

Prayer, the Holy Spirit and Revival #2

by Richard P. Belcher

God's sovereignty means we should pray because He commands it and it is a means to accomplish His will, and we should pray with a clear concept and craving for the glory of God, confessing sin and dependence on Christ, and with a commitment to the authority of God's word.

Duration: 1:14:58

Scripture: Habakkuk 3:1

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his family's reformed tradition and the blessings that America has received as a nation. He acknowledges the various challenges and tragedies that have occurred, such as the loss of young lives, heat waves, droughts, fires, and the shuttle tragedy. The speaker believes that these events may be a message from God, calling for revival and seeking the hearts of people to pray for it. He then shares the story of David Brainard's prayer and how God answered it, leading to a powerful revival among the Native American Indians. The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer motivated by the glory of God, confession of sin, and obedience to the word of God, rather than relying on gimmicks or entertainment in church.

Transcript

Turn with me tonight to the Old Testament prophet, the book of Habakkuk, chapter 3. References already been made to these verses, but I want to read them. This is not the text, it's a text, because we're going to be looking at several passages, probably quoting them more than looking at them in depth. But I do want to read this as a foundation, and then have prayer, and see if we can balance this subject out.

Chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, upon Shegaionot. O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.

In the midst of the years make known. In wrath remember mercy. Let's pray.

Our Father, we acknowledge again that we are only instruments. We have no power to preach. We have no power to teach, except you would grant us.

We could even stand and put together ideas and thoughts, but all is vain, unless the Spirit of God speaks. And so we pray tonight for that holy unction from upon high, that only you can grant, to a poor helpless

worm as he stands in the pulpit, to proclaim your word. We pray not only unction for the speaker, but understanding for the hearers.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Tuesday night, we set before you something of the person and the work of the Holy Spirit.

We said the Holy Spirit is a person. We declared from the scripture that he is a divine person. We spoke of some of his work.

He convicts of sin. He indwells the believer. He seals the believer.

He fills the believer. We talked about the fact that he is God's agent of sanctification. As part of his work of sanctification, he is also God's agent in the church, and in the individual life of the Christian, for revival, for reformation, and for renewal.

We stress also that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in everything that he does. Now perhaps when I finished the other night, some of you thought that preacher has painted himself into a corner. He has told us that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in everything he does.

The Holy Spirit is sovereign in revival. If that be so, then we don't need to pray. And on the other hand, if that preacher would admit that we need to pray, then the Holy Spirit must not be sovereign in revival.

We're wrestling again, I think you see, with the relation of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. And may I warn you that human reason always butchers the relationship of these two areas. So I don't want us to depend upon human reason.

I want us to look tonight at three areas. First of all, I want to set before you some false ideas of prayer. Generally false ideas of prayer, but we'll also relate them as we go to revival.

Second, I want to set before you some biblical concepts of prayer. And third, I want to set before you those biblical concepts applied in a very practical way. First of all, let me mention some false ideas of prayer that are floating around in our world today.

Some people have the idea that God can do nothing unless men pray. To put it another way, God's hands are tied until somebody down here on this earth prays. This viewpoint would have to admit that God in his sovereignty has given up some of his sovereignty because he has ordained that nothing can be done without prayer.

Therefore, I would declare that God is not really sovereign because his sovereign decision to give up his sovereignty and ordain that he can do nothing without prayer has reduced God to less than a sovereign God. Another false idea of prayer that's rather prevalent that goes along with this idea that God can't do anything unless men pray is the idea that man can change God's will when he prays. Have you ever heard that one? Some things will happen only if men pray.

And if we don't pray, then these things will never happen. Which is to say that we can somehow change God's will if we pray. Or if we don't pray, we change God's will.

Therefore, God's will is kind of open-ended. It's not set from eternity past, but God's will is set every day, day by day, depending on whether or not the human creatures upon this earth pray. If men pray, then some things happen.

God orders his will accordingly. If men don't pray for something, then God orders his will accordingly on the basis of the fact they haven't prayed. Which is to say the determination of God's will is bound to man's prayer.

Well, let me tell you this evening that both of these ideas are scripturally incorrect. The idea that God can do nothing unless we pray, or the idea that we can change God's will when we pray, are both scripturally incorrect. Ephesians 1:11, and these verses are known to all of you, but I call them to your attention on the last.

He is the God who works all things after the counsel of his own will. I don't read anything there about his will being predicated upon man's prayer. We read in 1 Samuel 2, verses 6-8, that the Lord kills and the Lord makes alive.

He brings down to the grave and he brings up. The Lord makes poor and the Lord makes rich. He brings low and he lifts up.

He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill to set them among the princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory. Now I don't read there that God is dependent upon man's prayer to do that. The thrust of the passage seems to be that the Lord is the one who does it.

The Lord kills, the Lord makes alive, and is not predicated on the fact of whether or not we pray. Daniel 4, verse 35, says he does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay his hand, and none can say, God what are you doing? He does according to his will.

His will! And there's nothing said about predicating it upon prayer. In fact, I think I can find some things in the Bible that God did without anybody praying. Where was there someone praying when God created the world? There wasn't anybody even created yet to be able to pray for God to create the world.

Where was Adam and Eve? And where was their prayer when God came after they had sinned in Genesis 3, verse 15, and gave them a promise of the Messiah? Were Adam and Eve on their knees praying that God would send us a Messiah? God gave the promise of Messiah. Nobody praying. And let me ask you, what Jew ever prayed that God would use Assyria to judge his people, according to Isaiah 10? Now, maybe you can find it in Scripture.

If you do, I'd be glad to hear it. But I don't recall any Jew ever praying, Lord, you just come in here and bust up our land with that Assyrian war machine because we've been so sinful. And what Jew ever prayed that God would destroy the temple? The fact of the matter is that Jews said to Jeremiah, God can't destroy this temple.

This is his house. And what Jew ever prayed that God would destroy the city of Jerusalem? And what Jew ever prayed that God would destroy the wall? And what Jew or Gentile ever prayed that the Messiah would die on the cross? I've set those before you just hopefully to illustrate that God's hands are not tied by our prayerlessness. And that we cannot change God's will by our prayer.

Our God is sovereign. And God can do anything he wants, anytime he wants, anywhere he wants, through anybody he wants, and without men if he so wants. Is it not this low view of God that man can somehow change God's will and God's hands are tied because we don't pray? Is it not this low theology that has led our age into a utilitarian concept of God? I can control God and his will.

God then must exist for me. And I can use God to accomplish my end. God must exist to do my bidding if I can control him and he can't do anything unless I pray.

And so when I need something, I'll seek him. And when I feel we need revival, I'll seek him. When I want my church to grow, I'll pray for revival.

God will send it. I'll pray for revival so I can save my face and my people will pat me on the back and say, you're doing a good job, preacher. God exists to serve me.

I pray to God earnestly and in depth for a little time during the year. Isn't that the average revival? How do we pray for revival in our Southern Baptist churches? Oh, we schedule an evangelist. He's going to be coming in.

Oh, maybe six or seven months ahead we schedule the evangelist. And then a week before the revival meeting starts, quote-unquote, question mark, whatever else you want to put there, we have cottage prayer meetings. Nobody does much praying until the cottage prayer meeting.

And then everybody begins to pray. And for a week we pray. And then during the revival meeting, maybe a few people pray.

And when the revival meeting's over, nobody prays anymore. And even the preacher and sometimes evangelist, when the revival is over, or the revivalist, when the meeting's over, they go back to their normal routine of prayerlessness. So I pray to God.

He exists up there to help me. So it's proper, it's right for me to pray to Him a little time out of the year so He can wait on me, so He can do my bidding, so He can maybe save my face in front of my congregation. A utilitarian God.

He's up there to serve me. I can control Him. Is this not also what has led to a manipulative view of prayer and God? I can manipulate God.

God's my little puppet. I make Him dance on my strings. Is this not what has created in some men's mind a mechanical concept of prayer? God's kind of like a machine.

You put in a nickel's worth of prayer, you get a nickel's worth of blessing. You put in a thousand dollars' worth of prayer, you get a thousand dollars' worth of blessing. Take your pick.

Pray for an hour, hour's worth of blessing. Pray all night, a whole night's worth of blessing. God's a mechanical individual.

He's a machine. We just punch the prayer in, and we can manipulate God and change God's will. And God has to do our bidding.

Is this not what has brought in some men's mind a bargain concept of prayer? I can bargain with God. Or a gimmick concept of prayer. We can treat prayer like a gimmick.

Everybody wants to study prayer. If we can just learn when to pray, how to pray, what to pray, where to pray, how to hold our hands when we pray, how to position the body while we pray, what to pray for and what not to pray for. If we just attend all the seminars on prayer, then we can manipulate God.

I'll have him in my hand, and when I pray, God said, Revival, Revival. The gimmick concept of God and prayer. But I say again, that's not the God of the Bible.

God's hands are not tied by our prayerlessness. And we cannot change God's will by our prayer. God can do anything he wants, anytime he wants, anywhere he wants, through anyone he wants, or even without men if he wants.

He works when we pray, he works when we don't pray. He works when men work, he works when men don't work. He works through human resources, and he can work without.

He's God. Somebody says, Preacher, I thought you were going to get us out of that painted corner. You've put the paint even tighter by what you've said in this first point.

Well, let me start with the paint remover as we move into point number two, some biblical concepts of prayer. Let me give you some biblical concepts of prayer. It is thoroughly biblical that God has ordained the human responsibility of prayer as one of his means of grace.

Very clearly the Bible declares that man has a responsibility to pray and to seek God's face. That's declared in the Bible again and again and again. We have a responsibility to pray and seek God's face.

Matthew 6.44, pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 7.7, ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened. Matthew 21.13, my house shall be called a house of prayer.

Matthew 26.41, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. 1 Thessalonians 5.17, pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5.25, Paul cries out, Brethren, pray for us.

Luke 18.1, men ought to always pray. Luke 21.36, watch ye therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things. Ephesians 6.18, pray always with all prayer.

I like that. Colossians 4.2, continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving. 1 Timothy 2.2, Paul says, I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

1 Timothy 2.8, men are to pray everywhere. James 5.13, is any man afflicted, let him pray. James 5.16, pray for one another.

Philippians 4.6, in everything by prayer. Isaiah 55.6, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. May you add to that all the biblical examples of the great men of God in the Bible who prayed.

And I can say with firm conviction, a Christian has a responsibility that even comes to revise, to pray. But let me stress, second, that God has ordained prayer as a means to bless man. God not only says that we are to pray, but the Bible reveals that this is one of the means, not the only means, but one of the means whereby God blesses us.

James 5.16, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. The effectual, fervent prayer. I believe the Greek word there speaks of a runner, stretching to touch the cape.

This kind of prayer that James talks about is not just a little quiet prayer, but it's a fervent prayer of the spirit and perhaps even of the voice. Stretching out to touch God as we call upon him. Paul asks the Romans to pray that he may have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come to them.

Ephesians 1.17-19, Paul says he prays that God may give to these Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, and you know the rest of it. That they might know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards those who believe according to the working of his mighty power. That's Paul's prayer for these Ephesians.

Now why does he pray for them? Because he knows that our God is a God who hears and answers prayer, and that prayer is his responsibility, and it is a means whereby God not only blesses his life, but God blesses the lives of others as he prays. Matthew 18.19, any two of you on earth shall agree as touching anything, they shall ask and it shall be done for them, and my Father is in heaven. Mark 9.29, Jesus said to his disciples, this kind can come forth by nothing but by fasting and prayer.

Man has a responsibility to seek God's face. Man has a responsibility to pray. God has ordained prayer as a means to bless man.

Let me put it another way. God is not dependent on human responsibility, but God commands man to be responsible, and God honors human responsibility in his sovereignty over all things in accordance with his will and power. Let me say that again, not to bore you.

Our God is not dependent upon human responsibility, but he commands us to be responsible, and he honors our responsibility in these areas, because in his sovereignty over all things, he has ordained that we should seek his face and receive his blessing through prayer, in accordance with his purpose and will. Now third, let me be very practical. I don't believe I can get any more practical than I'm going to be right now.

Should I pray in light of God's sovereignty, in light of the Holy Spirit's sovereignty in giving revival? Should I pray? Absolutely yes! Because God commands it, and because God has ordained it as a means to accomplish his will. Perhaps the more important question is, how should I pray? How should I pray? That's perhaps the place we fail. I'm not to pray in a utilitarian spirit, thinking that I can control God, that I can press God to do my will.

I'm not to pray with a manipulative motive. I'm not to pray in some mechanical way that God, you've got to bless me, because here's five hours worth of prayer, I want five hours of blessing. We're not to pray in some negotiating manner with God.

But we're to pray, and let me mention three accompaniments of prayer. We must pray with a clear concept and a craving for the glory of God to be accomplished alone. Let me say that again.

We must pray with a clear concept of the glory of God, and a craving for the glory of God, and the glory of God alone. In fact, you do not pray if the glory of God is not your motive. You're just saying words.

There is no such thing as prayer if your motive is yourself. But true prayer is based upon a clear concept of the glory of God. But second, I must pray with a confession of sin, with a clear concept of my sin, that I'm not coming into God's presence because of anything good within me, but I'm coming into God's presence dependent upon the blood of Jesus and the work of Jesus Christ at Calvary's cross for me.

And only prayer that is based upon an understanding and a confession of sin can be in Jesus' name, that is, depending upon Jesus Christ. Because otherwise, if I don't have confession of sin, my dependency is upon me when I come into God's presence to pray. And third, I must pray with a commitment to the word of God, to its authority, and to be obedient to that word.

You're wasting your time when you pray without a commitment to the word of God and its authority over your life. You're wasting your time. So how should I pray? Not with a utilitarian spirit that I'm going to manipulate God or negotiate with him.

But I must pray with a craving and understanding of the glory of God. I must pray understanding my sinfulness and yet Christ's righteousness. I must pray with a commitment to the authority of God's word and with a heart that is responsive to obey as God so directs.

How am I to pray for revival? The same way. Not in some utilitarian spirit whereby I think that once a year we can maybe manipulate God to come down into our midst in a service and bless us. We just have enough people out to the cottage prayer meetings.

If we just spend enough time that week before the preacher gets there, then we can somehow see revival in the church and we can see people saved. No, no. I must pray for revival for God's glory alone.

I must pray for revival confessing my sin. I must pray for revival with a commitment to God and his word and a spirit and an attitude of obedience. How often our prayers for revival lack this motive of God's glory.

You remember Moses back in chapter 32 of Exodus. Boy, they needed revival. The people had just set up the golden calf and danced around and played and pulled their clothes off in idolatrous practice.

And you remember God came to Moses and said, Moses, I'm going to destroy those people. They're going to die right here. That's it.

My wrath burns against them. But Moses, I'm going to raise you up to be a new nation. Now can you imagine, use your imagination for a moment, can you imagine the modern preacher, I might even say the modern Southern Baptist preacher, had he been in Moses' place.

Would he say something like this? Oh Lord, you can't destroy these people. I went to school a long time to be a preacher and a pastor. And I've spent a lot of money and time to get this position.

And I have a position of importance in the community. Oh God, if you destroy these people, my ministry is going to just fall apart right before my eyes. Oh, if you do that, God, my reputation is going to be shot before the lost world.

And before the brethren. And before the religious world. Everybody down at denominational headquarters is going to say he couldn't even get those people back to Sinai.

Nobody will ever recommend me to a bigger church. I'll be ruined for life in the ministry. And I've got a wife and a family.

Oh, what will I do? What will I do if you carry out that statement? Everybody will see me as a failure. Oh God, revive these people so I can keep my job. Revive these people so I can be considered a great preacher.

Oh, revive these people so I won't suffer humiliation. Oh, revive these people so I can build my reputation. Oh, revive these people so I can be successful.

Is that what Moses prayed? Moses' prayer was not self-centered. Moses said, Lord, why does your wrath burn against your people? The ones that you brought out of Egypt. Oh God, your glory is at stake here.

The Egyptians are going to rise up and say, God, you brought them out here to Sinai to kill them. Oh God, remember your covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. You swore yourself to them, God.

Your glory is at stake here because your word is at stake. Now Moses wasn't concerned about what was going to happen to Moses. But Moses was concerned about the glory of God.

He planned for revival of these people and for God's wrath to be turned away on the basis of God's glory. Moses didn't say, wait a minute, Lord, what was that last statement? You're going to destroy them. What was that you said you'd do with me? You're going to raise me up to be a great nation? Well, Lord, let me change my prayer here, Lord.

I'm being a little facetious. Let me change my prayer, Lord. Well, those people, they've sinned.

They've busted them in the mouth. Break their teeth. You're going to raise me up and be a great nation? Well, that's different, Lord.

How many times when we pray, and even thinking about revival, is our motive really self and not the glory of God? We want revival so that the other churches of the association will pat us on the back and say, oh boy, what a great preacher. God's blessing his church. Maybe you might even want revival so that you can speak at the conventions and the associations and at the Southern Baptist Founders Conference.

We just have great revival. How often our prayer for revival lacks the motive of God. Well, you remember Daniel, let me give you a second example.

Daniel down in Babylon in Daniel 9. How often our prayers for revival lack confession of sin. Imagine again the modern preacher in Daniel's place. Lord, it's so uncomfortable here in Babylon.

No air conditioning. And my wife's complaining. And the kids cry all the time.

And things are so hard for me and for your people. And Lord, this isn't really what I had in mind when I surrendered to preach. And they didn't tell me it was going to be this way back at seminary.

Lord, you've punished your people long enough. And surely, Lord, I deserve something better. Oh, woe is me.

Pity me, Lord. Send revival, Lord, so we can go home. Back to the land of Judah.

Out of this miserable place called Babylon. No, Daniel didn't pray that way. Daniel recognized God.

Throughout this passage, there is a clear recognition of God. But there's also confession of sin. The recognition of God's glory.

Actually, this passage just puts both of these ideas together. The recognition of God's glory. But there's also the confession of sin.

We have sinned, Lord. We've broken your laws. Oh, God.

The confession of sin. And so when we pray for revival, there must be constantly and always, in fact, continually when we pray there, there should be the confession. Because without the confession of sin, remember, our dependence is upon ourselves.

But it's when we confess our sin and acknowledge our helplessness and our worthlessness that we then cast ourselves upon the Lord and his power in light of our sin. Let me give you one more. Remember when Josiah repaired the temple in 2 Chronicles 34? And then they planned a revival service.

How often our prayer for revival lacks a commitment to the Word of God. And then where they're going to make a new covenant with God in their hearts to obey him. A modern preacher would have said, now, wait a minute, Josiah.

We've got to make this a great service. We've got to plan everything carefully. Let's get Miss Judah of 625 BC to come and sing and give her testimony.

Somebody said the other day that surely Miss Judah will help stir our revival. And you're just going to use the Word of God? That won't work. Let's get some entertaining speaker.

I know a fellow, he tells the best jokes in the book. He's got the most sparkling personality. Everybody likes him.

I've never heard anybody say anything bad about him. And he never mentions sin. And he'll be such an encouragement to everybody.

In fact, he won't even make people mad by preaching the Bible. He'll preach. Would they have seen revival in Josiah's day? No, they found the Word of God, called the people together, read the Word of God.

The people's hearts were broken by the Word. And God sent revival. Because in Josiah's day, they centered on the Word of God.

And I say to you, if you're praying for revival with a heart that's not committed to the Word of God and to obey it, you are wasting your time. What a contrast to today's, these Bible men. In Bible revivals, the glory of God was supreme.

They prayed with the glory of God for the motive. The confession of sin was present. They prayed, confessing their sin.

And the Word of God was central. They even prayed for revival with hearts that were open and willing to obey the authority of God's Word. Compare that with revivals today.

Man is so dominant in our revivals today. Man's plans. How can we get people out? How can we get people out? Nobody mentions real prayer.

Pack a few, these other programs. And sometimes, maybe you preachers, have you ever gone into a church and thought, how can I get these people to like me? If I can just get them to like me on Sunday morning when we start the meeting, they'll come back the rest of the week. Man's personality.

And so men stand in the pulpit and tell jokes. I heard, I read somewhere the other day, they were advertising a clown and a puppet conference, a church clown and puppet conference. And the advertising said, this may be the most important church conference you will attend this year.

And you know what I thought? I replied in my heart with one of my favorite movie actors lines. John Wayne, in one of his movies, said all the way through, that'll be the day. That'll be the day when the most important church conference that you'll attend this year is a puppet and a clown conference.

Men's methods. Now, I don't mean to be critical, but in the simultaneous meetings, we gathered together as preachers of the area. I preached a couple of them.

And we spent a whole hour talking about how to draw the net. As if to say, if we don't draw the net just right, when it gets down to the invitation time, some poor soul is going to slip through God's hands. If we just don't draw the net with the greatest of care.

Men's methods. How to draw the net properly. To catch the fish.

Men's stories. Boy, this story will move them. I remember when I was a young preacher, I used to hear a good story and I thought, boy, if I can just find a book.

But that's what you got. To move people for the very purpose of stirring emotions. Man's prayer.

To get men to pray. Without any mention of what real prayer is, we can manipulate God. How far short we fall of biblical revival.

One of my favorite men of history is David Brainerd. Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut, on April 20. He wasn't saved until he was 21 years of age, on July 12, 1739.

Brainerd spent years trying to be saved by his own good works, his own good feelings, his own good intentions. But on July 12, 1739, the sovereign grace of God came to David Brainerd and opened his heart and granted him understanding that salvation is in the righteousness of Christ, and not in himself. That following September, after his salvation, he went away to college, Yale College.

But David Brainerd in 1742, about three years later, when he would have graduated as a valedictorian of his class, the largest graduating class of Yale, David Brainerd was kicked out of school. I don't have time to tell you the details. John Edwards said that David Brainerd was a Christian in the whole episode, and no fault is to be laid at his feet.

But as David Brainerd was kicked out of school, he must have wondered, what in the world can I ever do for God now? But without schooling, he had time for much prayer and study of the Word. And his diary reflects, it always reflected, but especially from these moments on, it began to reflect a real quest for the glory of God alone, a confession of sin. Oh, if you've ever read Brainerd's diary, he didn't just visit Romans 7. He didn't just spend a few days there.

David Brainerd lived in Romans 7. And David Brainerd was the mayor of the city of Romans 7. I don't know a man in all history who had a concept of sin, indwelling sin in the believer like David Brainerd. And he was constantly crying out to God for mercy for his soul. He was so wretched and so vile.

But his diary also reflects not only a quest for the glory of God and confession of sin, but a burden for a lost world. And it's no surprise that on July of 1742, Brainerd was licensed for the ministry. And then he

was approved for missionary service at the age of 24 in that November.

He went out to an Indian village in the wilderness called Konamik. If you think you've got a rough field, you ought to understand where Brainerd was. No matter how hard he tried, no matter how hard he preached, there was no success.

The Indians were spiritually dead, lost in the darkest night of sin. Some of them laughed, some of them mocked, but most of them just didn't care about the gospel or a missionary. Besides the indifference of the Indians, he was very lonely, no friends, no family.

He didn't have any comforts of life. He had to build his own house. His food was mostly boiled corn.

He slept on the floor on a pad of straw. The bread that he ate, he had to travel 15 miles to get, and usually when he ate it, it was moldy or sour. Then there was the peril of traveling in the wilderness.

Many times David Brainerd was lost in the wilderness, traveling even in the cold of winter. At times he would even fall into the river. There was no warm house to dry himself or to warm his body.

Brainerd wasn't a well man. He was sick, very sick. But he pressed on.

He pressed on preaching the word of God. He pressed on praying for God's glory to be manifested to these Indians. He pressed on living in Romans 7, the reality of his own sin and helplessness.

And then the mission board in 1744, May of 1744, reassigned him to another area called Cross Weeks Inn. Oh, his heart was heavy as he went to this new place. And humanly speaking, there was no possibility that these Indians could ever be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And he was sick. But he continued to pray with the glory of God as his motive. And he continued to pray, constantly confessing his sin.

And he continued to pray with a heart that was open to obey the word of God. His whole hope was God. But he worked and labored and preached.

And then on June of 1744, God answered David Brainerd's prayer. He says, the Indians began to gather. Ten first, and then fifteen, and then thirty, and then sixty, and then ninety, and then about a hundred.

And he said, finally, in one service, the spirit of God fell upon those Indians like a mighty rush. And the Indians began to cry out to God for mercy. What a day it was as these Indians who, just a few days prior to this day, had been crying out in their paganist and idolatrous teeth.

What a day it was when drunkards were cleansed and saved. The power of God fell in answer to Brainerd's prayer. Prayer that was motivated by the glory of God.

Prayer that rose from a heart that lived in Romans 7 and confessed sin constantly. And prayer that knew what it was to be obedient to the word of God. Brainerd died on October 9th of 1747 at the age of 29.

But he died as he had lived his life. His life focused upon the glory of God. A lifestyle of worship and a heart that was open to obey the Lord.

Where is your mind focused tonight? If you pray for revival, why are you praying? Is it God's glory that you seek? If you pray for revival, is yours a lifestyle of worship and prayer, or is yours just some prayers once

a year, twice a year, when it's expected of you because we've got an evangelist? Does your heart so quest for the glory of God that you are found on your knees constantly in a lifestyle and confession of sin and a heart that is open to obey? I want to challenge you this evening. When you leave tomorrow, go home seeking revival with one craving on your heart. The glory of God.

I want to challenge you when you leave tomorrow. Go home with one confession upon your soul. Romans 7. I am full of sin.

My schemes and my plans and my works cannot do it. God, if revival is to come, you must send it. Go home seeking revival with one commitment in your preaching.

The word of God. Go home with one cry ringing in your prayers. The cry of a Bacchic of old.

O God, wilt thou not revive us again? O God, revive thy work in the midst of the ears. In wrath. O God, remember me.

That's the kind of prayer. And through that kind of prayer, God will bring you under the spout where the glory comes out. To your nation of old through Amos.

How you gave them cleanness of teeth. How you sent drought. How you killed their young men with a sword.

To warn them. To call them back. But no one heard.

So the message came, prepare to meet thy end. We would not claim in America that we hold any special place like Israel of old. But truly we do see that you've blessed us as a nation.

And we thank you. Somehow we just can't help but understand that you're seeking to warn America. So much has happened.

O God. Even our young men have been slain with a sword. And perhaps even the heat wave this summer.

And the droughts in the South. And the fires in the West and in North Carolina. And perhaps even the shuttle tragedy.

As our God of science and technology exploded right before our eyes. Perhaps, O God, you were saying, seek my face. Seek revival.

I'm calling. O God, may we hear. Give us hearts that will pray for revival.

Hearts that will seek revival for your nation. Hearts that will seek revival, realizing, O God, I pray for all who are present. Some of them need the breath of God to fall, even as the breath of God teaches to pray.

Teaches to pray with faith. And we pray with confession. And we pray with hearts obedient to the word of God.

Then that we, by the spirit of God, can know. Set our hearts. Set our hearts to pray.

Even in the manner that we've discussed. And O God, send us that breath. Thank you very much.

It's always interesting to observe and to know how the Lord has brought us, each in our individual ways, to where we are. I have a very Reformed tradition in my family. I'm the descendant of pioneers on almost every side.

My people in this nation before the Revolutionary War, staunch, most of them Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian Calvinism. Whether they were really believers or not, I don't know. But it's interesting to read some of those old wills.

Whether they were believers or not, it's unobservable, but whoever wrote those wills knew something of the grace of God. Later on, as people became cut off in the mountains, primitive Baptistism became their faith. Whether they were believers or not, it's difficult to tell.

In the mountains, there used to be a phrase that they used about most of the people who were under the influence of Calvinism. They called them leaners. They just leaned that way.

My great-grandparents were certainly leaners. Some of them, I'm told, were godly men and women who professed to know and love the Lord. My parents were the first in my family to be associated with Southern Baptist churches.

My grandparents on at least one side later became involved in Southern Baptist churches. But Virginia is a very old state. While we've known a great deal about the grace of God through the years, much of it is gone today.

The church in which I grew up, the church in which my parents were members before my birth, enrolling me in the cradle roll before I was born, was a church that was basically just a program church. When I was about seven or eight years old, all the children were making public professions of faith and joining the church. So I did what everybody else did, feeling prompted by some type of spirit.

The pastor didn't ask me anything, didn't even deal with me as you should deal with a child. And I remember him presenting me to the church, and my father was a deacon in the church, and saying, now, we all know Ivan Young. He's a deacon here, and here is his son.

What is your pleasure? I remember when we had the baptismal service, how ill-informed I was. There were some kind of granules on the floor. In my childlike mind, I assumed that was the people's sins that had been washed off.

So you see, I was a real candidate for the church, wasn't I? Well, years passed by, and in 1951, there was a gigantic citywide campaign in the city of Roanoke, and a Texan came to conduct that meeting, the preaching grocerman, Howard Butt. And in that meeting, God began to work in my heart. I remember that I was a teenager about seventeen years old, and working for the state, and had an opportunity to be in Richmond about the second or third night, and I felt so much better.

I just wasn't going to have to hear that preaching. But you know, it was worse in Richmond than it had been in the First Baptist Church the previous nights. The following night, I was back and on the back row, and I remember responding that night with a broken heart.

God did something in my heart, but it was a long time before I fully realized what had really happened. You see, nobody realized I was converted. They thought I just had a rededication.

And in the church that I was involved in, that soon faded away without any instruction. I remember trying to read the Word. I didn't know where it began, so I began in genealogies, and you can imagine how far I got.

And so about a year, a year and a half later, I got in a church in another town. And the church had a fighting fundamentalist pastor, an independent pastor. And you can imagine the influence I fell under.

There were many great things that took place in that relationship, things that I'm sad about, too, also, in that experience. But it was back in the primitive Baptist country. God began to deal with me about the ministry in a very positive way.

And so soon I was enrolled in an independent Bible college. But you know, the Lord had his purpose in that, for my theology professor was a man who hated John Calvin. I mean, nobody could hate John Calvin, I don't believe, any more than that man did.

I think the very first class of any type, I think it was a biblical introduction class, he began to blast John Calvin. I didn't know who John Calvin was, but the fellow was a Yankee, and that sort of rose my suffering blood a little bit, you know. I wanted to know who John Calvin was, and I began to examine the theology of John Calvin.

And I decided John Calvin must be a pretty good fellow if that theology professor hated him. And, you know, I found a lot of students had the same experience. That man made more Calvin than anybody else.

But another wonderful thing took place there, and Lloyd and others who went there can remember it, I'm sure, was the fact of the theological discussions we had. The interesting times, debating everything. And I suppose, really, the intellectual experience that I came to in relation to the doctrines of grace came as much as dealing with students as it did with any pastor.

I was a five-pointer intellectually. I wished to argue all the five points, but you see, I knew very little. And that's about all I knew was the five points.

And not only that, in that Arminian dispensational background, I was scared to death to preach them, because they said, oh, that'll wreck your churches, that'll ruin you. Well, you know, there was another problem we had there. We had some pretty strong Calvinists around there, and a certain fairly well-known evangelist was there occasionally.

But the man was a bit radical. And lots of times he'd do things that hurt. Just the other day, I mentioned him in the pulpit preaching a message of grace to a man who's just recently been coming to my church, happened to know something about that fellow.

And he picked up immediately what I was saying. And I may have lost him completely, because he said, you know, that man wrecked a church in Tennessee. You know, if you preach the doctrines in the wrong way, they can do that, can't they? They can do that.

So I left college and went to pastor churches, preaching Arminianism, but if you've got me alone, arguing for Calvinism. Now, isn't that an odd situation? Indeed, some of the Calvinism moved upon me. However, I believe that a man had to be lost before he could be found.

And I believe with all my heart that if a man came to Christ, it had to be the work of God's Spirit within his heart. But all of my methodology and everything I did was Arminian in its approach. Indeed, I began

pastoring the church that I'm now pastoring.

It will soon be there twenty years. And we had to go through a building program. And after the building program, we began all the methodology.

In one year, the church grew over a hundred percent. I thought, boy, I'm arriving now. I'm getting it made.

But you know, within a year, it all blew up in my face, because it was built out of the wrong thing. I began to search for new methods. And somebody offered to pay my way to a seminar for Campus Crusade.

Well, you know, that week, the pump and that thing, I thought that was great. I remember we went out to the city of Asheville, and one afternoon, we were supposed to have had fifteen hundred people converted. I was really carried away.

I came home, and I got my people together, and I trained them in all the things they trained me in, you know, in that canned approach. We went out, just that little church, one night, and we had sixteen professions of faith. But the next night, I knew something was wrong.

We couldn't get back in a single home, not a single door. You see, they'd been tricked. Oh, I was a bit depressed.

I didn't know what to do. The month moved along, and maybe a couple or three months. In February, a friend of mine invited me to go down to the state of North Carolina for their evangelism conference in Greensboro.

So I decided I'd go along. Maybe I'd pick up some new ideas. Carl Bates was the president of the convention that year.

I don't remember what else Carl Bates said. Sometimes Bates could really have something, and other times he had nothing. But God had something that day for my heart.

As he brought his message to a conclusion, God got a hold of my heart in an unusual way. I felt strangely burdened, uneasy, disturbed. Went by a local bookstore, and I picked up one of the books, God's Purpose in Prayer by Iain Bounds.

I went home, greatly burdened. I began to read that book. I had other books by Bounds I'd never opened.

I read them all. The burden became greater. God gave me a spirit of prayer.

I've never had a spirit of prayer like that before or since. I wish he'd give me another. I prayed night after night, spent most of my time in the study.

God was working in my heart. I had a thirst to know the holiness of God. Now, I wasn't a wildfella.

My life wasn't unclean by men's standards and by the areas in which I moved, but it was unclean before God. There was something missing. I had a great thirst, as I've said, about the holiness of God and about personal sanctification.

You have to understand that if you've ever been a part of dispensationalism and its almost antinomian approaches. One day I went in a Pentecostal bookstore, and a book caught my eye. And I picked it up with fear and trembling.

The name of it was God's Way of Holiness. When I picked it up, I found out, though I didn't know who Horatius Bonar was, but I thought it safe because it was printed by Moody. I said, this isn't Pentecostal, and I know that it won't be Arminian in its approach.

Well, as I began to read that book, God did a greater work in my heart. As he began to talk about God's law, you see, as a dispensationalist and as a fundamentalist, I had grown to hate the law of God. And the only place where the law of God, as I understood it, was in bringing a man to Christ.

But a believer had no relationship to it whatsoever. I had no understanding of the law as a covenant of works before you are converted, but when you're in grace as a rule of life. I didn't understand that at all.

So I went to my pulpit in just a few Sundays after that, and a deep fog during that period. And for the first time and only time thus far in my ministry, I had apologized to my people and retracted things that I had preached and things that I had said. God cured me once and for all of my antinomianism there.

That's the thing that bothers me when we see some of our brethren who claim to believe grace departing from the law of God and saying that it's an enemy and that we have no part of it. Oh, dear friends, you know, sin, the word of God tells us, is a transgression of the law. And if sin is a transgression of the law, then personal holiness must have some relationship to the law of God.

Well, I was on my way. I had a young man who was a student in a local Bible college in the church, and he'd been telling me about his brother-in-law who was reading the Puritans. And one day I asked him just before this, I said, what in the world does he want to read them for? I couldn't understand that.

But after I read Bonar's book, there was a thirst open that could not be stopped. Soon I had acquired J.C. Ryle's book on holiness. I devoured it.

Soon I began to read the Puritans, John Owen on the Holy Spirit, and then the works of Thomas Watson, and well, on and on and on we go. You know, I needed some kind of vehicle to work through and to understand this thirst that God had given me for personal holiness and consecration. I couldn't go the Pentecostal way.

One of the things that bothered me about Ian Bounds, he believed you could pray to change the mind of God. I was too much of an intellectual Calvinist before to believe that. But during this experience, I became a real Calvinist, an experimental Calvinist.

The doctrines weren't just philosophies running around in my head and ideas to argue with somebody else. They were real truths that brought me into a deep and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that's been fourteen years ago.

And most success stories, you know, tell how everything went great after that. I thought, man, this is the most wonderful thing. Man, I'm going to turn the world upside down.

I'm going to turn this little church around. But that didn't happen. In fact, things got steadily worse for a number of years.

I've never kept a diary, but finally the Lord began to show me something. I began to look at every difficulty. Every time I lost somebody because of what I was preaching or something else, I found that during those dark hours I got closer to the Lord and I grew more than any other time.

And I began to learn something that I never understood. Thank God for the hard times. For those are the times that draw us closer and closer and closer to the Lord.

Well, I'm beginning to worry a little bit. I haven't had any hard times lately. I'm coasting too much.

I wonder if things could be this easy. But I've learned some things along the way that I'd like to share with you in relation to the doctrines of grace. You know, when you first come to grace, you think, man, I've got to get out and preach the five points.

You've got to preach the five points. But sometimes that's the worst thing in the world you can do. For in reality, the five points of Calvinism were set in a negative statement.

They were set at the center of the door to oppose the propositions of the Arminians. And sometimes there's a better way to preach it. I have a dear friend.

For a long time I was the only Southern Baptist up in our part of the country that I knew of. I felt like maybe I was the only one anywhere that got ahold of the doctrines of grace. I'd been reading all of our old history books about the Virginia Baptist ministers and found they were all Calvinist to the man almost.

But the Lord brought another dear brother in our city to the doctrines of grace. And about the second Sunday afterwards, you know, you're just so full of fire, he got up and told his folks, and I want to tell you, God doesn't love everybody. Man, what a time he had.

One woman came down the bar. I said, you said God didn't love everybody. And I wanted to love everybody.

Well, he had a hard time. You know, sometimes the way in which we say what we say is the important thing, isn't it? A few years ago I got ahold of a book by James Buchanan on the doctrines of justification. I began to learn something, I think, at least for me.

I don't think I need to be preaching so much about limited atonement in that phrase as I need to be preaching about the stewardship of Jesus Christ. That he died to do something. Those who oppose us preach a death of Christ that makes men savable.

We have a gospel that Christ died to save. And that's a positive way, I think, to preach particular redemption. I'll tell you, one of the great doctrines we have to preach is irresistible grace.

But let's preach it in the order of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, the Baptist faith and message. Man must be born again, and then he can repent and believe. They can get ahold of that, but they can't get a handle on what you're saying sometimes.

And then there is that great doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Oh, what a neglected doctrine in our day. You know, there are a lot of people who are fairly straight on the death of Christ, but they're not straight on what is our righteousness.

Justification means to be declared righteous. We're declared righteous in the righteousness of Christ imputed to our account. Not our good works.

Really, I think that's the problem with the pure Arminian who loses his salvation. He thinks his own works of righteousness, his own works, his own good works are his righteousness, and he loses that, not the

death of Christ. And then so many Baptists have been influenced by the school of some of our friends, and the neo-Arminianism, declaring that our faith is our righteousness rather than the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Oh, my friends, this is the message we must proclaim. We must proclaim to men, let's not get nerved sometimes into the negative, as I said. Let's keep it positive on where the real issues are.

The issues are heaven and hell, and the grace of God that can bring on that lost sinner to know the Lord. May we pray together. Our Father, we thank you for your grace.

We thank you, our Father, that you could reach down wherever we were. Each of us here today have this testimony. Wherever we were, whatever circumstances, Lord, you've brought us to your truth.

Lord, we bow at your throne, and we give you all the glory. For, Lord, it all belongs to thee and none to us. Now, Lord, we come with this service on our hearts tonight.

What a subject our brother has, the Holy Spirit and revival. We pray, even as one of our speakers exhorted today, that he might have the unction of the Spirit tonight, and that he might teach our hearts. And, oh, our God, that we might receive something that would fire our hearts to go back, and to be better witnesses for thee in those places where you have assigned us to serve.

We make our prayer in the name of Christ, and for his sake. Amen.

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