

Are You Backsliding? (Part 1)

by Michael L. Brown

Michael L. Brown's sermon calls for a deep revival within the church, emphasizing the need for leadership, prayer, and genuine transformation.

Duration: 57:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Backsliding"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares stories of powerful encounters with God and the impact it had on people's lives. He describes a revival where people were getting saved even before entering the church building, emphasizing the presence and visitation of God. The preacher also tells the story of a churchgoer who realizes the need to truly experience God and not just go through the motions of attending church. He encourages believers to seek a personal encounter with God through prayer and devotion, emphasizing that God wants to move in and through them.

Transcript

Lord, look at these, your people, your servants that are here. They've come, Lord, some for many hours. Some have had to invest precious funds just to get here.

Some have had to break away radically from their schedule to get here. Some, Lord, are ready to quit unless you visit them. Living God, I pray that You would come in power and speak to us today.

That we would have an encounter with You through Your Word, and that we would be changed for Your glory. Living God, we look to You and pray that You would not disappoint, but that You would take us deeper. In Jesus' name.

Amen. I want you to turn with me to 2 Chronicles, chapter 34. I'm going to back my way into our subject.

In a moment, we're going to take a look at what we really mean when we speak of revival, and give you a glimpse of what God has done in different parts of the world, in different generations. Then we want to talk about our own lives, see where we are at, see where God wants to take us. I want to say right up front that there is no condemnation in this room.

No one is here to criticize or to put down or to crush. If God by His Spirit speaks directly to you, maybe this is what you've been praying for and longing for. Maybe today and this week you're going to receive the

answers that your heart's been crying out for.

Maybe the breakthrough that you so desperately need, or that you don't know that you desperately need. Maybe that breakthrough is knocking at the door today. So don't miss a golden opportunity.

I don't mean my teaching, I don't mean these meetings, I mean if God begins to deal deeply with you. Do not harden your heart, but embrace it. And if you humble yourself in His sight, He will give you grace.

Before we read from 2 Chronicles 34, let me say that we need revival because the church is sick. The world doesn't need revival, the world needs to be impacted by revival. But revival comes to a sickly, sleeping church.

That's us. Not the guys down the block, that's us. And the reason that the church is sickly and sleeping is because we as leaders are sickly and sleeping.

Now that may sound extreme at the outset, it won't sound extreme when we're done. But the message of revival is first and foremost to the church, and first and foremost within the church it's to the leadership, because it's because of leadership that we'll either move into revival or move out of revival. 2 Chronicles 34 tells us, verse 1, Josiah was eight years old when he became king and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years.

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. So at the age of sixteen, eight years into his reign, he begins to seek God.

And he does it, apparently, for the next four years because it says in the twelfth year of his reign, in his twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, asherah poles, carved idols, and cast images. So in the twelfth year of Josiah's reign, he begins to bring a reformation movement to Judah and Jerusalem. He begins to bring them to a place of repentance.

He begins to purge the temple in the twelfth year of his reign. Now go over to Jeremiah chapter one. The Josiah reformation revival was the last great move in the history of Judah, the last great move before the temple was destroyed.

Jeremiah 1.1, the words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin, the word of the Lord came to him when? In the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, son of Ammon, king of Judah. One year into Josiah's reformation, one year into this beginning revival movement, God raises up Jeremiah. I believe it's important for us in the church today, it's been evident that there's been the beginning of a stirring, a renewing, a rising hunger in the midst of the people of God.

Prayer movements, city-wide prayer movements, city-wide repentance movements, city-wide pastors' gatherings, people crying out to God for God to come. Since the late eighties, this awareness of the need for revival has been growing. Then into the early mid-nineties, the beginning of refreshing moves breaking out in different ways, and now maybe the very first signs of a true awakening that could sweep America.

But what we need in the midst of this is the prophetic voice challenging us to go deeper. Not just saying this is wonderful and embracing everything and sitting back and stagnating again. Not just standing back and criticizing, but saying God's moving the Holy Spirit's at work, but where do we go from here? Because I've had the privilege of speaking in different nations, I've seen many churches heavily impacted in the

current renewal movement in different nations.

England has had about 4,000 churches, possibly more, impacted across the board from Anglican to Pentecostal to Baptist, across the board. Much more universally than we've seen in America. Heavily impacted by a genuine renewal, and yet many of the churches are stagnating because they say, where do we go from here? I've seen that in other nations, and I believe that it's critical that we, here and now, in the early stages of what God is doing, pray, Lord, what are you saying? What's your prophetic word? Give us the spirit and heart of Jeremiah's in our days so that we can be challenged.

See, Jeremiah spoke to the people early in the years of Josiah, and said, you have not returned to me with all your heart, but rather in pretense. See, the prophet comes along and makes you uncomfortable. Just when you want someone to put their arm around you and tell you everything's well, they tell you, I have this against you, says the Lord.

Are we willing to allow the Lord to make us uncomfortable? Now, I'm jealous for the real thing. Desperately jealous for the real thing. And it always disturbs me when we cheapen what God is doing.

We prayed for a woman in a wheelchair last night, and it seemed the power of God hit her, and she began to shake and basically was slain in the Spirit in her wheelchair. Well, that's nice, but I want to see you get out of the wheelchair. I'm not going to say it was revival because she shook and fell in the wheelchair.

Do you understand? When we say, oh, revival's come, revival's broken, revival, because the Sunday school attendance doubled. Or because the old deacon wept for the first time in 20 years. Or because the offerings were up, or because three people got saved.

Thank God for all of it. Thank God for everything He does. Like one man with a powerful healing ministry said, if Jesus heals a wart by His power and it disappears, rejoice.

I mean, God did it. I don't mean to downplay it. I don't mean to say, oh, that's nothing.

But let's not call every little trickle a mighty flood. See, there's the critical, never satisfied spirit. When a trickle comes, it says, that's not a river.

And then the river comes, and it says, that's not a flood. And then the flood comes, and it says, floods are dangerous. And you've got some people that sit there every week.

Whatever happens, they're going to have a problem. But the other extreme is it starts to trickle a little bit. We say, this is the great outpouring, the deluge, the revival we've been waiting for.

You know, we just get a little squirt, and we say, this is the mighty river. And God's saying, don't you think I have more than that plan? Don't you think I'm bigger than that? So when we talk about revival, we're talking about the only hope of America, friends. The only hope of America.

The reason that America is in the condition that it's in today is because we've had no revival since the beginning of the century. Azusa Street was a great Pentecostal outpouring at the turn of the century. But a few years before that, end of 1904 into 1905, there was a revival that impacted America as a whole.

I've shared some of these incidents. I've probably shared some of them the last time I taught here. But a lot of people don't hear about the 1904 revival in America.

It began in December of 1904, about the same time revival was breaking in Wales, November of 1904. And in those six months in Wales, after that, 100,000 Welshmen converted within six months. And in case you didn't hear the other statistic, about two-thirds of them within ten years died on the battlefields of World War I. The mercy of God extended the last moment.

But revival impacted America in 1904 and 1905. One of the most startling statistics was that in Atlantic City... I mean, you look at Atlantic City today, known for its legalization of gambling in recent years and so on. You look at Atlantic City in New Jersey.

In the 1904-1905 move of God, they could not find more than 50 people unconverted in the city of Atlantic City, numbering 60,000. 60,000 population, they couldn't find more than 50 unconverted. There were parts you could go into New England and couldn't find unconverted people.

God moved powerfully. When the prayer revival swept America in 1857, 1858, it changed the moral climate of the nation. 30 million people in America, 2 million got right with God in that period of time.

You had businesses across New York and across major cities that would all shut down. Government buildings, things would just shut down so everyone could attend the noonday prayer meetings. This is the type of thing that happens in revival.

More than what we've seen, more than what we've known, more than what we've experienced. James Edwin Orr, who was the greatest revival historian of this last generation, God the evangelical man, he talks about how after the War of Independence in the end of the 1700s, America took a deep moral decline. There was terrible drunkenness.

Women were afraid to walk the streets at night. Surveys were done of the major campuses. Schools like Yale and Harvard, those began as Christian schools, friends.

You go to Yale today and one of the most powerful things you're confronted with is a militant homosexual movement there. You can go to Harvard Divinity School and find one of the leading professors there in the School of Divinity, a theological, ethical, moral professor. That's what he's known for, one of the top preachers in America.

You can go to Harvard today and find out that this man a couple of years ago publicly said, yes, it's true what you've heard about me, I am a practicing homosexual. These schools didn't start like that, friends. They started to train people for ministry.

Even people just going for a secular degree at Harvard in the late 1600s, early 1700s, those standards were far higher than any Christian school you'll find on a large level today in America. But things were so bad in the late 1700s that Orr records that they did surveys of the major schools and at various schools they could not find a single professing Christian on campus in America in the late 1700s. Every one in one school, all of the men signed to be members of the profanity, the foul speech club, that they would vow to use foul language.

Another had only five registered Christians, but when they would meet they would keep their meetings in code because they didn't want to be found out. In America. What changed it? Revival hit.

What tamed the Wild West? You hear about the Cain Ridge Revivals, these various Kentucky Revivals, 1800s, early 1800s. Revival hit and tamed the Wild West and swept and impacted America. And the moral

climate of our nation changed.

What I'm looking for, what I'm praying for, what I'm believing for, along with many of you, is for God to shake our nation in such a way where you don't have homosexuals in leading positions, when you don't have abortion clinics murdering our unborn, when you don't have a sleeping church that's full of the world, and pastors and sexual sinners, when we're pure and holy, when America's impacted for the glory of God. Yes, do what you can politically, do what you can socially, do what you can, join the school board, do whatever you can on that level. Don't abandon the society.

But the only way it's going to change is revival. It's when the unconverted get converted. How's that going to happen? When the church gets on fire.

We're scratching the surface, friends. That's not bad news, that's good news. I told John and Steve a couple of weeks ago, I said, listen, man, God's calling me into this thing in the early stages.

I'm not coming as a latecomer, this is just the very beginning. We're at the very beginning, here in Brownsville, at the very beginning, early stages of something you could call revival. See, we got into this terminology in America where you hold revivals.

Oh, we're holding a three-day revival. Oh, praise God, we're sponsoring a four-day hurricane in our city. And I use that illustration to say, well, you don't hold a revival.

You say, well, in our church we had revival and we shut it down. Oh, you can shut down revival. That you can do.

But you can't sponsor it over having a guest speaker, a guest musician. You can't have a revival. You know, folks from other countries, look, that's just a curiosity to them of Americans, that you hold three-day revivals and that we're having our anniversary revival.

What that generally means is some hyped-up professional speaker who's going to spend most of his time taking up an offering, some emotional stories to get you all soulishly moved, some special music, and you go home unchanged. That's American revival. We're not talking about God visiting a place.

See, when this thing spreads, the way it's got to be is what you see happening at the altars here is going to be happening on the streets. That you're going to see people walking in to play bingo and suddenly falling on their faces and crying out, God have mercy. These are typical in times of revival.

I'll give you a couple of examples from the Hebrides revival from 1949 to 1952. How many of you know where the Hebrides are? Just a few. Small islands off Scotland.

How many of you have read about the Hebrides revival? Just a few. How many of you know of the ministry of Duncan Campbell? Just a few. He was a strict Presbyterian, non-Pentecostal.

When he was asked at one stage of his ministry, had he ever spoken in tongues, he said, no. He said, but I was at a meeting once and someone said it was tongues, but I didn't understand it. I mean, that's as much as he knew about tongues at that stage of his ministry.

He was a mightily used man of God. Now, I say these things about him not being Pentecostal, so when you hear some of these stories, you realize this is God at work, man. You can't just say this was some emotional thing or this guy was just out there.

This doesn't happen to these kind of people. He gets a call. These two sisters in their 80s, one of them completely blind, the other doubled over with arthritis.

They had been praying for revival in the parish of Barvis. That's where they lived in the Hebrides, Lewis Island. They'd been praying for God to send revival.

They were convinced that God had given a covenant promise through the prophet Isaiah in the 44th chapter of his book. Ki atzok mayim al-sameh, as I pour out water on the dry land. V'nozlim al-yabashah.

That's not tongues, that's Hebrew, by the way. And streams on the dry ground. Water on the thirsty ground, streams on the dry ground.

Atzok ruhi al-lecha, I'll pour out my spirit upon you. Uvir kati al-tzeh al-tze'echah, my blessing on your descendants. They took that as a personal covenant promise.

And they began to say, you promised us rain. And I believe the principle is that God promised rain for the thirsty. God promises outpouring for the hungry.

On that level, you can make it your own promise. They were praying for revival. There had been some young men praying regularly for months, for months, for revival to come.

How long do you pray for revival? You pray for revival until. That's the only alternative. Someone was joking with me.

He said, Mike, we prayed for an hour and there's no revival. We called our church to fast one day this month and there's no revival. Well, you call your church to fast one day a week and to pray one night a week and to pray daily for revival until.

And at some point, whether it's one year, ten years, or fifty years, God will visit you if you're hungry and if you obey what he's saying to do. So these young men had been praying, gathering regularly, working regular jobs, and praying at night until the early hours of the morning, several nights a week, and they had been doing it for months. And no breakthrough.

These old women praying for revival, no breakthrough. Others praying for revival, no breakthrough. One night, one of the deacons, one of the young men, reads from Psalm 24 that those that will ascend into God's hill and see Him are those with clean hands and a pure heart.

And he says, what's the use of all of our praying? It's just humbug, he said, if my hands are not clean, if my heart is not pure. And he said, I must ask myself, am I clean and pure before God? And repentance broke that night and the Spirit fell and those men ended up falling into a trance and laying there until the early hours of the morning. Duncan Campbell says that's when the revival broke.

Well, he gets a message. These sisters were convinced that God wanted to use him. He gets a message.

Would you please come and minister for us? Such and such a date. And he sends back a note, no, I'm sorry, my schedule is full at that date, but I'll put you on the calendar for next year. So these old sisters, when you don't want to cross praying women, especially ones that know the secret place, that are shut in with God.

Some of my dear Korean friends, when they tell me, listen, they want you to come a certain date and the schedule doesn't permit it, and they said, brother, we are praying. It's like, change the calendar, it's going to happen. You can't resist the flood tide of Korean praying, if you've ever been there and seen it, man.

So this old lady, stone cold blind, gets the reply, he can't come. And she says, that is what man says. God says he's coming.

Well, this tourist agency had some travel group, ended up having a special conference and booked every hotel and every room in the area where Campbell was supposed to be speaking, and suddenly the meetings are cancelled, and he has an opening in his schedule. So he shows up. And right from the outset, now this was not, this was Scottish Highlanders.

These were people that our typical American service, would strike them as totally hyped and worked up. It was not their style at all. Very conservative people.

Campbell comes in and begins to minister, and almost immediately the spirit falls. And God begins to move that night at midnight. Listen, there were young people at a dance hall.

These young people had no interest in God. They had had it with traditional religion. They were at the dance hall at midnight, when suddenly conviction fell in the dance hall.

Nobody went over and told them there was a church meeting going on. God went over. Conviction fell in the dance hall, and the dance hall empties out and the kids come into the church at midnight.

The service continues till four in the morning. At four in the morning, Campbell receives a message, Mr. Campbell, there's a gathering of people at the police station. Unsafe people have gotten out of their beds in the middle of the night, and want to find out how to get right with God, because they're under conviction.

We have very little understanding of conviction. When we see people running up to the altar weeping, that's more than normal pattern. That's what we should expect when someone realizes they're undone.

Not our typical, do Jesus a favor, come up here and pray a quick prayer and receive the benefits package. Not our contemporary version of the gospel. That's unknown historically.

It's unknown in most of the world. Poor Jesus, He's knocking. He's knocking at the door of your heart.

Won't you come and give Him a chance? Someone just comes, kind of strolling up. They don't have a clue what's going on. The main question they're wondering is, how long is this thing going to take before I get out of here? The only thing they're uncomfortable with is standing up there.

And you tell them, OK, pray this prayer. Father God, have mercy on me. I've sinned.

What? I've sinned? I've sinned, yeah, I've sinned. I mean, that's the level of conviction. They walk out, we say, praise God, you're saved.

And then we wonder why we don't see Him again. It takes six months of follow-up to get them back in church. Why? Because they haven't been saved yet.

We're following up on dead sinners. If we get them converted, they'll be all right. There was a guy last night, one of the ones I noticed maybe in his mid-twenties, crying his eyes out at the altar.

Just broken up. At the end, after he prayed, I looked at him and I smiled at him. And he tried to smile and started weeping again.

I mean, he just saw the reality of it. And afterwards, he was all the way in the back. I made my way out to the foyer area, praying for people.

And he was there. He said, you've got to pray for me and my wife, my whole family. We need prayer.

I said, hey, what were you doing up at the altar tonight? He said, man, I got saved tonight. He was crying again. And we prayed for him.

The power of God laid him out. And it's just, hey, that's a good way to start. And the scene is here.

It's going to get heavier. It's going to get heavier. People at four in the morning, what do we do? And there's Campbell.

He says, I'll never forget the sight there under moon, starlit sky, all these people wanting to find out how to get right with God. And for six weeks, listen, six weeks they went like that, starting at seven in the evening. And then they'd go to one church, back to another church, back to another, and ended four in the morning.

And here's the awesome statistic. In those first six weeks, 75% of those converted got saved before they got into the church building. God visited.

God visited. He goes over to another area. And this one is hard.

The people are bitter against the gospel. They come in. They have their opening meeting.

Nothing happens. Nothing happens. One of the deacons says to Campbell, he says, don't fear.

He said, I've heard the chariot wheel. Now, you get a lot of flakes. They've heard and seen everything.

Some of you have the visiting flake shows up in your church for six months before they move on with all these amazing prophecies and visions and revelations. See, the good thing about a lot of charismatic Pentecostal churches is that they often have more life than some other churches. They also draw more flakes, it seems.

So, yeah, I've seen the chariot wheel. God, show me the awesome things that will happen in your ministry. We believe a lot of it.

20 years goes by and it's all the same, but we're living in this delusion that these awesome things are happening. I mean, some of us are in a spiritual dream world. We think that we are the most anointed people on the planet.

And when we stand behind the pulpit, demons run for miles, but nobody's lives are being changed. And the reason that you still have 20 people is because you have the elite troops of God's holy remnant. And you are preaching such a high standard that no one will run with you.

And that's why they're in the back door, in the front door, and out the back door. Maybe there's another problem. I don't want to get too personal, though.

But, hey, there's a real spiritual realm. When someone says, the Lord showed me, that's such a, man, it happens. And a dimension in the spirit when God speaks and something breaks and a neighborhood's affected.

And what you say in your secret prayer closet is heard in heaven by God and affects nations. I said, Mr. Campbell, don't fear. I've heard the rumbling of the chariot wheels.

They suggest, why don't we go to Brother So-and-so's house and pray. So they go to this house and these men are seeking God. Past the night of the meeting.

I mean, how many times, if you don't have a breakthrough, do you go back and have a prayer meeting? I've seen it with these dear Indian brothers we work with in India. I said to our team, okay, we didn't break through. Can we all fast today? I knew people on the team were sick.

We had about 10 people, jet lagged and tired, different things, and still catching up with us. And I said, hey, do you think we can just fast tomorrow? We just need to break through it. Okay, we'll do it.

Good. I go to the Indian brothers. I said, look, don't prepare any food for us in the daytime.

We feel we've got to fast till we break through. So we're going to fast tomorrow. And he says, good idea.

And he turns to his whole team. He says, no food till we break through. Just makes the announcement.

They all nod, okay. That's Christianity. They're serious.

You know, not ruled by their stomachs. They're ruled by the things of God. So, okay, fine.

No food till we break through. I mean, how many times after a meeting, when you don't break through, do you go and have a prayer meeting? We're not used to that. So they go and they go have a prayer meeting.

And at midnight, Campbell says to the blacksmith, he feels led, says to the blacksmith, brother, would you lead us in prayer? And the blacksmith prays for a half hour, which is a long time at a prayer meeting with other people. As Campbell says, as others have said, the first thing to go in revival is the clock. Time doesn't really have that much meaning.

He prays till 1230. At 1230, he gets seized with a holy boldness. And he said, God, he said, don't you know that you're honor is at stake? You have given us promises and you're not keeping them.

You promised to pour out water on the thirsty land and you're not doing it. And then he paused and he said, I challenge you to keep your covenant commitments. And just then the granite house shook like a leaf.

I put down a note in one book. I wonder if some of our modern spirit stifiers would have been there to rebuke the house for being too easily shaken, too easily moved. I call them our modern SWAT teams, spiritual watchdogs and self-appointed truth sentries.

I may have put in an extra thing that doesn't fit SWAT, but it fit when I came up with it initially. Oh, we got people that'll have a problem with every little spiritual move, especially if it doesn't start with them. Some of us are like that.

Come on, let's be honest. The house shakes. Campbell immediately thinks of Acts 4:31 when they prayed the place was shaken.

People say, why do people shake? Well, if a house could shake, how much more person when the spirit falls? Some people thought it was an earthquake. Campbell knew it was. Those men were on their faces.

God had come. Past two in the morning, they got up to go home. Now, here's the wild thing.

They had a small turnout at the church meeting that night and people in the area were bitter towards the gospel. Listen, they go out. Past two in the morning and in every home, the lights are on and people have gotten out of bed to seek God.

People are getting out of their doors, carrying chairs on their back saying, is there room in the church for me? Men laying on the ground, crying out for mercy. It was not an uncommon scene in the Welsh revival as people would go into a certain area. There's a man.

He's been knocked off his horse. He's laying there on the ground, waiting for someone to lead him to God and to pray with him. You know it's real when you hear the reports about the spirit falling in school rooms.

One of the most famous reports from the 1859 revival in Ireland. As God was moving, there's awesome scenes from that revival. Some of the most extraordinary stuff I've ever read.

Outpourings taking place there. There's one boy just not feeling well. He's not at rest with his own soul.

Someone's walking him to go back home. Maybe he's sick. As this older boy is walking the younger boy home, he talks to him about Jesus and leads him to the Lord.

And the younger boy now turns around and goes back to the school. They've got the schoolroom with the boys downstairs and the girls upstairs. Coleraine, Ireland, 1859.

And the boy now begins to share what happened in his life and the joy he has because he found Jesus. Conviction falls on the other boys and they fall on their knees and begin to weep and wail and get right with God. Now nobody comes to announce upstairs to the girls' class what's happening, but the same thing happens there.

Next thing, the weeping and the wailing hits there. Parents hear this cry. Word begins to get out.

They wonder what's going on. They begin to arrive. As they get to the threshold of the door, the same thing falls on them, the conviction.

They begin to weep and cry out. And you've got these scenes happening across the country. That's a picture of revival.

One last Hebrides story. And I often tell these because so few people know about them, but they're relatively recent. And they didn't happen in the jungles of Africa.

Campbell's preaching at a convention, the Bangor Convention. Somewhere in the UK. And the Lord speaks to him, Go to Berneray.

Berneray was a small island in the Hebrides he had never been to. Go to Berneray. The Lord, I can't go to Berneray.

I'm scheduled to be speaking at the convention here. I'm the final speaker. Go to Berneray.

Three times. So he tells the convention and he says, The Lord's impressed me. I've got to go to Berneray.

He said, You can. I've got you down as the final speaker at the convention. He says, He shares with the other leaders.

They're convinced it's God. They send them off. The next day, he gets a plane, flies into Glasgow in Scotland, then gets off the plane in Scotland, and flies over to Stornoway in the Hebrides, then drives across the island of Stornoway.

He's got his luggage. He doesn't know anybody there. He's just going in obedience to God.

At the end of driving across Stornoway, then he gets in a little ferry, and he's brought over by ferry over to the island. Doesn't know anybody. Doesn't know why he's there.

God's just said, Go. He's exhausted at this point. He sees a young man working in the field.

He says, Excuse me. Are there any churches here? He says, No, sir. They're closed.

He said, Are there any elders? He said, Yes. One of them lives right up that hill there. And he said, Could you tell him that Campbell is here? And if he says, Which Campbell? Tell him the Campbell from Lewis Island.

Thinking maybe he had heard about him. So the young man goes up and comes back. He says, Yes, that's Elder Hector MacKinnon.

He says, You are expected. He says, You will be staying at his brother's house, and the first meeting is at nine o'clock tonight. What had happened was that this man, Hector MacKinnon, who was a postmaster, was deeply burdened for the state of the church on his island because the churches were closed and young people weren't interested in God.

And he took a day off from work. He took a day off from work. Remember when ministry wasn't work? Remember when you didn't talk in terms of I'm going to work? Some of you need to take some time off from work and meet with God.

He took a day off from his secular job and sought the Lord. And he became convinced that God wanted to send Duncan Campbell. So he was praying.

His wife three times went into the barn to check on him as he was praying to see what was going on. And three times she heard him say, God, I don't know where he is, but you know where he is, so send him. And that day was the day that God spoke to Campbell.

Go, to Burnery. And he became convinced that Campbell was coming in a few days and publicly announced we're having a nine o'clock meeting with Duncan Campbell. That's what you call Holy Ghost communication.

You know, Ravenhill always used to say you don't have to advertise a fire. Wesley was asked, how do you draw the crowds? He said, I set myself on fire and the people come to watch me burn. All of our advertising and hyping it up and taking out \$40,000 ads in big magazines to announce our revival

convention is because we don't have revival.

You know, if you came up with a cancer pill that cost \$1,000 for one pill, but that pill would totally and forever cure cancer, do you think you'd have to mount a big advertising campaign? To sell it? You think you'd have to reduce the price? You'd have only one problem, how to manufacture it quickly enough. Did Jesus ever have a problem drawing crowds? Because he had the goods. That's why he could say, unless you hate father, mother, your own life, you can't follow me.

Unless you forsake everything you have, you can't be my disciple. Why could he say it? Because everybody wanted to get near him. Everybody wanted a touch.

Everybody wanted to see his healing power and his glory. He had to say, hey, not so simple. You really want to be my disciple? You've got to leave everything.

You can't serve two masters. He can say that. If we said it now, people would say, okay, goodbye.

Because the power isn't there. The glory isn't there. The conviction isn't there.

The healing might isn't there. Jesus isn't being exalted. If he was, and some of you are beginning to see it in different ways, man, people come flocking.

Your problem is how to handle all the people. So they have their first meeting, nine o'clock. There are only about 400 people, maybe, that live on the island.

About 80 show up, good crowd. But nothing happens. A completely ordinary meeting.

Now, how would you feel? You have the supernatural leading, this, this, this, this. Well, we'd say, hey, I know it was God. It's going to break.

We might have our questions. Have you ever known that you knew, that you knew that this was God? It was confirmed a thousand times over, you are absolutely sure, and then the thing didn't go right, and instantly you wonder, was this God or not? Campbell has his doubts. Did God even call me here? He's a little discouraged.

I mean, you'd think it's all going to happen. You'd think it's all going to break. You know? And the elder says, don't worry, Mr. Campbell.

God is hovering near, and he's about to break through at any moment. Now, this church was also on the top of a hill, and the people had all left the building, and they're walking down the hill to go home, and the elder and Duncan Campbell are walking out. Suddenly, the elder says, stand, Mr. Campbell, and he takes his hat off.

He said, see what has happened. God has come. And as these people were leaving, conviction began to fall on them, and they're right in the, you know, the grass, and right there, they fell down on their knees and on their faces and began to weep and wail and get right with God.

I mean, nothing happened in the meeting. They're all leaving, and suddenly God came. By the end of that night, Campbell says, there was not a family on the island that was not affected.

I think we ought to dream dreams of what America could look like if revival hit. See, we've fallen so far, and we don't realize it. It struck me as I was praying this morning that teenagers in godly Christian homes dress in ways that would cause our unsaved grandparents to blush.

Our standards have fallen so far, and we have been used to it. This is what we've seen. This is what we've known.

If you haven't read the Word and said, where is that today? If you haven't read about revival history and said, where is that today? If you haven't gone around the world and seen what God's doing in different parts of the world and said, where is that here? You can just think, this is it. This is church. Having church.

We go to church. Some time ago, the Lord gave me this poem, and I'm going to read it to you and then begin to talk about the state of your own lives, our own lives, where we stand before God. How many of you in school had to read Coleridge's poem, The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner? Some of you.

Well, I thought everybody had to read that. You go to England and ask about who knows where the Hebrides are, of course they know. It's like being in the States and saying, who knows where New Jersey is? And then I say, how many of you know Coleridge's poem? Well, they can quote it.

Just their education is a little different. But it was a famous poem, The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner. And some time ago, as God was stirring my heart that he was about to pour out his spirit and bring revival to America, that we were on the verge of something radical.

Fall of 1994, I think this started to build in me, and then over a period of months I just filled it out. But I want to read this to you. It's called The Rhyme of the Modern Parishioner.

And if the shoe fits, you wear it. If the Lord has anything in this for you, you take it. And then we're going to begin to look at signs of a backslidden heart.

The only thing that resembles Coleridge's poem is one or two lines where I had some fun with it, and the meter. Otherwise, forgive me. It happened in the vestibule at ten one Sunday morning.

A haggard looking churchgoer sat plaintive and forlorn. Then suddenly he rose and found a hungry looking Christian. He took his hand, took him aside, and asked him a straight question.

You've read the Word. You know the book. The promises are clear.

But have you seen the living God? Have you found Him here? Have you experienced holy fire, the Spirit in His power? A mighty wave, a rushing wind, a flame that does devour? Is there something more you're seeking so high, so wide, so deep? Do you find yourself frustrated? Is church putting you to sleep? Then listen well. Your heart is right. My tale I will tell.

This story is your story too and it's your tale as well. For thirty years I've been in church. Seemed like a good show.

But now I've got to meet with God. Do you know where to go? I'm trapped in mundane worship times. The praises have grown cold.

The preaching's dry and dusty. The teachings stale like mold. Each service feels like a rerun.

The songs all sound the same. The prophecies are so hollow, not worthy of the name. Words, more words, they're everywhere.

But oh, there is a stink. Words, more words, they're everywhere, but none to make us think. We lack the heavenly presence.

It's clear we're in a rut. I'm desperate for revival. It burns within my gut.

I'm lovesick for my Jesus. So hungry for my Lord. Just longing for my Savior.

God knows that I'm so bored. Is there someone who can help me? Who's touched the real thing? A man who's heard from heaven with a word from God to bring? Are there prophets burning with fire? Servants who are ablaze? Appointed and overflowing. Appointed for these days.

Do they carry the Spirit's burden and breathe the Lord God's breath? Are they set apart and holy? Obedient to death. I hear the words of the Master. Come follow me, he said.

If some Christians go their own way, I'll go with him instead. Oh, please don't do as I have done and waste so many years. Don't wait and wait for endless months.

Move on. Outgrow your fears. Forget the twelve-step programs a seminar won't do.

You need a touch from heaven to fill you through and through. There must be change in your life, a work of God that's real. Don't fool yourself with worn clichés.

Don't let the devil steal. Don't miss out on God's presence or let these hours pass. Don't stop your soul from hungering.

Get out of the morass. Dear friend, you are not crazy. Dear saint, you are not mad.

There really is a problem. It's true, you have been had. There is more.

There is more, believe it. There is that place in God. There are holy visitations, new paths that must be trod.

Will you get up like old pilgrim and seek that better way? Will you go forth on that journey no matter what men say? Will you go out now and meet him and leave the crowd behind, forsaking dead traditions? If Jesus you will find. It's not in another meeting, a nicely packaged hour, another harmless service devoid of heaven's power. It's not in another teaching, three points to fill your head.

The word is always vibrant, but this stuff is so dead. We need God to send his spirit to fully take control, to transform every member, to come and make them whole. Enough with man's religion, enough with earthly plans, enough with our new programs produced by fleshly hands.

Just then in strode the pastor his calling to fulfill, just doing his weekly duty. Then he became frozen still, for astir was that parishioner. He grasped the preacher's clothes and grasped the preacher's soul as well, and in that grasp he froze.

Oh pastor, enter the prayer room and shut yourself inside. Be emptied of competition and crucify your pride. Pray for holy visitations caught up alone with him, consumed with heavenly vision.

That's where you must begin. You won't find him in a textbook buried on page 22. He is the living God who acts.

He wants to move in you. It's not only the apostles he'll bless and send and use. He will saturate your own soul if you will not refuse.

So arise, get up, pursue him. Jesus, your true best friend. He is worthy of devotion.

He's faithful to the end. Why should you starve on crusty bread and crawl along the ground? Your savior is your source of life. Seek him, let joy abound.

Renew your life, refresh your heart, press in, take hold, pray through. Put first things first, make God your goal. What else have you to do? Your Bible schooling stole your zeal.

Church life has drained you dry. You used to have such childlike faith. Now budgets have your eye.

You used to be so passionate, so innocent and free. Now you've become professional. You'll preach for a good fee.

Oh, set your sights on higher goals and not on dollar bills. Live in the light of judgment day. Ambition always kills.

Let Jesus be your daily guide. Put him where he belongs. And soon his presence will arrive.

His praise will fill your songs. Simplicity will be your style, devotion your new goal. Communion will become your aim.

God's life will flood your soul. Oh, take your eyes off numbers. Church growth can be a trap.

Go out and make disciples. Go out and bridge the gap. Pour your life out for broken lives.

Let God your heart break too. Take up your cross, deny yourself, just live his will to do. Wake up, be brave, be honest.

Today, oh, hear his voice. Be ruthless with your schedule. Seek God.

Make that your choice. You won't find him in your planner. No committee has the key.

You'll find him when your soul cries out, there must be more for me. There must be more than building funds and sessions past midnight and endless talks with leadership disputing who is right. Somehow I know I've been misled.

The model doesn't work. I'm not called as an executive nor should I be a clerk. I'm called to be a man of God, and with that cry new life will rise.

Your heart will be revived. Heaven's light will flood your soul. You will not be denied.

The parishioner then turned his gaze away from flesh and blood. He looked to him who sends the showers, to him who sends the flood. Today, oh, Lord, do hear our voice and pour your spirit out.

Saturate the thirsty ground. End the spiritual drought. Revive us with your presence.

Renew us from above. Touch the flock called by your name. Come fill us with your love.

Do greater works in our day than that which you have done. Bring the fullness of your reigns and glorify your Son. That old church goer spoke no more.

Another voice was heard, yet not the voice of flesh and blood. It was our Father's Word. And if you listen closely beyond this little rhyme, you'll hear clearly, my children, it is time.

It says in Zechariah 10, verse 1, to ask the Lord for rain in the time of rain. Ask the Lord for rain in the time of rain. It says in Isaiah 55, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he's near. It says in Hosea 10, 12, that we are to break up our foul ground. It's time to seek the Lord until he comes and rains righteousness upon you.

Jesus says to the city of Jerusalem, he weeps because you did not recognize Friends, this is a divinely appointed hour. I don't mean what's happening here in Brownsville. I mean what is happening around the country and around the world.

It is the hour. It's the day that we have been longing for. The thing that overwhelmed me in my first trip here was not seeing sinners flock to the altar, not seeing people under conviction.

Maybe different ones have seen, different among us have seen different levels of that through the years. It wasn't the freedom of worship. I've traveled along those lines at different times in America and other parts of the world.

In my lifetime, I've seen those different things on different levels. So we've traveled and seen some of the awesome works of God around the world. It takes your breath away sometimes, but you know what got me more than any of this? Of course, this is the first thing in America I've ever seen sustained like this and deepening and deepening and deepening and deepening.

That's what excites me also. But the thing that blew me away, the thing that just reduced me to tears and sobbing, sobbing uncontrollably, was just when we'd sing, the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon you. And we'd get to that refrain that says, this is the year, this is the hour.

I mean, I'd just lose it. I'd just lose it. I called my wife after the first meeting and just broke down crying, not so much because of what I saw, but that sense, this is the hour.

Years ago, I visited a big church in the Orlando area. I was so blessed by what the brother from Orlando said when I spotted you here. The prince over Orlando, the spiritual prince over Orlando had been so pierced and destroyed through their churches praying.

Now, they're a good group of people. He's a good man. But they were talking about how they had so damaged the spiritual powers over Orlando and all this.

I had been there 10 years ago, and then it was 10 years later, it was the late 80s. I said, man, this city's gone way down since I was here. Doesn't look like the prince over Orlando knows that he's been pierced and punctured.

When I heard the vision about the city, I didn't want to live it up type thing changing. I said, that's a vision of revival. That's what God wants to do across the nation, where our public schools are more godly than

the Christian schools.

When 12-year-olds, instead of shooting each other, are fasting and praying and having a vision for going on the mission field. It's time, friends. It's time.

And we've got to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves. Again, there's no condemnation here. It's a day for liberty.

It's a day for release, friends. I want you to go to the book of Revelation with me in the third chapter. As Steve was preaching last night, pouring his heart out to leaders, I've never heard him preach so strongly to the church in the different meetings I've been.

It's only maybe 13, 14 so far. But I haven't heard him preach with that intensity to the church and to leaders as he did last night with those words of warning. And deep down, I felt there are people sitting here and you're not going to go with God.

You're going to cave in to the pressure. When the big tither is offended because you flow with the spirit, you're going to just tone it down a little bit. And I don't mean that we put a stumbling block before people.

Paul was clear on that. We put no stumbling block before anyone. The goal is not to exalt the weird and the wild and to offend people.

Maybe we've been so conservative and so stiff for so long that we're enjoying our liberty a little too much to the expense of others that don't understand. You don't want to exalt things but a sincere saint that's struggling, you help them along. And if they have a problem with God, then you leave them to have a problem with God.

If they're offended, fine, let them be offended. But we don't want to intentionally drive people out. But some, when the pressure builds, when God begins to point and say, I want this out of your life.

And this is what obedience is going to require. I felt deeply that some are not going to go on with God. That God will start something and he'll stop it.

I mean, it's easy in the euphoria of hearing the testimonies and seeing the environment here. It's easy to go back and think we just snap our fingers and it happens wherever we go. There's a battle, friends.

There's a battle. Revelation 3. What was the great tragedy of the church of Sardis? Verse 1, to the angel of the church in Sardis, write these are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know your deeds. Here's the tragedy.

Listen carefully. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. He's talking to believers here.

He's talking to believers. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up.

Look at the word to the church of Laodicea. Revelation 3.14. People say, well, the final age is the Laodicean age. Number one, there's no clear teaching in scripture that these are progressive church ages.

You may make nice sermons out of it, but there's no specific teaching on it. This is the seventh church age, and that was Laodicea. Now we look back 1,000 years later, we put them in another slot, so you've got to keep changing that.

As I always tell people, if you keep a prophetic calendar, just do it in pencil. The other thing, the description of Laodicea does not fit the bulk of the church around the world today. The bulk of the church around the world is a suffering church, an oppressed church, a church that is not rich in material goods, that is beaten down.

It's a church that's suffering all types of atrocities, hundreds of thousands of martyrs. One of the few true tragedies on the earth today and receives no international outcry. Laodicea, you say, I'm rich, increased in goods, I'm in need of nothing.

That fits a lot of the North American and European church, but it doesn't fit most of the church around the world, frankly. I say, yeah, the shoe fits. Apply the Laodicean letter but it's not universal for all the church around the world.

But look, here's the great tragedy. Verse 15, I know your deeds, that you're neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other.

So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. Now look at what it says. You say, I'm rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing, I'm naked, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

It's worse not to know it. Sardis, you have a reputation of being alive and yet you're dead. Some of us say, hey look, we've got faithful attendance, we've got a lovely building, we're respected in our community, we've got good tithers, we have a missions budget, we have a reputation for being alive.

Jesus is talking to someone who looks like they have it all. They could have been the fastest because they were poor and blind. I don't know if you have this same phenomenon in the state where you live because it varies from climate to climate, but I found this to be fairly universal even in different countries that I have run into people who've experienced the exact same phenomenon.

In the early 1980s, I bought some new suits because I was going to have new responsibilities, teaching and working in a Bible college and ministering, etc. and I just needed to get a few extra suits and I got some suits and wore them for some years and hung them up in my closet and it's an extraordinary thing and maybe you found the same phenomenon to happen. Those suits have all shrunk dramatically.

It's hanging in my closet. Do you find that true in your states or in different countries? It seems almost universal. They've shrunk dramatically.

I mean there's no way that I've gained a little maybe through the years but not those things. I don't know what happened to them. We have a scale that doesn't work right.

That is a simple point. You don't realize where you're at until you can really look in the mirror. You say, hey man, I'm in pretty good shape.

Yeah, I'm in real good shape. Well, time, how long it takes you to run the mile now or walk the mile or crawl the mile compared to what it used to. We need some absolutes.

It's easy to think we're something. I mean look, I'm big, I'm slow on a basketball court but I'm big. I can play basketball decently.

It depends on who I'm playing with. I play with some of my other friends and man, I do pretty well. Then I go and play with these guys in my area.

I stand out. You know, I stand out because of my lack of skill. I stand out because of my light skin.

And I play and man, I don't even dribble. I mean I just pass and I rebound a little bit. I almost always bust up a finger or something like that.

My wife keeps trying to get me to retire. I try and hide it if I come in with this awfully swollen finger and a limp. How's everything? Oh, it's great.

It's just great. Man, I think I'm doing great until I play with some guys that can really play. And then I jump as high as I can and a five foot two guy blocks my shot, you know? You understand what I'm saying? I mean there's the generalization white man can't jump.

I don't know but this white man can't jump. That much I know. But I'm saying that you've got to compare yourself rightly to get a right gauge.

You may be the hottest thing in your area because everybody is cemetery level and you're a death bed level. Am I wrong? I mean we compare ourselves to ourselves. Now that must have been inspired because I've never said that before.

That's one of the Pentecostal proofs of the anointing. But I want us to be honest. I want us to really be honest and look at our life.

I want to give you some absolute things to look at to see if you were backsliding or if you have backslidden in certain areas of your life. Now look, I could say we need to pray more and we'd all say yeah, we need to pray more. We need to witness more.

Yeah, we need to witness more. We need to read the word more. Yeah, we need to.

I mean we all could affirm that. I'm not just talking about holding up a standard. You know, we look at the prayer life of John praying high and praying around the clock and not sleeping and separating himself for 30 days and fasting and prayer.

You look at that and say I'm a worm. And then we look at the faith life of Smith Wigglesworth going into a funeral parlor and pulling someone out of the casket and throwing them against the wall and saying walk until they walk. We look at that and we say man, I'm a worm.

And then you look at the sacrifice of like John and Charles Wesley. Leonard Ravenhill once said to me the problem with the Wesley brothers is they were more consecrated and devoted before they were saved than I am now. I mean these guys went for it.

You look at that and say man, I'm worthless. I once taught a course we have on audio cassette called Giants of the Faith where each week I looked at a different man or woman of God whose life challenged us. I looked at one or two that blew it to learn from their example.

I looked at some of the missionaries. I looked at some of the men and women of faith, prayer warriors, and so on. And man, I had to pull myself up by my spiritual bootstraps every week.

It was devastating to teach on these people. Devastating and inspiring. But to teach on a different one every week to absorb their life even more deeply to review certain key facts and to teach on it.

Man, each of them stood out in a different area and you're comparing yourself to each different one each different week you're saying it's hopeless. But then that faith would come up, that inspiration. Why not? Why not? Why not me? I'm not talking about setting an impossible goal.

Well, how many dead have you raised in the last six weeks? None? You know, I'm not talking about that. When's the last time you fasted 40 days? You haven't fasted 40 days this last week? What's the matter with you? I'm not just trying to work us up where we say, oh, woe is me. I want us to be ruthlessly honest.

You know, one brother said yesterday about he spends an hour every service. The last pastor that testified, repenting. He said, man, that's a sign of the moving of God.

That's wonderful. That's Jesus. So, I want us to look at about a half dozen danger signs.

Now, at this point, we can take a five-minute break. I don't believe that it will hurt the spiritual atmosphere. We can take a five-minute break and resume or we can just change the tapes, keep teaching, and those that need to use the restroom can do so.

How many would like to take a break? How many would like to just keep going? All right, well, we'll have compassion and we will take a quick break. We'll be back in here. Hang on, don't move yet.

Father, anything that you've spoken already that we need to hold on to, don't let us lose. Those that need to sit here and stay or meet with you or talk to you or write some things down, better do it. Those that need to just get out for a few minutes, Lord, may this be a time of even physical renewal in these few minutes.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14231.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-l-brown/are-you-backsliding-part-1/>

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