

Revival - America's Only Hope

by Robert Vradenburgh

America is experiencing the judgment of God, not revival, and must turn to God to be revived.

Duration: 36:09

Scripture: Judges 10:13-14, Psalm 85:1-6, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 1:24-31, Romans 1:18-32

Topics: "National Revival", "Moral Decay"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the need for revival in America. He starts by referencing Romans chapter one, emphasizing the lost state of the Gentile heathen and the importance of sharing the gospel with them. The preacher then shifts the focus to 'heathen America,' highlighting the suppression of truth and the worship of created things instead of the Creator. He emphasizes the moral and spiritual decay in the country, accompanied by a paradoxical high level of church attendance. The sermon concludes with a call for revival and a reminder of the consequences of forsaking God.

Transcript

Let's remain seated while I read selected verses from Romans chapter 1, and then I'll have you stand as we read from the 85th Psalm together. I'm preaching on the subject Revival America's Only Hope this morning. We've preached recently from Romans chapter 1 in preparation for our missions conference, and certainly that was appropriate as we see the description of the Gentile heathen and the fact that the heathen are lost, they're guilty before God, and all the more reason that we must take them the gospel.

I want to approach this passage from a somewhat different standpoint this morning as we think about heathen America. Notice verse 18 of Romans 1, and then we'll turn to Psalm 85 together, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth, or literally suppress or hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Would you skip down to verse 24, wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. Verse 26, for this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meat.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. Verse 32, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Now, would you stand, everyone, with me out of reverence for God's Word, and we'll say these, we'll just read in unison the first six verses of this marvelous 85th Psalm.

Reading in unison from the King James Version, would you say it with me? Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land. Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.

Thou hast covered all their sin, Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath. Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Turn us, O God, of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us forever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? Father, this is the prayer of our lips. May it indeed be the prayer of our hearts.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

You may be seated. No discerning Christian living in 21st century America can deny that this country needs revival. The breakdown of public morals and the breakup of the traditional home are all well documented.

I could take a lot of time this morning giving statistics about suicide and juvenile delinquency and deadbeat dysfunctional dads and pornography and divorce and broken homes and pregnant teenage mothers. I don't need to bore you with those details. I think you're convinced of how appalling they are.

And yet, how ironic it is that at the same time we have this awful moral and spiritual decay, it is accompanied by a higher level of church attendance. America has a higher level of church attendance than any other country that is comparably developed to us. Fifty-three percent of Americans consider religion to be important in their lives.

Compare that to only 16 percent in England, 14 percent in France and 13 percent in Germany. Something's not quite right. It's easy to look at some superficial things and say that we're experiencing revival.

Some evangelical leaders have said as much in recent years. After the horrific events of September 11, 2001, Franklin Graham, who said some very commendable things and nobly said Jesus was the only way to heaven, didn't back down about that. But I think he was overly euphoric when he made the statement that America hasn't experienced, and I quote, an enduring turn to God.

I don't believe it was enduring. Do you? Pat Robertson said that that attack was bringing about one of the greatest revivals in the history of America. People are turning to God.

The churches are full. I want to be hopeful this morning, but I must dissent from that euphoric opinion and submit to you that America is experiencing not revival today in 2007, but the judgment of God. It is no longer that America needs revival.

It is a matter, it boils down to, she must have it to survive as a nation as we know her. So the question really is, is it too late? Can God bless America? Or has he turned his back on our society? Let's turn to the

Bible and learn both from its warnings and from its history. And I believe a reverent, unbiased investigation of God's word on this subject will fill our hearts, first of all, with alarm and secondly, with hope.

The cause for alarm, first of all, is that God is already judging our nation. Just as he did Israel, as Paul wrote in Romans 1 18, for the wrath of God is revealed. He's talking about the heathen there, but he also goes on to talk about the judgment of God upon Israel in subsequent chapters.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This passage in Romans chapter 1 is about the wrath of God. And may I just say that is not a popular subject today.

We gravitate toward preachers that get up with all smiles and make us feel good and tell us what's going right in our lives and how it's all going to turn out just fine. We don't want to hear about the wrath of God. May I submit to you, first of all, the Bible teaches that there is the wrath of abandonment.

When we think of the wrath of God, usually our first conception, our first thought is the fact that God sends people to hell or he just zaps them right on the spot like he did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven or the company of Dathan and Abiram and those 250 princes, the sons of Korah. The Bible tells about the ground, the earth just opened up and swallowed them all alive. I mean, who could deny, if you witness that, who could deny that that was the judgment of God? I mean, it's just written on the surface.

But there are other kinds of judgment that aren't so obvious unless we know the word of God. There have been times through the history of man, especially the history of the nation Israel, when God showed his wrath by abandoning that nation and turning his back on an entire society. We know that the Bible teaches God does that to individuals.

They can cross God's deadline. God withdraws his spirit's influences from them. God leaves them alone.

One of the saddest words in the Bible, saddest expressions is found in Judges chapter 16 and verse 20 when the Bible says, referring to Samson, that great, greatly used man, he's not a he-man, he wasn't a Charles Atlas or an Arnold Schwarzenegger. I don't believe he would have been impressive if you had looked upon him at all, but when the of God came upon him, he had supernatural strength. But he prostituted himself to the devil.

And we read these words, and he wished not that the Lord was departed from him. He didn't even realize it. Some of the saddest words in the Bible.

What an apt picture of America. We have had the truth. We have been blessed by God.

We have known God's power in great awakenings in the past, but most Americans and even most believers alive in our country today have been shorn of that power, and we don't even realize it, and we're not alarmed about it. The Bible says in Judges chapter 10, verses 13 and 14, referring to the nation Israel, yet ye have forsaken me and served other gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen.

Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. God turned his back on Israel. A similar sentiment is found in Proverbs 1, verses 24 through 31.

I'll just read some of those phrases. But I have called, and ye refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.

But ye have said it not, all my counsel. That literally means ye have disdained all my counsel. Ye would not of my reproof.

And then God says this, I also will laugh at your calamity. You think that's cruel? Better be careful what you say about God. I will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. And they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.

Why? Because they hated knowledge and despised all my reproof. They spurned all my rebukes. Hosea 4, verse 17, says Ephraim, referring to the northern ten tribes of Israel.

Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone. God gave up on that northern kingdom.

God abandoned them. Oh, they existed for a while, a few more years, before Assyria took them into captivity. And now they've lost their identity.

Where are the ten northern tribes today? Nobody knows. Yes, God does come to a point where He lets a people go. He gives them over to the consequences of their own sinful choices and their depravity.

He lets them eat the fruit of their own way. And what a frightening thought that is to think of in a personal way. Could it be that I have been abandoned by God? Could it be that God has told His Spirit, don't speak to that man, that woman anymore? Their day of grace has passed.

Their opportunity for salvation is gone. There is such a thing, beloved, as the wrath of abandonment. And people don't even know it.

There are reasons for this wrath. We've talked about this a lot recently. And I don't want to repeat myself to a great extent.

I want to get into some new material today. But three times in Romans chapter 1, we read the phrase, God gave them up, or God gave them over, it says one time. God gave them over to uncleanness.

First of all, that means sexual impurity. To uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. Does that characterize the rank and file of America today? As a society, we become lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Most Americans live for the weekend when they indulge in all kinds of wild revelry, drunken orgies. Notice that it starts in the heart. Uncleanness in the heart.

And then when the heart becomes wretchedly immoral, the body follows in the most degrading ways. I know it's easy for us as Christians to just curse the darkness. And I don't want to just do that today.

But beloved, we need to see how bad it really is. America has become a pornographic culture. It pretty much started, at least it really got going good with the sexual revolution, which in turn gave way to the playboy empire.

And then pornography has gone from that point, from behind the counter in the local drug store, to the bookshelves of any bookstore and library just about in America, and to literally millions of internet websites, all spewing out filth to feed the insatiable lusts of a sex-crazed culture. Marriage is no longer in style. For many Americans, it's just an option.

For most of them, a minor option. And before you settle down to one person, the conventional wisdom is to try them on for size, live with them a while in immorality, without any commitment, of course. That's become the American way.

And this in turn leads to the disintegration of the home and of marriage, abuse of spouses, shocking, horrific child abuse, pedophilia, child pornography, and the list goes on and on and on. And that's just step one. That's just step one in this downward spiral described by Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Romans chapter one.

And I ask you this morning, has America become a pornographic society? What drives things, even the commercial realm? It's sex. Is it filled with lust in the heart, leading to impurity in the body, disgraceful, dishonorable, to use the King James word, dishonor and dishonorable behavior? I think you know the answer. Yes, our nation is dragging other nations down the sewer.

We're not just ripe for the judgment of God, folks. We're already experiencing it. And yet most Americans think they're getting away with something.

God gives men over to sexual immorality. That's the judgment of abandonment. That's the first step.

The second step is to degrading passions. And in verse 26, for this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections, which literally means degrading passions. This is a downward spiral even further to greater debauchery, speaks of perversion, specifically describing the sins of lesbianism and homosexuality.

It's most interesting here that Paul cites, first of all, women. And the words used in the Greek here, both for women and men, which has men with men working that which is unseen, it's interesting. It's not the usual word in the Bible, in the Greek, for man and woman.

It is just the word that makes a distinction of sex. It would be comparable to the way we use the word male and female. But the first thing mentioned is women.

Listen to me carefully. When lesbianism characterizes a society, when women act unnaturally with other women, that underscores the fact that God has abandoned that society. Women are usually the last to be affected by the decay of morals because God has put within them a mothering and a protecting instinct over their own children.

But in our day and in our culture, lesbians have become strident and brazen and relentless and passionate and even violent. And I submit to you that it is proof that all virtue is God from our public place. Motherhood, the highest normal human virtuous relationship, has been abandoned.

And the people that are indulging in it and practice it have become elevated as cultural icons. The Rosie O'Donnells and the Billie Jean Kings and the Martina Navratrovolas and even the daughter of our current vice president. Verse 27 speaks of homosexuality among men.

Men with men working that which is unseemly. The word unseemly means shameful. Do I need to even comment about that? It's been quite a while since the gays have come out of their closets in America.

The judgment of God is already evident in many because of the high incidence of AIDS, which is certainly hinted at here when it says, and receiving in themselves that recompense, the natural result. That's what the word recompense means. The natural result of their error, which was meat.

The word meat means in the necessity of the case. You've heard it said, and it's so true, a man can choose his own lifestyle, but he can't choose the consequences. There is a divine law of sowing and reaping that cannot be circumvented and cannot be broken.

And so I ask you, is present-day American society not only immoral and pornographic, but is it also approving of and legitimizing and exalting lesbianism and sodomy? I think you know the answer. That's God's wrath already at work. We're not done.

Verse 28, and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to a depraved mind. The word literally means a mind tested and found disapproved. There's a play on words here.

Verse 28, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, it literally means, and even as they did not approve of God, then God did not approve of them. Adokemon is the Greek word. A trial-less mind.

A mind that is non-functional. A mind whose reasoning is corrupted and crippled. Notice the progression, or should I say the digression here.

First the heart is rotten, and then the body follows, and now the mind goes. The conscience cannot function. Paul gives several results of this.

Depraved mind. The members of this kind of a society do those things which are not convenient. The word convenient means proper.

They can't even figure out what's decent or appropriate or proper anymore. The mind is gone. They can't find their way back.

It's all messed up. They just can't think right. Another consequence that ought to alarm us is these people know it's wrong.

They know the consequences. Look what the Bible says in verse 32, "...who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." They know that. But they not only do the same, but they have pleasure in them that do them.

They give hearty approval to others that are engaging in it. And if you think I'm exaggerating just for the sake of an effect, I want you to go back about 13 or 14 years. Most of you are old enough to remember the impeachment proceedings against former President Bill Clinton.

And when he was caught in that scandal with a White House intern, his approval ratings went up. And why not? The rest of the sinners felt comfortable with a leader like that. That's how bad it's gotten.

When a nation like ours descends to the Jerry Springer and Howard Stern level, when we laugh at that which is so bizarre and corrupt and unconventional, when the purveyors of this filth are held up as cultural

icons, when we tolerate everything and everybody, except somebody like this preacher who gets angry at sin, we have become a reprobate society. Let me give a solemn reflection on this wrath of abandonment. How does it manifest itself in society? Well, God withdraws His restraining grace.

The word used three times, God gave them up or God gave them over here. It's the same Greek word *paradidomi*. It's a legal word.

It means God officially hands them over. It's like a judge after he's pronounced sentence, he hands over the condemned person to the bailiff. God lifts his hand of restraint.

He tells his spirit to leave them alone. And the result is sin runs rampant through that society. Sin has both been the cause and the effect of that judgment.

Secondly, the natural consequences of sin are seen on a wholesale. Scale, scope, HIV, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases have become a nationwide epidemic. And we're a supposedly civilized, developed country.

Abandoned, unwanted children are handed over every week to social services. Did you read that heartbreaking article on the front page of last Sunday's newspaper? An 18-year-old girl in Raleigh who had just graduated from high school was raised in a foster home because her parents couldn't raise her, abandon her, drug business or something. But because she's 18, she's out on her own.

Social services gave her a suitcase and \$100 and said, good luck. And there are 600 others just like her in North Carolina alone. What is that? The natural consequences of sin.

Another effect, the result, man substitutes false religion for God. Verse 25, I skipped that deliberately. Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever.

When God abandons a society, the last straw, the ultimate insanity, is that man who has rejected the true God creates in his place a non-God and worships him or it. And what do we have in America today? We have the worship of Mother Earth and Mother Nature. We have fabricated our own idols of sin and sex and eco-feminism.

We've even named a TV program, American Idol. And millions of Americans, including, sad to say, many professing Christians, sit transfixed before what is really their family altar in the home. And watch that mess, that stardom in which they're all caught up a la Hollywood.

Amen. Yeah, we have our idols. And because we do, because we rejected the true God, God has returned the favor.

Leonard Ravenhill, who died in 1994 but really had a burning passion for revival, was right when he wrote 40 years ago this statement, America cannot fall. She has already fallen. Oh, but we think we're wise.

Look at verse 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. We have our experts.

We have our authorities. We're giving PhDs to people in religion and philosophy. They're so smart.

They're so elite. God says they're fools. It's a pretty bleak picture.

It's been pretty heavy. But I ask you, is there any hope for America? I believe we can learn from Psalm 85 and other similar passages that there is. But that hope, that only hope is revival.

I've given you a cause for alarm. I want to deal for a few minutes with a cause for hope. God is pleading with our nation.

Just a little bit about the context of the 85th Psalm. It's one of several psalms that takes its setting after the judgment of God upon Judah in the Babylonian captivity. Bible scholars are not agreed as to whether it was actually written after the captivity or whether it was prophetic of the captivity.

But we see here that the history of the world is the judgment of the world. Verse 1, Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land. Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

How many times did God do this to Israel? Many generations experienced this cycle. They had the truth. They rejected the truth.

They rejected the true God. Then they rationalized about their condition. They invented a complex religion.

They started worshiping a false god and God abandoned them. And then in their dire extremity, a remnant turned to God in contrition with fasting and prayer and intercession for others. And you know what? God was entreated.

God has done that time and time and time again in our nation's past. What an encouragement that should be to us to pray, Lord, do it again. The great revivals in America's history, if you've studied them, and the sad thing is most Christians in fundamental churches have not studied them, do not even know when the first great awakening was or any figure associated with it, and certainly don't know about the second great awakening.

And yet that changed the whole course of our history. When those awakenings came, the church was in serious decline. For instance, after God sent the first great awakening associated with George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards and the Tenet brothers and others, what happened? Well, not too long after that, the American Revolution was fought.

While we're glad to be independent as a nation, there were some sad things that happened as a result of the American Revolution. If you've studied history, you know that France was brought in as an ally. But along with the aid that we received from France politically and economically and militarily in our struggle against Great Britain, we also imbibed some of the godless influence of the French philosophers in vogue at that age, in the age of enlightenment, as it was called, Voltaire and Diderot and Rousseau.

That's where Tom Paine got his inspiration for all of his godless stuff. We call him a patriot, but he was a wicked patriot. Wrote the Age of Reason, and the reason that people would buy it was because the effects of the first great awakening were forgotten.

God revived Israel even after he had given them up. I want to show you one other passage, and then I'm done. Turn back to Psalm 81.

Psalm 81, probably just one page, you'll have to turn. But my people, verse 11, but my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. Verse 12, so I, would you say those next three words with me? Gave them up.

That's Romans one. So I gave them up under their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels. Verse 13, oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways.

That's a sigh from the heart of God, folks. Oh that my people had hearkened. And it's unfortunate that our translation says had.

It really means in the Hebrew, oh that my people would hearken to me. Because it's easy to look at it and say if it really means had hearkened. You say, well since they didn't, no wonder God didn't do the things that he promised he would do.

In the next verses, I would have subdued their enemies. I would have turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of God should have submitted themselves unto him.

He would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and so forth. But make a marginal rendering in your Bible there that means would. Oh that my people would have hearkened unto me.

I would have done these things. I will do these things. We go back to Psalm 85, verse 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? This is the cry of the restored remnant, realizing that true revival was the only thing that could cause God to turn from the fierceness of his anger against Israel for their sin.

I'm wrapping up, folks. Are we, as the remnant in America, as the salt of the earth in this country, are we willing to pray that same prayer, and pay the price, and not let go of a sovereign God unless he blesses us? Again, I say we have 350 or more people here today. I praise the Lord for that.

We won't have a service this Wednesday night because it's a holiday. But on any given Wednesday night, if we have 150 here, that's a great crowd. If I were to announce we're going to have prayer for revival, we're going to break up for prayer for revival for our country, I might as well announce that we're going to have free root canals without Novocaine.

That's about the response you'll get. We're not alarmed. We're not burdened.

We're not patiently waiting upon God. We get our exercise about it every once in a while. We pray for a few weeks, maybe, before revival comes in the fall.

And then when God doesn't send it, it's back to life as normal. God waits to manifest his mercy. Jonah 3, verse 9, the Gentile Ninevites said this, Gentiles, heathen, who can tell, when Jonah preached, who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away his fierce anger that we perish not? And I say today, we can't tell.

God's sovereign. Anybody that comes and says, if we'll just pay the price for revival, we can have it anytime and anywhere we want, that's not true. We bought into that life for the last 150, almost 175 years, and we're paying the price with revivalism.

When we prostrate ourselves before a sovereign, holy God, and we say, God, I know that you promised to honor your word, and you promised to honor holy living, and you promised to honor the importunate, persistent, intercessory prayer, and I will not let you go until you bless me. It may be that God will hearken. Are we desperate enough? We've all heard what Pastor Henry said.

Give me liberty or give me death. To God, some Christians would say, give me revival or give me death. The hour is late, but God's mercy is great.

Amen. God is sovereign, but he's ordained and laid down means, used means, prayer, and the proclaiming of the word. The only hope for America or for any other society is to hear the word of God and to obey it, shall we pray? Thank you, Lord, for your sobering admonitions.

Thank you for confronting us with your truth. I pray, Lord, that you help us to see it's not too late until Jesus comes to pray and preach and plead and repent so that those who are now under your wrath already may be saved and escape that awful final and eternal wrath. Oh, God, grant us revival.

Break our hearts. Help us to wait upon you for it. Help us to search our own hearts and get rid of the idols in our own lives.

Father, would you send revival to our country, true revival, one more time. We'll praise your name for it. We pray it in that name.

Amen.

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