

Revival - Part 2 (June 2002)

by Richard Owen Roberts

Richard Owen Roberts discusses the critical need for revival in the church, emphasizing repentance and the return of God's presence.

Duration: 28:21

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the pattern found in the book of Judges where the people of Israel repeatedly sin, fail to repent, and are brought under God's judgment. When the judgment becomes unbearable, they cry out to God and He raises up a deliverer. The speaker applies this pattern to the current state of the church, suggesting that the church has sinned and failed to repent, leading to God's judgment. He also mentions a shocking statistic that a large percentage of the evangelical church may be lost. The speaker concludes that true transformation can only come through revival, which he defines as a powerful move of God's Spirit that brings repentance and renewal.

Transcript

We're back for the second half of Springs of Living Water. We're speaking with a dear pastor, a preacher, a Bible expositor, Richard Owen Roberts. And brother, your experience and what you're describing is so enlightening, but also so terrifying.

Yes. And many of you who are listening, if you would like to join us and ask a question or if you would like to ask for prayer for the breaking of this kind of bondage, cheap bondage, cheap theology, cheap grace. If you would like to ask for prayer today, if this conversation brings the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, you're welcome to call and we'll stop and we'll pray because the reason we're here is to lift up Jesus Christ.

Yes. We're here to lift up the cross. That's the only reason we're sharing this with you.

And you can tell from our guest, it's really our brother in Jesus, you can tell that he's just pouring out his soul and his heart. And I just want him to go on and on because it's so wonderful to hear the perspective that he has seen. And I just know that the listeners are just like I am, all ears.

Yes. Our telephone number is 1-877-534-0780. And you're welcome to join us on air with your questions or with your request for prayer and intercession for the situation that you're facing and the sin that has caught you.

We want today for the delivering power of the Holy Spirit to touch your life. Well, you know, the shocking thing that I heard Pastor Robert say was that there's, and he doesn't say that it's a statistic that he has heard verified, but to even say that 50%, but he quoted 70% of the evangelical church today are as lost as Satan himself. That's so terrifying to me.

It just goes to the core of my heart and I'm just saying, Lord Jesus, what must he think when he looked at this body today? Yes. This brings us to the question that is really on my heart. As we look at this situation, I recognize that there's no way this broadcast or the National Prayer Chapel or any other church is going to bring the transforming power of God to this city.

We're absolutely unable to do this. It's going to take something that you call revival. Would you describe for us what revival is? Yes, it was great joy I would do so.

Revival in its very essence is God. Now, I have made mention of the fact when God is grieved with his people, they've sinned and they will not repent. He may withdraw his manifest presence.

That I believe he has done from the churches in America. The church is then faced with two options. Number one, let's not notice what happened.

Let's go on as if all is well. We know how to do church. We don't need God.

God, in fact, often gets in the way. I've had a pastor say to me not long ago the reason his church did not have a prayer meeting was they had found that prayer meetings got in the way. People waited on God to do something, which they were perfectly capable of doing themselves.

That, I think, is essentially what's happened. Instead of the church falling on its face before God and crying out in repentance and intercession, oh God, we can't live without you. Please, please return.

The church has just gone right on and has not even felt the absence of God. Now, revival is, as I just said, God. Prior to all the revivals of Scripture, and indeed as far as I am able to tell, every revival in history, there has been some form of righteous judgment from God, and most often that righteous judgment has been withdrawal of his manifest presence.

When that happens, wise, truly sober, godly people say we can't go on. We must have God. This happened many, many times in America.

I mention these past days, time after time. All the people in this country shut everything down, closed the stores, closed the factories, closed government offices. We have numerous records, indeed, of Congress itself adjourning and going together to church to seek the face of God and plead with God to return.

And a revival is exactly that, a return of God to his people. In Psalm 80, there is a marvelous statement about revival. The whole chapter really deals with revival.

But the prayer that's repeated three times, Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. A revival is a time when the people of God who have gone so far from him that they can't find their way back, but they can still fall on their faces and plead with him, and they do so, and God does

exactly what that prayer describes. He turns them again.

He turns himself again. And when a turned people and a turned God meet, that is revival. And, of course, the outward manifestation of this is holiness.

In revival, there is an awesome sense of conviction concerning sin. The holiness of God rises before the people's eyes. They feel more deeply than ever in their experience their own sin, and they are blessed with gifts of repentance that exceed any repentance they've ever known.

They turn with all their hearts to the Lord. Holiness grips them, and it begins to flow so that revival essentially has two parts. What we would technically call the revival, which is in the church among God's people when they come fully alive to the holiness of God, and then the outflow, which we call the awakening, where the world is suddenly arrested.

The world says, what's going on? Look at these people. They've called themselves Christians for years, and we've said we don't believe in Christianity because we don't believe in them. But now look at them.

Look at how they love one another. Look at how they love righteousness. Look at how they make restitution for wrongs they have done.

Look at how they reach out and help others. Look at how their sense of justice grows. There's something here we're not going to miss.

And so the world comes flocking then to discover what has turned Christians into God-like beings. And that's what we're about. That's what the gospel is about.

We just can't make it. We can't make it without this happening. Let's go back and take a phone call.

We have a question. Hi, Wayne. Welcome to Springs of Living Water.

How are you doing, Ray? Good. What question would you like to ask Brother Roberts? I would ask why is the church taking in the worldly type music on the radios and TV and so forth like that? It's worldly music. They put the name gospel, like gospel rap and gospel this and gospel that.

And the book of Ezekiel is nothing new under the sun. That's my question right there. Okay.

Wayne, listen to the radio and he'll answer you. Well, when God has brought the church under judgment and he's not there himself in any manifest way, and yet the church won't face that fact and won't fall on its face, as we said, and plead with him to return, and yet they want to go on with church. Well, then why not join the world? Bring in everything under the sun and give it a little religious flavor and say this is Christianity.

See how delightful it is. See how much fun it is. See how much like the world we are.

You don't have to think that if you become a Christian, you're going to be separate or different or people are going to dislike you. No, no. Join us.

We in the world are one in the same. And that's what's happening to us. Sad scene, isn't it? It really is.

Oh, this breaks my heart. You know, part of what has happened in my own life, I was trained in seminary, the marketing skills necessary for building a business. Yes.

And I was taught that I was a coach or a CEO and that I dare not spend a great deal of time in my study because the people needed their needs met. And my job was to administrate all of the programs of the church to meet all of the needs of the people. Yes, many a pastor has been led astray in that fashion.

But here in my mind is a remarkable thing. I have been engaged in ministry for well over half a century. In the early years of my ministry, we never faced a counseling situation.

We knew nothing about psychologists or psychiatrists in the church. The word of God met the needs of people. Yes.

They were liberated from their sin and they found that they had a whole life that made sense in Christ. But as the church grew more and more careless, the sin mounted up in the church. Then we have really what Jeremiah described in these immensely impressive words.

You have healed the daughter of my people superficially. Yes. And so we are dealing with innumerable millions of people in the churches who only know service type of healing.

I thought of it this way. If your mother were gravely ill and time after time you had sought to get her to consult a physician, you began to suspicion she had cancer. And finally the whole family got together and marched on mother and said, Mother, we're taking you to the emergency room.

And so you did. Yes. But as you arrived at the hospital, your mother insisted she was going to walk in on her own despite her great weakness.

And in trying to do so, she fell over into a hedge of rose bushes with thorns and she received many scratches. But you managed to get her out of the thorns and into the emergency room. And immediately the whole core of medical people concerned themselves with the scratches.

And after working on her for 45 minutes, they said, Ah, now all is well. And send her home. Yes.

And that, I think, is what happened to millions of the church. Their scratches are being bandaged. But their deep inner wounds are untouched.

Yes. Because they do not know the Lord. They've never come either to repentance or faith.

Let's go to another caller. Freddie, welcome. What would you like to ask? Yes.

I have actually two questions. One is, I wonder why is it so hard for us to repent? Why is it that generally there is no desire for us to repent? Whenever I talk or say something about repentance to other Christians, it just seems to scare and frighten them away. And not only that, I recognize that even in my own heart that it always seems so hard.

There's always this resistance that rises up in the heart and just doesn't want to repent. That's one question. Freddie, let him answer that one.

And while he's answering it, turn your radio down. Okay. Thank you.

All right. That is a significant question and one that I wish the whole church all across the map would raise. There is an immediate relationship between my view of God and my repentance.

If I'm using God, if my interest in God is to get him to do something for me, if in other words I have never really been saved from self, if my notion of salvation is that I'm saved from hell but never from sin, then I'm going to work things to my advantage. I'm going to want to repent no more than I have to to get what I want. But on the other hand, if my great interest is God, if the whole focus of my life is God, then my relationship to God is not to get something out of God but to give something to God.

And what I would be giving to him is love, adoration, worship, obedience. So if a person has a low view of God, they're going to have a terrible struggle with repentance. The higher their view of God and the greater their longing to honor this great and awesome God, the greater the inward prompting toward full repentance will be.

And so if one finds that they have very little inclination toward thorough repentance, then the biblical advice is quite clear. Get a higher view of God. I think a lot of people who call themselves Christians and do read their Bibles, now we've already spoken of many who don't even read them, but many who do read their Bibles would be wise to call a moratorium on all selfish use of the Bible.

Instead of going to the Bible to find some little pink tablet to make me feel good, some little pick-me-up medicine, some nice sweet little promise to make me like myself and my world better, I should just simply cancel all that use of the Bible for a protracted period and every single day use my Bible to discover who God is. Until I have such an awesome sense of God that I cannot possibly repent sufficiently to please Him. I'm deep driving motivation toward repentance.

Brother Roberts, what you're saying is so cutting to my heart also because I recognize that the greatest sin of my life has been my training in entrepreneurial philosophy. That somehow I should be able to use the Christian faith to get to heaven. I should be able to use God to build a successful church.

In other words, I'm trying to use, and I have had to just turn aside and repent of that and go a long way the other direction and say I would rather fail than risk using God to build my kingdom. Right, yes. That's the way all of us need to be.

Constantly under the profound determination to focus solely on God. Freddie, come back with your second question now. Are you with us? Hello, Freddie, did we lose you? Hello? There you are.

Come back with your second question. Yes, my second question is, I've been reading Charles Finney and one of the things that he seemed to insist on was make yourself a new heart. And I think that's from somewhere in Ezekiel where God said, told people to change, to make for themselves a new heart.

So, in other words, he seemed to say to people that it's your responsibility to change. You make yourself a new heart. Don't ask God to do it for you.

And on the other hand, I was also reading Pastor David Wilkerson in the New Covenant Unveiled and he also from somewhere in Ezekiel puts an emphasis on the Lord saying, I will put in them a new heart. I will make for them a new heart. And I realize that these are like two sides of the same coin.

And I wonder how do you bring the two together? Well, because you've used names, I'm going to have to do the same. And to say, and I say this courageously but very, very carefully, there have been historically since the early 1800s in America, two very, very different views of God, the Bible, and especially of revival. One is a man-centered view.

The other is a God-centered view. In all the early days of American history when we were seeing revivals with such power and such frequency, they were God-centered. But when Mr. Finney arrived on the scene, with no biblical background, no real understanding of these things, but a very profound personal conversion, he took a different approach.

He said that the high view of God, the constant focus upon God, had ruined religion in America and had brought the nation to the point where there were no revivals. And so he redefined revival, and in essence said revival is nothing other than the right use of the right means. And in essence what he said was, anytime you want a revival, you can have a revival.

So we then had to have some new language to distinguish these two views. So we had these words, revival and revivalism. Now, Finney is the founder, the father, the promoter, the main spokesman of revivalism, whereas the rest of the church prior to Finney stood for revival.

And that's partly why he made this tremendous focus on you must create for yourself a new heart. But the other men who have a saner and a broader and a more complete view of scripture place the emphasis upon the new heart that God gives us all, I quoted a few moments ago. Turn us again to God.

Now obviously all of us are called upon to repent. But it is possible for any Christian to sin to that point where they cannot turn themselves back to God. And as deplorable as the situation is, it is not hopeless because God can do what they cannot.

And that's really the answer to the question that has been asked. How do you put the two together? Well, to whatever extent one can change their own heart, they ought to. But it's quite obvious that we reach that point where we can no longer make a new heart for ourselves.

Every time we're tempted, we have a choice. Will I go God's way? Will I go my way? Will I do what the new heart calls for or will I do what the old heart calls for? But the nature of sin is that it becomes like a habit. It develops calluses on the heart.

And the person who gives themselves to sin repeatedly discovers they can't turn themselves. They can't make a new heart. But God can.

And when in desperation they call upon Him, then indeed the new heart comes. The book of Judges is a wonderful, wonderful illustration of these matters. I don't know whether you've ever studied the book of Judges from this perspective.

But in chapter 2 of Judges, there's a very careful laying out of a pattern. And the pattern consists of these essential factors. The people were in right relationship with God.

That'd be number one. Number two, they sinned. Number three, they did not repent.

Number four, God brought them under judgment. Number five, when the judgment was so severe, they could not stand it any longer. They called upon God.

Number six, when their cry was out of desperateness, God heard their cry and He raised up a deliverer. You have from chapters 3 to 16, seven repetitions of that pattern. They sin, they don't repent.

God judges them. The judgment becomes so oppressive, so heavy, so difficult. They cry unto God.

When their cry is from their hearts, God answers, raises up a deliverer. And the situation, you know, in summary here in this country, is we have sinned as a people. I'm speaking of the church.

We have not repented. Again, I'm speaking of the church. God has brought us under judgment.

And we said, oh, we can handle that. But the day we pray will come when the church says we can't handle this. We must have God.

And the church begins to cry from the bottom of its heart. We are out of time. We thank our brother for being with us.

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