

Revival Theology

by Richard Owen Roberts

Revival is a time when heaven draws closer to earth, bringing people to a deeper level of repentance, holiness, and a genuine experience of God's presence.

Duration: 1:56:24

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 64:1

Topics: "Holiness", "Revival"

Description

Richard Owen Roberts emphasizes the critical need for revival in the church, expressing his distress over the lack of longing for God's presence among believers. He highlights that true revival brings the nearness of God, leading to deep repentance and a renewed understanding of holiness and the nature of sin. Roberts warns against superficial treatments of spiritual issues and calls for a return to a biblical understanding of God, emphasizing that revival is essential for genuine conversions and the progress of the gospel. He urges the congregation to pray fervently for revival, recognizing that it is a divine visitation that transforms lives and communities. Ultimately, he calls for a collective longing for God's glory to be manifested in the church and society.

Transcript

Am I right in supposing there are some here this afternoon who were not here this morning? Would you indicate that? Thank you. I appreciate that. Now, I had a reason for asking that.

I thought it was so, but I want to take just a very small amount of time to say to those who have come in for the afternoon session but weren't here this morning what it's in my heart to accomplish during this daytime session. The conviction that I have is that there are far too few people who care anything about revival, which is most amazing to me, because, as I said last evening, a revival is a time when heaven draws closer to earth than at any other time in human history. And I really have great difficulty understanding any believer who does not long for heaven, and, or, who does not long for that which comes closest to heaven, namely, revival.

But even knowing how disturbing it is that many do not long for revival, and knowing how unwise it is not to long for it, I'm nonetheless aware that even some who attend meetings like this have only sporadic interest in revival. Now, for many years I have led a prayer meeting for revival in Wheaton, Illinois. I don't know exactly how long, but approaching twenty-five years.

Now, it's a men's prayer meeting, and it's an early morning meeting at 6 a.m. If all the men who came to the prayer meeting at one time retained the burden and kept coming, the place where we meet would not be anywhere near, but in truth, it's larger than we meet, because there doesn't seem to be adequate staying power. People get stirred up, and they say, now I see the urgency of revival, I'm going to pray for it until God sends it. But they grow tired of it, or they get occupied with something else, and their interest strays, and they abandon their prayer for revival.

That hurts me, it greatly distresses my heart, and I wonder if they ever really understood even what we are praying for. Because if they understood, I say to myself, how could they abandon it? How could they cease to long? So my intent today has been to try, I trust through the word of truth and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to increase your longing for revival. So, this morning I took the time to demonstrate in a very brief fashion that the major issue of revival, which is always beyond the presence of God, our response to that presence in repentance has to be thought of in terms of sin, in terms of dead works, and in terms of departures from truth, or the promotion of error.

I want to speak more of the last of those three this afternoon. But then, using the book of Hebrews as an illustration, I took just a little while to speak in terms of what the general flow of the book of Hebrews is, and how it appears in two great portions, the wonderful doctrinal portions that elevate Christ above all else, and then the warning passages that keep insisting how dangerous it is to begin in the Christian life, and then to depart. And as I said to you in summary fashion, what Hebrews makes plain is that when one leaves their life of self, their life of sin, their life of religion, in the case of Hebrews, it's an epistle written to Jews, and what it meant was that they left the religious life of Judaism and embraced the Lord Jesus Christ and the new covenant.

And for them to have left Judaism, which as I said this morning was only a shadow or a type of the real that was to come, to have left that for Christ and then to leave Christ and go back to Judaism was the same as to leave everything for nothing. And again emphasizing that the nature of revival is that it's the nearness of God, heaven coming, as I said, close to earth. To abandon prayer for revival is similar to the problem detailed in Hebrews.

It's to be content with the less when the greater is before us as a possibility. And then following that presentation, I began using a series of words which have been utilized throughout history to describe revival, and the purpose in all of it was to quicken your heart and to deepen your longing so that by the grace of God you might reach a position that may be similar to my own. I know that individual Christians can survive without revival, but I don't want to, for I long for the nearness of God.

And I long for it not alone for myself or for the little ones of whom I spoke this morning, but for the glory of God. For nothing could bring God greater glory than to have a bow before the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. I don't need to tell you, do I, that at the present time we are seeing very few genuine conversions.

Now, granted, in some of the major or mass evangelistic crusades they are seeing lots of decisions, but statistics prove that of those that make decisions in these mass evangelistic endeavors, somewhere between 92 and 98 percent fall. In other words, taking again the book of Hebrews, they violate all that Hebrews stand for. They are led to believe that their decision for Christ saves them, but that's a lie.

Christ saves, not our decision. And there is no one whom Christ is saving who abandons Christ. And anyone who makes a good beginning, but there is no appropriate conclusion, is not saved.

Now, I'm going to come more to that, because I know it's a ticklish area. Someone sort of was asking me after the morning session, what do you really believe about the security of the believer? That's an appropriate question. I'm not going to take it up now, but it is my hope to be able to do so this afternoon.

For not to create division among us, we've got plenty of that. What we need is agreement on the great truth of Scripture. But let me take just a little while longer this afternoon to return to the words that I was setting in front of you, as I said, with a hope that they would lift your spirit and inspire you and create a deep longing within you.

I distinguished between the use of the term revival and awakening. I said a little bit about fire as a term that has been used in connection with revival. I talked just a little bit about the word fullness and indicated how marvelous it is when people are filled with the fresh graces of the Lord Jesus Christ in revival.

And then, as we concluded the morning session, I introduced the word glory and asked you to think and to realize that a revival is a time when the glory of God is manifested in the land. Now, here is another term that I would set in front of you. A dear man somewhere this week--I don't know whether it was here last night or at Kingston yesterday morning--we sang a hymn that this man wrote.

He gave as the final message of his life a message entitled, Revival is like Judgment Day. The man who wrote the hymn and whose final sermon bore that title was Dr. J. Edwin Hoare, a sweet and a godly man whom I had the pleasure of being associated with for many years. But get a hold of that expression.

Revival is like Judgment Day. Now, when I speak to you about revival as fullness or revival as glory, that's upbeat. But when I say to you revival is like Judgment Day, now that stirs a bit of concern and maybe even a borderline case of fright.

What are we in for when revival comes? Now, dear friends, even this is truly upbeat when you understand it. All of us, no matter how sincere we are in our walk with God, and no matter how faithful we have been in seeking to keep our confession of sin up to date, do find on occasion that there are hidden sins that are suddenly brought into the light. I well remember as a child a day when I was kept home from school because of sickness, and I sat by a window.

Now, my mother is still alive at ninety-nine, and by God's grace doing well. But my mother was an absolutely immaculate housekeeper. I'm not sure there ever was another mother in the world who was more serious about housekeeping than my mother.

I mean, she pursued dirt and dust as if they were holy enemies. But on the day I speak of, when I was kept home from school and I sat by a window, the rays of sunshine came through that window, and to my horror, I saw the filth in the air. It disturbed me greatly.

I thought to myself, not in my mother's house. Where could all this dirt have come from? I wonder what happened this morning to introduce this dirt. But it was only later in life when I realized there was no dirt introduced that day.

But what was already there? It was simply that the way the sun shone revealed what was there, which I had never realized was present before. Now, the nature of a revival is that it turns the light of God upon us in such a fashion that we see things that we didn't know were there, and things that are utterly horrifying to behold. Have you had the experience? Do you know what I'm speaking of? When you think your confession is as up-to-date as it could possibly be, when you're sure that you have turned from every

possible sin, and suddenly you become aware of something you didn't know was there.

For years, personally, I have preached against pride, used many passages of Scripture to describe pride as the great sin, the unforgivable sin. Which it is. How can God forgive the proud? The proud won't bow before God.

They won't break. Therefore, they can't be forgiven. And I had personally not only preached against pride, but sought with great care to be sure that pride was eliminated from my life.

Then one day, in the normal course of affairs, I was opening the mail, and there was a rather large packet, and I looked at the return address, and it was from one of the large denominations. I thought, well, now I wonder what they would be sending me. It was obviously personal.

It wasn't just some packet of form material. So, I wondered about it for a moment, and I proceeded to open it. And when I pulled the contents out of the envelope, I recognized immediately that it was a grouping of material that had been gathered together by this denomination on the subject of the Solemn Assembly.

Oh, I said, I'm grateful to see that this denomination has taken seriously this matter of the Solemn Assembly. I wonder what they have to say. So, I began to leap through the material, and suddenly, as if the Lord struck me in the head with a club, I realized what I was really doing.

I was looking through the material to see if they acknowledged that what they knew about the Solemn Assembly they learned from me. Now, it's a fact that what they knew they learned from me. That's a fact.

Because the leaders of this particular denomination were in a meeting where I laid out biblically the Solemn Assembly, and they said, that's it, that's what we need, that's the first time we ever understood corporate repentance. So, there was nothing wrong in the fact part of it that they had learned it from me, but that was not important. You see, what I was doing was searching to see if they gave recognition to me.

And immediately, I was overwhelmed with sorrow in the realization that the pride I thought I had dealt with was anything but dead. And I stuffed the material back in the envelope, and I got down on my face before God, and I said, I'm sorry, I'm grieved to discover that pride is very much alive. And I repented of it.

Well, I mentioned this morning that in the course of God's events, we sold our house last week and had to move. But in preparations for the move, I was sorting material in my office, and I pulled out this large packet, and I thought, oh no, not this. I'm not even going to be tempted to look inside of it.

I still don't know what's in that packet, specifically. And I'm not going to know until, by the grace of God, pride is more thoroughly dealt with than it's been thus far. You know what I'm talking about.

Well, revival is like judgment day, because the light of God's truth shines upon us at such an angle that we see things in our lives that are grievously wrong that we never knew were there before. And the nature of revival is that the church is brought to levels of repentance it has never before reached. Now, many of you know the statement out of Scripture, judgment must begin at the house of God.

And can we not say concerning our own lives, surely judgment must begin right here. Now, it is a fearful thing to be judged by God. It is a very, very disturbing thing to reach that point where, as far as you know, your confession, as I've said already, is altogether up to date, and then suddenly be made aware of some lingering sin you didn't even know was there.

It provokes great shame, it provokes great sorrow, it is deeply troubling, and yet it is urgently necessary. And so, although we fear the judgment of God in revival, we anticipate it. We long for it.

Is there anyone here who would care to say, I'm as good as I ever wish to be? Oh, no, is not part of the Christian heart a longing for more complete sanctification than anything we've yet known? I love that song that the old gypsy evangelist made popular, Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. All his wonderful passion and purity, O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine, till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. The longing of the Christian heart for holiness.

And how can one fail to long for revival knowing that revival is like judgment day, and it will move us to levels of holiness that we have never yet reached. And I know I spent a brief period of my life as a pastor, I know how I longed not only for, but in the lives of my people and in the life of my church. You share that with me, brother, that deep longing, never yet satisfied that true holiness will come.

Now, have you ever said, Oh, Father in heaven, will you quickly send revival so that we will know the judgment day of revival and holiness will speedily move forward in our lives? But then there are other terms. As I said this morning, so that I don't miss any of these great concepts, I've brought along a list here, and I have to keep consulting it. There was a time when I never needed notes, but since I've grown old, I have that diffugality that accompanies age of forgetfulness.

But dear friends, let's just think of a few more of these wonderful terms. These are terms that are both biblical, but they are terms that have been used throughout the centuries by the church in describing revival. Here's a precious term, outpouring and outpouring.

I used the term fullness this morning. In Joel, chapter 2, verses 28 and following, it will come about after this that I will pour out my spirit on all mankind, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams.

Your young men will see visions. Even on the male servants will I pour out my spirit in those days. And then there's a perfectly wonderful passage in Isaiah 64.

Some of you are familiar with it. Right now, when we look heavenward, do you not sense that it's as if heavy layers of black clouds cover the earth? But in Isaiah 64, the prayer is raised, rend the heavens and come down. And can't you, in your imagination, view not the little hands of an old man, but the mighty hands of the Almighty God, reaching down and rending the heavens, parking those dark clouds, and then outpouring his spirit upon the land, and outpouring? Oh, how we need an outpouring of the Spirit.

Oh, it's not that we're not grateful for former occasions when blessings have come to us. Many of us in our ministry have known days of great rejoicing, days of plentiful outpourings of the Spirit. I so often remember my experiences when I was in my twenties, and the powerful stirrings of the Holy Spirit that occurred, and the profound conversions that took place.

It seemed as if I scarcely knew anything in those days, and yet I preached with all my heart, and I saw congregations burst into tears. I can right now bring to the forefront of my mind the remembrance of occasions when entire congregations were bathed in white as they were wiping the tears and blowing their noses because the Spirit of God came down in powerful conviction. I can review in my mind marvelous conversions that took place in those splendid days.

But no matter what's happened in the past, we don't live there. We live in the here and the now. And as thankful as we are for every outpouring in the past, we desperately need an outpouring today.

I don't know of any denomination, I don't know of any local church where the need of revival is not very, very great. We sometimes even use the term Pentecost to describe revival, and appropriately so. But one of my favorite terms in connection with revival is the term power, power.

Who in their right mind would say that the church today is experiencing the power of God? Why, every thoughtful observer must know that indeed today God has held his power in check. He is reserving his great power. No matter what good things may be happening in your congregation, you most certainly must be wise enough to know that it is nothing in comparison with what God can do.

Now, I have seen some very touching circumstances in recent times. I have been in some meetings where very precious results have occurred. I won't bore you with the details of these sweet experiences of grace, but I will tell you that the finest thing that I have seen in my entire lifetime is nothing in comparison with what God can do.

God's reserves of power are absolutely matchless. And so when I think of revival, I think of God and his mighty arm. I think of God rolling up his sleeves.

I think of God manifesting his strength, his mighty power. I use these words, as I have been saying to you, merely to seek to stir up a longing that is deeper and more permanent than anything you've yet known. But here's a term you may not have thought of.

For many years in the American church, revival was described as the progress of the gospel. Isn't that unusual? The progress or the success of the gospel. Just think about that expression, the progress of the gospel.

Well, now, I've just alluded to this, but let me be more specific. While we are seeing some wonderful blessings today, from place to place, not always, not everywhere, but sometime, the blessings that I see are as nothing in comparison with the blessings I used to see. I am a Congregationalist.

I mentioned that not to promote my denomination, but for a few of you, at least, to give you a little understanding about me. Much of my early ministry was in churches that you would call liberal. Churches that had never had the gospel preached.

Congregational churches. And I would go as a stranger into a church, and I would begin to preach the gospel, and tears would begin to flow, and converts would come on the right hand and on the left. There were days when almost the book of Acts was being duplicated.

The Lord was adding to the church daily such as were being saved. Now, I could go to those same kinds of churches today, and they would look at me and wonder, where did this ridiculous oddity come from? What kind of a throwback is this? This is ridiculous that anybody who has any education could believe in such old-fashioned, outdated things. Nobody could describe what is happening today as the wonderful progress of the gospel.

The sad truth is, for every convert we make of the usual sort, the church takes two steps backward. For most of our converts are our converts. I'm sure some of you recall the story about T.L. Moody.

Someone observed a drunken bum stumbling down the street, and they confronted this bum, and he said, I'm one of Mr. Moody's converts. And so this person then went and confronted Moody. I just saw one of your converts stumbling down the street drunk, and Moody said, you're right, it had to be my convert.

It wasn't the Lord's convert, you can be sure of that. Well, many of our converts today are no different than before we met them. Some while back, I was speaking at a gathering of Pentecostal pastors.

In the state of Arizona. And one of them burst into tears soon after I started speaking. And the longer I spoke, the more he wept.

And as soon as I finished, he rushed up to me. He said, it was as if you had a flaming torch, and you applied it to my life. And my entire life went up in smoke.

I said, what are you talking about? He said, about a year and a half to two years ago, I read a biography of D.L. Moody, and I read that Moody had vowed to win at least one person to Christ every day. And I said to myself, well, if Moody could win one, I can certainly win two. So he said, every day for the last year and a half, I have led at least two people to Christ.

But while you were speaking, he said, I realized that of all those hundreds of people that I had led to decisions, I was not in fellowship with one single person. And it dawned on me they were my converts, not Christ's converts, because if they'd been Christ's converts, I would be in fellowship with them. I have pastors tell me we baptized 27 people on Sunday night, three weeks ago, and we haven't seen a single one of them since we baptized.

The wonderful progress of the gospel? No! The tragic decline of the gospel is the way we would describe today. But I used the expression this morning, salvation running as a mighty river. Can you get the picture of a season of revival when salvation rushes like a raging river and covers the land so that millions and millions and millions and millions are swept into the kingdom of God in true salvation? The wonderful progress of the gospel.

Now, no matter how successful you are in your ministry, and no matter how well your church is doing, can you not see a contrast between what is happening in the here and now and what ought to happen when salvation is like an unleashed flood? And doesn't that quicken your heart to long for a precious season of the wonderful progress of the gospel? And what would be the sense of being quickened to think in that direction and pray for nine months and then abandoning the prayer? But let me suggest another term. Very often in scripture--no, I'm going to go back again. I've just glanced at my notes, and I want to read several references from Acts.

Just in thinking of the progress of the gospel, just lay hold of these references. Verse 247, Now, the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had received the word of God. Acts 17, 11.

Now, these who were in Berea were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures to see whether these things were true. Dear friends, when you read the book of Acts, do you not see the remarkable progress of the gospel? And then, as I said before, you contrast that with today. And as one brother said as we were on our way to lunch, he felt like crying out this morning, Lord, do it again! Do it again, Lord! And is that not the spirit that ought to grip every Christian heart? Do it again, Lord.

We're not satisfied with what's happening in our day. We want to see once more the wonderful progress of the gospel. In other words, similar to fullness and similar to outpouring that is frequently used concerning revival, is the word rain.

R-A-I-N. Now, I suppose here in Seattle today, or in the Seattle region, nobody's pleading for rain. But although you have plenty of moisture at the moment, we don't have plenty in the church.

The church is dry. And it's not been dry for mere seven days, not even seven weeks or seven months, not even seven years would cover the period of drought. It's growing drier and drier everywhere.

You tell me one place where the rain of God is plentiful on the church here. Oh, I know we hear some boastful reports, but don't investigate, because if you do, you'll find out what's said isn't true. I spoke last night of Pensacola.

Well, I know something's happening in Pensacola, and they boasted that the crime rate was way down. But that's not what the chief of police said. The chief of police has reported that there has been a national decline in major crimes.

But that the decline in major crimes in Pensacola has been considerably less than the national decline. I don't want a revival that doesn't affect the crime rate. I don't see any point in it.

Every true revival that I know about has had an amazing impact upon crime. Some of you have read the brilliant stories of the revival in Wales, of which I spoke this morning, spoke of its weakness as experience-centered, but perhaps you have already heard these well-documented tales about what happened in Wales. Day after day after day, week after week, judges entered their chambers, and they laid a pair of white gloves on the podium.

Signifying there was not one single crime to be tried. Not one crime. The policemen in many parts of Wales had only one official duty.

That was to care for the vast crowds of people that were trying to get into the churches. And to see that the churches didn't collapse by taking in thousands more than they were built to hold. And because they had no duties in terms of regulation of crime, they organized themselves in gospel quartets and went around singing.

I believe in revivals that have dramatic impact upon crime. Now, not everybody will sound amen when I tell you that one of the other impacts in Wales was that the football matches, which drew thousands and thousands of people, couldn't be held. And there's one case of a huge football match, ordinarily huge, where three players showed up and four spectators.

And they had been running 20,000 or so at these matches. And then some of you heard the stories. They seem almost unbelievable, but they are, like gospel truth, the stories of what happened in the pits, the mining pits, where as a result of the revival, the ponies and the mules went on strike.

They quit working. The direct result of the revival. These mules and ponies had been driven by kicks and cursing.

And when the miner descended into the pit and came up to his pony and said, Pony dear, you and I are here to serve the Lord today. Let's do our best. But let's pray and sing a hymn before we start.

The poor animals were bewildered. They didn't know what to do. They had to be retrained to respond to humankind.

That's the kind of revival I'm praying for. A plentiful rain from heaven that takes this dry and parched nation and takes our withering and dying churches and causes them to blossom like the desert rose that has been watered. And if you think things are bad here in America, and they surely are, you should go with me on one of my periodic trips to the Principality of Wales.

Let me tell you what it's like there. There are seats in the churches for every inhabitant in the land. And not so many years ago, every seat was occupied.

But now, if you go into a typical village, we'll say population 8,000, you'll find 15 church buildings with seating capacity for the 8,000 plus the farming region about. And of the 15 churches, you'll discover 11 of them have the roofs caved in, the windows broken out, or they've been turned into bingo halls or club rooms or automobile garages. And of the 15 churches, four remain open.

One is the Anglican Church, the Church of Wales. There are five elderly women past eight years of age who attend service there once a month. One is the Presbyterian Church that lost all track of the gospel 40 years ago.

One is the Evangelical Church that two weeks ago had 28 members, the largest church in town, but last week a little band of mean-spirited Pentecostals split that church and carried five of the fable members off. And the last church is Baptist, and it's controlled by the Masonic law. I'm giving you a realistic picture.

Dear friends, cannot your heart feel the burden for the reign of God's Spirit upon the principality, even as you long for revival here? Do you know that in the history of the world there are but two nations that have been described as the land of revivals? America and the Principality of Wales. And both, both are withering and dying. Oh, for the reign from heaven.

A big part of your prayer life is the pleading for reign. How heavy upon your heart is the longing for the showers of blessing and the plentiful reign of God. Another term that we referred to this morning, but in a little different connection.

When we're talking about revival, we're talking about reformation. Now, I want you to understand it's possible to have reformation without revival, and it's possible to have revival without reformation. But what we desperately need is a revival reformation.

We need the two together. I've been describing revival as God drawing near. A reformation is a time when grievous error is corrected.

I just said almost in passing this morning that we have erred terribly in terms of the great doctrines of Scripture. And I illustrated by speaking of the difference between decisional regeneration and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. We need a reformation.

How long did the Protestant Reformation of 1517 last? Who's going to answer that question? Dear friends, it's still burning bright. It's still very much a part of our lives. We need a revival that doesn't burn itself out in a few weeks, but a revival that touches our children and our grandchildren and our great, and our great, great grandchildren.

We need a revival reformation that turns our society back to God and restores the great doctrines of Scripture to the forefront of the life of the nation. Reformation. Have you been seeking a reformation? Do you understand the consequence of the reforms that are mandatory? Now, our home is in the city of Wheaton, Illinois.

That's about 30 miles from the heart of downtown Chicago. I don't go to Chicago except when I have to. It is a dangerous place to go.

There are areas of Chicago that no one in their right mind would enter if they're white. And there are other vast areas where you would be utterly foolish to go out after dark. In fact, in some of the hotels and motels in the area, there are signs warning people, don't go out at night alone.

If you must go somewhere, secure someone to go with you, preferably a police officer. We need reformation. There are people that can't come to church at night because they cannot leave their homes.

Now, maybe all is innocent bliss here in this area, but believe me, in large parts of America, crime is frightening, and evil is rampant, and oh, how we need reformation. Well, I'm nearly done. I think I have one or two more words I want to mention.

Let me just look at my list. Refreshing. In Acts 3.19, Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Now, I want to speak with utter candor to you. I feel like a tired old man. I'm not going to quit, by God's grace, as long as I have an ounce of strength left, I'm going to invest it in the work of the kingdom.

But I could sure use a refreshing. My, my, my, my, how excited I get just at the prospect of a season of refreshing. Does that touch you? Do you feel the need? Have you been praying fervently? Oh, God, send us a time of refreshing.

Another word that I love in connection with revival is the word visitation. A revival is a visitation. Now, I know that we don't all understand the like these matters.

I know some of you are not very literate biblically. You've never been very sincere in your study of the Bible. Some of you are still making a colossal mistake.

You are using the Bible to fortify yourself. But the real purpose of the Bible is to bring us into contact with God. The Bible is like God's autobiography.

It is God's unfolding of his own heart. And everyone who has used the Bible aright has come to understand that God hates sin and withdraws wherever sin prevails. We need a visitation.

We need God to rend the heavens and come down. Pastor, would you be angry if God visited this place? Wouldn't that be lovely? And what are the visitations of God apt to look like? Well, we all believe, I hope, in the God of infinite variety. He can do anything he pleases.

But I want to tell you one of the most delicious, one of the most lovely visitations of God that I have ever experienced. Have you ever been in a situation when, as the Word of God was being preached, a silence descended on the congregation? Now, in normal settings like today, you are listening, you are courteous to me, you are attentive to the things of God, but you don't hesitate to wiggle. To shift your position, to get comfortable.

Here's a sister that's just rolled her shoulders a little, I say that not to embarrass her, to say that's normal for all of us. When in a normal meeting, when we're seated, why, we do what's necessary to increase our endurance so we can go on listening attentively. And sometimes there are sneezes and coughing and nose blowing and eye wiping and all kinds of things that are normally going on.

I am asking, were you ever in a meeting where a holy hush fell, where it became so perfectly silent that even a pin drop would sound like thunder? I have seen some occasions when after I finished preaching and sat down, nobody moved. Whoever was presiding didn't dare stand up and close the meeting. I was in a situation a while ago where this holy silence, just overwhelming, it wasn't a large group, maybe 600 or so, just a holy silence.

And after a period of time, and during times like this, you don't consult your watch. I mean, it's about the last thing you would think to do. So when I estimate time, that's all I'm doing, is estimating time.

But I'm thinking of this occasion when I suppose maybe twenty minutes passed after I sat down. There was not a cough, not a perceptible sound of any kind. Total silence.

Stunned silence. And then someone apparently got antsy and thought they could help the Holy Spirit out. Someone seated somewhere in the audience, and they stood up and started a praise chorus.

And they got out maybe three measures, and then it sounded as if God choked them. It died right there. And the silence was there again.

Many people said to me afterward, and long afterward in some cases, Now I know what the visitation from God is like. For the words that were spoken were undisturbed. And I sat there in the utter silence, and the word that I heard entered my heart and altered me.

Now, you know what happens to us usually before this amen is pronounced. Some of us are visiting right in the pew. And what we're visiting about is not the Lord or anything to do with the service.

But we're going for a picnic this afternoon. What are your plans? And what about the football game last night? Did you enjoy it? Visitations from God, where we sit in utter silence before him. I know that some of you are Pentecostals, and I don't want to speak indelicately, but I do want to warn you of your own danger.

I was in a charismatic Lutheran church in the Northeast, and one of these strange silences descended. I don't know how long it lasted. I would judge maybe 30 to 40 minutes, when there wasn't a sound.

And then some woman stood up, and she used these formula words, I the Lord say unto you, and she proceeded with what she thought was a word from the Lord. And then the place broke into bedlam after maybe 10 minutes of this noise. The Lutheran pastor, adorned in his turnaround collar, came quietly down the side aisle of the church, and he stood in front of the congregation.

And it took him a while, but they realized, uh-oh, pastor's standing up front, quiet. So the place settled down. And then he said to them, for the first time in my life, I have come to understand the nature of a true visitation from God.

Utter silence. Never, he said, in my life was there such a profound awareness of the manifest presence of God. And then, to your shame, you behaved yourself like people who didn't even know there was a God.

He then proceeded to give them the most profound and stirring rebuke I ever heard a pastor give to a congregation. And they felt the sting of his rebuke. And again, that holy silence descended.

Now, I preach from about 8 in the morning until 10. The first period of silence might have run up to about 10.30. His rebuke might have occurred about 20 minutes to 11. The second period of silence came about a quarter to 11.

I was scheduled to preach in another state that afternoon and was picked up at 12.30. And so I slipped out to go to the next meeting. But the entire congregation just sat there silent. A divine visitation where men and women conducted business with God at a level they had never conducted it before.

Oh, I long for many such visitations as this. Do you? Or would you prefer noise and excitement and fanfare and confusion? I'm wanting to say to you that it's very difficult in our day to identify what is of God and what is of the flesh. But I can tell you very plainly, no flesh can force a congregation of hundreds to absolute silence.

If somebody said, Mr. Roberts, I'd like to experience what you've just described, and if you will cause it to happen tonight, I'll give you a million dollars. It has nothing to do with me. There's no way I could make it happen.

It's when God visits his people. Well, I've said enough in that direction. Let me lead us in prayer.

Lord, we haven't always thought alike, we who gather here. We don't always appreciate the same things. But every Christian heart walks for you.

And we can courageously and harmoniously link our hearts with one another and ask for a revival that will be unmistakably your presence. Your power. Your outpouring.

Your fire. We are weary of what we do. We are weary of strange fire and human flesh.

And we long, we long for your presence, your gracious visitation. Will you stir this longing and deepen it to the point where nothing can satisfy save you, our God and our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ? So burden this body of believers that we will never, ever be content with anything less than the best that you give to your people. We have learned by our experience that your nearness is our greatest good.

And for it we plead in the holy, precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Now, I have ventured into some--oh, don't get in a hurry, brother.

My word. I imagine at 323 he's leaping up and ready to close the meeting. Excuse me, I didn't mean to embarrass you, brother.

I want to take a little longer this afternoon and to enter into a very treacherous area. Now, I've said a few little things that may have provoked some ill-ease in you, but that's all right. You need to be provoked.

But I want to take the remainder of the afternoon session to focus on the theology of revival. I've been really giving you this morning and thus far this afternoon something about the nature of revival. And now I speak of the theology of revival.

And please understand, despite my frail appearance, I'm not bereft of my senses. I know the prevailing view about theology. I mentioned already in this meeting how some say we mustn't mess with theology

because theology divides.

And I conceded the truth of that. And it's my conviction that we need the division that theology brings. We need the sheep divided from the goats.

But now, I want you to understand that there are--when we say theology, we're not talking about something man has concocted. We're talking about the scriptures, the word of God. There are certain truths that God has honored in the past, and those are the things I want to draw to your attention.

And I want to take just a very few moments to review things historically. In the early days of America, our forefathers held to the theology of revival, those great doctrines of scripture which made it possible for God to send frequent revivals. And I hope all of you understand there were tremendous revivals in the 1600s before this nation was ever founded.

Powerful revivals in the 1700s, again, before the nation was founded. Then the nation was put together and the constitutional documents drawn and so on in the latter part of the 18th century. And then again, there were powerful revivals.

There was a revival that began approximately 1792, and it came on wave after wave after wave after wave on into the 1830s. But in the early part of the 1830s, a whole new viewpoint was interjected into the American church. And some will be hurt and shocked and perhaps even maddened when I tell you that the proponent was Charles G. Finney.

Now, some see him as the patron saint of revival, but I must tell you he pronounced the death knell for revival in America. Every body, every group that has followed Finney's theology has been deprived of revival. For Finney's theology was unlike any theology ever developed before its time.

Now, just a few of you have read systematic theologies, and most of you have no particular reason to do so. I'm not urging you to do so. But every legitimate, systematic theology always begins with God.

But Finney's systematic theology began with man. Now, what I want to tell you is that we have had a major shift from a God-centered viewpoint to a man-centered viewpoint. Finney is thought to be the greatest revivalist in American history.

But what most people have never taken the time to understand is that Finney was converted in a season of great revival and in a place where revival was burning brightly. But he made a very gross error at the time of his conversion. He said the theology that prevailed up until this time destroyed revival, not even knowing that he himself was converted in a revival.

He then introduced this whole new system of theology, and a very high percentage of the Church has embraced it. And those of you who know and love history know that there has been no national revival since 1859. Now, that's a long time for a nation that had revival with great frequency.

Now, I'm not here to belittle Finney, though some of you would do well to rethink your own slim understanding of this matter. But I want to focus on the area where the changes took place, which have led to this terrible time in which we live, when the Church has lost its ability to be salt and light, and when evil is triumphing, so that those of us with little children, or in my case, grandchildren--I spoke of the grandchildren who'll be hanging on my knee, Lord willing, when I get home on Saturday-- one years of age, three years of age, five years of age, whose precious souls I feel heavy concern for. And not only just

because they're my own, but I look around in the services and I see the children and the young people, and I say, oh God, we must have revival for the sake of the little one.

Now, dear friends, I'm going to give you a list of things where we need to change the focus. And the first is God. God.

God! We have come to a very degraded view of God in our society and in our churches. This book, Reuben showed you, *The Salvation in Full Color*--now, this, as I mentioned to you, is not important, and I'm not pushing the book by any means. I'll let Reuben do that if his conscience allows.

When I prepared this book for publication, I kept saying to my wife, if what these sermons represent is Christianity, what is portrayed as Christianity in our day is garbage. There is a world of difference between the content of the sermons of this volume and the average sermon today. The contrast between the two is as great as the difference between chalk and cheese, or between chaff and wheat.

And the heart of the difference in the sermons is the view of God that is represented. Now, I want to urge all of you--I made an allusion to this, but now I want to be utterly specific. This book is only used when you are searching for some word about yourself.

You are not the center of God's universe. You were not created to feel good about yourself. God's plan and God's purpose in making you was not to give you a happy, satisfying life.

I don't want to hurt you by referring to denominational matters outside of your own bigotry. My family, soon after they were converted--that is, my parents--took us, as children, to a Presbyterian church. And as a child, I was drilled on what is called the Westminster Standards--the greatest doctrinal statement ever written.

And I remember, as a young boy, being forced to memorize what is called the Shorter Catechism. And I remember so well this particular question--what is man's chief end? And I remember every bit as well the answer. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Now, you were not put here to enjoy God forever, first and foremost, but to glorify God. That's the reason for our being. This book is not about you.

You are very incidental to the theme of this book. This book is about God. I have said to you that there is a theology of revival, and the first and the foremost theological issue is God.

Most of us worship and serve a God who is scarcely a half-inch bigger than ourselves. And I want to say to you, in language I hope you can't miss, that if you will allow yourself to entertain a low view of God, you are certain to entertain a high view of yourself. Now, I spoke earlier of pride.

There is only one substantial way to deal with pride, and that is to let God occupy his rightful position. When God becomes God in your life, there is no room left for pride. If you are proud in heart, you are stupid, because stupidity and pride are wed.

They cannot be divorced. It is absolutely asinine to be proud. What have you got to be proud of? Your beauty? Well, there are many people more beautiful than you.

Your strength? Many stronger than you. Your wisdom? My word, come now, how can you be less realistic? What have we got to be proud of? We have much for which to be thankful, but nothing over

which we ought to exult in pride. But I repeat what I said.

If you maintain a low view of God, you will have an inordinately high view of yourself. If you have a high view of yourself, you're sure to have a grievously mistaken view of sin. And a grievously mistaken view of self and sin inevitably leads to a wrong view of salvation.

So we've got people today who think they're saved. They don't even know what they were saved from. Don't even know they needed salvation.

Don't even know who the Savior is. Don't have any interest in the world and the Savior. They think only of themselves.

Now, the most important thing that could happen in any church is for the pastor and the people to get serious about God. I meet people who say, I don't even like the God of the Old Testament. Oh, but I love Jesus.

There are certain fundamentals we have to face. How many gods are there, too? The God of the Old Testament, the God of the New? Or is there one God who's changed? In the Old Testament, he was mean and harsh, but he mellowed with age. He became sweet and kind and loving in the New Testament.

No, of course not. Our Bibles plainly declare God speaking of himself, I change not. We have got to come back to the God of the Bible.

I would like to make a suggestion for each of you personally. You may not have the grace to follow it. This particular Bible that I've been reading from is a New American Standard.

It actually was just a very cheap cloth-covered Bible that fell to pieces after I used it for a while. And my son, who is the manager of our bindery, put a leather binding on it for me. But no, that's neither here nor there.

I have a reason for mentioning this Bible. I love the King James. That's my favorite.

But I reached a point in my life where I said, I have got to give due attention to the God of the Bible. The King James is so familiar to me that I'm apt to misthink. I set it aside.

I got this cheap cloth-covered Bible, and I said to myself, now for the rest of my life, I'm going to focus on the God of the Bible. So systematically, time after time, I've been going through the Bible. One of the brethren at lunch asked me how I was pursuing my own Bible study at the moment.

Well, it really doesn't matter. I'm not asking you to follow me, but sometimes when we report things, they're helpful to others. At the present time, I'm in the book of Isaiah.

I began in Genesis some weeks ago, and I am making note of every time God registers displeasure with his creation. I've got a big file that I'm developing of all the words that are utilized when God manifests his displeasure. In short, I'm not asking you to do that.

In short, what I'm telling you is, this is God's book, and the first and foremost thing I ought to do is to discover as fully as it's possible to discover the God of this book. I ought to know everything about God that he says about himself. Now, I'm ashamed to admit that for years I had used the Bible that way.

But now, by God's grace, I'm determined. So, I'm going to make a specific suggestion. Get yourself a brand new Bible that has no markings, no passages, that you've already got your notes on and so on, and make a moratorium.

Say to yourself, I am not going to find one precious promise for myself. I'm not going to seek one word of encouragement. I'm not going to waste a moment focusing upon myself.

I am going to give an entire year to doing nothing but searching out the God of the Bible, because I want a true view of the God who shows himself in Holy Scripture. And one simple way to begin, you certainly don't need to follow this, but a simple way is to read through, and every time you come to the word, I, you discern whether it's God speaking about himself or someone else speaking. And if it's God speaking about himself, put some kind of a mark there, and say, now that's a passage I must meditate upon, because God is revealing something about himself.

If I was in control of all the creatures in the world, I would forbid all creatures for at least a year to speak even a single word of comfort from the pulpit to anybody. I would require them to preach for a solid year on the God of the Bible, doing nothing but unfolding God's revelation of himself. And indeed, if I were a pastor myself, I would preach on the God of the Bible until people began to quake in their purity.

You know that one of the most tragic things that can happen to a people is when they lose the fear of God. And that's happened to us, not only in our society, but in the churches. And so I'm urging you to return to such a use of the Bible that you know what it means to fear the Lord.

I could not emphasize that strongly enough. I might mention to you that if you study the subject of the fear of God, you'll find not less than three tremendous matters. First, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

We have millions in the churches who are unwise and cannot be made wise. They could listen to ten thousand sermons, but they cannot be wise until they fear the Lord. Secondly, the Bible makes it crystal clear that the only preservative against personal evil is the fear of the Lord.

You can work day and night trying to rid yourself of sin, but it's the fear of God that brings deliverance. And third, you will discover that the fear of God is the only true source of social justice. I mentioned this morning how greatly we needed a restoration of justice, a reformation even.

The fear of God is the source of justice. Now, just take for a moment of consideration our judicial system. It stinks.

It's ridiculous. A man can be seen committing a crime by twelve eyewitnesses, and thirteen years later they're still fussing around in the courts about whether he's guilty or innocent. Another man is charged with a crime.

There is not one eyewitness, and he's rushed off to jail. There is no justice in the land because there is no fear of God. How can a judge be just who doesn't fear the Lord? It's impossible.

Well, I don't need to labor the point. Would you place at the forefront of your thinking the realization that we need to return to right thinking about the God of the Bible? If I were a pastor, I would preach for weeks and months on the attributes of God. And when I had done everything there was to do on that subject, I would take up the anthropomorphisms.

Some of us don't even know what an anthropomorphism is. Now, I'm not going to fault you for that. But you know that God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

And yet God's hands are described, and his face is described, and his arms are described, and his feet are described. No, they are not meant to make us think that God has a face like we do our hands. Those are called anthropomorphisms.

But I tell you, there's something very powerful in calling a congregation to consider what the Bible says about the face of God. I mean, just think right now what it means, sir, to have God's face turn toward you in favor over against having God's face turned away from you. Our people don't have any sense of what it means to be confronted with an angry God.

Whose hand is at work against them. But now, I must move from that, because there are several things I want to quickly call to your attention, and already we are approaching that hour of four o'clock. Not only must there be a restoration of the view of God, but the whole issue of holiness needs to be restored.

I don't know if perhaps it was two or three years ago, I was invited to speak to a large gathering of ministers of the Church of the Nazarene. And it was a two or three-day conference, but in the midst of that, I had dinner with the president of the denomination, the superintendent, I don't remember his title, bishop maybe, whatever. And I said to him, sir, what percentage of the pastors of the Church of the Nazarene are holy? Now, if any of you know anything about the Church of the Nazarene, you know that it was established in order to restore holiness to the Church.

So, pastor or leader, I say, what percentage of the pastors are holy men of God? And what percentage of them are emphasizing holiness? He said, I don't think we have a holy man among us. We certainly don't place any focus on holiness. That's one of the holiness denominations.

No emphasis on holiness. We've got to come back to the realization that our God is holy and hates sin. We have people in our churches who love sin and can tell you the day and the hour they accepted Christ and are sure they're going to heaven.

They've never known a moment of holiness, not even a longing for holiness. They don't even know without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Have you contemplated those words recently? Very significant words, it appears to me.

Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. And then another doctrine that must be restored is the doctrine of total depravity. You see, the gospel is being presented today to people as if they had a little something wrong with them, and they need a little something to correct the little something that's wrong.

The biblical teaching and the standard of the Church for centuries was purely and simply man is shot through with corruption. He is totally unable to do anything acceptable in the eyes of God. He has no capacity, no will, no way of pleasing the Lord.

He is absolutely and totally rotten and corrupted and depraved by sin. Most people don't even believe that. And yet that was the standard doctrine of the Church for centuries.

Maybe some of you don't know that you are totally corrupt. You have no ability in and of yourself whatsoever to please God. To talk about revival that doesn't include a restoration of the theology of God, a restoration of the theology of holiness, a restoration of the theology of the total depravity is to speak

foolishly.

What good is a revival that is still wide of the mark, still missing the purpose of God, still spraying from the truth? I said this morning, and it bears repeating this afternoon, when we talk about repentance, we're talking about repentance from sin, repentance from dead works, and repentance from wrong theology. It may be some of you need to repent, because your view of God is wrong, because your view of holiness is wrong, because your view of depravity is wrong. In the book of Jeremiah, it speaks about the grievous error of having healed the wound of the daughter of my people superficially.

Let me give you a little illustration. Suppose that while we're together, at least some of us this week in various places, you're walking along with me, and we come to a place where the walk is lined with thorn rosebushes with thorns. Suddenly you see me stagger, and I fall into the thorn bush of roses, and I'm punctured in several places, bleeding, and so you're greatly agitated and aroused.

We've got to care for this dear brother, and so you rush me to a clinic, and I'm taken right in, and the doctor says, I can tell by the complexion that you're dying of cancer. So, he busies himself with the treatment program of cancer, and you just took me there because I'm punctured. But let's reverse that.

Suppose that it isn't me, but your dear mother, and you know that she's dying of cancer. And so you arrange an appointment at the doctor's office, and you have to help her along the walk, and suddenly she's the one that topples over into the rosebushes and is punctured by thorns. You get her into the doctor's office, and the doctor says, oh, these terrible wounds, and he begins to treat her for the punctures, and you keep trying to say, doctor, I believe my mother's dying of cancer.

Oh, he said, we got everything under control, and he cleans up the puncture wounds. You see my point? It's possible to wrongly treat people, and I believe there are many in the church who are dying of cancer, and we're treating them for mere puncture wounds. Let me repeat the words from Jeremiah.

You have healed the wounds of the daughter of my people superficially. I say to you, there are multiplied millions in the churches who have never been healed of the depravity of sin. They have been treated for superficial wounds.

It may well be that some of you are guilty of administering superficial treatment. And again, I say, repentance is needed. It is absurd to apply the balm of Gilead to someone who doesn't know they're sick.

They, as a whole, do not need a physician, said our Lord. But those who are sick, we have millions in our churches who do not know that they are shot through with the cancer of sin, and we put a little Band-Aid on their elbow where there's a scratch, and they have never known the healing of the great physician in the soul. There are other doctrines.

I alluded this morning to the doctrine of regeneration. I distinguished between decisional regeneration and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. A few weeks ago, I had an experience that will long distress me.

It was the result of something lovely that had happened a year or two before. I had been teaching a course in one of the theological seminaries, and one of the men who was in this course was a black man who was pastor of the largest black church in the city, and he was obviously affected. He said repeatedly, I never heard things like this before.

I never knew that those matters were in the Bible. Anyway, to shorten the story, he called some time after our experience in class together, and he said, would you be willing to speak to my denomination? Well, I said, if we can agree on dates, yes, and we were able to. So, a few weeks ago, I went to the national gathering of this large black denomination and was privileged to speak three times, but they had a lot of other speakers from among themselves.

I was the only white man there, and one night, a very eloquent black man said he was going to speak on a nick-at-night experience. I thought, a nick-at-night experience? What's he talking about? Well, apparently he had stayed home one evening to gratify his daughter, who wanted to spend some quality time with her father, and her idea of quality time was to watch television, and apparently there's some program on television for kids that's Nickelodeon or something. I don't know what it was, but he got this notion of Nick, and he was thinking about Nicodemus, and he said, I'm going to preach on a Nick-at-night experience.

He then proceeded to talk about Nicodemus in John chapter 3 as if he had never read the book of the Bible at all. It was perfectly absurd. It was ridiculous.

It was shameful. It was disgusting, because he kept saying, every one of you needs a Nick-at-night experience, and over and over. He was eloquent and powerful in the flesh, but it was anything but true.

And I thought, well, thank God I have the privilege of speaking three times, but isn't it all undone by this kind of nonsense? Well, I don't know. One always leaves matters like that in the hands of God, don't they? But now I mention that to say there is scarcely any part of the Bible more misused than John chapter 3. How many of you have used the story of Nicodemus to illustrate a conversion, to talk about conversion? Well, I hope you wouldn't dare to raise your hand, because I'm going to shame you if you do. You know the story of Nicodemus.

You know that he came to Christ at night, and you know that Christ said to him, Nobody can even see the kingdom of God if he's not born again. Surely no one can enter the kingdom of God if he's not born again. And he sent Nicodemus away, saying to him, If I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe, how could you believe if I told you of heavenly things? It is not the story of a man being converted, or born again, or whatever term you want to apply to it.

It's the story of a man who is darkened by sin, who goes away unchanged. We, every one of us, without any exception, was born dead. Now, some of you have been unwise enough to suppose that if a person will repent and believe, they will be born again.

But you don't see the absurdity of what you think and say. How can a person who is dead repent? How can a person who is dead believe? It's impossible. How can a person who suffers from total depravity do anything pleasing to God? The biblical doctrine of regeneration is that work of the Holy Spirit upon a person before they repent and believe, making it possible for them to repent and believe.

Our Lord used various means of expressing this great truth. He said you have eyes to see, and you cannot see. You have ears to hear, and you cannot hear.

You have hearts with which to understand, but you cannot understand. You have hearts of stone. You need hearts of flesh.

And the prophets tell us that the day will come when God will replace the hearts of stone with hearts of flesh, and when God will take away the deaf ears and the blind eyes. Do you preach, pastor, do you

preach the work of the Holy Spirit in making a dead person alive so that they can repent and believe? Now, just think about the passage itself. Jesus is likening the spiritual to the physical.

He's saying to Nicodemus, in response to Nicodemus's statements, Nicodemus says, is it possible for a man to enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? And Jesus makes it clear what is born of the flesh is flesh, what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. You must be born again. Now, what sense does it make to speak of the physical birth and to somehow parallel that with the spiritual birth, when in the case of the physical birth, the subject of the birth has nothing whatsoever to do with the birth? Are you following me? When you were born, what did you do? Did you conceive yourself in your mother's womb? Did you tell her what color hair you wanted, what color eyes, what type of physique, what kind of a brain you desired? Were you the one that did the advanced work? No, you were a subject of the birth.

You're not the one that provoked the birth. You're not the one that conceived the seed. You had nothing to do with any of that.

Now, I ask you, what sense does it make for Jesus to liken a spiritual birth to a physical birth and then end up saying we are born again as a result of repenting and believing, whereas in our first birth we have nothing whatsoever to do with our conception and our birth except that we're the subjects of it? Just use the head that God gave you. It was meant for more than holding your hat. What I'm saying to you is that in the Church today, people are led to believe that if they will repent and believe, referring to an instantaneous moment of experience, they'll be born again.

And it's not true. The new birth is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. He quickens the dead, and then that person who has been quickened hears the gospel, and now their ears are attuned to spiritual truth, and their eyes are open, and their hearts are tender, and they say, oh, wow, that's for me.

That's what I need. That's what I've been craving. That's the answer.

And they cast themselves upon Christ. Now, I must close because our time is up, but you get the sense of what I'm saying. I began this morning by declaring to you it is not enough to talk about repentance for sin.

And even when we introduce the doctrine of repentance from dead works, it's still not enough. We've got to repent of peddling falsehood and calling it truth. Now, suppose you come to understand regeneration in the way I've just inadequately described it.

What does that leave you to do? Well, there's one course open to those of us who are burdened for the lost, and that's prayer. I don't know how many come to your prayer meeting here, or your prayer meeting, brother, but I dare to say the number is far fewer than make sense in both cases. Be astonished if it were otherwise.

And I would suppose that the level of the prayer is remarkably poor in comparison with the extent of the need. But you understand when we see that our family, our sons, our daughters, our neighbors, our friends are utterly depraved, totally incapable of doing anything that pleases God, dead indeed in trespasses and in sin. And our one great hope is to get on our knees before our Father and say, Oh God, take away their stony hearts, take away their blind eyes, take away their deaf ears, enable them to hear.

Now, I've described revival as a torrent, as a rushing river, as a mighty flood. Do you not see the relationship of these things? As we are on our faces pleading with God, then suddenly God begins to work in powerful ways. But as long as we take initiative and put ourselves in God's place and pretend that we

can preach people into the kingdom or twist their arms and get them to make decisions that matter, we're not going to call on God as we are.

Well, I wish there was another hour, because there are a number of things it seems to me would be appropriate to add to what I've said. But still it seems to me we've had at least a limited dose of truth. And what are you going to do about it? Do you see this issue of revival as absolutely mandatory? How can we go on without it? Is it any wonder that Moses said to God, If you don't go with us, we're not going anywhere.

Wouldn't it be wise if in our church, in each instance we came to the decision, Lord, we played church long enough? Now we've got to have reality. And we're not going to march on with all our plans and programs. We're going to wait for your Spirit to come in mighty power.

Oh God, help us. We need thee. We have limped so long that we now perceive of limping as if we were walking well.

We have made substitutes for the absence of your Spirit with such frequency that we no longer are burdened as we want to be. Oh, by your grace and mercy, will you overwhelm each of us without exception with a gigantic unceasing longing for your nearness in the church, for the remarkable work of the gospel, for the gracious outpouring in fullness. Help us to deal with the issues of repentance as men and women of God ought.

And for everyone in a position of responsibility who has taught falsely or foolishly, oh may repentance come swiftly. And may the day come ere long when the churches of this region are filled with the glory of God, to the praise of Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

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