all going to watch a ball game and the Lord says listen you haven't had enough prayer to go watch a ball game. And how long is a ball game to be and how long have you meditated? Now I say vision which in turn turns into burden comes how? Well you go down into some hell hole that there is where there's prostitution and vice and drugs and liquor and obscenity and everything else be sure you're in a good state of health to do it. And then from that vision begins to come or again you read magazines and from those magazines you realize the awesomeness that two thousand years after Jesus Christ came into the world that there are more lost people at this moment than ever in history.

More lost people at this moment than ever in history. Now while we're totally dependent upon the sovereignty of God and the mercy of God we At the same time there is a responsibility given to us as a people of God. Let me step back a minute.

Have you ever sat down in your meditation? Have you ever thought of the grief of God after Adam wrecked the purpose of God in the Garden of Eden? Have you ever meditated over that? And then when you meditated over that have you thought about the enormity oh I can use, I can use, oh sorry, I can use this here. ASA is the Jewish Association and the Jewish system, the Old Testament Jewish system, a great monolith of what is it, priests and Levites and offerings and sacrifices and new moons and Sabbaths and Urim and coming. And God lets that go on and then there's a period here of 400 years between the Testaments.

B.T. Between the Testaments. And then suddenly God puts one solitary individual there. One solitary individual.

And he has one commission. You go and prepare the way of the Lord. Now he's got all this against him.

A whole stack, at least 2,000 priests. And a senior priest. An elaborate temple.

A system of buying and selling cattle and other things for sacrifice. An altar court where you could come to a priest and tell him of your sin and your guilt and I need to make an offering for you. And this little fellow comes on here and he's saying that that thing's all obsolete.

That God is going to manifest himself independent of all that and there's somebody else. And when they say well you must be the man he says oh no no no no I'm not the one. I'm just coming to prepare the way of the Lord.

Now think of the sorrow of God after Adam failed. Think of the sorrow of God after the whole system that he'd inaugurated failed. And then think of something that may be even more awesome still.

Think of the fact that two thousand years have lapsed since Jesus came and did a full work of redemption and the church is still dragging its feet today.

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