

Revival Now

by Mark Greening

Revival comes when we repent of our sin, find our joy in the Lord, and love Him more than anything else.

Duration: 1:12:42

Scripture: Psalm 103:8-14, Joel 2:12, Micah 7:18, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Coming Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for Christians to constantly be revived and restored to God, even after being saved. He shares his personal experience of realizing the root of sin and the importance of honesty with God. The speaker also recounts a powerful moment of witnessing to a woman named Nellie, who initially rejected the gospel but later broke down in tears and accepted Christ. The sermon highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and the impact of prayer in leading others to salvation.

Transcript

At the beginning of the conference, we were reminded that revivals often come in 50-year cycles, and the speaker did give some background to that. And that is what I found over the years, sometimes sooner than 50-year cycles, depending on the prayer and holiness that is being exercised. But I'd like to state that although we've been long overdue for a year of Jubilee, you remember the Old Testament, it was a time every 50 years where slaves were set free, where the land had rest, and people regained their inheritances.

We're long overdue for that, but I would like to suggest, and I believe, that when God sends revival, it's not going to be a nationwide revival as we've seen in the past. My thought is, as I've been praying about this, that revival has already begun. It's already begun.

Do not despise the day of small things. It's begun in Canada, in certain places. It's begun in the U.S., in the Western world, all around the world.

But God is doing something different. He is putting new wine into new wineskins, because with the coming oppression, with the one-world government, and with the new regulations that are being imposed in the U.S. and Canada and elsewhere, the Church, at one point, is going to be underground. I mean, isn't that a praise to the Lord? In China, in Seoul, Korea, wherever the Church has been oppressed, that's when she really grows and is revived.

So, to get us there, God is going to do a work in individual lives, and I'll explain more about that as we go. My text this morning is found in Psalm 85.6, where God asks the question, and the psalmist, rather, asks the question, Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? It's not enough for countries around the world in the past to have been revived. It's not enough for us personally to have been revived in the last year, or even in the last month.

The psalmist asks the question, Will you not revive us again? We don't have to wait for the person sitting beside us to get revived. We don't have to wait for a husband and wife, or a pastor, or the leaders, or someone else to get revived. God can give revival to each one of us if we'll listen to what He says through His Word.

I can guarantee, tomorrow morning, you will not pick up the New York Times and see that revival came to Kinneland on the first page. You won't see that. But according to 2 Corinthians 3, verse 3, Christ Himself will write, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, on tablets of human hearts, revival has come to... And you can put your name in there.

One of the key words in this verse is the word again. As a matter of fact, in the preceding verses, in verses 2 to 4, in the same chapter, we read, You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.

Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. Now, in verse 2, it's talking about people who are Christians. They're saved.

Their sins are forgiven. That's the doctrine of justification. God's wrath is satisfied.

That's the doctrine of propitiation. And yet, there is a need for us to be restored, in verse 4, and to be revived again in verse 6. Now, this brings up a critical point about our walk as Christians. And that is that as Christians and as churches, once we are saved, we need to be constantly revived and restored to God.

Now, when I was younger, I used to think that my spiritual gift was backsliding. And I've learned as I've gotten older that I just get a little more subtle in my backsliding, and I can do it in ways that are very creative. And I've realized, and God has shown me, the need for constant brokenness in my life.

All we have to do is look at the powerlessness and the condition of our churches to know that we are in desperate need of revival continuously. Now, the obvious question this afternoon would be, well, how do we get revived? But I don't want to ask the obvious question this afternoon. Instead, I want to ask that question in a different way.

The question is this, how does a person get unrevived? Because in understanding how we get unrevived, we'll know how we're to get back to being revived. The answer is found at the end of verse 6, Will you not revive us again that what your people may do what? Rejoice in you. We fall into a backslidden or unrevived state when we no longer find our joy in the Lord, when we no longer love Him, when we find more joy in the things of this world, in relationships, in money, in possessions, in hobbies, in interests, in good things, in success, in power or position or lustful pleasures.

More joy in these things than in Christ. Jeremiah 2.12, the prophet said, Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror, declares the Lord. My people have committed two sins.

They have forsaken Me, that's bad enough. They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. Now this forsaking of God not only happened in the Old Testament, it happens and happened in the New Testament as well.

We read in Revelation 2 that the Christians there had not just lost their first love. We often tell people, oh, you've lost your first love. No, that's not what Scripture says.

They left their first love because they loved something or someone else more than the Lord Jesus. And that's the way, folks, we become unrevived. We love someone or something, we stop loving the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our hearts and souls and mind and strength, and we become unrevived, and therefore we break the first commandment, which is to what? Have no other gods before Him.

And when we start loving something or someone more than the Lord, and we break the first commandment, the rest fall like a house of cards. You see, that's the problem in our churches. We preach to people what to do and what not to do.

Do's and don'ts. And if you want to be revived, you do this and this and this and this, and we miss the first point, which is have no other gods, because when God has my heart, He has all of me. The way to revival is finding our joy and love in the Lord again.

Let me pause for a moment on this point. This is called a revival conference. I've preached at other revival conferences.

But whether revival sweeps the eastern seaboard, as it did in 1857 with Jeremiah Lamphere, where a group of men met on Wall Street, and then you know the story from there, it is estimated that close to two million people across the nation came to Christ as a result of that revival. Two million. Whether God sweeps the eastern seaboard, as He did in 1857, or whether God revives one man, one woman, or a group of people, revival can come.

Revival takes place when I repent of my sin, of rejoicing in other things, and loving other things, and rejoicing in other things more than loving and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Over the years, I've witnessed many individual revivals in individual people in small pockets in churches. And I'll share testimonies about that in a few minutes, but I want to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that a deep love for God, not just conviction of sin, or convicting messages, or prayer alone is necessary if God is to send personal or corporate revival.

Many of you have read of the Welsh revival that took place in the early 1900s, where 100,000 people were saved. That revival was criticized later by some theologians as a false revival, because they said at the end of about a decade that 10,000 people couldn't be found in church, but 90,000 stuck. Can you imagine that? What are our statistics today? From altar calls, 2% darken the door of a church after altar calls and great evangelistic meetings.

2% after one year. And the one event that God wanted people to remember that sparked the revival in 1904 took place on the second Sunday of February in that same year, after the morning service. And the pastor, Joseph Jenkins, invited the young people into the vestry at the back of the church to have a meeting after he preached.

And he asked them this question. He said, tell me, what is God doing in your life? Well, someone stood up and began to preach. Another person stood up and shared some scripture.

And Jenkins said, no, tell me what God is doing in your life. Is He real to you? And then a 19-year-old girl by the name of Flory Evans stood up. She was a fairly new Christian.

And she said this, I am unable to say very much today, but I love the Lord Jesus with all my heart. He died for me. And those words ignited a flame that was to lead eventually to national and international revival.

And God confounded the wisdom of the wise by not using a theologian, nor a pastor, nor a revival preacher, but a teenage girl who was fairly new to the faith to spark one of the most powerful revivals the world has ever seen. Not with fancy words or theatrics, but in simplicity and sincerity, expressing her deep love for the Lord Jesus. Is this not what the psalmist meant when he said in Psalm 51.12, Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Why? So that I could just feel good. Listen, next verse. Then, once I found my joy in you, once I love you, Lord Jesus, get this, then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you.

Have you ever considered that the most effective way to see people saved and backsliders turn back to God is through the example, through the words, through the teaching and preaching who are filled with joy and love for the Lord? I remember years ago when a church I pastored became very obvious that we were just playing church. I remember when I came on board. The elders and the deacons met and they gave me this great big thick manual.

It must have been about that thick. And I said, what's this? They said, it's a church growth strategy and plan. In other words, they had told God what He was going to do in the church.

Right? It was a marvel to angels and pets. I don't know what, this thing, I remember one of the elders, he was on board with me. He says, let's hide the thing.

We hid it. They never asked for it again. But I remember looking at all these things God was going to save.

It was a small church. I started, I guess there were about 90 people when I started. But four people a year and so many baptized and all of this.

And God wasn't doing what we told Him to do. Sometimes God doesn't do that. And so God burdened my heart that we needed revival.

I didn't know what to call it back then. I knew we needed God. Without me, you can do nothing.

And it's not by might or by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord. So I figured, well, if the Holy Spirit doesn't do something, then we're wasting our time. So I began to pray.

And I prayed to God that according to Zechariah 12.10, that His spirit of grace and supplication would fall on another man in the church. Just one man. One man on the elders' board.

By the way, in my elders' meeting, none of the elders would come to prayer meeting. One man every once in a while out of guilt would come. So I quoted from Acts and said, you know, they devoted themselves to the preaching of the Word and to prayer.

And I said, well, if we want to be elders, we've got to pray. If you're too busy to pray, then you can't be elders. But I just trust God will burden your heart.

They all resigned except for one man. All of them. I was left with this one man, Dave.

And he said, what are we going to do? I said, well, we're going to pray. We're going to get right with God. And so I began praying.

And I would just seek the Lord. I said, Lord, I can't do this. I can't do this.

I looked out every Sunday in the Valley of Dry Bones. Any pastors know what that's like? I was trying to make corpses dance. You ever try to make corpses dance? That's what we do in our churches.

We get them to read a sinner's prayer. And then we try to make that corpse dance. They've never been regenerated.

We say, if you believe in God, you say, the demons believe in tremble. So I began praying for that man. And one day I got a call.

And he was the controller of an engineering company. And I didn't know who was on the other end. There was weeping on the phone.

And I said, who is this? He says, it's Dave. I said, Dave, what happened? What tragedy has befallen you? He says, I'm at work, and the Holy Spirit is on me. I'm convicted of my sin.

He says, I'm behind my desk on my face. I said, is your door shut? He had a corner office door. I just want to think, man, shut the door before he gets kicked out.

Then he can't support me in the church, right? Selfishness. I said, shut the door. He said, it's okay, the doors are locked.

And he was being broken over his sin. I said, come over after work and we'll pray. And he came over that night.

And we prayed and we prayed that God would rend the heavens and that the sky of brass and bronze over us in our area there in Toronto would just be broken and God would move to save people. We began praying. There was only two of us.

We didn't need elders meetings. We just prayed. We had no set time.

Sometimes in the morning, sometimes at night. No set time. We just prayed until the Lord showed us to stop.

And then one other man joined the board. He became burdened. And then the three of us began to pray.

That was for three months. We began to pray. And our prayer was, may your spirit of grace and supplication fall on your people to pray.

You can't orchestrate this. You can't strategize this. We went to a retreat with all the men in the church.

And I don't even remember what the speaker was talking about. But after we got out, we were standing on the veranda. It was up north.

And there were about 17 men there. And one of them just said, Mark, I'm burdened. As men, we should start praying together in small groups.

Those men covenanted. And every week, they got together to pray and pray. But you know what was very interesting? They loved the Lord.

That was the first thing God did in our hearts was to give us a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, we quote that verse in Romans 5. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. But the spirit that He's given us, it took me a long time to figure out what that meant.

Actually, yesterday, if I'd be honest. I was in the parking lot weeping. And God laid this on my heart.

He says, You know why I shed the Holy Spirit in your heart? With love. It's not so you can feel loved. And it's not even so you can love others.

It's so that you can love the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why I shed my love abroad in your heart. These men got it.

They began expressing their love for the Lord. But after they had confessed their sins, and after three months, these men were transformed by the Spirit of God. And their wives started coming up to me.

And I remember one wife saying, Do you think that your wife could start a prayer meeting for the ladies in this church? Because our husbands have now left us in the dust spiritually. Now, when women say that their husbands have left them in the dust, you know God's up to something. That was after six months.

And I'll never forget the day God came. It was on December 31st, 1992. We didn't do anything different.

We had no evangelistic programs. We had no strategies. And one woman, her husband had died in the hospital.

Just before he died, I had shared Christ with him and he came to the Lord. He wasn't even in my parish. There was another guy I went to visit.

He was there. I said, well, he's a captive audience. He was too sick to leave the room.

So I witnessed to him. And I started sharing with him the Gospel. He comes to Christ.

And I gave him a Bible. And his wife was mad at me. She was so mad because her husband was a good religious man.

How dare I say that he's not saved. I had written my telephone number in his Bible. He had died.

She had taken his personal effects. A year later, she calls me on December 31st. She says, are you the man who visited my husband in the hospital when he was dying? I said, yes.

And I thought, oh boy, here it comes. She says, could you come visit me? I found his Bible. And I found your telephone number.

And I want to talk with you. I went there that day. And I told her what happened, what I shared with her husband.

Very simple, very simple Gospel message. And I turned the Bible around to let her read. And something happened I'd never witnessed before.

As she began to read, the Holy Spirit came on her in deep, deep conviction. And without me saying a word, without me asking her to pray a prayer, she just wept and repented and started to express her love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And she got saved after 10 minutes of weeping.

And I thought to myself, they didn't teach me this in seminary. That was the first. It started one, two, three, four a week.

Every week. People, we would just give them the Bible. We would show them Scripture.

They would weep and come out Christians. We said nothing. But all the while people were praying and they were in love with the Lord Jesus Christ.

75% of our church was always in prayer. People would hear, well Mark's going out to witness to someone. Let's pray for him.

And while I was sharing the Gospel, people would get saved. Do you know, I became a good Calvinist then, kind of. My friend always says, what's the difference between Calvinist and Arminianist? He said, Mark, believe like a Calvinist but live like an Arminian.

I liked what he said. I never forgot that. But irresistible grace.

I saw irresistible grace. The Apostle Paul, he was on his way to Damascus. On his way on the road to Damascus.

What? To throw Christians in the jail. Who knows what happened to them. Maybe some of them were killed.

He wasn't going to a revival meeting. Revival came to him. Why? The church was pleading to God, save that man.

Give me souls or I die. Give me children. They were praying for him.

How could he resist that? I remember one man, a Vietnamese man. He came to me. He'd just been newly saved outside of the church.

And he came in and we were discipling him a little bit. And he said to me, he said, Pastor, if you witness to my wife, she'd be saved. And I thought, okay.

I said, I've never saved anyone before. He says, but people are getting saved. I said, yes, the Holy Spirit's saving them.

I'll share with her, but I can't save anybody. So, his English, now he speaks great English, but back then, he was just brand new off the boat. He was Buddhist background, gets saved, can't communicate.

Her English was almost nil. And so we brought her over one night to have dinner on a Friday night. And I said to her, Natalie, and she didn't want to be there.

You know, you don't have to have discernment when you see. She just sat there. She wouldn't say anything.

We couldn't get her to talk. Even with her husband translating, she didn't want to talk. So I said, well, I'll give this a shot since he actually brought her.

I'll honor him. So I said, Natalie, your husband's so excited because he's found Jesus. Let me tell you why he's excited.

And I use that as the segue to share the gospel with her. And at the end, I said, Natalie, would you like to become a Christian? And she said, no. She didn't know how to say no in English.

That was about, oh, very few words. And then I said, do you believe these things? And she said, no. Well, what do you do? Nothing.

We change the subject and we're eating away. And all of a sudden, remember, people who love the Lord are praying. And she begins to cry.

And she begins to weep. And she bows her head and she's weeping and weeping and weeping. And her husband starts talking to her in Vietnamese when she's able to compose herself.

And he looks at me with a big smile. He says, Pastor, I have good news. She's under conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Damn it! She's under conviction of the Holy Spirit. No one said anything to her. She couldn't even understand me, folks.

Do you see what God can do? She could not understand what I was saying to her. She wept. She repented.

She got up with tears of joy. Hugged us all. Got saved.

The last time I talked to her, almost all of her Buddhist family is now saved. Restored to me the joy of your salvation. What happens then? Then I will teach transgressors your way and sinners will turn back to you? They go with that.

Let's have a run. Let's just fall in love with Jesus. And guess what? He'll use us.

You see, the coming revival is not going to be a mass sweeping one across the country because then we're sitting ducks. It's going to happen more and more underground. It's going to happen in pockets.

God has reserved 7,000, more than 7,000. I say 7 million maybe who have not vowed the need to veil. And God is going to find them.

God is going to move in those hearts. And some of you are right here today. I hope you don't mind stories.

I mean, this is God. God's doing it. It had nothing to do with this.

As a matter of fact, we remember... God would do the most amazing things. At the back of the church on a Sunday, I'd meet someone. I'd never seen them before.

And I'd say, Welcome to our church. Where are you from? They said, nowhere. Well, we live here in the city.

I said, well, why did you come today? They said, these are unsaved people. We don't know. God woke us up and told us to come.

Listen. Well, how do you organize an outreach like that? Just pray. Fall in love with the Lord.

And then they get saved. I remember we had this saying. The elders... I think it was Lee Trevino one day.

He was getting ready to tee off on one of his tournaments. And it was starting to get cloudy. And as soon as he put up his driver, boom, he got struck with lightning right down the road.

And he was unconscious. They took him to the hospital. And after he revived, one of the reporters says, Mr. Trevino, what did you learn through this event? And he says, When God wants to play through, you let Him play through.

And that's what the elders would pray. I remember my God saying, Oh God, just help us stay out of the way. We were scared.

We were scared. We didn't know what to do anymore. We just stand away.

God would save people. I remember so many people were getting saved at one time. I used to pray this.

Lord, save this person, but just not tonight. I don't have time. I had no assistant pastor.

I had no time. People would come. They would knock on our doors.

Ten o'clock at night. People would be there until two, three, and four in the morning. They'd be getting saved.

I remember one man, he kept begging me, begging me, Oh, I want to get saved. I want to get saved. I said, You're not ready to get saved.

A few times I told him, You're not ready. I'm not leading you to the Lord tonight. One night he came.

He was so desperate. He says, I need to get saved tonight. This was at two in the morning.

I said, You've got idols. I said, You're too rich to get saved. I said, It's easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than a rich man.

You've got too much money. He says, I don't care about my money. I can take it all.

I've got to get saved tonight. He fell on his knees. He got saved.

I remember an NHL hockey player. I mean, unsaved people were leading people to Christ. Now that's, I didn't know that could happen.

Did you know that? We had one man in the church. I'll never forget. He reminded me of EOI.

You know, EOI and Winnie the Pooh? You could say, Oh, you know, but isn't it a great day? Yeah, but it'll probably rain. I mean, he'd talk like that, too. He was the most negative person I ever met in my life.

He wouldn't get saved. One day, he says, Mark, I'm bringing one of the Canadian NHL hockey players from Boston, Bruins up to counsel with you. This man's been going to psychiatrists and psychologists and no one can help him.

But if you talk to him, you'll help him. I said, I can't help anybody. Well, anyways, this guy flies up from Boston and he was, you know, a defenseman.

I mean, everyone here looks bigger than me, but this guy looked bigger than me. I mean, he's huge. Comes in and I said, he says, I need help and he just looked really intense at me.

He says, I need help. And I said, what do you need help about? He says, I've come up and I'm going to kill my parents. And I'm thinking, did he say parents or pastor? Parents or pastor.

I don't know. Lord, have mercy on this guy. He's big.

He just squashed me like a grape. So I said, I was going to go back there. He's big, but I'm fast and I'm going to run.

I'm going to get on the picnic table. I can get out of here real fast. So his unsafe friend follows him to the back and that morning, the Holy Spirit led me to this obscure passage in Romans.

I'd never used it for witnessing and I remember thinking, those are interesting verses and I was kind of perplexed. As I was sitting at the picnic table, I was going to turn to another passage and the Holy Spirit said, no, show him what you read this morning. I'm used to this by now.

So I turned the Bible around to him and I said to him, Sean, start reading here. Three verses into, I still don't know where it was, three verses into that chapter, he began to weep uncontrollably and ten minutes later, the tears of joy, he got up, he gave me a bear hug. I still have a displaced disc, I think, in my back.

From that, he just about killed me and he was just rejoicing, he was so excited and his friend, Eeyore there, looked at me with a baptized in pickle juice look and I said, what are you so upset about? He says, because God saved him and he hasn't saved me yet. I said, that's because you're too proud. Humble yourself and God will save you too.

So as they're leaving, I figured, well, who's going to disciple this guy? That was one of the guys, by the way, I said, Lord, save him but not today. Anyways, God didn't listen to me. See, he doesn't listen to strategic plans and he doesn't even listen to our selfish prayers sometimes.

So, I said to this fellow, Eeyore, not his real name, I said, give me his, give me Sean's telephone number, I need to disciple him. He says, no, he was so upset that his friend got saved, he didn't give me his telephone number. So I said, Lord, I don't have time anyway, just bless him, just bless him, disciple.

Three years later, we had a revival speaker by the name of Dick Sibley, who was part of the 72 Revival in Saskatoon, which went into the Midwest and then did go around the world in different pockets, powerful move of God in the 70s. And he was preaching three years later after this event and sure enough, I'm at the back to greet people with Dick and this man comes, this big guy comes down and he said, Mark, do you remember me? I said, no. He says, I got saved on your picnic table three years ago.

I said, Sean, what are you doing now? He says, I just want to let you know, after I left, I went to another church, they disciplined me there and I'm graduating from Bible college and I'm going into the pastorate.

You see, when God wants to play through, you let him play through. I've just given you a few stories, I don't have time to tell you the most amazing salvations I've ever seen, but I want to tell you this, there was no human fingerprint on one of them.

No one. God can use Balaam's donkey. He can use us.

What I do know is that we love the Lord Jesus and transgressors turned back to him and sinners were saved. That's revival. You see, the Lord cares about our hearts above everything else.

That's why in Proverbs he doesn't say, my son, give me your money, your talents, your hard work, your ministry. He says, my son, give me your heart. You see, the Pharisees gave all these other things to the Lord, but they never gave him their hearts and that's why Jesus said, these people, they honor me with their lips and I might add their laws.

There are 613 laws. But their hearts are far from me and that's why, folks, we never read about a revival in the Gospel in Jerusalem until the book of Acts with the Christians. If anyone should have had a revival it was these religious people who were doing everything right and saying everything right.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the hearts. Jesus cares about my heart and your heart today. Was this not why Jesus did what he did when he restored Peter? How would a court of law have dealt with Peter after he sinned? Well, they would have done a play-by-play reenactment of every nuance of his statements and the fact that he cursed with an oath and they would have dragged him through the whole thing again.

But not Jesus. All those things didn't matter. Do you know what? The Lord... I want to be careful here.

The Lord is not so much concerned about our sin as our hearts once we recognize we've sinned. I'm going to explain this more or less you think I'm preaching heresy here. I want to be careful.

But he could have brought Peter up on his sin and us on our sin today. And you know what? He didn't do that. He didn't say, Peter, how could you have humiliated me and yourself by denying me? All Jesus wanted to know was this one thing.

Peter, after all is said and done and I don't have to tell you how you've sinned, do you love me more than these? Peter, do you love me more than everyone else around you? Peter, I don't care how good a fisherman you are. I don't care how good a leader you are. I don't care how great a preacher you are.

Peter, all I care about is your heart. And Peter, if I'm going to use you, because I've prayed for you that after you've returned, strengthen your brothers. If I'm going to use you, Peter, I want you to know this, you've got to love me with all your heart.

Can we be honest with God for a moment? If Jesus was to appear and say to each one of us individually right now, do you love me more than... He might bring up, for those who are listening on the internet, maybe it's a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Maybe it's a husband or a wife. Maybe it's a friend, a best friend.

Maybe it's your child. Maybe even a parent or an educator or someone you respect. What would you say? If he said, do you love me more than your money? More than your possessions? More than that car? What if he said, do you love me more than your goals? More than your plans? More than your retirement? You see, the answer to that question will determine whether God can revive our hearts and use us to

touch others in revival.

After we started a new work a year ago, God was to teach us more things. I've learned more things in the context of God moving to save and in these individual revivals than all my Bible college seminary reading put together. It's just amazing when you go into the school of God and realize how he works things.

Revival God's Way is the name of this conference. And I remember, we started, and again, I'm not that organized. Anyone that knows me, that's all my gift.

Administration, it's not, I call it the curse of administration. I don't have the gift of administration. I'm no good at it.

I leave that up to others. My wife's good at that. Others are.

But we started, people would come at 10 for coffee and we'd start to preach from 10 or I guess we'd worship and then we'd be finished by noon and we'd have potluck. Everyone would bring potluck. Everyone ate together kind of like an axe.

And it did. It just kind of turned into an axe thing. We didn't plan it, but people wouldn't leave sometimes till midnight for the first six months.

No one would leave. They would stay, you know, 10, 11 o'clock at night. Our fridges were emptied every week.

People would keep eating. They'd be talking afterwards. People would be praying.

They'd be worshipping. They'd be encouraging one another. We didn't plan it.

It just started to happen. But there was love. Everyone that came in said that this was the most loving fellowship they ever saw.

And I remember one man. We had poachers in our church. We had someone that was going to another church.

They go to two services. They go to this big church and then they come to ours. So they're at this big church and the pastor says, all of you should be in cell groups, home churches.

So he turns around and he talks to one of these ladies in our church and she says, would you like to come to a home fellowship? And she said, I didn't tell him I was taking him out of this church. So she brought him to our house church. He didn't know any different.

He just thought, well, house church, okay. It was a few weeks later. He says, you're not part of that church.

I said, no, don't give us a tie. Don't give it to them. No, we don't tie.

We do tie, but in different ways. We didn't ask for money back then. But anyways, so here he is and at the end of the service, not a service, at the end of talking to them about the word, he comes to me and he says, I have been to Buddhist temples.

I have been to mosques. I have searched out different religions. I've been to all the different denominations and he said this to me.

He says, I don't need to know if you're telling me the truth because I feel it here and what he referred to afterwards, I felt the love here. By this, shall all men know you are my disciples. If what? You have love one for another.

Same happened with another man came in, didn't know the Lord. Our brother Edgar was preaching. He was speaking to us.

And afterwards, this man came to me with tears running down his face. He was afraid to go to talk to Edgar. Now Edgar is a loving guy.

And I said, well why are you afraid? He said, he could feel the love of Christ in Edgar and the power of the Spirit. He says, I don't even want to talk to that man. He's too holy, he said.

Edgar just said he didn't know him. But this happened two or three weeks and finally the crying stopped after about a month and he gets saved. We never ask people to pray sinners.

Do you know? Show me in the Bible. I want to be gracious. We're a sinner's prayer.

You know, sinners pray and sinners get saved. But you know, until the 1950s, there was no such thing as a sinner's prayer. Everyone calls in the name of the Lord.

We just tell people, call in the name of the Lord in your time, in your whatever. Just let the Lord save you. Man, when you let the Lord do it, it's amazing what he does.

Like, people get saved and they're well saved. Right? And then we started seeing, this is funny, we started seeing God save Christians. Christians were getting born again.

That's amazing. You know what a revival is, mostly? It's when Christians get saved. That's what a revival is.

That's what got me moved on from one church once. Do you know, one of the main barriers to revival is a joyless, loveless walk with God. Now, someone might say, well I thought that sin was the greatest barrier to revival.

Isn't that what 2 Chronicles 7, 14 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 will I hear from heaven and I'll forgive their sins and heal their land. Yes, sin is a barrier to revival. But I want to ask another question today.

Why do we sin? Because if we answer that question, why do we sin? We'll know how to get revived. The reason that we sin, the reason there is so little revival in our lives, is because according to Psalm 85, 6, we do not rejoice in the Lord, we do not love Him as we ought. It's not enough for us to be convicted about sin to experience revival.

It's not enough for us even to be obedient to the Lord to experience revival. We saw that with the Pharisees. They didn't experience it.

Revival will come personally and corporately when we come to that place in our lives, when we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our hearts, and we feel joy in a daily relationship with Him. Now before I go on and prove this from Scripture, we need to understand that the reason we sin, and by the way, sin is what prevents revival, is because we love something or someone else more than the Lord Jesus. That's why we

don't have revival.

And when we love something more than the Lord, what do we do? We sin. Jesus said, if you love Me, keep My commandments. He also said it another way, if you keep My commandments, you love Me.

So sometimes we don't balance the two verses. We say, well, I'm going to just, like a Pharisee, obey all these things. Must love the Lord.

No, no, no. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. Folks, Jesus said, what's the greatest commandment? To love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

Right? On that commandment hinge what? All of the Law and the Prophets. You see why the Puritans used to say, love God and do what you want. You say, that's risky.

How can I preach that? Think about it. Love God, they used to say, the Puritans, and do what you want. It's when we don't love God that we get into trouble.

And we break that first commandment. Remember, that's what caused Adam and Eve to sin, was it not? They weren't content having the Lord Jesus Christ to walk with them in the cool of the day and to enjoy, have all their joy in Him and just express their love and appreciation and adoration for the glorious things He had done in creation. Adam was a part of naming everything.

He had first-hand experience. Can you imagine? Without sin clouding his intellect. How brilliant that man and woman must have been.

And they knew God. And they weren't content in that garden with not having noisy neighbors, with not fighting traffic jams, and not having to worry about the IRS and paying taxes. They weren't just happy with the Lord's presence and His blessing and they were tricked into believing that they would be happier if they could just have that piece of fruit.

Now, things haven't changed over the years. The Israelites thought they'd be happy if only they could have meat. And they grumbled.

You see, God also hears our grumblings. And He even answers grumblings. And it says, He sent in these low-flying quail under the radar and they grabbed them right out of the air.

Sister's chicken right there. They just grabbed it. And they started eating it.

And it says, while the meat was still between their teeth, He sent leanness to their souls. The very thing they thought they would love and would give them enjoyment sent leanness to their souls. David thought he could be happy if he had a Bathsheba.

God sent leanness to his soul. We can all think that if I only had this and could get this, and we pursue this, that, or the other thing, that we'll be happy. And God sends leanness to our souls because we have left the Lord Jesus Christ.

And bear in mind, every single sin that we get into is a ploy of the devil to substitute a person, or possessions, or pursuits in place of Christ. Do you understand the way that works? We often think of sin in terms of temptation and that's how it starts. But He appeals to our lusts.

And He says, basically what He says, if you just had that, you'd be happy. In other words, that is more appealing, that thing is more lovable than Jesus. And they're distractions from keeping us from loving God with all our hearts.

And by the way, many of the things we sin in are actually good things that God has made and given to us. It's just that we love them more than Him. 2 Timothy 3.1 says, but mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days.

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God. You see, we sin when we love the sin more than the Lord Jesus. Matthew 6.24, no one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. In other words, you will love one over the other. You see, money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

And if you're afraid of losing your home and your investments and all these things, which by the way, God is going to take that. You realize that the world economy is just teetering on the edge. And so if our hearts are set on these things, we will love them and be more concerned about them than the Lord.

And He wants to free us from that so that our hearts... He says, give me your hearts. He doesn't need our money. He owns a cattle on a thousand hills, but when He has our heart, He has everything anyways.

He has our bank account. 1 John 2.15, Do you not love the world or anything in the world? If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. James 4.4, You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Or do you think the Scripture says without reason that the spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely? In other words, God is jealous when we love something or someone else more than Him. So we can see why God can't send revival personally. Let's talk about personally.

It's not about others. It's not about a mass revival across this country. I live in a high and holy place, but also with Him who is contrite and lowly in spirit to revive the heart of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

He's talking about one of us. Do we love something we own more than the Lord Jesus and do we prove that by how much time we spend caring for that thing or worrying about losing it? Whether it's money, or investments, or homes, or cars, or jewelry, or electronics, or clothing. Do we love pleasure more than God? And by pleasure, I mean things that can be anything.

It's something that we devote time to to the exclusion of God. Physical exercise. Scripture says, bodily exercise profiteth little.

I mean, I just look all around in the nutrition stores and the advertisements and everything. I mean, people trying to stay fit. Just eat a little bit and you stay fit.

I mean, there's just a whole cult out there of this thing. Catering to the body. Fleshly lusts.

TV, sports, hobbies, impurity, pornography, lustful thoughts. I hear these sermons about how terrible it is about pornography, abortion, all that. That's the fruit of the root.

Pastors, we've got to stop just talking and making people feel guilty about the fruit. The fruit comes from the root. And if you pull the fruit off, either it'll grow back or it grows back in another place.

So we give up something, some lustful fleshly pleasure here, and another one pops up in its place that may even look different. Because the reason we sin is because we love the sin more than we love the Lord Jesus. You know, I used to weep over my sin years ago.

I don't weep over my sin anymore. Do you know what I weep over? I weep because the Lord showed me, Mark, you love that sin more than me. Could we get honest with ourselves again and say, Lord, I love this person, or I love being selfish, I love pandering to me, I love the way I talk, I love the way I say things, I love all of these things that I am, I love goals and possessions, all these things.

I love these things more than you. You see Psalm 51.6, before the psalmist was restored with joy and love for the Lord so that others could be revived. He said this, Surely you desire truth in the inner parts.

I'll never forget sitting in my living room one day and I was praying, confessing my sins and the Lord stopped me and he said to me, Mark, why don't you tell me the truth about that sin? So I sat there and I said, okay, what's the truth? And it was quite free. It was convicting, it was free. You know what I said? Lord Jesus, I love this sin and I named it.

I love it. And I love it more than you. I was devastated.

That was the beginning when God began showing me. He said, you know what? Mark, until you get to the root of sin, which is loving it more than you love me, I can't touch your heart and use you. God wants honesty.

Proverbs 28.13, He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. I had no intention of preaching this message. Absolutely none.

No intention. And three weeks ago, the Lord came on me. I wept on and off for four and a half hours.

I thought that was it. Then that Sunday morning before I preached, I was on my knees and I wept another half hour. And then yesterday in the parking lot, I wept for another half hour or so.

And the Lord says, Mark, you're going to preach to sinners like you. You don't just need to nail down the fruit. They know.

The Holy Spirit's in them. If they're saved, they know. But you tell them what I've now shown you.

That when we sin, we sin because we love the sin more than the Lord Jesus. I love your word more than my daily bread. Lord, I love things.

I love things that pander to my flesh more than I love the living word. Stop confessing the sin. The fruit of sin.

Confess the root. Which is, if you're like me, I love the sin more than the Savior sometimes. You see, our hearts can attach themselves to so many things other than God.

As a matter of fact, our hearts are so attached to people, places, and things, that in the rapture, do you know a lot of Christians are going to go up feet first holding on to the things they love? A hundred years

from now, friend, we won't even care about the things that we're worried about and we love today. Unless it's the Lord and His people. 1 John 2.17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Do you know there's not one reason why any one of us cannot have a personal revival today? There's not one reason. Will you not revive us? By the way, the us is lowercase. It's not capital U period, capital S period.

It's not, will you not revive the US of A? Will you not revive us? Us is me. Us is you. That your people may rejoice in you.

And now, once we understand the root of our sin, which is loving sin and not Jesus, now doesn't it make sense when we quote 2 Chronicles 7.14, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways. What are the wicked ways? Digging cisterns that hold no water, loving something or someone else more than Jesus. Then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. Now, here's where that old devil comes in to mess things up for us. He'll come and tell you that you're so great a sinner, that you've sinned so greatly that you could never expect to be forgiven.

You've somehow squeezed out the last drop of God's grace and mercy. Has he ever told you that? Oh, God can forgive you for these other things, but not this one. Oh, and the devil knows the Bible so good, doesn't he? And he quotes Hebrews 12.7. You might not remember the reference, but you'll remember this if you've been around for years.

He'll tell you about Esau. You know, afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected and he could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessings with tears. And he'll tell you God can never use you again.

He'll never forgive you for that. 1 Corinthians 11.31 says, if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. Now, I have a problem with some revival preaching.

And I say that because I used to do it. Boy, I could really smoke people. Oh, you could smell the fire in Brimstone when I preached.

When we preach like that, in a way, we misrepresent God because my Bible says in Psalm 103, verse 8, the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve, because if He did, not one of us would be here today.

And we're here today as living proof that He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed their transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust.

There is grace and mercy for you today if you will come and confess the root of your sin and my sin. You know, I remember years ago, sometimes reading books isn't the best thing. God put me on quarantine once.

I don't want to advocate this, but it took me 14 years. I never read a book. He said, stop reading.

I'm going to teach you through the Word. But I remember reading something where General Booth talked. He said, Lord, I wish that all my elders could be dangled over hell for one minute and they would cure them of their backsliding.

That's a paraphrase, but that's what he did. So I thought, I don't know if I want to be dangled over hell, but I would like to have an Isaiah experience and see the glory of God. Lord, just show me your glory and I won't backslide.

I don't need to see hell. I know about hell. I just want to see your glory.

I was minding my own business. One day I was alone in my apartment on my knees praying and all of a sudden this terrible picture I saw in my mind's eye. I used to have a country place.

We had a family country place in Vermont on Lake Champlain. One day I had the onerous task of digging up that cesspool. As I was praying, I saw myself in the center of that cesspool with my nose just above the sludge line.

I said, Lord, what is this? The Lord spoke to me very clearly in my heart and He said, That's the way I see your sin, Mark. I said, Surely not I. I said that. I said, That's the sin of the prostitutes and drug dealers in Parkside at King and Jameson in Toronto where the Red Light District is.

I used to take teams up there to witness. I said, That's their sin. That's not my sin.

And I'm going to quote exactly what I heard in my heart. And the Lord said to me, Mark, that is the way I see your sin because when they sin, they do what comes naturally. But when you sin, you sin against knowledge and light.

Now, that means that those of us who are preachers, not many of you should presume to be preachers or teachers knowing that those of us who teach will incur the stricter judgment. My brother Edgar taught me this when he came to preach. He says, Mark, I consider everyone better than myself because God revealed my sin to me.

I never forgot. Thank you, brother, because the Lord used that to teach me. The Lord began showing my sin and there's not a person that I've met since then that I don't say, brother or sister, in my heart, you're better than me.

You're better than me. Not one. Anyways, after God showed me this sin, it felt, you know, the psalmist said, do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

I know that doesn't happen theologically, but I know what it's like to feel that. Maybe you felt that. The Holy Spirit felt that he was taken from me.

I felt that at any moment, I could slide in hell. I used to remember reading that in Jonathan Edwards. People would hold on to the pillars feeling they were sliding into hell itself.

I wept every day for two weeks out of fear and anguish, feeling that God had left me and at any second, I could plunge into hell for eternity. My sin, I never saw it as I saw it for two weeks. I remember I was driving on the 401, one of our major highways back from seminary, and I was driving this old Honda Civic and the front end had broken and I used to be a mechanic and used to fix cars and customize, so I had taken a big old drive shaft, propped it under the front so that the front end could kind of slide on this bar.

It was very dangerous, by the way. But I took calculated risks. I kind of understood front ends.

And I was praying. I don't know how I didn't have an accident. I would drive and the Holy Spirit would convict me.

I'd just be weeping. I could hardly see. I didn't need windshields out there.

I needed them on my eyes. I couldn't see where I was going. I said, Oh Lord, just take my life.

I can't live like this anymore. Seeing my sin caused this car to go into the guardrail. It'll be an understandable accident because of that front end.

And kill me. Take my life. And I got home that day, again alone in the apartment, and I got down on my knees in frustration and I was crying and I said, God, you've always answered my prayers, but you didn't answer the prayer.

I prayed that you would give me a vision of your holiness and you didn't answer that prayer. And God again, after two weeks of silence, He said this to me. He says, Mark, I did answer your prayer, but I couldn't show you my holiness until I first showed you your sinfulness.

This doesn't happen very often. The Holy Spirit laid on my heart. You turn to Micah chapter 7. I didn't even know it was there.

I opened my Bible to Micah chapter 7, verse 18, and I read these words. Who is a God like you who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us.

You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. And the Lord says, Mark, I love you. I've forgiven you.

And it broke. And His love came over my heart. And the Lord said to me this.

The last thing I heard in this encounter was He said this. Now Mark, I want to tell you, don't you dare ever look down on anyone and their sin again. Never.

Oh, I love the book of Joel chapter 2. I named my eldest son Joel. Joel chapter 2, verse 12. God says, Even now declares the Lord, Return to me with all your heart.

Why? Because our hearts have attached themselves to things, good things even, that become bad things because they turn us from God. Return with all your heart with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart, not your garments.

Return to the Lord your God for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents. Folks, He relents from sending calamity. Why? He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve.

Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing, grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord our God. You say, Mark, are you saying that God will not judge or punish us for our sins? No, that's not what I am saying. I am saying that He does not, if we will come to Him, if we judge ourselves, we will not come under judgment that God is giving us an opportunity today.

God calls it again today according to Hebrews 3 and 4. God has called another day today. Today is today, May 8th. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.

Isaiah 57, 15, this is what the high and lofty one says, He who lives forever, whose name is holy, I live in a high and holy place, but also with Him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. I want to say this, sometimes we try to pray down revivals, and I know prayer is very important, but the issue is not whether we can get God to come to us, it's whether we go to God. Azariah the prophet in 2 Chronicles 15 that Edgar read at the beginning said, The Lord is with you when you are with Him.

Again, the question is not whether we can pray Him down today, brothers and sisters. The Lord is. It's a promise.

One of the 7,487 promises in Scripture. He says the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And we are with Him when our hearts are with Him.

All of our hearts. Set your minds on things above. Set your hearts, your affections on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Never forget the day God says, Now Mark, I want your heart. He showed me something. He says, Mark, you've surrendered everything in your life.

You surrendered your house and you surrendered your money and you surrendered your cars and your businesses because I'm a tent maker and you surrendered all these things. You've surrendered all this to me. And by the way, I don't need it.

There's one thing you haven't surrendered to me and that is your will. He said, my son, give me your heart because when I have your heart I have everything else anyways. I wept.

Not because of my sin but because of my sin of not giving Him my heart and loving other things more than Him. You know, I'm tempted to pray. I preach a message called When God Stopped the Prayer Meeting.

Do you know God stopped the prayer meeting in the Old Testament? The book of Joshua 7. Joshua and the leaders are on their faces and they're crying out to God. And what does God say? Stand up! Israel has sinned. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever is among you that... Brothers and sisters, I love you.

And I'm a sinful man but I know the Lord Jesus loves you more. And He shows me. Stop crying about your sin in terms of the action and cry and weep about the sin of loving it more than God.

Oh, the sin needs to be repented. Don't get me wrong. But are we willing to love the Lord Jesus Christ more than that thing? And see, when I sit in revival meetings I remember one preacher, I remember Lusitera.

He's a great preacher. And he was master at having lists. He had lists, I'm sure.

I used to swear that he'd interview my wife-to-be because he would just go through all these lists. And man, it was like getting hit with a buckshot. Sometimes, though, I could dodge them all.

You know, the preacher didn't mention my sin. Now, I know I've missed some of your sins. But the Holy Spirit hasn't because He told you about it in that still quiet voice that we heard about today.

But if you come to Him, He is gracious and compassionate. He's brought us here today so that we could find Him in revival personally. Will you not revive us, me again, so that I might rejoice in you? Let's come to the Lord in prayer.

Let me just close in prayer and we'll let the Lord speak to us. Heavenly Father, we come to You in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, You've done so many wonderful things.

You've saved us from eternal hell. You do not give us what we deserve. We think we deserve so much.

We don't deserve anything but roasting in hell next to that devil. But You have not treated us as our sins deserve. Oh, You have mercy and compassion.

You want to move our sins so far from us. And all You ask us to do is to have truth in the inner parts, to judge ourselves so that we don't come under judgment, to come to You and tell You what You already know, that Lord, when we sin, we love sin more than we love You. That ought to break our hearts.

Oh, God, have mercy. You're so loving. We're sinning against love.

We're not sinning against the mean God. He's not like a father or a mother that we grew up with or an educator or a pastor or anyone else. You're a loving Father.

You love us. Like the prodigal son, we run. We squander all Your blessings on what we think will make us happy.

And one day, when we have to reach up to touch bottom, we remember what we had. We remember our first love. We know we're not worthy to be called Your sons anymore or daughters.

We come back to You today and just make us one of Your servants. We want to be a servant of God. I don't care about a title.

We want to be called a servant of God. We can only be servants. And we come to You, and before we can even say too much, You cut us off.

You don't even listen to our confession because You know about it before we even say it. And You tell us. You hug us.

You embrace us. You give us a robe of righteousness because we finally confess the sin that drove us from You. It was love for the world.

You give us a robe of righteousness. You put a ring on us and You restore us. And there's more joy in heaven over one Christian even who repents than 99 righteous who do not need to repent.

God, have mercy. Help us to see Your love. Shed Your love abroad in our heart.

Not so that we can just steal Your love or love others, but so that we can love the Lord Jesus Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ and to help us to love Him. We can't love Him.

We can't love You without Your help. God, have mercy on us. Descend upon us, O Lord, with Your love.

We're not even going to ask You to come. We don't need to. You dwell in a high and holy place and You'll come to one of us today or two of us or the whole group of us if we just come with a contrite and lowly heart and tell You what You already know we've done and we can be revived today.

Then we'll teach transgressors Your way and sinners will turn back to You. We thank You, O God. We praise You in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are so wonderful. We love You. We love You.

Help us to love You. Help us, O Lord. In the name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

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