

# (Revival) Revival Preaching and Repentance - Part 2

by Michael L. Brown

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*Michael L. Brown emphasizes the critical role of repentance in revival preaching and its necessity for preparing the way for God's presence.*

**Duration:** 24:44

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:3-5, Jeremiah 1:5, Malachi 3:1-2, Matthew 3:3

**Topics:** "Revival Preaching", "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes the powerful preaching of Charles Finney, a renowned evangelist. Finney's preaching was described as logic on fire, piercing through his listeners like cannonballs through a basket of eggs. His words carried the anointing of the Holy Spirit, breaking through hardened hearts and bringing conviction and repentance. The central theme of Finney's message was always repentance, which often brought opposition and trouble. The preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching with divine empowerment, a broken heart, and a personal experience of the message before delivering it to others.

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## Transcript

...earlier on here, and he calls on the Jewish people in the regions of Judea to come and repent. And what does it say in verse 5 of Matthew 3? People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. They came from everywhere because he was broken, because he had repented, because God had put him through the mill.

Just think, just think of knowing that your whole mission in life is to announce the coming of your younger cousin, and then as soon as everybody follows him, you're a done. You tell me there's not some flesh that has to die in the process of that? Whatever else it took for John to just have no fear of man and confronts it head on and realize it might cost him his life. God purged him, prepared him supernaturally all those years.

So John gave what he had, and when he gave it, he had mass results. Again, as Wigglesworth said, there's a sense where there's a price to pay for every gift from God. Where if you are not motivated by compassion to heal the sick, you will never get to the point of perseverance to see him really break through.

See, the real things, the crucial things, the things of great eternal consequence don't just drop off trees and hit you on the head. No, glory to God, I just got this. I just got that.

The real, weighty, life-changing things have to be poured into lives that have been prepared and purged and shaken so that the flesh isn't glorying and raising its head anymore. So revival preaching must be experiential. You say, well, what does revival preaching sound like, or what are some examples, or how did it affect the hearers? Well, there was a 15th century Italian priest who was kind of a pre-reformer.

In other words, he was involved in Reformation a little bit before the Reformation, called Savonarola. Listen to a description of his preaching. The mere sound of Savonarola's voice, I'm reading from Winky Pratt in page 26.

The mere sound of Savonarola's voice was as a clap of doom. A cold shiver ran through the marrow of his bones. The hairs of his head stood on end as he listened.

Another tells how his sermons caused such terror and alarm, such sobbing and tears, that people passed through the streets without speaking, more dead than alive, as he prophesied coming judgment on the church and the country. I mean, you just think of how many unsaved people put on television and radio and listened to our so-called evangelists preach. Some of them are genuine evangelists, some are just names that they were given, okay? Evangelists, so-and-so, just a title that you get in churches.

But just think of how many people listen to those things. I know a woman very well, related to someone very close to me. And she, for years, would pray, go gambling in Atlantic City, and then take a tithe of her earnings and send them to one of the leading televangelists of our day.

And one who seemed to have the strongest message of repentance, too. Something doesn't compute there. Something's funny there.

Listen to this description of Finney. And I'm going to give you a couple of descriptions of what people felt like when Finney preached. In the back of a book about Finney, it says, When he opened his mouth, he was aiming a gun.

When he spoke, bombardment began. And listen to some eyewitness accounts and some people who were exposed to his ministry and how they described it. Just try and picture this, all right? Remember, Finney's about 6'2", maybe 175 pounds, sharp eye, shrill voice.

One said of Finney that his words were logic on fire, crashing through his listeners like cannonballs through a basket of eggs. Another description. Finney is talking about one time as he was preaching.

There'd been much prayer that prepared the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. He said, For more than an hour, and perhaps for an hour and a half, the Word of God came through me to them in a manner that I could see was carrying all before it. It was a fire and a hammer breaking the rock, and as the sword that was piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

Listen to what Finney's wife said. She said, Oh, my dear, though I know you love me, yet you are terrifying when the power of God comes upon you. You stand there like a mighty angel shouting the gospel and wielding the flashing sword of judgment.

Revival preaching is God's Word on fire, piercing hearts, shaking things up, setting things right, opening eyes, demolishing excuses, and endowed with such an anointing that it not only brings the conviction, but it brings into people's hearts the power to repent and turn and get right with God. Now, the central theme of the message is always going to be repentance. And if there's any message that's going to get you in trouble, if you want an unpopular ministry, then get a word from heaven called repent and bring it and see what happens.

Again, assuming you've met those first four conditions, that there's a divine empowering, your message is motivated by all these things we mentioned coming out of a broken heart, and you've experienced the reality of it. Listen, so you understand something. I can preach a message with force because it gets nailed on me first.

I carry the thing around on the inside burning and exploding. It's flattened before God. By the time I bring it to you, I'm just telling you what's been burning in me for days or weeks or sometimes months.

And then when I'm done preaching God says, well, you're going to preach that and not step up a little higher the way you live? You're going to preach that and not move even further? I figure, well, I just incorporate it into my life. He says, well, if you challenge them, you've got to go further. I'm not claiming to have all these things working in my life.

All I'm saying is, if you're getting it from me now, it's because I've gotten it because it's burning in me because it's part of me. I've talked for years about the difference between truth regurgitated and truth digested. Most of our truth that we hear in pulpits and that comes forth in prophetic words and services is regurgitated truth.

The moment you get it, you just shoot it right back out. You hear a teaching and now you regurgitate it. You read something in a book, now you get up and share it with others.

You can't do that. I don't want to read a book about how to move in the gifts of the Spirit and then share that with my group. But once you've learned how to do it and experienced it and that truth has been digested and it's become part of you and now been incorporated into who you are, now you can share it.

Until then, you've got no business sharing it. Unless you're saying, this is what other people say, let me tell you what they say, here's the teaching. But revival preaching's got to be truth digested and burned deeply into the heart.

So what about this word repent? Well, who would want to preach the message repentance if you know that what it means is it's going to come to you first and you're going to get purged and shaken to a deeper dimension than you thought you needed to be. But yet the message of repentance is central, absolutely central to the whole heart of revival preaching. Let me give you some reasons why and give you some perspective on principles of repentance and revival.

Again, understand that the basic concept is a Hebraic concept. The meaning of shuv is to turn, turn back. It can mean turn away from your sin.

When God would say to the people, shuvah adai, turn to Me, He meant turn away from your sins and turn back to Me. And then He would say, I will turn to you. What did He mean? I will turn away from my anger and I will turn back to you in mercy.

The simple way to say it is when man repents, God relents. When man repents, God relents. That's the heart of the message.

But the preaching of repentance prepares the way of the Lord. That's why it's essential in revival to have the message of repentance. The preaching of repentance prepares the way of the Lord.

Isaiah 40 is what's quoted here in Matthew 3 and the other Gospels in terms of John's ministry. A voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him. It's joined together also with Malachi, the third chapter.

We're going to look at both of those passages in a moment. So Mark's Gospel starts off in verse 2. It's written in Isaiah the prophet. And now he quotes Malachi first.

I will send My messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. And then Isaiah. A voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.

What does the passage say in Isaiah? That every valley is going to be lifted up. That the mountains are going to be flattened. That the rough places are going to be made smooth.

And there's going to be a way for the Lord to walk through. What does it say in Malachi? That the Lord will come suddenly to His temple. The messenger of the covenant whom they're seeking.

And He's going to come and sit like a refining fire and purify the sons of Levi. So that they can offer an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. He's going to come and purge and purify.

And sit there with that fire. God gave me a message for a church some years ago. Back in 85.

About a shaking, a purging that was coming there. And He basically made plain that Malachi 3 was going to be in operation that night. The purging, shaking word.

Are you ready for revival? Is Jesus welcome in your church? And there was a shaking that was prophesied. A shaking that was going to take place. A purging that was going to come.

And then if the people would go with God. And following on the heels of that would be revival. Some months later when I heard about all the people that had left.

So quickly. When I heard about sin being exposed to the point of in leadership. One man's wife having an affair with another woman.

Then I understood the reality of that message. And the shaking has never stopped since then. So the preaching of repentance prepares the way of the Lord.

How so? Well, it humbles the proud. It humbles the proud. Just picture if God is going to walk right through the center aisle.

And you've got things, obstacles standing in the way. We've got to clear it out. He's got to come through this way.

What if you've got deep holes? We've got to fill them up. What if you've got all types of little obstacles? What if it's all rough and needs to be smooth? We've got to make the way ready. That's what repentance does.

And if you really want God, you have to have repentance. It's that simple. If you really want God, you have to have repentance.

And in the words of Frank Bartleman, every revival is determined by the depth of repentance to which it reaches. Let me just give you two exact quotes from Frank Bartleman. The depth of any revival will be determined exactly by the spirit of repentance that it obtained.

In fact, this is the key. Emphasis. The key to every true revival born of God.

And then he says it again. The depth of revival will be determined exactly by the depth of the spirit of repentance. And this will hold true for all people at all times.

If you want God, you've got to prepare the way. Repentance prepares the way. It humbles the proud.

It reveals their sin. It cuts down their haughtiness and gets them on their knees. And now they're in a position where they can receive from God.

Repentance prepares the way for the Lord by exposing man-made religion. You come in with that word of repentance into religious circles and everything goes crazy. Why? Because man-made religion is idolatry.

What is idolatry? Idolatry is when you make anything and then worship it. Anything that man makes that he turns around and worships is an idol. And most religious systems are idols.

They're made by man. Because of that, when the word of repentance comes in, turn back to God. Let God be God.

Let Him be the Lord of all. Everything starts to go crazy. That's the most hated word in the religious world.

Repent. Turn back. Get right with God.

So it humbles the proud. It exposes man-made religion. It removes the presence of willful or chronic sin.

How is God going to come and dwell in the midst of a sinful people? Well, what's going to clear it out? Repent. Get rid of it. Turn.

Enough is enough. What would happen? What would happen if next week God said, I am coming in full power to your service. Make all things ready.

Don't you think people would just go crazy that whole week, set accounts right, go ask forgiveness one of another, clear things out of their house that didn't belong, fast, you know, and clear their system out of junk that shouldn't be here, and just do everything they had to do. All of a sudden they'd be running around like chickens with their heads cut off because they said, oh no, if God's coming, I'm in deep trouble. Well, revival is preparing the way for His coming.

And it's got to expose all the sin and the junk. It also prepares the way by exalting the humble, brokenhearted ones. Every valley has to be lifted up.

When the word of repentance comes, those who just want God, they don't really care about what others say. They don't really care about the religious system. They don't really care about how it looks on the outside.

They just want God. They just want God. And now God can lift up those that are truly servants and truly desires of His righteousness.

The question that you have to ask yourself is how deep will you let revival go? You've got to understand, once you hear the message of repentance once or twice, you think you're done with it. And when next week someone prophesies it, it comes out again, you say, oh, come on, man, we repented last week. You may think I'm joking, but I'm telling you.

When God says, you have to repent this week because the sin from last week is still there, or you may have repented, but the 30 people next to you still haven't, and they need to hear it again, it gets old. You don't want to hear it. It sounds like a downer kind of message.

But until that willful sin is broken, until that religious pride is humble, until the way is made clear, the message is going to come again, and you have to say, how badly do I want it? How much am I willing to let God search me and scrutinize me and flatten me? If it's true, and I'm sure it is, that the depth of revival is determined by the depth of the spirit of repentance it obtains, then that's the question. How deep are you willing to let that knife cut? I remember at a service, just reminiscing with a friend about this, he brought a message at this church that was in the midst of a real outpouring of the Spirit. He brought a prophetic word one Sunday morning, and somebody got so mad he was ready to punch him in the face, and finally they calmed the guy down.

And I said to this fellow, when I saw him a few weeks ago, I said, what was it that you said? I really forgot. I remember the instance. Yeah, that's right, that's right.

I was glad it was you that day and not me. I mean, we were kind of joking. I said, but what was it you said? He said, well, we had a guest speaker that day, and everyone was worshiping and praising the Lord and singing.

He said, and God just showed me that they were all doing it to put on a show for the guest speaker. And God had this brother bring forth the word that the Lord was not pleased with our worship. Tell us you are pleased.

We don't want to hear that you're not pleased. Tell us nice things, prophesize smooth things. That's what they always told the prophets.

Tell us we can go to war and we're going to win, not we're going to go to war and lose. Jeremiah, tell us that we're going to crush the Babylonians, not that they're going to crush us. Nobody likes to hear it.

I said to some brothers recently, I said, look, if I told you what God said, then don't get mad at me. You know, why did you have to burst our bubble? Why did you have to tell us the truth? Well, do you want to live or you want to die? Do you want to go to heaven or you want to go to hell? Do you want to see the power of God or do you want to see works of man? The message is never popular, but the fact is, without it, God will never come. But we can't repent of this.

The people will be upset with us. Well, are you going to fear God or are you going to fear man? Now, there's a wonderful quote, just a wonderful, wonderful quote that I often think about from Joseph Parker. And it's such a wonderful quote that it's written on the piece of paper that I left at home.

But what he says is this. In essence, and you've heard it sung in a song by Keith Green, Leonard Ravenhill popularized the quote by having it in his book, Why Revival Tarries. What he said was real simple.

He said, the man whose little messages repent sets himself against this age. And he will be mercilessly battered by the ones whose moral climate he's challenging. And then the famous words, you'd better pledge your head to heaven before you preach that message.

And you can preach on anything. Listen, I've been involved in controversy. But God has shown me real clearly that the heart reason for the controversy was the message of repentance, not the other stuff.

I mean, look, you get up and preach and you can say God loves you. God's pleased with you. God's happy with you.

He's good. And He's so happy with you, He's just going to give you every blessing you could ask for. And to confirm it, to confirm it, there's going to be a lightning bolt right now and more rain outside than we've ever had in the last 10 years.

And, you know, 30 miles away you hear a little thunder and maybe a flash of lightning and it starts to rain. Well, nobody would kick that guy out of the church. Nobody would wring his neck.

Nobody would call him a false prophet. Nobody would be out to do him in over that because they liked his message. So they'll be sympathetic with him.

But if you do the same thing following a message to repent, they'd have you strung up, you know, by the top of the rafters before the meeting was over. It's the message of repentance that's going to bring the persecution, going to bring the opposition, going to bring the resentment. And without that, we'll have no revival.

We were at a service, New Year's Day of 1983, and after the Spirit was terribly quenched, God began to speak. Someone finally stopped and waited instead of going on with the show. And a message came forth from a brother during the service.

We're going to take communion that day. Do not partake of communion. Do not partake of communion.

There is sin in your midst. I forget if it was labeled or not as bitterness and gossip or other things. There's sin in your midst.

If you partake of communion, some of you will get sick and others will die. He said, well, Lord, we won't partake of communion. It was a thoroughly scriptural message.

Couldn't get away from the fact that it was Bible. Well, do you want to hear a message like that? Why spoil our fun? We wanted that. We were looking forward to communion, brother.

Well, do you want the truth or not? When God's really going to come, a lot of people who thought they were really doing great are going to be on their faces in front of the whole body saying, oh, man, I failed. And you sit there and say, I always knew they were kind of subpar spiritually. Next week, it'll be you up there if it's real revival.

Again, you read through. I don't have time to do it. I'm not teaching on the prophets or anything like that.

But you read through the Hebrew Scriptures and you'll see over and over and over that people wanted to hear every message but the truth. They did not want to be told you were dying without major heart surgery. They wanted to be told good things, happy things, encouraging things.

It's like, listen, if you'll submit to the surgery, then I can tell you good, happy, encouraging, wonderful things because it's God's desire to bless and not curse. But you're going to have to submit to the knife first. Again, just another quote from Frank Bartleman.

When the religious condition of the times called for men who were willing to sacrifice all for Messiah, the demand created the supply, and there have always been found a few who were willing to be regarded reckless for the Lord. And utter recklessness concerning men's opinions and other consequences is the only attitude that can meet the needs of the present times. He's actually quoting another writer there.

But there's a holy recklessness, a holy abandonment that's absolutely necessary and an absolute dying to the praise of men and a desire to please men or be accepted by men. All those things have to happen first. You have to know that you belong to God and then you can get up and preach that message.

Because sure enough, as long as there are religious people in the world, as long as there are hypocrites who don't want their sin exposed, as long as there are other people who've got their vested interest in the religious system going on the way it is, of course God raises up bodies and fellowships and brings people together. I'm not saying anything that's organized is not of God. But when people put their salary before the call of God, well, if I repent, then I'm going to have to get up and confess publicly, and if I do that, I'm going to be booted out.

I'm going to lose my salary. I can't do that. Or I'm going to lose the esteem of the people, or this or that.

If they'll put that first, they'll never go on with God. And I've seen people do it. I've seen people turn back for a paycheck.

I've seen people turn back for family. I've seen people turn back instead of moving on with God out of convenience or because it was just too hard to go the other way. How deep are we willing to let revival go when it comes? Are we willing to say, Praise the Lord, bring the flames down, and keep them burning until there's no flesh left on the altar? Or after the first burn, are we going to say, Well, praise the Lord for that revival meeting.

Now let's get on with the show. In future classes, we're going to look at hindrances to revival and denominationalism and sectarianism and just various things once they are erected to the point that they will not move with God. We'll see how those things can be hindrances.

But let's just understand that revival preaching is going to come. It's going to scorch. It's going to burn.

It's going to transform. It's going to shake. It's going to empower.

But it's going to hurt. But it's going to hurt because it's the loving hand of God reaching down and touching. And those whose hearts are open and ripe to the Lord will be transformed and will never be the same.

And those who will hear can be taken out of their lethargy and out of their sin and out of their hopelessness and out of their bondage and put into a position of spiritual power and life to change this world. Father, we thank You for Your Spirit, for Your life, for Your Word, for Your truth, for Your reality, for

Your fire. We open our hearts to You and we lay ourselves on the altar.

Show us the meaning of being living sacrifices. Lord, that means we're on the altar perpetually. That means that Your flames are continually upon us.

That means that the work is Yours. The power is Yours. The excellency is Yours.

And we are going about doing Your will in the life of Your Spirit. Thank You, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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