

# God Centered Revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*A word-centered revival, which focuses on the preaching of the Word of God, is essential for a lasting and impactful spiritual movement.*

**Duration:** 2:18:23

**Topics:** "Prayer Power", "Gospel Revival"

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## Description

This sermon from 2 Thessalonians chapter three emphasizes the importance of prayer for the spread of the Word of the Lord, seeking protection from evil forces, and following the example of faithful leaders. It encourages believers to be directed into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ, while also warning against associating with those who lead unruly lives. The message underscores the power of prevailing prayer for the unhindered proclamation of the gospel despite challenges and distractions.

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## Transcript

Second Thessalonians chapter three. Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did also with you and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

We have confidence in the Lord concerning you that you are not doing and will pardon that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you. Not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order.

If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either. For we hear that some among you are leading undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Now may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter.

This is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. God, again we come asking that you would make this book live in and through us for the sake of Christ's glory in us.

Amen. Mr. Roberts, if you'll come. What wonderful truth God has given to us, and what a marvel it is that foolish and inconsequential people like us are loved by Christ and permitted to engage with all our hearts in the forwarding of his great kingdom.

Now, this morning we're going to be thinking about the nature of revival and the responsibilities that we have in this regard, but I'd like to begin with something I'm fairly sure a goodly number of you have already grasped, but possibly a few have not. Revivals themselves come in two basic forms, and it's tremendously important to recognize this because it greatly affects our prayer life. The two forms are what might be called, number one, experience-centered revivals, and number two, word-centered revivals.

Now, the wording is intended to be exact. Experience-centered, don't lose sight of the word centered, and word-centered, the focus again including the notion of centered. Now, let me explain what I'm making reference to.

There are revivals where the great focus is upon personal experience. Now, a revival that did not have personal experience could hardly be called a revival. It's obviously a mandatory ingredient in revival, but I have spoken of experience-centered, and in the second place, word-centered.

A revival without the word of God is nonsense, but again, some revival movements are word-centered, and some are experience-centered, and in the hope that it will get your mind working in the right direction, and because this is truly intended to be an informal session where you have opportunity to participate. Now, I want to make a restriction here. I'm going to ask for some replies, but I don't want anybody here who's heard me explain this before simply parrot what I've already said.

I'm capable of doing that myself, but I want to ask you, as I said already, to get you thinking carefully about this. What would you suppose that I'm making reference to when I distinguish between experience-centered and word-centered revivals? What kind of a response will you make to that? Don't all speak at once. Well, that is certainly involved, yes, so keep that very much in mind.

Any other thoughts? Excuse me, we'll take them one at a time. Yes, you heard that. Are you all able to hear these responses, the focus, and what you're concerned about, what you hope to see occur? Yes, that's an important ingredient as well.

Any other thoughts that you're able to contribute? Yes, I don't know if you could hear her softer voice, but it was an excellent observation. In one case, you have the preaching of the word as a major factor in what is happening. In the other case, you have, hopefully at least, not necessarily, but hopefully, the Holy Spirit himself impacting, touching, bringing about experience.

Well, yes, sir. I'm going to have to ask you all to remember that one of the frailties of age for men in particular is the loss of some of their hearing, so speak up. Yes, that's an important observation as well.

Now, let's think of it from this perspective for a moment. Can you, and not everybody, of course, will be able to respond because you haven't all read Revival History, but for those who at least have a smattering Revival History, can you give us out of history some examples on either side, examples of experience-centered, examples of word-centered? Yes, and that whole movement, what we refer to as the First Great Awakening, be absolutely the word-centered. Any other examples that you can offer? Well, if it was word-centered, who was doing the preaching? Yes.

I hope when I contradict any of you, I will not do so offensively, and I honestly believe you've come out of a great longing to have the truth, but that was quite a mistaken notion, but I'll come back to it and help you to see why. Someone else, I think. Yes, and that's an excellent and an important observation, and just to add a little to that, Evan Roberts was not capable of preaching.

He had no training. He had gone to Bible school for a very short time. He heard Jeff or Joshua speak, and Seth, S-E-T-H, Seth Joshua speak, and he had used the phrase, Lord, bend me, and that really gripped Evan's heart.

Now, Evan had been working in two places, in the coal mine, running the elevator, really, and then in an uncle's blacksmith shop. He was a fervent fellow. Because of the nature of his work in the mine, running the elevator, there were times when he was intensely busy, but then there were other seasons when he had some free time, and he took his Bible with him and was pouring over the Bible.

Then he felt he wanted to preach, probably felt called to preach, went to Bible school, heard Seth Joshua came under this great burden to be bent by Lord, and he became so utterly concerned that he was no student at all, finally, and he hadn't been there long. The principal said, Go home. You're not cut out for this.

He went home. He asked his pastor if he could speak to the congregation, and the pastor felt, like the principal, that Evan was hardly qualified and said, Well, you can speak in the after meeting. Now, that is probably not a familiar term to some of you, but it's very, very typical.

I have many, many times been participating in these after meetings, and it'd be the regular Sunday evening service, and just as an aside, but an exciting aside, the evening services were, through the years, larger than the morning services in terms of attendance in the Heath Church in Cardiff, where I've often been privileged to preach, and our dear friend John Snyder got a great deal of benefit and blessing in participating there also, but Sunday morning, the place full, Sunday night, the place full, and then in the after meeting, if there were, say, 900 in the evening meeting, maybe 400 in the after meeting. That would be a time for asking questions of the speaker, probing deeper into what had been considered, and in the many times I participated, be just loaded with young people, fervently inquiring, and so Evan is given the privilege to speak in the after meeting, and he just unburdens himself, and God is in it, and there is an immediate warming up of the whole atmosphere, and soon he's in demand all over the Principality, and essentially what we would describe he did is to exhort using, as you said, questions and directives, maybe this procedure here for searching your heart, that sort of thing, but virtually no preaching. Now I have asked you, can you think of examples? We've had a couple.

I'm not really testing what you know in terms of revival, but whether you've ever really sorted out the difference between these two things, because it is so essential to our situation. Any other responses you would like to make, sir? Yes, now that was quite soft. I didn't hear the whole myself, but I did hear the Finney.

Now the Finney period was somewhat of a combination of the two. There was, I would say, a great focus upon experience, but Finney was himself a very serious preacher, and a very biblical preacher in most respects, but at the same time not a very well educated preacher, and by educated I mean in the word of God. Some very mistaken notions, and so there was a slant to his preaching that was out of kilter, and in the long term very damaging.

Well let me just sort of give you a summary, because I'm, as I said, anxious that you have a feel of these things. The Reformation, a word-centered movement. The great preachers, obviously Martin Luther was a man with a very poor background, and some of this early stuff is really quite sad, because he came out of this awful mess of Catholicism, and he had come to some truth, but it over the years that was growing through to this preaching more and more biblical as time passed, but John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli, and a great host of other men, profound preachers.

You read their writings today, and they're almost too serious for most of us to handle, because they were so thoroughly educated, and acquainted with the ancient theology, as well as biblical theology, but nonetheless the Reformation, a word-centered movement. The Great Awakening, a word-centered movement. Jonathan Edwards has been mentioned as a splendid example.

In the United Kingdom, John Wesley, and of course George Whitfield, the grand itinerant, and men like Daniel Rowland, and the men up in Scotland, the Erskines, just a wonderful array of men, and a lot of their material is available today. You can read these great sermons. Prior to the Awakening period, even the Puritan period, and the Puritan period was a season of Great Awakening.

Also, that wonderful biblical preaching, but as we move along, and this is what I want you to be alert to, as we move along, now there's a lot of confusion, and I'm not just sort of a guy who's insisting you've got to say it my way. What difference does it make? But nonetheless, I have a way of reckoning that not everybody agrees with. The first Great Awakening, 1730 roughly to 1770.

The second Great Awakening, roughly 1792 on up to 1830 is a powerful movement, and then gradually lessening in power. The third Great Awakening, and again, as I said, there are those who are talking today about the need of a third Great Awakening. Well, by my reckoning, we had that already, so we're talking, but you see how incidental, inconsequential a numbering system is.

But what I'm calling the third Great Awakening, that wonderful movement that began in New York City under that businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier, hired by the Dutch Reformed Church at Fulton Street in New York to have some kind of an impact upon businessmen in the city. And many of you have heard the wonderful story of his calling a noontday prayer meeting for businessmen, and nobody showing up at the appointed hour. And then maybe 30 minutes late or 40 minutes late to perhaps a half a dozen coming.

And then in almost no time, every auditorium in the city filled at noontime with praying, testifying people. So the third Great Awakening, by my reckoning, is experience-centered, because its focus is prayer, spreads pretty much through all the metropolitan areas of the nation, and to a lesser extent, even some of the more rural areas are impacted. Then, and I'm just kind of taking high points, because there are vast

numbers of smaller movements, at least by our reckoning, but then we come to the 1904-1905 period, and absolutely without any question, an experience-centered movement, not carried along with great preaching, but with simple exhortation.

There were others other than Evan Roberts who were preachers. I mentioned one already, Seth Joshua, his brother Peter Joshua. Even our own R.A. Torrey had been in Wales and preaching.

The Keswick movement had some influence in that, and early Keswick movement was very much a word-centered movement. Now I give you all of that because I want you to face this realistic truth. I will explain further in a moment the difference between the word-centered and the experience-centered, but at the moment, I want you to realize this.

Word-centered movements endure. Just take the material I've given you. How long did the Reformation last? Well, a very long and wonderful time.

I gave you some approximate dates for the First Great Awakening, 1730 to 1770. I gave you approximate dates for the Second Great Awakening, 1792 on through 1830 with great strength and then slowly diminishing strength. I gave you dates for the Third Great Awakening, 1857 and 1858 in this country, 1858 and 1859 in the United Kingdom and some other parts of the world.

The wealth revival, so-called, though that's a misnomer because Wales had had some 50 revivals prior to 1904-1905, but a portion of 1904 and a portion of 1905. You see how things have grown shorter and shorter. We've got to face the reality that an experience-centered movement is of much lesser duration.

Now, friends, that is immensely consequential. How long has it taken us as a nation to get in the rotten circumstances we're in today? Well, we've been at this decline for decades. Will a movement that lasts six months be sufficient to offset that which has taken years and years and years? So, brevity, that's an issue of great importance.

Now, a second issue of very great importance, the endurance of the results. Now, think of this. In a word-centered revival, there is virtually no falling away of the converts.

In an experience-centered revival, there is a considerable falling away of the converts. Let me emphasize that and illustrate it with firsthand information. My home, our book ministries, and our international awakening ministry are located immediately next to Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

You walk out the back door of our facility and you're on college property. Wheaton is one of those colleges that has had some perfectly glorious stirrings of the Holy Spirit. Many of the best-known preachers and missionaries in modern history are graduates of Wheaton College and were touched deeply in the seasons of revival at the college.

But the last revival movement in Wheaton occurred only a few years ago, and it was very close to my heart. One afternoon, maybe about three or four o'clock, I had a phone call from Texas, and a very dear and godly man said, Dick, have you had any reports from Texas today? No, I said, none. He said, do you realize, and he named a mutual friend, was preaching in chapel at Southwestern Seminary this morning, and chapel is still going on.

Well, that was good news. The Lord was stirring in the seminary, and for those of you who don't know, Southwestern is probably the largest theological seminary, student-wise, in the nation. Well, my son was

working regularly with us at that time, and he was standing across the desk, and when I hung up, he said, Dad, what was that? Oh, I said, a wonderful report of a stirring of the Holy Spirit at Southwestern.

And he said, Dad, give me the phone. So I handed the phone across, and he dialed the college next door, and talked to one of the faculty members who was a graduate of Southwestern, and asked him if he had any news of Texas. And the fellow said, no.

Well, he said, my dad just had this call, and I wanted to share it with you. And the professor said, oh, if we could get those students to come here and share. Well, it took perhaps three weeks, but they came, a group from Texas, and they spoke on a Sunday evening in Pierce Chapel to those students who gathered several hundred, and they shared what God had been doing in their lives and in their school.

And an incredible wave of divine blessing swept across those students. But the administration made, by my assessment, I'm sure they wouldn't like to hear this, but they will hear it if they give me an opportunity. The administration said, that's a student movement.

Let all the faculty and administration and friends of the college keep their hands off. And when the students asked permission to use the chapel again the next day, they were told they could do it after nine in the evening. And they met again.

And I don't remember exactly whether it was three times or only two. Then the church across the street, the college church, invited them to meet in the sanctuary. So from roughly Sunday night through Friday, a wonderful stirring.

Now, great numbers of those students, under deep conviction of sin, stood and confessed sin publicly before the other students. They even brought in great trash bags, those plastic trash bags. And they filled several of them up with pornographic material and sex apparatus and drugs and needles and so on.

But maybe three months after all of that, students were writing in the college newspaper, revival is a fraud, it has no value. We've been through all that. An individual student would acknowledge, I went forward, I confessed my sin.

I jumped, stopped, in the trash bag. And now I'm right back where I was. Now listen, friends.

When people do not know the difference between confession of sin and repentance, there is bound to be a huge problem. I hope that you will relate immediately now to what I'm saying. There are people that have been in their church services for decades who have never heard a word spoken.

They do have deaf ears, blind eyes, hearts of stone. In a season of revival, God opens those blind eyes, gives hearing to those deaf ears, softens those hearts of stone. And a person awakened by the Spirit of God in a revival is for the first time in their experience in a position to be impacted powerfully by the Word of God.

And if the Word of God is not preached, that person will not have anything to relate to that will be life transforming. All experiences are temporary. So I've said the duration of the movement itself, the steadiness of the converts is greatly affected by whether it's word-centered or experience-centered.

Number three, and this is of great consequence also, an experience-centered movement will likely have no or at best little impact upon societal issues. Now think of that. Are there any issues in society that are

completely out of order today? Is not abortion a huge plague? Is not sexual perversity a huge plague? Are we not regularly promoting to the highest political offices of the land men who are totally incompetent? Is not the decisive issue in a political race who is the biggest liar, who promises the most and delivers the least? Now some of us have an acquaintance with history.

We know that the higher educational movement in America was rooted in revival. Many of us know that the anti-slavery movement was rooted in revival. We know that the temperance movement, and some might not be appreciative of this, but even the woman's movement, suffrage, the vote, et cetera, for women had its ties to revival.

Do you understand what I'm saying? When you look at our society and you ask, do we need a short-lived movement? I'm sure with any thought you will say no. Do we need vast numbers of converts who go nowhere, who remain, if they're converted at all, which they're not necessarily, but if they are, they remain infants the rest of their life. Do we need a revival that does not touch the core of the nation and transform society? You see, part of what's wrong with us is so many Christian leaders have so individualized Christianity that they've lost all track of the kingdom of God impacting society at large.

So now look, here's what this comes down to. If an experience-centered movement is inferior in its long-term results to a word-centered movement, that ought to greatly impact both our thinking and our prayers. And may I ask you, have you ever, with great care, focused your prayer on a movement that endures? On a movement where great preaching, and I don't mean great in a mere human sense of popular and nice to hear, but I mean great in terms of its biblical accuracy and its profound impact through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Well now, someone might be thinking, Mr. Roberts himself, I know, believes that revivals come from God. They're not our doing. If God sends an experience-centered movement, what's that got to do with us? We take what God gives.

But is that fully accurate? Do we not have some opportunity to affect what happens? Now, it hasn't been so visible this visit, but if my reckoning is right, you may recall, dear friends, is this the third time I've been here. I remember the last time that row after row after row were university students, or at least those that looked like it. Is that a fair appraisal? Now, I'm not asking, are there fewer here now? That's not my issue, but I'm wanting to say in my former visits here, I felt such great hope because I am myself convinced that it's not too late for America and that what is needed is God himself to raise up a glorious army of young men who will preach the Word of God with great authority and power.

Now, I've said our understanding of these things can influence our prayer. I'm not praying for an increase in experience. I'm sick of the experiences that are related to me.

A while back, I was preaching in Washington, D.C., and a couple whom I've known somewhat came to me before a service. The husband was the spokesman, and he said to me, we normally sit on the front row, but tonight we're going to sit on the back row. I naturally asked, why? Well, he said, my wife and I have been at the Pensacola revival, and my wife has been blessed with the jerks.

We're afraid if we sit on the front row, and every time you use the word Christ, she'll jerk, that that might trouble you. So we'll sit on the back row where it won't bother you. No, I said, don't do that.

Sit on the front row. Your wife will not dare to jerk. Now, you probably don't even know what I'm talking about, jerks.

I mean the snapping of the head. There are revival movements that think physical phenomena is of God. Now, why would God give somebody the jerks? And especially when the name of Christ is mentioned.

Some of you heard about the so-called Toronto revival, the airport vineyard movement of some years back. A dear friend, I mentioned his name last night, Ron Owen, the musician. His mother still lived in Toronto, and he told me one day, I'm going to visit my mother, so I'll be out of touch for a brief time.

And he said, I'm going to try to visit the airport vineyard while I'm there. So he goes, he sees his mother, he has a sweet time with her, a lovely godly woman, and then he visits the airport vineyard. Somebody is standing in the pulpit, reading Isaiah 53.

Others are laughing like hyenas throughout the whole auditorium. So nobody can hear what is being read. Now, why would God cause people to laugh when one of the most profound and impacting passages of all scripture is being read? So we have not only the problems I've mentioned of the impact of experience-centered movements on their duration, upon the permanency of the converts, upon the lack of impact on societal issues, we also have the ridiculous notions of phenomena that grip so much of the nation.

So many people who think the work of God affects the body. Now listen carefully. Among the books that I have been permitted to put together, I mentioned this book in speaking of glory earlier this week, Scotland Saw His Glory, one of my favorite books among those I've been privileged to put together.

But anyway, in the introduction, I demonstrate using the glorious accounts of revival within the book that virtually every revival began with at least a measure of phenomena. And you know the phenomena comes in all kinds. In the days of Whitfield and Wesley, there were people who were taken in faint and would fall on the floor.

And Charles Wesley and George Whitfield determined that that was not of God and they forbid anybody to faint. John Wesley, on the other hand, assumed that it was from God and forbid anybody to discourage it. Wherever that fainting continued, the revival waned.

Where the fainting was prevented, I mean, they were told at the beginning of the meeting, anybody who faints will be removed from the auditorium. Well now it stopped immediately because the tendency of phenomena is to be practiced because of the personal benefit it brings. You say, what benefit would there be? You've become the center of attention.

Much phenomena is caused by pride, wanting to be noticed, wanting to be singled out as a special convert. So in the book on Scottish revivals, the point I wanted to make is this. Where phenomena was allowed to continue, the revival waned.

Where phenomena was extinguished, suppressed, prevented from happening, the revival soared. Now that is a very consequential thing. Now look, I'm not a complete idiot.

I know that there are prominent people who disagree with me, but I honestly believe everyone has a right to be wrong. But I'll stake my life on the fact that the true work of God is on the soul of man, not upon the physical body. And our burden must be for the eternal well-being, not for the temporal impact of a season

of excitement.

Well, I think I've said sufficient on that matter. I do want to give you opportunity for question, for objection, even if you choose, or for further clarification, sir. Yes, what about Azusa? And that, of course, is a splendid and a very relevant question.

Was Azusa Street, some of you perhaps are not really even acquainted, but many say that the Pentecostal revival, as they call it, began at Azusa Street. And so the question is an appropriate one. What about that? Well, of course, the viewpoints went in varying directions.

Some thought that was the beginning of the greatest revival in history, and some thought that was an aberration of a grievous sort. But now obviously part of the response to that is, do you believe in cessationism, that the Holy Spirit no longer works gloriously, or do you believe in the ongoing activity of the Spirit? Now the critical issue about Azusa Street is, was it based upon biblical fact, or was it based upon human lives? Now the major issue behind the whole of Pentecostalism is, what is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Now I spoke to this on Sunday as clearly, and I hope as warmly as it's possible to speak. The evidence of the baptism is power, passion, purity.

Not passions run wild, but channeled passions that move and that deeply transform the lives of others. Azusa Street and the whole of the First Pentecostal, then Charismatic, and now Third Wave movements is the only evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. And that's a lie, and that's a tragedy, because there was a great deal of good in that.

There were many who were renewed to a true love of Jesus Christ, and if they had simply stressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit and let the Holy Spirit bring about whatever he wanted in the lives of people, it would not have been a problem. But when a lie is the issue that divides thousands and thousands of churches, then that's tragic. I for one believe good came out of Azusa Street, but I don't believe it's necessary to use lies to bring about good.

And if no lies are told, the good will be vastly more good than when there are lies underneath. Now, as I said, there are other views. I've simply, this dear brother didn't expect me to give somebody else's view, but my own, and I have.

But I do, I want to repeat, I am not blanketly condemning that movement, but I am saying let us always be biblically accurate and honest. Any other responses you would like to make? Yes, yes, that's well worth asking and devoting our attention to. Is it necessary to outlaw all phenomena? No, but to discourage phenomena.

Now listen carefully. When I can forbid somebody to do something and they don't do it, does that sound like it's from God? Since when have I been in a position to command what God does and what God doesn't? So you see, that's the critical issue. If it's truly, if God is going to happen, whether I forbid it or not, the great danger is encouraging that specifically and deliberately, which might be of God, but in a higher probability is more apt not to be of God.

So that's a very significant matter. Let me repeat it. If I can forbid it, and that's why my illustration about the people not sitting on the front row because of the jerks, I knew she would not jerk sitting on the front row.

I knew it was not of God. I knew when I said that to them, if it was of God, I couldn't forbid it, but I knew as I said that it wouldn't happen. Now look, I mentioned somewhere already this week in so much of my early

ministry, I saw tears.

I heard people in the congregation crying out for help. Is that the kind of phenomenon that we're urging you to discourage? No. No, it's that which draws attention to self.

I mean, when you got a congregation that suddenly burst into open wailing and many fall down, many are taken to their beds. They can't even rise out of bed for five, six, seven, nine days even. They're under such profound conviction of sin.

We're not talking about discouraging the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, but the confusing power of Satan. Look, let's think of it this way. In the camp meeting revivals back in the early 1800s, and they were very common, and some I believe were genuine, others perhaps not.

But what did the media do? Now granted the media was nothing then like it is now, but what did it do? If a young couple were found fornicating under a wagon, the media focused not upon the powerful preaching occurring in the arbor, the brush arbor, but they focused upon the aberrant behavior of young people under the wagon. We are concerned not to give the devil a chance. If we encourage the phenomena, then the media will spread that everywhere.

At the time of the Toronto blessing, as it was really burning hot, I was preaching in the city of London, and on the front page of the London papers, this phenomena of the laughing revival. It was making a mockery of the work of God, but it's mighty hard to mock a God who's got tens of thousands of people weeping over their sin under such deep and heavy conviction they can't even rise from their bed. Then in time, gloriously converted, lives radically transformed.

Lifetime alcoholics set free. Homosexuals totally liberated. Adulterers, adulteresses, drug addicts, etc., etc., etc.

Radically transformed. So our job is to keep the focus on the real, on the eternal. Perhaps this would be a good time to mention a matter to you of great consequence.

Revivals are fragile. Get a hold of that. Revivals are fragile.

Let me explain what I mean. There's a very real and wonderful sense in which it can be said that a revival is all eyes on Christ. Now what does Satan have to do to bring a revival down? Yes, just to get the eyes off Christ to something or somebody.

And phenomena is something Satan has used countless times to draw attention from Christ. Some aberrant doctrine can be used. Some personality who gets projected up and then becomes the focus of attention, not Christ.

So every one of us should set our hearts to be taught by the Holy Spirit to keep the eyes on Christ. Let me put it this way. Some of you are praying for revival and have been doing so for considerable time.

How absurd to pray for revival and not be preparing for it. I mean is it not an act of faithlessness to ask for something you've made no preparation for? And what is included in proper preparation? Distinguishing these things of which we're talking together. Learning how to keep the focus on Christ.

Learning how not to be deceived ourselves by matters that are either ill or wrong or simply of lesser consequence than the real. Any further questions or responses? Yes, thank you. That's excellent.

I hope you were able to hear his question. And let me just rephrase a part just to be sure we're all thinking on the same page. In 1857-58, as I said, we had a glorious movement that began in New York City.

We refer to it as the prayer revival. And it was genuine, but it did not include very much great preaching. But that movement also affected the United Kingdom and particularly Ulster.

That's the northern portion of Ireland and Wales. But in Ireland there was a great bit of phenomena in the early days. And this is so important and I think it will be helpful.

I'll take a bit of time on it. Because of the masses attending meetings, there were not auditoriums of sufficient size to accommodate the crowds. In Ireland it was more word-centered than experience-centered.

But here these great crowds often gathered in open fields or in sections of a city with considerable open space. People of all sorts attending. But there was this phenomena that kept occurring.

Big, strong, hulking men standing there listening to the sermons. Off time, simply sunk. It wasn't as if they fell over, but they sunk.

This went down in a heap. This was, of course, a great concern. Generally speaking, Ulster, Northern Ireland, is largely Presbyterian.

And those of you with some sectarian knowledge are aware that Presbyterians generally are conservative and careful. They tend to be better educated as a rule than certain other sects. But nonetheless, this phenomena was occurring.

And the immediate concern was, can we prevent this from happening? But all those who carefully studied it, and I should qualify that all those true believers who carefully studied the matter, came to the realization that what was really happening was men were so deeply moved by the preaching of the word that they lost track of the physical. That the sinking down in a heap was something that happened. Now look, I've been standing here for more than a few minutes.

Do you think that every half second I've said to myself, remember you're standing, you're not on the floor? No, obviously, when we stand, there's something going on underneath that is keeping us upright. But when the focus was so intense on what God was saying, on the powerful word being proclaimed, somehow that whatever it is that kept men standing erect ceased. And they sunk.

Now this was the thing that made them in the end say, don't try to prevent that. Invariably, these men who sunk and were in a, what is that word? Semi-conscious state. When they came back to their full awareness, invariably, it was with a deep, deep sense of their awful wickedness and a glorious sense of the grace of Jesus Christ.

So they arose from the ground, transformed men. That was the analysis. Physicians, godly, well-trained pastors.

Now there were a few kooks and there's some really anti-revival stuff, but it didn't matter. The men of God evaluated the matter and said, this is of God. And so I'm glad you brought that up because I needed to enforce that in front of you.

We don't want to do anything to discourage what is of God. Our concern is to discourage that which is of the flesh, that which Satan uses to draw the attention from Christ. Those cases did not draw attention from Christ, but made multitudes recognize, wow, this is a mighty God who can take this man who is a notorious sinner, sink him to the ground, and then bring him up as a transformed man.

Anything else? I didn't quite catch that. Did somebody heard it better than I did? Or if you want to state it again so I can catch it. Well, are we hindering revival? Well, disinterest is a great hindrance.

Not understanding the urgency is a great hindrance. Supposing it to be something it is not is a great hindrance. But if we solely focus on the personal, we've missed the mind and the heart of God.

I've tried to spell that out already, that the bulk of the material in our Bibles on revival is larger than you or me as individuals. Our burden must be for the world, not merely ourselves or our family or our church or our neighborhood. Now, don't know that I've come anywhere near what you had in mind.

Is it something you could qualify so I could come closer in the correct answer? All right, well, we can ask this simple question. To what extent is revival my responsibility? I'm each of us can say this personally. To what extent is revival my responsibility? What can I do? Well, there's a certain sense in which I have to say I can't do anything.

Revival is of God. But I have tried very hard to set before you the necessity of preparing the way. Last night I stressed seven very consequential things that we can do.

There is a part, but here's what it really comes down to. If I'm going to pray for revival and yet I refuse to be revived myself, why should God pay any attention to my prayer? So if I am in my own lifestyle a hindrance to the work of God, I ought to focus on getting right with God myself because there is a desperate need of prayer. And honestly, I never in all my life really liked wasting time.

And praying for something that I guarantee can't happen by my ill conduct is certainly a waste of time. Or encouraging others to long for revival. When I don't long for it myself or when I'm thinking, well, maybe if they'll pray hard enough, revival will come and it'll straighten me out.

Now that's nonsense. Why would anybody want to live in a nonsensical way? So obviously, we do, by God's grace, take seriously the passions, the passages already spoken upon and the abundance of others that we will not have time to think of this week. But we do our part.

And honestly, my longing for revival is not based on what it will do for me, though I'm sure it will benefit me in my own walk with Christ. But my burden is broader than myself. And I expect yours is too.

Now some might have a limited burden. Maybe your burden is because you have unsaved children or grandchildren. Well, I wouldn't belittle that.

That's worthy. But I would encourage even a broader burden than that. But let every one of us do what we must and let God do what we can't.

And he's wonderful at doing what we can't. Well, I thought I saw one other. Well, by Southern California, I'm assuming you're referring to the Jesus People Movement, the Calvary Chapel Movement, the Third Wave, as it's generally called.

I don't like not to answer questions, so I'm going to. But I don't like not getting to the heart of what I'm supposed to say today. So I will answer and answer fully.

Are all of you acquainted with that movement we call the Jesus People Movement? Well, the essentials for anybody that might not be well informed. Vast numbers of more or less college age, and I'm not meaning exclusively, but that's where the great center was, college age student. There was a student rebellion pretty much across the land.

At that time, Maggie and I, with our children, lived very close to the University of California at Fresno. And we had students up on the major buildings of the university with machine guns. It was an attempt to overthrow authority.

And some of you have heard of the Kent State riot and things like that. Well, war games are tiring if there's any measure of maturity in you at all. And so before long, the students tired of their war games and of the overthrow of authority.

And they retired largely to the beaches of California and the West Coast, really, and then the Gulf Coast area. And there were tens of thousands of them on the beaches fornicating and doing drugs and having a good time in the flesh. And then suddenly, God was there.

And vast numbers of these students profoundly impacted by Christ himself. There was really but a handful of pastors who foresaw what was going to happen and redeemed that wonderful opportunity. The one most prominent, and deservedly so, was Chuck Smith at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California.

He saw it coming, and he prepared himself and this small church. And Wendy's, they were called hippies. Some of you are perhaps too young to have known them.

If you'll forgive an old man a moment of enjoyment. I've got this bunch of hippies in my sight right now. The girls dressed in gun sacks.

The guys looking like they didn't know there was such a thing as a shampoo, and having no razor or scissors, and thinking that looking the worst you could was the best way to live. You asked the right man, dear sir, because soon after this movement was underway, three of these awful looking guys came to my home. My dear Maggie opened the door and courageously ushered them to my study.

Most women would have run for their life. And they came in, and I welcomed them. And they said, no, we understand.

You can help us. I certainly hope so. Would you, would you tell us what it means to be born again? Could you help us to understand how a person can become a disciple of Jesus Christ? The glorious time helping young men moved upon by the Holy Spirit.

I saw what was coming also. But unlike Chuck Smith, when I encouraged my church to welcome these people, they made it clear they didn't want all that dirt and mess. No, they weren't really dirty.

They just looked like it. And they didn't stink, or at least not the ones I knew personally. And I don't think it will be a grief to the Lord if I share another thing with you.

I had a Sunday off, and Maggie and I decided to go to Southern California. Fresno's in the middle of the state. And we had a dear friend at a church in Pasadena, and we stopped to see him.

And then we said, have you any advice as to how to spend the Sunday in Southern California? Well, yes, she said, I can give you what I think is good advice. If I were you, I would go Sunday morning to the Crystal Cathedral. It wasn't yet that.

It was Robert Schuler's drive-in church. And I would go just to see how rotten the world has become. And then in the evening, I would go to Calvary Chapel in close to Mesa.

And mind you, if you take my advice, go early. So we went to the drive-in church. The Crystal Cathedral had not yet been built.

The drive-in church was a building where the walls rolled back and the parking lot was wired, so it was as if you were going to a drive-in theater. The platform was way higher than normal, so you had to be like this if you were going to see what was going on. And for the first and the only time in our marriage, both Maggie and I fell sound asleep at the same time.

Now, usually, you know, one starts to doze and the other one gives the elbow. But we both slept through the sermon. And the whole service was designed to put you to sleep, if not physically, spiritually.

It was obnoxious and ridiculous. It was as non-Christian as anything could be. The pastor himself, if he knew anything spiritual, he had a very great cleverness in hiding it.

But in the evening, we thought, well, it starts at 630. We'll get there by six. But when we got there, the chapel was crammed full.

There was a paved area outside. It, too, had a wall that rolled back. There were several hundred chairs outside, and we found a chair.

As I said, we're there a half an hour ahead of time. And there are these hundreds and hundreds. It wasn't a big, big church at that time.

I don't know, maybe it seated 400 and possibly another 400 outside. And every one of them buried in the book, and then some in prayer. Just a lovely sight.

Hundreds, hundreds of young people absorbed. And they began singing, sang maybe 45 minutes with these biblical songs, so prevalent in that day. And then some fellows put a stool on the edge of the platform, and Chuck Smith came out, sat on the stool.

Now, I'm making up the numbers because I'm not that sharp, but just trying to give you the feel. He said, tonight we're dealing with the Luke chapter 5 through chapter 12. What a joke.

I'm thinking to myself, isn't that ridiculous? So he starts at the first verse, goes over it phrase by phrase, spells it out in a way that a listener of any degree of intelligence could understand. The vastly intelligent were not disappointed. The not so intelligent were not unfed.

He went on and on and on, two or three times. He said, now this, and he would name a series of verses, is parallel to what you find in Matthew or Mark. And then he would name the date and say, we went over it then, so we're going to bypass it now.

He went through the entire passage, not leaving a single phrase unmentioned. And in all that time, two hour sermon and all that time, we saw two people move. An obviously pregnant young woman who left for

a moment and was soon back, and a boy maybe of 11 or so who left for a moment and was back.

The total movement. Then when he finished, they sang again for another half hour and the service was over. And as my dear wife and I walked to our car, we turned to one another and we said, how do you explain that? And we answered each other in unison, God, no other explanation possible.

God in the midst of his people. That began to flourish even more. Soon they had a great tent that they were meeting in.

And eventually across the nation, Calvary Chapel saw all, focusing the same way. Now, I don't want to confuse anybody or mess you up with too much raw detail. We refer to that as the third wave.

The first wave, Pentecostalism, with a great focus upon leaving your apostate church and joining a Pentecostal church, the great focus, of course, on tongues. Then the charismatic movement, the second wave, affecting Roman Catholics and Lutherans and Episcopalians and Baptists. Just as an aside, some of you are aware of Joel Osteen and his huge work in Houston area.

And if there was ever a man who didn't know what he was doing, he would be a good example. But his dad was a Baptist pastor caught up in the second wave, charismatic, and denounced the Baptist and joined that charismatic movement. An obviously converted man, though wrong in some of his thinking.

But the third wave, friends, and this isn't irrelevant to revival. It's very pertinent. The third wave is not focused upon tongues, but upon signs and wonder.

But the sad thing is that John Wimber, who was a major spokesman of the movement, acknowledged that with all of the miracles he had reported, he wasn't really sure that there were any that lasted. And he himself died relatively young. I don't want to be sounding like I'm putting it down.

Thank you for bringing this up because it's a beautiful example of what I'm speaking of, the genuine work of God that was allowed to go in the direction where there was greater focus upon the temporal and the physical than there should have been. But nonetheless, a great movement and still many splendid results enduring till today. That was what, roughly 1972, somewhere around there.

So please understand I'm speaking warmly, sympathetically, and yet critically, saying let all of us learn how to focus on the eternal and not be distracted by the temporal. Well, we read at the beginning a passage, and if I'm not careful, we'll have just a couple minutes at the end to deal with it. So let's not let that happen.

I've given you the background now. There's just one other background area I've got to give you. There are two incredibly marvelous factors in revival that must never, ever be overlooked.

One we have already focused on a good bit. The manifest presence of Christ, and in what I said about the Calvary Chapel when my wife and I asked what explanation to give, and one word, God. So every true revival, now there are lots of false revivals, but every true revival, it's God in the midst of his people.

But the second issue, and that is the issue that we've been leading to this morning, it has been mentioned but not dealt with, and that is the free flow of the Word of God, the running of the Word of God. Now listen carefully as I analyze. In terms of the manifest presence, there are things we can do.

Think again of the Luke 3 passage, preparing the way of the Lord. Think again of the James 4 passage, the seven issues that James brings to our attention. So we have a direct responsibility.

We can't make the manifest presence appear, but we can at least create under the power of the Word and the Spirit an atmosphere in which God is clear and able to come. But now we're thinking of this second great issue, the free flow, the rushing forward, the running, if you will, of the Word of God. There is nothing we can do.

A deeper repentance on your part won't make this happen. Following any of the steps we've already dealt with is not going to guarantee that the Word will run. The rushing forward of the Word is linked to one human responsibility, prayer.

Now join me in 2 Thessalonians. We're looking at chapter 3, a magnificent chapter. If we were intending to be here for a couple of weeks, I would have the privilege of opening it in its entirety.

But considering everything, I'll have to stick just with the first portion, 2 Thessalonians 3. Finally, brethren, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did with you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what is commanded.

And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. Our focus is upon the running of the Word of God. Now I don't know whether you have any sense of the consequence of this or not.

There's an awful lot of disadvantages in being old, and I won't review those. But there are also some advantages. And one of the advantages pertains immediately to this call for prayer.

Maybe you read it and it doesn't say much to you. But I read it and it says a great deal. I don't want to take but a moment, but I think it's just to remind you I was born in the northeast, was in a Presbyterian church at the time of my call to ministry at the age of 12, had an absolute certainty what I was called to do and to be.

And God has kept that alive for these 71 years. And because my dad, he was a layman, worked in a factory, but God had given him a sweet, tender heart. He had started a ministry in a poor house.

And very soon after my call, Dad said to me, one night you'll preach here tonight. And I did. But what I want to speak to you about is what I saw with my own eyes in those early days.

Having been born in the north for the first major portion of my life, my work was across the northern tier of the nation. At the time that I entered the formal ministry, I knew I would not survive as a Presbyterian because you cannot labor outside the bounds of Presbytery without permission, in other words. And I was sure they would never let me do what God called me to do.

I became a Congregationalist. And much of my early ministry was in Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Lutheran churches. Many of them appeared to be 100% dead.

Some of them seemed to be maybe 5% alive. I was called as pastor to a church in Portland, Oregon. When I went there, I thought there was possibly a Christian in the congregation.

I was mistaken. That person was not. But there was an elderly man who had been ill at the time and hadn't been in attendance, who did later on come back to health and was truly a believer.

So there I am, a young man, pastor of a church under Unitarian influence. I had already seen incredible seasons of the Word of God running rapidly. On the fourth Sunday when I preached, I saw tears.

I was sure on one face. I thought on the second. I hoped a single tear on a third.

At the end of the service, I said, there will be a meeting of inquiry at three this afternoon. Anyone who can no longer live without the knowledge of sins forgiven may meet me here. I really thought somebody would come.

Thirteen came. Eleven were gloriously converted over the next six days. What I found out was I couldn't counsel thirteen.

I just laid out some essential truth. I asked them, before they left, to make an appointment with me for half an hour, at least sometime in the next six days. I added, it would be much better if you came to tell me how Christ transformed you than if you came to ask me for help.

Eleven came with glorious stories of how the Lord had transformed them. Until their death, they remained faithful. One was a man with a French background, not a very bright man and his hearing, at least a little bit, hindered.

He got very angry. He said that I had told the congregation that no Roman Catholic would go to heaven. What I had actually said was, no Roman Catholic will go to heaven because he's a Roman Catholic, any more than a Protestant will go to heaven because he's a Protestant.

Christ and Christ alone is the way to heaven, but he missed the greater part. He was never, to my knowledge, converted. The one person I thought was a believer was among that thirteen who gave no evidence of being converted.

Now, I want to ask you, sweet people, do you think I was responsible for what happened? That was the beginning of a movement. Now, it wasn't quite exactly the Book of Acts, where day after day the Lord was adding to the church, but it was very close to that. Transformation after transformation after transformation within a relatively short time, a semi-unitarian church, a powerful evangelical movement growing and pouring out the blessing they were receiving from the Father upon the whole area.

It was God at work. So, when Paul is asking people to pray, he is saying, it is not now as it was, and I'm asking you to pray that it will be once again as it was. May I ask how many of you, you need not give physical response, but how many of you are praying that the Word of God will run like a mighty tidal wave of divine blessing? I have tried to give a good kick against the typical church prayer meeting that focuses upon the temple.

Oh, for a prayer meeting where every single week the whole of the congregation is pleading with God. Now, when our pastor stands in the pulpit this week, let the Word go forth like a tidal wave of blessing. That, you see, is always the mark of genuine revivals.

The Word flows with incredible force and power. I, as a young man, I've said, saw at least a bit of this. We were not in revival, but I saw churches transformed, and they had nothing to do with me.

I was nothing but a young fellow who had met the Lord Himself, who was given a burden, and who was doing his best, and his best wasn't very good at all, but it was God at work doing magnificent things, transforming lives, totally transforming entire churches. But today, well, it's been a very long time since I felt it appropriate at all to call for a meeting of inquiry. If any of you wonder what I think about altar calls and things like that, I'm not against them, but God doesn't lead me that way.

I see too much false response. I'm looking for something better than that. But the meeting of inquiry, when the Holy Spirit is at work, is a wonderful means that God may use.

But I'm not pushing anything except Christ and His manifest presence and the free flow of the Word of God. So let's look at this prayer and give it the kind of attention that God Himself will enable each of us to give it. I've got some notes, and I've got my text, and I'm not able to see.

If you think to pray for me, ask that the Lord will knock me on the head and eliminate me or improve my sight. I do have some things I'm really very much concerned to share, and I think you'll find them very useful. So now here is a prayer that the Word may spread in a gloriously rapid and wide and deep fashion.

Now just think of the wording of this passage, that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly. Try to cherish that in your mind. Get the feel of it.

Can you do that? Can you just think on those words? What would it be like if the Word of the Lord were spreading rapidly? Now listen to these words from Psalm 147 verses 12 to 15, just an extract. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! He sends forth His command to the earth. His Word runs swiftly.

Have you ever been around in a season when the Word was running swiftly? The multitude of translations give us some sense of the meaning. The King James says that the Word may have free course. The Revised Standard, that it may speed on.

The Phillips translation, that it may go forward unhindered. The New English Bible, that everywhere the swift and glorious course of the Word may be seen. The New International, that it may spread rapidly.

The literal interlineary, that it may run. The Williams, that it may continue to spread. The Beck, that it will run well.

The Confraternity, that it may hold its onward course. Think of that, holding its onward course. The Berkeley, that it may run its full course.

The Berkeley, that it may have the same splendid progress. The Today translation, that it may continue to spread rapidly. The Way, that it may spread uninterrupted.

The Wakefield, that it may continue running and gaining speed. The Jerusalem, that it may spread quickly. The Vulgate, that it may find no obstacle and hindrance in its onward course.

Oh, get the feel of that. Oh, to live at a time when the Word is running as a mighty flood. Is that silly? Well, you see the point of this prayer is Paul is asking them to pray that it will happen again as it was happening earlier in his own ministry.

The great apostle saw a waning of the running of the Word of God in his own ministry. We ought not to be surprised that things are not now as they were when I was a young man. But while we're not taken by

surprise, neither are we discouraged.

I think you can sense without my confirming it, my purpose is to urge you to pray as you never prayed before that the Word will run speedily. Some of you may preach and you can pray that your own preaching will be profoundly impacted that way. Others of you are good listeners, pray that the preachers you know may be mightily affected for good and that the Word will spread.

I have so many happy memories. I have been blessed in so many incredible ways. Soon after Maggie and I moved to the city of Wheaton, I was asked to teach a Bible class in a major church.

First, the oldest people in the church and soon another class, the university aides, and they were significant classes, somewhere around 120 in each class. So every Sunday morning I wasn't preaching out of town, I was teaching these classes. The elderly class was made up of a mixture, but 60 of those people had been members of A. W. Tozer's church in Chicago.

And after he left Chicago and went to Toronto, they moved westward into our region. And every Sunday these dear people were asking Maggie if she would fill them in on my schedule. And they were praying that the Word of the Lord would run rapidly.

And they were praying in all realms, for health, for safety, for the baptism of the Spirit. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to have people standing with you, praying their hearts out. Now we've got a lot of jargon today that nicely expresses Paul's prayer.

Let her rip, floor it, full tilt the head, go at it full blast, be all out, hit it hard, give her the gun, full steam ahead. We're having a real run. Well, you know the language, but think of it now in connection with the Word of the Lord.

You got the picture, don't you? Two great things in revival, Christ himself in the midst of his people and his Word running like a tidal wave of blessing. And as I've said in my own lifetime, I have seen this happen. But now we are in a season where the Word is not running as it has, just as Paul was.

And instead of joining those ridiculous people who are caught up in end times thinking, why not join the apostle Paul who are caught up in the Word of God spreading like a mighty wave of blessing. He's asking that the Word move forward unhindered. Now think of the hindrances that you know personally to this free flow of the Word of God.

There's a general atmosphere of apathy. I'm assuming that all of you have some church that you attend. Do you find that the people in your church are constantly manifesting hunger and desire for more and more and more of the Word of God? Well, thank the Lord there are churches like that.

I was in a church in Texas about three weeks ago. It was a royal treat for this old man. Not a big church, I don't suppose more than 400 people all told, but about 300 in each of the evening services.

You've all seen pictures of the little birds in the nest with their beaks open and mama bird dropping worms. Oh, is it fun to preach to people who are there with their beaks open saying, give us more, give us more, give us more and taking it in and enjoying it and praising the Lord and saying, why was this only scheduled for four days? Why don't we go on and on and on? Hunger for the Word of God, the Word of God spreading with incredible power. But apathy prevents that.

Carnal indifference among professed believers is a huge hindrance. So many of the people are like the passage described it last night in the command, purify your hearts. A person with a divided heart has very little appetite for the Word of the Lord.

And then of course, another hindrance, the general unbelief and ridicule of the masses, those incredibly large numbers of churches that cannot quite believe in a God who created everything out of nothing. And they have to help the whole matter by devising novel ways of looking at creation and making God small enough so that with the help of their original thinking, we can understand how things came into being. And a lot of the theories that I hear would take a greater gullibility and imagination to embrace than the simple, plain truth, God did it.

And he could do it again if he wanted to. Have you considered that God could utterly eliminate everything that now is and in a moment make everything a thousand times more beautiful and glorious and gracious and wonderful than it now is? Just think about flowers. When you study flowers, is it not astonishing the variety, the flavor, the smell, the appearance, the whole thing? It's amazing.

But suddenly God destroys every flower and he got a hundred million flowers more glorious than those that were. So here we've got the Word of God just barely moving because there are so few that really believe. And there is in the church a spirit of pessimism.

Almost everywhere I go, there are pebbles of grief. It's never been so bad before. It's so bad it can't get any better.

Oh, thank the Lord. Christ is coming. He'll take us out of the mess.

Many a time somebody has said to me, I'm praying that Christ will hurry up and come. And I say to them, do you have any unsafe children? Yes. And you are such a reprobate that you're praying for deliverance from yourself and you don't care that your children are going to hell.

But the spirit of pessimism is so great that prayer for revival for the free spread of the Word is almost not there at all. Or the partial obedience. Think of the damage partial obedience has done to your own life in the past.

And think of the damage it's doing on every side at the moment. Or the lack of mighty prevailing prayer. Now in the book of Acts, the Word ran speedily.

Let me just ask you to note these passages. Acts 6 verse 7. The Word of God kept on spreading and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem. And the great number of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Or Acts 12, 24. But the Word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. Or Acts 13, 48 and 49.

When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord. And as many has been appointed to eternal life, believed. And the Word of the Lord was being spread throughout the whole region.

Acts 19, 20. So the Word of the Lord was growing mindfully and prevailing. Just exactly the opposite of today.

The number of churches that have reached that plateau and started in decline, estimated by some at 80% of all the churches in America. And the ones that are growing don't even have pabulum on the menu. Pabulum, infant cereal.

About all they got is a little straw. Not enough to nourish a squirrel. No squirrel could live on what they give.

And that's all. Now look, friends, I got to speak to this issue. Everywhere I go, warm-hearted, tender, gracious, earnest people are telling me how starved they are for truth.

Some of them attend prominent churches and yet they feel that they are on starvation diet. Will you think of this? The average preacher knows that he has an assortment in his congregation. Intellectually stupid people and brilliant people.

Morally, gross sinners and very nice. Spiritually, infants and mature. Most preaching is aimed at the lowest level.

And so all the serious preachers tend to be starving. All preaching ought to be aimed at the highest. Now just put it in terms of food.

I have been in countless homes where immense grace has been demonstrated. I have had so many banquets in private homes. I have had many a housewife when I thanked her for a magnificent meal say to me, oh well it's nothing we always eat every day in this home.

And I can tell by the look on her husband's face they haven't had a meal like that for at least three months. When we have a guest that we wish to honor, we may indeed go all out. Now look, if I aim at the highest level, does that mean that the lowest level will have nothing? But if I aim at the lowest level, that does mean that the highest level will have nothing.

All preaching ought to be aimed at the highest level. And those that want no more than a nibble can get it. And those that want the glorious feast of divine truth can flourish.

But that's not the way it is. It's exactly the opposite of that in most churches. Now we're talking about prayer this morning.

Praying that the word may run like a mighty flood. Will you start to pray for the preachers? That they will see how wrong it is to aim at the lower. And that they will begin to prepare banquet-like sermons so that all souls will be fed and flourished.

And if you will, let me ask you to think now why it is that the apostle says that the word will be glorified. Is it glorified when the word goes like a little trickle? A drop here, a drop there. Does not a mighty flood bring more glory to God than a drop or two? So here the urgent request, pray that the word will be glorified.

Now the old commentator said that it may have a triumphant career. Think of that. Isn't that a lovely expression? That the word may have a triumphant career.

I know we're not very good at this and we mustn't go to extremes in this direction, but think of our dear Lord on the throne in heaven. And in your church he sees a drop here and a drop there. And then in this church he sees a flood.

Which does he enjoy the greatest? Do you not see that in praying that the word will run as a mighty flood, you are asking that there will be a triumphant career for the word of God. That it will accomplish splendid and eternal things. Some of you know the name Leon Morrison writing about this passage.

He said Paul is not looking for a single striking manifestation of the word, but for the continuous swift advance and for its continual arousing of admirers. So we're not asking for a one time benefit, but that everything will be radically changed and that the word will continue to flow as a mighty torrent of divine blessing. And we know perfectly well the word is glorified.

When it results in true and lasting conversions. Most sermons don't produce any result. I can testify accurately about this because the average Christian is in decline.

Their moral commitment is less today than a year ago. Their joy in the Lord is diminishing. The impact upon sinners is negligible.

So when the word is glorified it results in glorious conversion of sinners. When the word is glorified it results in wonderfully advancing holiness. Have you been in the service when you said to yourself, I think I'd have been better off if I stayed home today.

And you've been in the service when you've been almost bursting with joy. I heard a sermon a couple weeks back that just thrilled my soul. And I thought, oh praise the Lord.

We drove a long way to hear that sermon. Wow, I would have been worth a hundred miles, a thousand miles to have heard that word of the Lord. For sanctification was soaring as a result.

And the truth is still with us. Pray that the word may run because when it runs it transforms not only individuals but society. Wouldn't you like to live at a time when there was a committed Christian president of these United States? When all the ungodly laws that have been passed were thrown out and the nation once again committed to the Lord God Almighty.

And then personalize this matter. Think of what it would be like in your own personal life if the word of God were running in the way Paul is asking us to pray. Think of the impact of the word flowing with great rapidity and depth in your own family.

Those I mentioned earlier with unsaved children, others with grandchildren, others with parents, others with cousins, aunts and uncles far from Christ. Think of the impact of a running word on your neighborhood. My dear friends who have been so graciously entertaining me this week.

On our way here this morning we three were speaking about their relatively new home. You know these have been married three months and they've got this small home. And they were telling me how warm and friendly the neighbors were but it didn't go beyond that.

They don't have neighbors coming and saying we understand you're Christians can you tell us how to find Christ. But think of living at the time when your neighborhood is so aroused that every day you've got people in your backyard and in your front yard and at your door and in your living room and in your kitchen asking can you help me. I've got to have help but got to know how to have my sins forgiven.

I can't live without the knowledge of my soul being right with God. What a picture. Oh keep it in mind.

And what about the place where you work? Or the school that you attend? And what about your church? Imagine your church as a place where day after day after day the word is spreading with such incredible force and power and depth that transformation after transformation becomes so vivid so lovely that your soul is running on thrill all the time. And then what about your region? Oh this is a beautiful area of the country but one doesn't get the impression that God is mightily at work here. You know during the season of revival in Boston ships coming from distant places approaching maybe about the 20 mile mark away from the city and the sailors falling on their faces in tears.

Barely enough men still functioning to guide the ship into harbor and as soon as they were anchored pleading for someone to come and help them to get right with God. I was talking with a pastor some time ago who saw a season in his own area and he said to me it was absolutely incredible. We're on a relatively busy road car after car after car stopping pulling into the church lot the people coming in something something is happening I don't know what it is but I got to have help can you help me to get right with God.

Total strangers even people from a distant suddenly arrested the free flow of the word. And then our pathetic nation I'm too old to care for myself but I've got six grandchildren they're raised in a Christian home but the influences around them are so evil unless God does a mighty work. Oh and the world itself but if I may let me ask you would you mind me speaking you personally? Imagine the word of God running with such speed in your own life that it was absolutely glorious that never before in your life did you have such a glorious walk with Christ week after week after week after week.

Can we not each personalize this and enjoy just the thought and ought not the enjoyment of the thought push us to mighty prevailing prayer that the word of God will once again run with great power. All around us are those who twist and pervert and try to prevent but within us is the great and awesome God in the power of the Holy Spirit pushing us to mighty prevailing prayer for the free run of the gospel like a flood.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/58bsgh04hOQ.mp4>

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