

Revival Tornadoes -- No Respecter of Persons

by Martin Knapp

Revival tornadoes are powerful and direct expressions of God's love and truth, which bring people to salvation and change their lives.

Scripture: Isaiah 55:10, Matthew 28:19, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 10:24, James 2:1

Topics: "Revival Preaching", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Martin Knapp preaches about the powerful impact of revival truth, likening it to tornadoes that do God's bidding by condemning sin and promoting righteousness without regard for social status or human influence. He emphasizes the importance of fearlessly presenting God's truth, regardless of the audience, as illustrated by the story of Peter Cartwright and General Jackson. Knapp highlights how revival tornadoes, like actual tornadoes, seek to destroy spiritual 'germs' that lead to eternal death, urging believers to passionately warn and save souls. He challenges critics who oppose revival efforts, emphasizing that true revival may provoke unfriendly criticism but ultimately brings about spiritual transformation and blessings.

Transcript

Tornadoes are no respecters of persons. God "directs their way." They do His bidding. They treat pauper and patrician alike. So does revival truth. It condemns sin alike in all, and smiles on real righteousness, whether in kings or common people. Money, learning, or position cannot bribe it nor turn its edge. The man who is the center of the revival must, fearless of man, present God's truth, realizing that an emperor or president, a king or a doctor of divinity, will, if unconverted, be lost eternally as surely as the most degraded. This point is illustrated in the story which, of told, will bear repeating, of Peter Cartwright and General Jackson.

A fastidious preacher had invited Cartwright to preach for him. As he was about to begin, the preacher whispered loudly to him, "General Jackson has come in. General Jackson has come in."

"I felt," writes Cartwright, "a flash of indignation run all over me like an electric shock, and facing about to my congregation, and purposely speaking out audibly, I said, 'Who is General Jackson? if he don't get his soul converted, God will damn him as quick as he would a Guinea ...'"

The next day General Jackson said, "Mr. Cartwright, you are a man after my own heart. A minister of Jesus Christ ought to love everybody and fear no mortal man ... If I had a few thousands such independent,

fearless officers as you are, and a well drilled army, I could take old England."

The next day after Bro. Weber had preached at Hillsdale, Mich., on "Hell," he was met on the street by a Universalist preacher, who accused him of personally attacking himself and his church. "I know nothing of, you personally," replied Mr. Weber; "but if the shoe fits you, wear it." Such was the lightning bolt that thus leaped upon this nettled prophet of infidelity.

Tornadoes pay no attention to men's ideas of dignity. Their business is to arrest and bear away every germ of malaria they can find in earth or air, and with search warrants for such from the great God of the tempest, they accomplish their work without consulting men's notions of dignity or how it should be done.

Revival tornadoes act in a similar way. Their mission is to seek the destruction of "sinnerisms," from which men are dying eternally by the million. They find men bearing in their breasts the fire of rebellion against God, which, unless quenched, will burn their souls forever. They find them wrecked upon the shores of Time and sinking beneath the angry billows of eternal despair. Their work is to seek them out and save them. So in plain language that all the people can understand, they vehemently warn and point to the one place of safety. Souls which are moved by such mighty currents of faith and quenchless love are not like the weak one who, when asked to help inquirers in an after-service, said, "I cannot; I'm not acquainted with them," but like sailors rescuing sinking seamen, will first get them to a place of safety and then get acquainted with them afterwards. Lost souls to them are more precious than rubies, and wherever these can be found, there they go.

Whatever ways or words they can devise to get their attention and rivet their minds to things eternal, they do not hesitate to use. If they will not come to the meetings, then they will go to them; and if at their homes they cannot be found, then away to their places of business; and if needs be from hence, at the Master's command, into the "highways and the hedges" to "compel them" to come in. Their Saviour gladly flew on such errands of love and mercy, and is the servant better than his Lord?

If those unversed in the Master's arts of reaching souls shall feel annoyed by their earnest, practical efforts, and shall complain as some have of their "lowering the dignity of the Gospel," in the unanswerable language of another they can say, "What constitutes the dignity of the Gospel? Is it human dignity, or Divine? It was a very undignified thing, looked at humanly, to die on the cross between two thieves. That was the most undignified thing ever done in this world, and yet, looked at on moral and spiritual grounds, it was the grandest spectacle that ever heaven or earth gazed upon, and methinks the inhabitants of heaven stood still and looked over the battlements at that glorious, illustrious Sufferer as He hung there between heaven and earth ... That was the dignity of almighty strength allying itself with human weakness in order to raise it. It was the dignity of eternal wisdom shrouding itself in human ignorance in order to enlighten it. It was the dignity of everlasting, unquenchable love, baring its bosom to suffer in the stead of its rebellious creatureman. Ah, it was incarnate God standing in the place of condemned, apostate man -- the dignity of love! love!! LOVE!

"Oh, precious Saviour, save us from maligning Thy Gospel by clothing it with our paltry notions of earthly dignity and forgetting the dignity that crowned Thy sacred brow as Thou didst hang upon the cross

"That is the dignity for us, and it will never suffer any gentleman here carrying the gospel into the back by-slums or alleys of any town or city where he lives. That dignity will never suffer by any employer talking lovingly to his errand boy, and looking into his eyes with tears of sympathy and love, and trying to bring his soul to Jesus. That dignity will never suffer, even though you should have to be dragged through the

streets with a howling mob at your heels, like Jesus Christ, if you have gone into those streets for the souls of your fellow-men, and the glory of God. Though you should be tied to the stake, as were the martyrs of old, and surrounded by laughing and taunting fiends and their howling followers, -- that will be a dignity which shall be crowned in heaven, crowned with everlasting glory. If I understand it, that is the dignity of love. I do not envy, I do not covet any other God is my witness than the dignity of love."

The success of the man and his methods show that, though Mr. Weber is a stranger to the shame and dignity which attends the spiritual idleness or ineffectual efforts of many of his critics, the dignity of the corpse and the shroud, yet that with the true gospel dignity that seeks to save men at any cost he is clothed as with a garment.

Tornadoes provoke unfriendly criticism. Instead of looking at the blessings which attend them, people are wont to magnify the discomforts which they cause, forgetful that even in these is some concealed blessing. Revival tornadoes have ever provoked kindred criticism, and of course such mighty cyclones of divine power as attend Mr. Weber's work will be no exception to this rule. In many places, as in Defiance, Ohio, as he has recorded in his journal, "The people criticized very much and some got mad because the truths were told so plainly. One complained and said, 'I would split the seats.' I heard about it and said, the next night, I hoped God would split some of their hearts and let light in so they could see their sins. The work swept on with mighty power. During his work at Jackson, Mich., where over 800 gave their names as being saved, two of the city papers criticized the work with a venom born from below. Referring to this in his journal, Mr. Weber wrote, "But this only drew out the crowds, and in fact stimulated the Christian people." Thus God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The evangelist treats these criticisms as a planet would a pebble.

One of the most cunning devices of the devil is that in which he deceives people to persist in worldliness, formality and opposition to holiness and aggressive revival work, and then blames spiritual people for the "friction" thus caused. It is as if a bad man should censure faithful fellow-citizens, who stand firmly by the laws of their land, because of the friction which his own badness brings.

Wherever there is carnality, pure Christianity, when its claims are all pushed with Apostolic energy, is the occasion of "friction,"

Noah, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, John, Paul and Jesus were the prolific occasions of "friction" among the self-seeking formalists of their own day, and the truths they taught and the errors they fought are in essence the same as then.

"Never on custom's oiled grooves The world to a higher level moves, But grates and grinds with 'friction' hard On granite, boulder and flinty shard."

The critics mentioned are usually of "the dog in the manger" class, who do not eat themselves, but snap at those who would. They are brethren to the Pharisees of old who would not go into Christ's kingdom themselves, but hindered those who sought to enter. What would have been thought of men, in the great Pennsylvania flood, who would not only refuse to aid in rescuing the dying, but would throw stones at those who were doing all they could to save them? Such persons are like men who would sit and find fault with the tone of the fire bell, the motions of the firemen and the noise of the busy rescuers, when the city is on fire, and fellow-mortals are perishing in the flames. O shame! Shame!! SHAME!!! Sad to say there are those who have been thus guilty. Only it was the evangelist, or pastor or other helpers that were criticized, and the souls of men instead of their bodies that were being rescued from ruin. They were seeking to save,

not from a burning building, but from the quenchless fire of an eternal hell. Yet some, wearing the outer garb of a Christian profession, instead of encouraging them, keep criminally silent, and sometimes try, after the victory is won, to cover their treachery by saying, "Well, I said nothing against them." Jesus, by and by, will say to such, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me Depart." Others, instead of praying for them, shrug the shoulder and curl the contemptuous lip, and instead of defending them, stab them again and again with the keen dagger of unfriendly criticism, and, saddest of all, sometimes this cruel, murderous work is done, as in the days of Jesus, by church officials and even ministers

Would that they would yet repent! The probabilities are, however, that they will not. Already they have been seen to point with a triumph poorly masked to one of the young converts who, in an unguarded moment, had yielded to the tempter's power and say, "We told you so." Already have they been heard to seek to justify self in the murderous course taken, and thus with the mantle of self-justification seek to cover the blood of souls with which their garments are spattered. May such be warned before it is too late. Otherwise, HOW WILL THEY STAND AT THE JUDGMENT?

Every true deep revival from Pentecost to the present day has awakened from opposers this same unkind hostile critics. The unfriendly world has taken up the cry, "These men are drunk on new wine," and ringing ten thousand changes on it, hurled it into the face of every great revival that has ever blest the land. As in the beginning, it has been treated as an elephant would treat a gnat, or as the moon, moving onward in majesty, treats the owl that barks at her. Jesus did thus, and his Church can be no wiser than her Head.

Tornadoes come contrary to men's preconceived ideas of how showers should come. Men in a general way often in the time of a drought pray for rain and look for it. When the tornado comes they prefer it to continued drought, but it is not "just as they would have ordered." The class that we expected to see converted have very few of them yielded yet, said prominent member of the church at Adrian, during the great revival there. Over four hundred had professed conversion, but they were chiefly persons whose salvation had not been looked for. The unlooked-for way in which God's power ... often is displayed in revival time, often surprises those who are not close observers of his dealings. Such is the case when some rich pew holder is hit by the truth and threatens to join some church where it never thunders nor lightens, where gospel gales never sweep, and revival tornadoes never come; where from one year's end to another there is one parched desert of formality and worldliness, and deadly spiritual calm in which most of its dwellers perish. Some too, are frightened when the power of God rests mightily with official members that are not right with him, as at Findlay, Ohio, where, under Brother Weber's labors, in about four weeks five hundred and thirty professed conversion. In the beginning of the meetings some of the leading men of the church said, "I cannot and will not stand it," and some said, "I will take my letter and go elsewhere." Some of the daily papers echoed their opposition, but the pastor remained firm and said, "They got no letters from me," and the work moved mightily onward.

The spiritual tornado often acts in an unlooked-for way upon an unconverted husband. He declares himself "disgusted" at the "plain preaching" of the evangelist, or at the idea of an endless "hell," and declares that he will "never go to church as long as that revival continues." Sister Faintheart had prayed for the revival and felt almost sure her husband would be converted, but now all hope must go, "he means just what he says, and the tornado has struck him in such a way he never will go back to the meetings. She never thought it would bring about such a state of things. O dear! O dear! The next night he goes. The third night he asks his wife's forgiveness. The fourth, O glory! He is converted! Such events are not likely to occur in spiritual ice-houses, where spiritual mummies fumble their musty manuscripts, but in the tornado belt they

are of frequent occurrence.

A tornado, notwithstanding all opposition, moves on. Contrary winds may cross its track, and forests, cities and even mountains rise up before it in its onward march, but they do not stop it. To fight against it would be a foolish if not a suicidal act. Revival tornadoes are centers of a similar might. As was written of the gracious revival conducted by Mr. Weber at Rock Rapids, Iowa, "The work has not been without opposition. Christians have been reviled to their faces, but since then some of these very men have been converted."

Jerusalem rose up to crush revivals in the beginning of this great revival dispensation, and like lightning God's judgment fell upon her and she was quickly pillaged and annihilated by a foreign foe. Herod threateningly shook his sword at them, and quickly he was "eaten of the worms." One of Mr. Finney's revivals was opposed by an influential clergyman, who made a public and violent speech against it. "There was great crying unto God that night that He would counteract any evil influence that might result from that speech. The next morning this man was found dead in his bed," but the revival swept on with power.

He who opposes the organized efforts through which God is saving the people touches the "apple of his eye." Such people are like a man who would stop and knock his head against the corner-stone of a cathedral every time he passed it. The structure could stand it all right, but it would lie hard on the poor man's head. Some, by opposing holiness and resisting revivals, have acted thus foolishly. The holiness temple still stands in all its stately grandeur, and revivals sweep on like a resistless Niagara, but the "heads" of opposers are in a sad condition,

The revival tornadoes which are about to be noticed are all of them monuments to the power of God, which thus crushes mighty combinations that unite to impede the progress of His work and moves on like the "sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Some persist in their foolish opposition, and while the revival moves on, their children are prejudiced against it by their parents' influence, and remain unconverted. Or, if the person who thus exposes his folly and sin chances to be a pastor, his people, too frequently drinking in of his spirit, likewise remain aloof from the revival or oppose it, and thus grieve the Spirit and purchase to themselves and theirs an awful penalty. Such people are like men who would oppose others who are seeking to rescue drowning persons from a billowy grave, because, forsooth, they "talk too plainly to suit them," or are "too excited," or because they "don't believe that people who are excited or frightened when they get into the life-boat will stay there." Or, they don't believe in having a whole ship's crew "saved at once," but "think they would be more likely to live if they were picked up singly, here one and there one." Or, because so many that are rescued belong to the raff of society." Men who would sit still and make such excuses for not aiding in saving their drowning fellowmen, or, worse still, oppose those who were doing their best to rescue them, would be considered thunderers. Yet this is precisely the way that some act towards revivals. Are not such opposers in God's sight guilty of soul-murder? Aid if they repent not, must they not answer for it at the Judgment seat of Christ?

Tornadoes are not of the regular order of things. So are revivals, and yet, as Mr. Moody says, that does not prove that they are wrong. Eldad and Medad were out of the regular succession. Joshua wanted Moses to rebuke them. Instead of that he said, 'Would God that all the his people were prophets.' Elijah and Elisha did not belong to the regular school of prophets, yet they exerted a mighty influence for good in their day. John the Baptist was not in the regular line; he got his theological training out in the desert. Jesus Christ

Himself was out of the recognized order. When Philip told Nathaniel that he had found the Messiah, he said to him, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?'

"As we read the history of the past few centuries, we find that God has frequently taken up those who were, so to speak, out of the regular line. Martin Luther had to break through the regular order of things in his day before he brought about the mighty Reformation. There are now some sixty millions of people who adhere to the Lutheran Church. Wesley and Whitefield were not exactly in the regular line, but see what a mighty work they accomplished!"

More rain frequently falls in one tornado than in a number of ordinary showers. More souls are 'frequently converted in one revival tornado than during years of the dews of ordinary means of grace or months of protracted drizzles. Listen to Talmage, the eminent Brooklyn evangelistic pastor, --

"The church is the boat; the gospel is the net; society is the sea; and a great revival is a whole school brought in at one sweep of the net. I have admiration for that man who goes out with a hook and line to fish. I admire the way he unwinds the reel, and adjusts the bait, and drops the hook in a quiet place on a still afternoon, and here catches one and there one; but I like also a big boat, and a large crew, and a net a mile long, and swift oars, and stout sails, and a stiff breeze, and a great multitude of souls brought -- so great a multitude that you would have to get help to draw it ashore, straining the net to the utmost, until it breaks here and there, letting a few escape, but bringing the great multitude into eternal safety.

"In other words, I believe in revivals. The great work of saving men began with three thousand people joining the church in one day, and it will close with forty or a hundred million people saved in twenty-four hours, when nations shall be born in a day."

Tornadoes are a heaven-sent benediction. They find Nature gasping for a pure breath of air and choking for a drop of water to cool her parched tongue. Her birds, heat-smitten and thirsty, have ceased to sing. Many of her cattle that once rejoiced upon her thousand hills, and her sheep that gambled in her pastures, are dead. or dying, and the stench of their decaying bodies polluting the air, scatters deadly contagion far and near. Her fountains are dried, and also her lakes and rivers, which once were as mirrors in which she beheld her own beauty.

Her flowers long since have faded, and her forests now are no longer pictures of life but death. Her fields, baked by the burning sun that glares blood red from the brassy heavens, are barren wastes. Her granaries are empty. Food is worth more than gold, and water than rubies. Her people many of them are dead, others are dying. Pestilences, arm in arm with deadly plagues, stalk defiantly through the streets of her cities at noonday, claiming thousands of victims who are helpless to escape their power. At night they break into her homes, and snatch children from their parents and wives from their husbands, and with their breath poison whole households, and then with a fiendish laugh, which they have caught from long companionship with demons, they toss them all into the lap of greedy Death, who gloats over them for a moment and then consigns them to the grave. Through all her rural districts where a happy, prosperous people had rejoiced in the rich profusion of her gifts, now Diseases hold high carnival. In secret counsel assembled, they decide that one of their number shall cuter this home and another that, nor stay their deadly work, until all the people are prostrate through their power. Health is banished from her borders. Joy is smothered in her chamber. Plenty and Prosperity have been stabbed by Penury and Poverty, who have usurped their thrones, and now reign in their stead. Wolfish Want makes both day and night hideous with his cries.

But see, quickly the scene changes. The wind rises. Hope about to die lifts again her head and faintly sings. A cloud hovers in sight. It fills the western sky. Now the sun is darkened. The heavens now look black lightnings flash in the distance and the welcome rolling of the thunder once more is heard again. The clouds like coursers on the track each bent on outstripping the other, move swiftly. Now the thunder peals, now crashes, then for a moment an awful deadly calm, then the elements all seem let loose and the tornado has come. Some fly to the cellars for safety, others, thankful that the reign of ghastly drought is over, sing songs of thanksgiving and the tempest, and with contentment trust Him who holds the whirlwind in His hand.

'Tis ended now. How changed the scene 'Tis true, some fences are blown down, occasionally a house unroofed, a forest tree laid low, -- but oh, how small a price to pay for such a blessing! Look, Nature again wears the same glad smile that of old so brightened all her subjects. Drought and Blight and Malaria and Plagues and Pestilences, all, in one short hour have been driven from her realms. These, with the murderous company of Diseases that were lurking in the land, were sought out and seized by the tornado's might, and, like so many prisoners to the scaffold, were borne roughly to their destined doom.

As it hasted on its mission, it touched each bird and tree and flower, and at that touch the one burst forth in song and the others into beauty. It carpeted the earth as in the days gone by, and following in its train were rosy-cheeked Health and brawny Strength and blushing Beauty, and Purity and Happiness, Plenty and Prosperity, with all of their attendants of minor blessings. Innumerable are the benefits following in the wake of the tornado. This picture has its counterpart in the spiritual world.

In many places spiritual drought abounds. The water of divine truth no longer springs up into everlasting life. The flowers of Peace and Joy and Love, and kindred graces of the Spirit, have withered away. The "wheat and corn and wine" of the kingdom rejoice the heart no more.

Spiritual diseases, plagues and pestilences, as in the counterpart, have formed a conspiracy against the souls of the people, and in the employ of Eternal Death are daily ringing consignments of their doomed prisoners to the gates of Eternal Despair.

Many, starving on the burning sands of Formality, stagger up and down the land, beating their breasts and crying, "O my leanness! O my leanness!" Others, to satisfy the demands of greedy hunger, devour like starving swine the husks of worldliness and many of the poisonous fruits of sin, which seem to allay the momentary craving but which leaves the system with additional poison in the blood.

Satan, through a band of strong temptations which ever wait to do his bidding, has honey-combed the land with pitfalls, cunningly covered so as to snare the victim by treachery and surprise, and into these many fall, to rise again no more.

But soon there comes the mighty transformation, more marvelous than that mentioned in the material world. A faithful few beseech heaven in Jesus' name for showers from above. They meet the conditions, and soon mercy-drops are falling, and now they are in the midst of a sweeping spiritual tornado, the figure of which was just described.

As bolt after bolt of the lightning of divine truth falls on every side, and as the revival currents in their majestic sweep make everything that is movable to tremble, some are frightened, and seek to run away from its influence, and others curse it, while all who know the secret of the Lord, sing His praises that the "rain has come and the drought is at an end. It soon passes by, but its fruits abide. Men who were dying of

thirst new abide continually at the fountain and without money and without price partake freely of the water of life. Others that were dead of spiritual starvation, have been brought to life and now, alive forevermore, partake gratefully of the gospel feast and "go from strength to strength."

Many afflicted with tongue paralyzing palsy, the loathsome leprosy of inbred sin, spiritual blindness, which makes men make "crooked paths" to the glee of devils and the grief of saints, spiritual deafness that hid for years deadened the soul to gospel sounds, spiritual debility and nervousness that had for a long time made revival meetings a dread, and spiritual fever that had well-nigh reached the fatal crisis now are made every whit whole," and strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son, are fast becoming effective workers in His vineyard. Weaklings are transformed into spiritual giants, and the desert waste now blossoms as the rose. The land now is full of the wheat and the corn and oil and the wine of the heavenly kingdom, and the people partake and are satisfied.

The strength of the Church in quantity and quality is increased manifold, and her children now are able to work, to give, to speak or to pray, as need requires and as privilege affords. No questionable or sinful expedients to "meet expenses," or the benevolences of the church, are needed now, for the people "have a mind and love to give," as Jesus taught. No more sepulchral silences in meetings for prayer and praise and Christian testimony, for they "cannot but speak" the blessed experiences of the soul. No more godless musicians going through with musical performances for worship, but a people whose hearts are full of song and whose voices join those of devout leaders as together "with the spirit and the understanding" they praise the true God. No more dearth of workers in the Sunday School and other departments of lawful church activities, for God's people, having become willing in this, the day of His power, many are ready to say, "Here am I; send me, send me." No more urging the Christians to labor with sinners, for now they cannot keep away from them.

May such revival tornadoes multiply, until Ethiopia shall no longer stretch out her hands in vain for some to bring to her the gospel, and until all the kingdoms of this world shall become those of our Lord and of His Christ. The great revivals, a record of which is given in the succeeding chapters of this book, are all corroborative of the fact that real revival tornadoes are a blessed benediction from above.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/martin-knapp/revival-tornadoes-no-respecter-of-persons/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net