

# The Definition and Hope of Revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*Revival is a time when God draws near to His people, marked by a hatred of sin, a fear of God, and a longing for holiness, and is necessary for the salvation of the unborn and the spiritual well-being of the nation.*

**Duration:** 1:19:12

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 18:15, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 6:14, Matthew 7:21-23, John 14:15, Acts 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Hebrews 11:6

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

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the urgent need for true revival in the church, highlighting the importance of repentance, confronting sin, and returning to God. It addresses the misconception of faith as mere mental assent, the necessity of biblical accuracy, and the requirement of absolute obedience to Jesus Christ for salvation. The speaker challenges the audience to heed the words of Christ and warns of the consequences of not doing so.

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## Transcript

Every great season of revival has had its own peculiar difficulties that preceded it. Many of us are aware that at the time of the first great awakening, as it was noted in this country, or the evangelical revival, as it was described in the United Kingdom, there was a massive problem of vast numbers of people who had been led to believe that they were Christians because they were baptized. And so the great preaching of that season focused upon regeneration to a very large degree.

All the men that God mightily used, preached on regeneration. As a young man still in college, I was invited to serve in a Methodist church as pastor for a season. It was a church in which there were virtually no believers.

And I preached on the subject of the new birth, and the people were rip-roaring mad. I was introduced to a very prominent Christian leader one night in the city of Spokane, and the pastor who introduced me to this leader said, Dick here is pastoring a Methodist church on the north side, and he's in great trouble. Do you have any wisdom you want to share with him? And he looked me over carefully.

Lewis Talbot was his name. Some of you have heard of him. He was president of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.

He looked me over, and he said, young man, if I were you, this is what I would do. I would find a sermon by John Wesley, very much on the order of something I had already preached. I would memorize that sermon.

I would stand in the pulpit and say, I am delivering this morning a sermon of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. I have memorized it, and I'm giving it to you word for word. And after I finished preaching, the people said, why, if that's what John Wesley preached, that's what we want to hear.

But we're not living at a time when the massive problem in the American church is baptismal regeneration. Oh, it's not that we're devoid of that problem, but that's not the major problem. Instead, we have literally millions and millions of people who have been taught that a decision they made is their regeneration.

We describe it purely and simply as decisional regeneration. Some are estimating that at least 70% of all the members of evangelical churches in America are as unsaved as Satan himself, and are reliant totally upon their own decision to accept Christ. We have cheapened it so much that it is much more difficult to join a lodge than it is an evangelical church.

And it means a whole lot more to the lodge members than it does to the typical Christian. I don't have any knowledge of the validity of this statistic I'm going to mention, but it certainly came from a good source. I was told a while back that on an average of 1,200 pastors every month were dismissed from their church in the Southern Baptist Convention alone.

That came from a state official in Texas. His statistic, not mine. But suppose that's true.

On an average of 1,200 pastors every month dismissed from their church. And dismissed is a very kind word. And in most instances, I bet it was not nearly that nice.

But now think of that. My math doesn't seem very good this morning, but I think 12 by 12 comes to 14,400. Now look, I've got a question we've got to face.

Suppose it is true that 70% of all the church members of evangelical churches are unregenerate. Does it make sense to suppose that 100% of the clergy are regenerate? There's got to be some correlation between the two. I don't mean to say it's identical, but there has to be some relationship between those two things.

If indeed, literally tens of millions of people think they're Christians because of a decision they made, is it not probable that a proportionate number of pastors are in the same great difficulty? I'd like to call to your attention a very brief portion from the book of Jeremiah. And these same basic words appear twice. First in chapter six, but I want to read from chapter eight of Jeremiah.

I'm looking at verses 11 and 12. And they heal the brokenness of the daughter of my people superficially by saying, all is well, all is well, but there is no peace. Were they ashamed because of the abominations they had done? They certainly were not ashamed and they did not know how to blush.

Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall. At the time of their punishment, they shall be brought down, declares the Lord. I'm convinced that the vast majority of evangelical pastors in America are guilty of having healed the wounds of the daughter of God's people superficially.

We have become infamous in announcing converts. A number of times in recent months, pastors have told me of the numbers of persons they have baptized. This says I baptized 600 last year.

This fellow, 750. And often when a man tells me how many he has baptized, I say to him, now be honest, what impact did all those baptisms have upon church attendance? And often they say, oh, our church attendance is in decline. Now, how can you baptize 600 converts or 200 or even 50 or 2000 and have no impact whatsoever upon church attendance? And obviously in the midst of this great rash of baptisms, the moral and the spiritual life of the nation is in steep decline.

I want to ask a very urgent and yet a question I can ask with great tenderness. Have you lost the ability to blush? Are you among that group that is healing the wounds of God's people superficially? In meditating upon those words, I began thinking in terms of a family situation. A fellow with a brother and two sisters, he was especially close to his mother.

And in the months preceding, he had observed his mother growing weaker and weaker. And in talking with his brother and his sisters, they agreed between themselves that something very serious was wrong with their mother. Each of them individually, all of them corporately, pled with their mother to seek medical help.

But she was strongly disinclined. Eventually, they took matters into their own hands. They made an appointment with the doctor, and they simply told their mother, we're taking you to the doctor's office.

And she didn't really have any choice, they forced her. But when they arrived, there was a parking spot right in the front, the walkway up to the doctor's office. And mother said, now listen here, I'll walk in there myself, don't you interfere.

They wouldn't, they weren't even allowed to help her out of the car. And so in a very wobbly way, she started up that slight incline and suddenly toppled over into the rose bushes that lined the walk. And the thorns punctured and scraped, there were bloody marks all over her.

The nurse glancing out the window saw this bleeding, elderly woman caught in the thorns and quickly got the doctor that rushed out, got her out of the thorn bush, carried her in, treated her, put on the necessary ointments and plasters. And after several minutes of very fervent activity, the doctor wiping his forehead, breathing a sigh of relief, now, now you're all fixed up. And they sent mother home, but she's dying, not of superficial wounds, but of cancer.

The cancer of sin has laid hold of the church in America and millions are dying. And we're healing them superficially, making them think all is well when indeed they have come nowhere near true salvation. And we don't even know how to blush.

Isn't it remarkable that there is so little interest in revival throughout the land? As might be obvious to you, I've been around a little longer than some, been preaching for 70 years. And I have seen an incredible change occur in the church in that long season of ministry. I see far fewer true believers today than we used to see.

I see more dying churches than we used to see. I see more painful evidence that indeed we are in most desperate circumstances. And while there has been a slight increase of demonstrated burden in recent times, the vast portion of the church is much more interested in the final coming of Christ than in revival.

You announce a conference on revival and you guarantee small numbers. You will announce some absurd conference on prophecy where every detail is going to be spelled out, where the preachers know more than God himself knows, and you'll have a vast crowd. So I put in front of you the question, why is there so little interest in true revival? Here we have come together for this very significant occasion, and I expect everyone here is of a very serious mind.

But my word, what portion of the church do we represent? For every person who has a slight interest in revival, there's at least a thousand that has no interest at all. And I'm asking you, why is there so little interest and burden for revival? And we're constantly meeting people who just boldly and plainly say to us, now as for me, I'm just praying that the Lord will hurry up and come and rescue us from this rotten mess. And often when they say that to me personally, I say to them, do you have any unsaved children? Any unsaved grandchildren? Well, yes.

You're such a vile reprobate that you're asking God to rescue you from this rotten mess, and you don't care about your own children, your own grandchildren? There is something pathetically wrong with a nation of churches that has so little concern for the vital well-being of the unborn. My dear wife Maggie and I have only six grandchildren, not likely to ever have any more, but one day all of those six will be married and have children in all probability. What is the hope of the unborn raised in a country as thoroughly wicked as the United States? If you don't have any burden for yourself, surely it's legitimate to have a burden for the unborn.

Now naturally, when we come to this subject revival, even on an occasion like this, there's a very wide difference in understanding as to what real revival is. Many of us have come to the conclusion that there are two incredibly immense factors in true revival. We can agree, I hope, on these two things.

Number one, in true revival, there is always the nearness of God. And number two, there is always the rapid flow of the Word of God. Now let's focus upon those two things for a brief moment.

In the 73rd Psalm, at the final portion, verse 28, there's a perfectly glorious statement made. The nearness of God is my good. And there are many in this room who can testify to the accuracy of that statement.

Time after time after time, I've come right back to that glorious realization. The nearness of God is my good. But now we live at a time when the bulk of the church seems to think that God is always near.

So what is the significance of describing revival as a time when God is near, if God is always the same distance and the same closeness to us? And how could James have been so stupid as to say, draw near to God and he will draw near to you if God is always near? It's quite evident, isn't it, that our lives are marked by these cycles. God is near and God is far. And some of us have had the experience of a wonderful long season of God's nearness.

And suddenly we realize we've lost that sense of God's presence. I'm thinking of a personal experience at the moment where, for several months, I had this incredible sense of the nearness of Christ. My love for Christ was sharper and quicker during that season than it had ever been.

And then suddenly I realized I've lost that sense of his presence. And with great moaning and grieving, I asked the Lord, what did I do to grieve your Holy Spirit? And I did everything I could think of by way of heart searching. And I pled with God through the power of the Spirit to search me and to reveal whatever I had done to grieve his Spirit.

And nothing, nothing came to the fore. And finally, in desperation, wondering what have I done, what have I done, and seeking the face of God, I thought I heard these words spoken in my heart. What did you do to gain my nearness? And I had to say, honestly, nothing.

And if you did nothing to gain it, why are you so sure you did something to lose it? Wow, that came to me with incredible force. And naturally, I said, if I didn't do something to lose this sense of your nearness, why have I lost it? And it became so clear. It is God's intention that we walk not by sight, but by faith.

And in those seasons when God is so near, it's almost like what is described of Adam and Eve. They walked and they talked with God in the coolness of the evening. But we've got to face the reality.

When God determines that he's going to draw away, it is right to do so. And when God draws away because we have allowed some sin in our life that we will not deal with, or in the church that is not dealt with, then indeed God does draw a distance from us. And surely the evidence is overwhelming that God is not near.

Everyone who loves the scripture has discovered that when God is near, there is a hatred of sin, there is a fear of God, there is a longing for holiness. And what church is marked by those things these days? But we treasure the whole concept of revival because we know that in revival, God draws near. And that's not something that we learn as youth and then it gradually fades and we lose sight of it.

I can tell you with great candor, my sense of longing for the nearness of God is greater now than ever. And not alone for myself, but the unborn of whom I've spoken and the vast array of people in the church who have no sense of the beauty of holiness. And I want to ask you, have you caught a sense of the beauty of holiness? Is it gripping? Do you sense that there is no beauty in all creation like the beauty of holiness? And do you realize that as God draws near, the beauty of holiness becomes greater and greater and your own life takes on more and more of the passion and the purity, the beauty of Jesus Christ himself? So I long for revival because I know that God intends that each of us should be arrayed in the beauty of holiness.

And that's not the case in most instances right now. But I'm also deeply stirred by the realization that the preaching today is not having the same impact that it used to have. You'll pardon an old man reminiscing, I trust.

But just as a youth hardly knowing anything, it was very common when I preached to see whole congregations bathed in tears. I couldn't take any credit for that. My word, I scarcely knew anything then.

I don't know all that much now, but a great deal more than then. But the word of God had impact and power. The conversions that we saw, which sometimes came in considerable number, were real and enduring.

People who came to Christ, who lived gloriously and happily for Christ throughout their lifetime, now a significant portion of those who say they've come to Christ are nowhere in the life of Christ a few months after their supposed conversion. The apostle Paul spoke to this issue in 2 Thessalonians when he asked in the last chapter that the people pray that the word of God run swiftly again as it had before. And obviously when you trace the ministry of the apostle Paul, you see something of the decline of the influence and the power of the word of God rushing as a mighty torrent of blessing.

And surely in our day, I would be amazed if every pastor here has not wept some over the lack of influence of the power of the word of God in his own preaching. And it's not necessarily because we've sought it less, but because we're living at a time when God has drawn away from the church. It's almost as if God has said, you don't want to do things my way? Then go ahead and do them your way and see how much you enjoy the consequence of my absence.

So revival, these two incredibly important things, the nearness of God and the flow of the word like a tidal wave of blessing. I'm ready to go home, but the Lord may keep me here for a spell. And if he does, I hope he'll permit me to see with my own eye, the church under the power of the revival of true religion.

But now there's another issue that seems to me of immense consequence that must be faced. As I ask men, why are you so disinterested in revival? I'm talking about men in ministry. As I confront them and ask them, why don't you lead your church in prayer for revival? Why don't you involve yourself in those things that God may truly bless and use? Men often say to me, revival is an Old Testament theme.

There's nothing about revival in the New Testament. And a significant portion of the church believes that nonsense. So I want to speak to that because I believe it's foundational for a gathering of this sort.

Is it valid to say that revival is an Old Testament theme and it is not relevant to today? Well, obviously there is a struggle that goes on within the church concerning the nature of God himself. In fact, I think we could ask a typical congregation, how many gods are there? Now, no one ever said to my face two, but they demonstrate that they believe there are two gods. The God of the Old Testament, whom a bishop some years ago described as a dirty bloody bully, Bishop Bromley Oxnum, and the God of the New Testament, who's a God of grace and of love.

Now, although the average person would deny that there are two gods, it's either two gods or else one God who's managed to get control of his disposition and he no longer gets angry. But what do you really think? What are your profound convictions? Do you really believe there is one unchanging God? And then, of course, there's the question that I've raised already. Is revival an Old Testament theme? So we're struggling in our day with multitudes of leaders who honestly think the New Testament is more relevant than the Old Testament.

And by a variety of schemes, they have managed to set aside major portions of the Word of God as if they had no meaning or significance for them. Now, I'm not talking about them, but I'm talking to you. And I'm asking you, does your understanding of Scripture make the theme of revival less consequential than it really is? I've often asked congregations to utilize their imagination.

And I've suggested, will you think in terms of an eye hook, say about at the seven foot level on that wall there? And again, another eye hook at the same level on the wall here and the cable stretched between. And I've asked people to consider now, let's call that cable that goes between those two eye hooks the norm. And are you aware of the fact that revivals are always preceded by declensions? So a cycle of history would be the crossing of that norm twice, crossing on the way down in declension, crossing on the way up in revival.

Look at that picture in your mind. You're dealing with people who don't understand biblical concepts, who are not really at all sure of the urgent necessity of revival in our day. We've got to use some means to help them to come to grips with the truth.

I ask you this question, in relationship to this norm, where does the Old Testament open? And I asked you in relationship to that norm, where does the Old Testament close? The most thoughtful people would say the Old Testament begins above the line and it closes below the line. And where does the New Testament open? And again, most people would say below the line. He came to his own and his own received him not.

To as many as received him, he gave the power to become sons of God. And then it goes on to add who were born not of the will of man, not of the will of Christ, but of God. And where does the New Testament close? Well, obviously above the line.

But you see what most people don't seem to have come to grips with is there are many of those cycles in the Old Testament, but there's not one full cycle in the New. Now look, what would you think of me if I stupidly stood here and asked you to pray for a revival of football, for a revival of baseball, for a revival of eating, for a revival of drinking? Well, we all know those things don't need revival. They're flourishing.

But if I asked you about a revival of religion, is it not obvious that there is an incredible need? For we surely are living in those days when we know the language of religion, the form of religion, but we don't know its power. The simple short truth is there's no need of talking about revival per se in the New Testament because God has already laid out all the principles of revival in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, they were living in revival.

But there were warnings that those glorious days would end. And we're living in that season when true religion is in decline. It just seems to me that if our people could get an understanding this picture, they could begin to feel a burden for the days in which we live, and the realization that our only hope truly is in the revival of true religion.

But now, in addition to the problem of a misunderstanding of the place of revival in Scripture, we're also wrestling today with concepts of God himself that are destructive to serious Christian living. For the average person, God is scarcely a half-inch bigger than themselves. And you understand, don't you, that if God is a half-inch bigger than I am, then there does have to be some kind of a bridge between God and myself.

A half-inch gap can be covered with a one-inch cross. And that's where the bulk of the people are at. The cross is a very minor consequence to them because they have never felt or understood the distance between a holy God and themselves.

And all of us understand that as that gap widens, that cross grows bigger. And we are in desperate need now of the realization of the vast gulf that exists between fallen man and the holy God, and that Christ and Christ alone can bridge that gap. And that one does not bridge the gap by something they do.

That that gap is bridged by what God does in true regeneration. That leads me then to say to you, dear brothers and sisters, we need not only a revival, but a reformation. The church has removed itself such distance from God, from scripture, that if we had merely a revival of what we've got, we would have a more colossal mess than we now have.

We desperately need to return to the God of the Bible, to the biblical concepts of true theology. Pastors tell me regularly, you can't preach theology. It's divisive.

Well, of course it's divisive. It was intended to divide the sheep from the goats. But I'm meeting pastors everywhere I go who are worn out trying to make goats behave like sheep.

And they're frustrated and discouraged, and many are quitting, and it's time to acknowledge the truth. Only Christ bridges that gap. And apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the serious laying hold of those two precious gifts God gives, the gift of repentance and the faith, there is no way for an ungodly reprobate to be reconciled to God.

But now, with those thoughts as the background, I want to speak to the issue more directly. Is revival solely an Old Testament theme? Or is it truly very much a New Testament theme? And I'd like to ask you to turn in Scripture with me to a passage that will be very familiar, I expect, to all of you in the book of Acts, chapter 3. A perfectly lovely passage. I'm sure some of you have enjoyed preaching upon it in the past, as I have.

But let's give a few moments now to this most splendid passage on the subject of revival, though the word revival doesn't occur either here or anywhere else in our New Testaments. Acts, chapter 3, verse 1. Now, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple, which is called beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.

And when he saw Peter and John, about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, look at me. And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk. And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up.

And immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And with a leap, he stood upright. And he began to walk, and a whole lot more than walking, mind you.

Isn't it beautiful? What happened to this man who had never walked, who had been lame from birth? And the people of God, who have known of this beggar, who have often seen him at the beautiful gate, they're observing him, verse 8, leaping, walking, entering the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all people, all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the beautiful gate of the temple to beg alms.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why do you gaze at us as if by our own power or purity we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up and disowned in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him.

But you disowned the Holy One and the Righteous One, and you asked for a murderer to be granted to you and put to death the Prince of Life, the one whom God raised from the dead a fact we are witnesses to. And on the basis of faith in the name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know. And the faith which comes through him has given him this perfect health in the

presence of you all.

And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance just as your fathers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he has thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and return that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from him, from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send forth Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by all the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times. Moses said, the Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like, from my brethren to him shall you give heed in everything he says to you.

And it shall be that every, excuse me, there's a lot of advantages in being old. And a few disadvantages. And one of the disadvantages is I'm losing my eyesight.

So, forgive me for messing up the reading, but I just couldn't see the passage. Let me start again at verse 22. Moses said, the Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren.

To him you shall give heed in everything he says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and his successors onward also announced these days.

It is you who are the sons of the prophet and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. For you first, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked way. Now personally, I thought, I believe that's a glorious passage on revival.

So, I don't see how anybody in his right mind can say revival is solely an Old Testament subject. Let's just think of some of the urgent issues in this passage because they are so applicable to us today. Let me get begin with the simple observation that we can't say what Peter said, silver and gold I don't have.

And neither can we say, but such as I have, I give to you, rise up and walk. We're in the predicament of having plenty of that which is perishing and not much of that which endures forever. When we're talking about revival, we're often confusing people by using interchangeably terms like revival and awakening.

And at some point there's wisdom in at least thinking our way through the difference in these expressions. I don't think there'd be any wisdom in saying I'm going to straighten the world out and get everybody thinking correctly. It's much too late for that.

But it's not too late for us to understand that there is a very significant difference in these two words. Obviously, you cannot revive that which is dead. And that's the bulk of the church.

The bulk of the church does not need revival, nor could it experience revival. Now again, going back to what I said about that passage in Jeremiah, you have healed the wounds of my people superficially. A very high percentage of all those who have been claimed as converts and denounced as converts and wrongly convinced that they are converts are still dead in trespasses and sin.

They cannot be revived. But a revival in the church has always led to an awakening in the world. Now of course, that's complicated by the fact that the church and the world are essentially one and the same in most circumstances.

Not intended by God to be that way. Have you ever considered how radically we have departed in this country from the position of our forefathers? Now dear brother Bill gave us a wonderful analysis of Jonathan Edwards' pamphlet on prayer. Do you realize that in Jonathan Edwards' day, church attendance was vastly greater than church membership? Because in those days, there was a statement in virtually every congregation's background.

Membership in this church is severely limited to those persons who can provide credible evidence of regeneration. Now we no longer speak about credible evidence of regeneration. We welcome people into church membership on the basis of profession of faith.

And there's a radical difference between credible evidence of regeneration and a proclamation of belief. There is a desperate need to revival in the church. But there is also a desperate need of awakening in the world.

And as I've said, because the world and the church are practically identical in most cases, there is this immense need of awakening in the church itself. But what hope is there for an awakening when we are lacking in the essential elements that God himself uses? So we go back then to Peter's statement. He goes, I don't ask.

How many of you have the gripping kind of faith that is able to say to the man, lame from birth, rise up and walk? Tragically, for some time now, we have confused the nature of true faith. Sometimes these gizmos on your ear don't work quite right because they're too small and they're not made to fit. Let me put a question to you of great importance.

How would you define faith? Do you really know the difference between saving faith and damning faith? We read in scripture that the devils believe and then also it says they tremble. The average person in the church who says they believe has never even had as much grace as the devils have. They don't tremble.

Nothing about God that frightens them. In fact, you want to make a lot of enemies in the typical church? Preach on the fear of God. And people will tell you stridently, they don't believe in a God you have to fear.

But what is the difference between the faith that saves and the faith that damns? Well, for the most part in the American church, saving faith is said to be mental assent. If you agree to certain facts, that means you have faith. Facts like the devils believe.

Does the devil doubt that Christ was the Son of God? Did the devil say, I don't really think that there's any possibility that Christ knows what he's talking about? No, we know perfectly well the devil believes that Christ is the Son of God. He believes that he died. He believes that he was buried.

He believes that he rose again. He believes that he's alive forevermore. But nobody in their right mind says the devil is a Christian because he agrees with historic events.

But I'm asking you, is faith agreement with fact? In your preaching, have you made it clear to everyone who hears you that faith is not mental assent? Faith is active obedience. You say, I don't know that that's true. Well, if you don't know that that's true, shame on you.

The book of Hebrews makes that so crystal clear. Everybody who is said to have faith in the 11th chapter of Hebrews was given something to do, and they did it. And their obedience proved their faith.

So we've got Peter here saying, I don't have any silver or gold, but what I've got I'll give to you. So in the exercise of true faith in the name of Jesus, a glorious healing. But there's something else that strikes me as immensely important to our day.

When the people were astonished and in a state of wonderment because of this incredible healing, isn't it lovely the way Peter tiptoes around the issues and pretends that these are really fine people and nothing's seriously wrong? No, he goes right at them immediately, straightforward. You're the ones that crucified Christ. I want to ask you now, is your preaching confrontational? Most of the preachers that I listen to don't tell the truth.

They tiptoe around it, but I'm not talking about them. I'm asking you, is your preaching confrontational? Do you pin the blame where it belongs? People often tell me the reason we're in this awful mess in America is because we have such rotten politicians. Well, granted we do.

Or because the educational system is so foul. Well, again, we concede that it is. Or because the media loves wickedness and hates righteousness.

Well, it does seem that that's so. But are they the cause of the problem? Or is it the church that doesn't have true faith and does not dare to pin the blame where it belongs? The immensity of Peter's ministry in those early days in Acts was directly linked to this confrontational spirit. And I'm asking you, after all, we didn't come here this week to talk about those that are absent, but to think about ourselves.

But move now from that. There are some other matters here that it seems to me are at the very heart of this subject of revival. Is it not absurd to pray for revival and not expect God to do anything? Is it not ridiculous to preach and yet not confront the people who are in front of you with the truth? Not to make it so real, so plain, that they begin to shake, to quiver, to weep, to feel their own desperate plight and their absolutely urgent need of Christ.

But the great focus of this passage is obviously in the person that speaks directly about this incredibly glorious subject of true revival. Verse 18, again, the things which God announced beforehand in the mouth of all the prophets, that is, Christ should suffer, he has fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and return.

Is that not the message that is so desperately needed in our day? Repent and return. I want to make an observation. Many people who talk to me say, Christianity is a very personal matter.

It has nothing to do with nation. Now, how stupid can you get? Are not the bulk of the passages in both testaments that deal with this incredibly urgent subject applicable both to individuals and to corporate entities? How absurd is it to talk about 2 Chronicles 7.14 as a purely personal individual matter? And this passage, to whom is Peter speaking? Whom is he commanding to repent and to return? All those people whom he has accused of having crucified Christ. And how do men come away with the notion that repentance is not part of true salvation, that it's a work, and that we're not saved by works but just by faith? How can you repent and return unless there is this glorious combination of repentance and faith wed together? I don't understand men who can leave repentance out.

My word, I've asked a great many, is it possible for you to walk in two directions at the same time? We repent, we turn about, and we return. Oh, would to God, America, we repent and return. I have the joyful privilege of enjoying a remarkably fine library with hundreds and hundreds of items from the early days of our country.

I have drawers full of fast day sermons that were preached in the 1600s and the 1700s and the 1800s, and over and over and over and over the theme, repent and return. I'm asking you, is that the theme of your preaching? Are you urging your people to repent and to return? And in addition to those immense words, that your sins, verse 19, may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Now that's what we're devoting our time and attention to these days, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Those glorious days of visitation, so often spoken of in the New Testament, that word that the angel spoke to the father of John the Baptist, those cutting words that our Savior spoke concerning the religious leaders of his day when he pronounced condemnation upon them because, as he said, you did not recognize your day of visitation. Repent and return that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. So lest we go on throughout these days together thinking about all those that we know that need to repent and return, let's focus upon ourselves.

Anything going on in your life that God finds offensive? Is there any solid reason why you do not know his manifest presence because you're entertaining in your life things that God himself finds abhorrent? Seasons of refreshing that he may send, verse 20, Jesus, the Christ appointed for you. And that, as I've said, is at the very heart of the revival message, Jesus himself coming among his people in a profound fashion, making great change in us by his glorious presence. But knowing myself and how easily I forget what time it is and trespass on other people's time, I must draw these things together.

But I do ask you to focus now in these closing moments on these last verses of the chapter. Moses said, the Lord God shall raise up to you a prophet like me from your brethren. To him you shall give heed in everything he says to you.

Now listen, friends. I find the most critical issue in the church today underneath the wrong view of God is the wrong view of self. Some of you have heard me say on other occasions there is a very clear relationship between what I think of God, what I think of myself, what I think of sin, and what I think of salvation.

We have millions of people who think they're saved, and they are not. They have never had a transforming experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. They have been taught by the false teachers in today's church that it's possible to enjoy Christ's salvation while denying Christ's Lordship.

Now this is pretty plain, it seems to me. The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren, and there's no question whom he's speaking of here. He's clearly speaking of that prophet they crucified, that prophet they preferred to see dead and to have a murderer as their victor instead of Christ.

You are to give heed in everything he says to you. And I'm asking you, does your preaching make it clear to all who hear you that absolute obedience to Jesus Christ is mandatory to salvation? Is it not foolishness to talk about revival and then not insist upon biblical accuracy? And the next words are mighty powerful. It shall be that every soul that does not heed, now get that, heed that prophet yet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.

Now in the course of our lives, we encounter many, many truly sad things. I remember one preaching in Texas one time. The man stepped up to me and introduced himself as a medical doctor, and he said to me, I've heard about you, and I've been persuaded that I desperately need to hear what you have to say.

But being a medical doctor, I'm on call this week, and I may not get to every service, but I want to because I so badly need to hear. The next night, I looked around the congregation. I saw no sign of him, and I was greatly grieved.

But the following night, he came early. He said to me, I told you that I might miss, he said, last night. I couldn't come.

You see, he said, I'm a plastic surgeon. The most effective school teacher in our community, after school, took everything out of her desk, put it into a couple of bags of handy, and carried it out. It was only the janitor left, and he thought nothing of it.

This woman went to her home, and she took a pistol. She put it under her chin, intending to kill herself, and instead, all she did was blow off her face. He said, I was late last night trying to restore her face, and he said, here's a tragedy.

She didn't have reason to live, though she was the most successful teacher in the school district, and a very attractive woman at that. Now she's going to live with a face that's awful. I did my best.

He started to weep. I did all I could. Sad stories, they come to us with great frequency, but I'll tell you something a whole lot sadder than any story I ever heard.

People standing before their judge and king, and hearing him say, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you, and all the time they thought they were part of the bride of Christ. The heart of what I'm trying to say this morning is that although God is the author of revival, God brings revival to pass by the powerful preaching of the word of God.

Oh, would to God that out of this body might be raised up an army of mighty preachers. I was in a week-long series last week in Virginia, and shared the speaking with a dear friend, and he said, there is no history of a revival that ever came about as a result of talking about revival. Revivals come about by the preaching of the great doctrines of scripture.

So I close by simply asking you again, have you been healing the wounds of God's people superficially, and have you lost the ability to blush, or is your message repent and return, and give heed to every word our prophet spoke? For those who will not give heed will be destroyed, and those who give heed, he will come to them.

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