

Revival of Prayer

by Mark Greening

Prayer is the key to revival and ongoing revival in the life of the church and in our personal lives.

Duration: 36:34

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:12, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 18:19, James 4:8

Topics: "Revival Praying"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor recounts the story of a youth group revival that took place in 1904. The pastor asked the youth what God was doing in their lives, and a teenage girl named Flory Evans stood up and expressed her love for Jesus. This ignited a revival in the youth group, leading them to pray, share their love with others, and worship God. The pastor emphasizes the importance of prayer in experiencing the glory of the Lord and calls for a revival of prayer in churches today. The sermon also includes examples of how prayer has led to conversions and revivals in the past.

Transcript

Over the past few weeks we have been considering the topic of revival as highlighted through the actions of various kings in the Old Testament. We've considered surrender to God, humility, dealing with idolatry in our lives, and giving as key events that spark revivals in the land of Israel. This morning I would like to focus on prayer as the key to revival and ongoing revival in the life of the church and in our own personal lives.

The psalmist asks in Psalm 85.6, will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Is that your heart's cry this morning? To be revived. Someone once said, not all those, Mark, who pray for revival are willing to pay the price of revival in their own lives. May that not be so of us today.

Young people, thank you for joining us. Today I'm going to be laying a groundwork from Scripture that will set the tone for why prayer is so important. I trust you'll never forget this message because it is key and fundamental to your own spiritual growth and for how God will use you as you mature and grow in Him in these years to come.

By the end of the sermon I will be giving some illustrations that will help us to understand how and why prayer is so fundamental for Oak Ridge and your youth group and all of our groups and everything we do here. So you be patient, some stories are coming. But in preparation for that, let's turn to 2 Chronicles 6, verse 12, where we read of Solomon's prayer of dedication for the new temple.

By way of background, prior to the construction of the temple, God had instructed Moses to build a portable worship center, as it were, where the Ark of the Covenant was housed and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. And as they moved around, God and His presence that was manifested by that Shekinah glory, the cloud and the fire at night, would follow them and lead and guide them. But now that the Israelites were established in the land, it was time for a temple, a permanent structure to be built, and Solomon was given the honor to construct that.

In 2 Chronicles 6, verse 12, we read these words, Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD, in front of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands. Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform, and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands towards heaven.

He said, O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven or on earth, You who keep Your covenant of love with Your servants, who continue wholeheartedly in Your way. And then jump down to verse 21, Hear the supplications of Your servant and Your people Israel, and when they pray towards this place, hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive. And then down to chapter 7, verse 1, When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifice and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground. They worshipped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, He is good, His love endures forever.

Now this is a summary of the prayer of Solomon. Now I want to read some familiar verses. You'll understand them as soon as, and remember them as soon as we go through them, but the context of these verses is very important.

After this wonderful prayer and this sincere prayer of Solomon, with God displaying His glory and falling on that place, insomuch they could not even do their work. It's wonderful when God's glory so fills a church that we don't need to work and He builds it without us. Notice what chapter 7, verse 12 says, The LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said, I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices when I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague among my people.

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 will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. Now our passage teaches us that the first priority to God in anything we do is prayer.

Of all the things that God could have chosen to emphasize in this passage regarding the grand unveiling of the temple, He chose to highlight prayer above all else. Of the 53 verses that describe this dedication, 45 refer directly to prayer and God's response to that prayer, and only 8 verses speak of the sacrifices and music and the festival that followed. And when that sincere prayer was offered up and the people's hearts were with Solomon as he prayed, the glory of the LORD filled the temple and people were in awe of God and worshipped Him.

What will it take for the glory of the LORD to come on Oak Ridge Bible Chapel? Prayer. What we need most in our churches today is a revival of prayer, for then and only then will we truly rejoice in the LORD and experience His power to change and to save. Is this not what God meant back in Isaiah 56-7? We're speaking of the Gentiles, you and I who are here today.

For those of us who would put our faith in Him, He said all the way back in Isaiah 56-7, these I will bring to My holy mountain and give them joy in My house of prayer. For My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. Did Jesus not confirm this in Matthew where He said, it is written, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers? You may remember the story.

Jesus came to the temple and found people were carrying on a profitable business, selling animals and charging excessive fees for converting currency for Passover. And He overturned the tables and He made a whip of cords and He thrashed them all out of that place. Somehow the religious people there had missed the whole point of coming to fellowship with God.

And Jesus reminded them, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers. In other words, you think that when you come together, it's just like any other gathering here at the temple. You think that you can carry on just like the rest of your week and come in and bring that thought and that attitude and that emphasis and that it's okay.

But My house shall be called a house of prayer out with you. This tone of prayer is to characterize everything we do in our churches, in everything we do if we're to please God. Jesus did not say that My house shall be called a house of worship and great singing that we just had.

Yes, worship, but My house shall be called a house of prayer. He did not say My house shall be called a house of entertainment and well-run programs. My house shall be called a house of prayer.

He did not say My house shall be called a house of great preaching and intellectual sermons and theology and doctrine. My house shall be called a house of prayer. It's not how we sing and teach and plan and organize, but it's why we sing, why we plan, why we do these things.

Is it for the glory of the Lord so that His glory might descend or is it so that I can be recognized and praised and thanked? Know this, preaching and teaching and doctrine and theology will not bring about a revival because My house shall be called a house of prayer. God did not say if My people who are called by My name will study the Bible more, will listen to better sermons, know their theology cold. He said if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, then will I hear.

Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayers offered at Oak Ridge. I don't know who made this saying, but I've never forgotten it. Someone says if you're clever, Jesus won't be wonderful.

And if Jesus is wonderful, you won't be so clever. And Jesus becomes wonderful through prayer. Have you ever considered that if Jesus said My Father's house will be called a house of prayer, then prayer must have been so important to Him.

Nowhere do we see the importance of prayer to Jesus like we do in Revelation chapter 5. There in that wonderful passage, John has this vision and he sees Jesus, this Lamb slain, standing at the center of the throne. And as He stands there, there's 24 elders surrounding Him with gold bowls in their arms. What's in the gold bowls? The prayers of the saints.

How wonderful is Jesus that He places your prayers in gold bowls and they're before His throne every day. How wonderful is Jesus that according to Psalm 56.8, He puts our tears in His bottle and He saves them. Not only should we pray because Jesus is wonderful, we should pray because our prayers are wonderful to Him.

In 1 Timothy 2.1, Paul says, I urge first of all that request prayers and intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone. Why, Paul? Verse 3, this is good and pleases. It pleases God our Savior.

Prayer is pleasing. It is wonderful to God. Just think of all the promises of God to us.

Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened to you.

Call unto Me and I will show you great and mighty things that you do not know. You will seek Me and you will find Me when you seek for Me with all your heart. I tell you that if two of you agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in Heaven.

Come near to God and He will come near to you. What great and precious promises there are from God to us. When we pray, God answers.

And when we pray, God saves. And when we pray, He builds His church. And when we pray, God sends revivals.

If we look at the history of the church, whenever the church reached a low point spiritually and was powerless with both men and God, what did God do? He sent a revival. And what is the first thing that characterizes any revival in church history? People pray. At the turn of the 20th century in Wales, before the great Welsh revival came where 100,000 people were saved in a very quick and immediate move of God, what was it? People prayed.

When God moved powerfully in the Great Awakening in the U.S. in the 1700s, it was because people prayed. Who was the great preacher? Who was the great singer? People prayed. Great music came out of the movement.

Great messages came out of those revivals. But people prayed. What church growth strategies? What Bible college? What seminary? What doctorate? Spawned these things.

None. People prayed. One of the main characteristics of a revival of prayer is that the presence of God is felt in a new and powerful way.

As a matter of fact, I've heard people say, I learned more about God in theology in one week in a revival than I did in all the years of Bible college put together. One such revival took place in 1857 in the city of New York. Jeremiah Lamphere, a 46-year-old businessman, felt led by the Holy Spirit to start a businessman's prayer meeting in downtown New York.

He started a noontime weekly prayer meeting where any businessman could come and the rules were very simple. Anyone could attend from any denomination. People could leave whenever they wanted.

And prayers were to be fairly short. Lamphere printed out some leaflets and he handed them out to the warehouses and some of the business establishment around that area and had people come to the old North Dutch Reformed Church on Fulton Street in New York at noon to pray. On his first announced prayer meeting on September 23rd, 1857, Lamphere arrived alone and prayed by himself for a half an

hour.

After that half hour, six more men came in at various times until there were seven of them in prayer. By next Wednesday, there were 20. On October 7th, there were nearly 40.

There was such a desire for prayer that people began to meet daily and one week later, over 100 men were in attendance at those meetings including many unsaved people who came and under conviction of the Holy Spirit got saved. Within one month, prayer meetings sprung up in churches all over the city and before long they were overcrowded. Men and women, young and old, from every denomination.

People praying with only one common denominator, a love for Christ, a love for one another and a love for the lost. People were being saved on a regular basis and those present expressed they tangibly felt God's presence as never before. By March 19th, the theater opened for prayer and hundreds were standing outside and a half hour before the theater opened for prayer, they were turning people away.

By the hundreds, it was packed out. By the end of March, over 6,000 people met daily in prayer gatherings in New York. Many churches added evening prayer meetings to their services.

Soon there were 150 different united prayer meetings each day across Manhattan and Brooklyn. Spontaneously, prayer meetings broke out all across the U.S. and in some towns, nearly the whole population was converted. It was said of Atlanta that only 50 people remained unsaved.

The Presbyterian magazine reported that as of May, there had been 50,000 converts of the revival. A New York Methodist magazine reported a total of 8,000 conversions in Methodist meetings alone in one week. The Louisville Daily Paper reported 17,000 Baptist conversions in three weeks during the month of March.

And according to a June statement, the conversion figures stood at 96,216 and still counting. One town was distraught because two teenagers in a high school were still unsaved. These are just brief examples of what was happening continuously and spontaneously all across the U.S. People said that the presence of the Holy Spirit seemed to hang like an invisible cloud over cities.

This was especially true of the eastern seaboard. There are historical accounts of people coming in on ships approaching the east coast. They felt a solemn, holy influence as far as 100 miles away without even knowing what was happening in America.

Revival began aboard one ship before it even reached the coast of the U.S. People on board began feeling the presence of God and a sense of their own sinfulness. The Holy Spirit started convicting them and they began to pray. And as they neared the ship's harbor, the captain had an emergency morse code go out, send a minister.

As the ship neared the harbor, hundreds in that ship came to Christ. Another small commercial ship arrived in port with the captain and every member of the crew converted in the last 150 miles. Ship after ship arrived with the same story.

Passengers and crew were suddenly convicted of sin. Syncretism, as Jim preached about last year. We worship God but we've got these things on the side that we do during the week.

They were convicted of sin. And they turned to Christ before even their ship reached the American coast. The battleship North Carolina was anchored in New York Harbor as a naval receiving ship and more than

a thousand young men were aboard.

Four Christian men agreed to meet together and to pray and they knelt on the lower deck one day. And the Holy Spirit so filled them with joy in their hearts that they broke out into song. But ungodly men on the top deck heard them and they ran down the stairs and they began mocking and jeering.

And by the time they got to the bottom deck, the Holy Spirit had dropped them to their knees and they began crying to God for mercy and they were saved. Night after night these sailors prayed and hundreds were converted on the ship. Ministers were sent forward to counsel and to disciple.

And as those men were trained by those ministers, then they went out to other ships and every ship they went to to talk about the revival, God sent revival even unto those ships. You say, Mark, those are stories from the past. No.

This still happens in the world today. I've mentioned to you the 1972 revival for the young adults. Earl Lackey, who was involved in that in 1972 in Saskatoon, shared his testimony with your group a few weeks ago.

And I'll never forget what Earl said. He says, Mark, a small church of 200 started to pray. And before long, prayer spread to other churches and within a short period of time, within five weeks, there were 3,000 of us in prayer at the Civic Auditorium in Saskatoon.

On Grey Cup Sunday, we packed it out. No one wanted to go watch the game. He says, what does it take to do that? Earl said, we had many reports of people driving along the 401 and being compelled to drive off and go to a gas station.

And they would say this, something is different. What is happening in Saskatoon? They would say, go see. And they would send them down to the revival and the prayer meetings.

In one class Earl had mentioned to us that there were seven students who would pray on a weekly basis and they could get any interest in the rest of their classmates to come and pray. But when God started to hover over that place because of the prayers of God's people, within one week they went in and there were 50 teens waiting there expectantly, looking to meet with God. Most of them saved that week.

I remember back in Park Royal, and God showed us this just in microcosm, where the elders began to pray for three months that the spirit of grace and supplication would fall on the rest of the congregation. After three months, 17 men spontaneously said, we need to pray. First we need to get right with God.

And then we need to pray. And they began to pray. And for six months we prayed together.

And then on December 31st it happened. God began to move. We sensed His presence.

We would witness the people, they would come to the Lord. We would read two or three verses to people, they would weep and come to Christ. The Holy Spirit was no respecter of persons.

We didn't even have to know the languages of those we were witnessing to. I remember a Mandarin lady was brought to me. And the husband says, witness to her, she'll come to the Lord if you witness to her.

I said, I can't do anything. I don't save people. And so I started to share with her the Gospel.

And she could hardly understand English. And at the end, and you could tell she didn't want to be there, her husband had dragged her into that meeting with me. And at the end I said, do you want to become a Christian? And she understood enough English to say no.

And then I said, do you believe these things that I've been saying to you? She said no. What do you do? Has anyone ever witnessed someone who said no twice to you and seen them come to the Lord? Have you ever seen that? Do you know within ten minutes as I sat there with her, she began to weep uncontrollably and began talking to her husband. She was a Buddhist.

Talking to her husband. And he looked at me and said, Mark, good news, she's under conviction of the Holy Spirit. She got saved, got up, hugged us, and was rejoicing in the Lord.

Since that time, she's led almost all of her Buddhist family to Christ. What technique? No technique. People were praying for me while I was witnessing to her.

I used to think that I had the gift of evangelism. I don't. In the time of God's moving, even if you don't have the gift of evangelism, God will use your testimony so powerfully you think you're going to be the next Billy Graham.

But you see, people prayed. You know, it's a wonderful thing to be so used to having people saved that when God stops saving, you call an emergency board meeting. God used to save every week.

The lowest number we ever saw saved was one a week. And we were grieved when we only saw one saved a week. We had no programs, no evangelistic meetings, nothing.

People would be saved. We'd meet people at the back of the church. Why did you come here today? God sent us.

Are you a Christian? No. But God sent us anyways. He woke us up.

He sent us. People would be on the prayer. The ladies would be on their knees praying.

People would be saved in other parts of the city. No one witnessing to them. God convicted us one day.

You're not seeing salvation. Two weeks went by. Two weeks, no one got saved.

The Holy Spirit showed us, you've grieved me. An event took place in this church, right in Park Royal that grieved me. You repent, elders.

God laid on my heart to stand up and preach a sermon on grieving the Holy Spirit because He is here today. He is a person and He feels and He is grieved by my sin. He's grieved by our sin.

I preached the message on grieving the Holy Spirit. I had the whole congregation stand. We held hands and I prayed and I asked God to forgive us our sins.

Whether through ignorance or not, I prayed that He would forgive us our sins. And the power of God once again came and 20 more people were saved in short order. You see, surely the arm of the Lord is not too short that it cannot save.

His ear is not too dull that it cannot hear. But your sin, if separated between you and your God, so that He will not listen. My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer.

People have somehow made the sermon or teaching or Bible studies the central focus in our churches. But the preacher, the teacher, if we have done our job right, will point people to the throne of grace. Why? Because it's there at the throne of grace that we can obtain grace and find mercy to help in our time of need.

God doesn't say, let us come to the sermon. Let us come to the counselor. Let us come to the teacher.

Let us come to the youth event, the worship service, to Sunday school. He said, let us come to the throne of grace because my house shall be called a house of prayer. And if we're doing our jobs, exercising our gifts, we will always point people to the throne.

Nothing wrong with counseling. Nothing wrong with teaching. Nothing wrong with mentoring.

But at the end of the day, are we leading our people to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help in their time of need? Have you ever noticed that the Christian church was born not while someone was preaching, but while people were praying? For ten days they did nothing but pray. They remember Jesus' words that if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall my Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? My house shall be called a house of prayer. As elders, we have been tremendously burdened about this over these past weeks and months and been praying about how the Lord would have us move forward at Oak Ridge.

We're grateful for the many prayer meetings and cells that go on. Praise God and thank you for those who have been so faithful in these. But we feel that the Lord is leading us to make another opportunity for prayer, to add another to this church.

Tonight, we're supposed to meet for our end of month prayer, but we're not having one tonight. Instead, on Wednesdays, beginning this week at 7.30, many parents drop off their teens to Ridge and other events from 7.30 till open-ended, 8.30 or 9. You leave like with these Jeremiah Lanphier prayers whenever you feel so led to leave, but we're going to have times of prayer. We're going to ask the Lord to lead these and let God be glorified in our midst as we give testimony and praise to what He's doing and as we pray for one another.

Pray for one another that you might be healed. So we're asking if you're able to come. The most important event is not this message today.

The most important event is not the wonderful worship we experience week by week. The most important event that we can ever be involved in is praying and seeking God on our faces. This morning, as we prepare for communion, I'd like to read a familiar verse in 1 Corinthians 11.25. In the same way, after supper, He took the cup, saying, this cup is the new covenant of my blood.

Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. Growing up, I don't know if any of you heard this growing up, but my pastor used to read that from the Amplified Version. And the Amplified Version says this, do this as often as you drink it to call me affectionately to remembrance.

Now the word affectionately does not appear in the original language, but that's what's implied and that's what the translators paraphrased it at. It wasn't just Jesus saying, I want you to have a cold, hard, theoretical remembering of what I did on the cross. No.

We're to remember Him affectionately. They threw that word in to give the sense of what Jesus wants us to do. Did you know that at the end of the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul had dictated this.

Tradition says he had bad eyesight. So perhaps that was the reason he used an amanuensis, a scribe, to write his book for him. But he got excited at the end of the book.

He wanted to say something. And so he wrote this in 1 Corinthians 16:21. These next four verses, I'll only read two of them. But he said this, I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand and here's what I'm going to write.

Verse 22. If anyone does not love the Lord, a curse be on him. Come, O Lord.

Do you love the Lord Jesus this morning? Do you really love Him? Earlier in my message, I spoke about prayer being the precursor to revival in our lives, in our church, and in our nation. But I'd like to tell one last revival story that took place in the early 1900s during the Welsh Revival. After much prayer in these churches, one specific event was the flashpoint for revival to begin.

Remember, lots of prayer, lots of great speakers, even some theologians in the mix, yet no revival. Burden for prayer, a burden for revival, a sense of God moving, no revival. One man, Avin Roberts, had said the Lord had showed him that God would save 100,000 people in that revival, yet no one was being saved.

And on the 2nd of February, or the second Sunday, rather, of February in 1904, after the morning service, the youth got together in the vestry. Their pastor, Joseph Jenkins, asked them, tell me, what is God doing in your life? One or two got up and started to preach and to read, and Jenkins looked at them and said, no, that's not what I asked you. Tell me, what is God doing? Is He real to you? And then a teenage girl by the name of Flory Evans stood up, and she said these words, and I quote, I am unable to say very much today, but I love the Lord Jesus with all my heart.

He died for me. And these words were the flame that ignited the revival. That youth group got so revived, they began to pray.

They began to express their love, something that the adults in their congregation had not done to that day. They shared their love with the adults in the congregation. They went out and they shared their love for Jesus to the people around, and the revival began, and 100,000 people were saved, and internationally even more, because the revival spread all around the then known world.

God sometimes confounds the wisdom of the wise and the theologians and the pastors and the teachers by calling things that are not as though they were and using teenagers, even in your group today. Do not let anyone despise your youth. You can love the Lord more than any of us here this morning.

Do you know why? Because you haven't learned to sin. You haven't learned to not repent. You haven't learned to hold on to things, and money, and ambitions, and all these things that may be good, but God may not have told you to have.

Seek the Lord while He may be found. In your youth, seek Him, and the Lord will do wonderful things in your life. Fall in love with Jesus, and let the revival start with you, if anyone does not love the Lord.

You were bought with a price, therefore honor God with your body, Scripture says. Let's pray for communion. Heavenly Father, we come to you, and what greater love has a man than this, that a man laid

down his life for his friends, and you laid down your life for us.

Oh Lord, you left everything for us. Can we not leave sin? Can we not leave pleasures of this world? Lord, have mercy on us. Lord, might you descend upon us by your spirit of grace and supplication, to turn our hearts to you.

If we, as your people, will humble ourselves and pray, and turn from our wicked ways, and seek your face, then will you hear from heaven, and forgive our sin, and heal our land. Now your eyes will be open, and your ears attentive to the prayers offered to this place. Heavenly Father, move in our hearts, only you, by your spirit of grace, can do this.

To go out today and say, we're going to change, that's in the flesh, and that's proud. That is pride through and through. But Heavenly Father, if you will move on us by your spirit of grace, we will change.

If you will shed your love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom you've given us according to Romans 5, we will love you. We wish to worship you in spirit and in truth. We wish for streams of living water to flow from within us, to the people around us.

Heavenly Father, only you can do this, for revival is from you. Lord, as we consider the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as we come to communion, we just ask that you would fill our hearts with love and adoration for you. Lord, hear our prayers, hear our confession.

May none of us this morning eat in an unworthy manner and sow sin against the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. We thank you for this opportunity to partake together. God, move in our midst, revive us, we pray, that your people here at Oak Ridge might rejoice in you.

In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.

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