

If Revival Doesn't Come

by Ronald Glass

When revival doesn't come, it's not because the Lord is unable to give it, but because we must humble ourselves and repent of our sins.

Duration: 47:19

Scripture: Psalm 80:3, Jeremiah 6:16, Lamentations 5:19-22, Habakkuk 3:16-19, Romans 11:33

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the prophet Habakkuk and his reaction to God's revelation of judgment. Habakkuk expresses his fear and physical distress upon understanding the future plans of God. The speaker then draws a parallel to the state of evangelical Christianity today, highlighting the defilement and corruption present in many churches. The sermon emphasizes the need for biblical revival and references the books of Lamentations and Habakkuk to further illustrate the consequences of turning away from God's covenant.

Transcript

What a great God we worship, what a great God we have who has saved us, and it is to this God that we look for the health and the welfare of our church and for the church throughout the world, and that's why we are concentrating on the great subject of biblical revival in these days. Today, as we continue our series, and we only have a couple of sermons left, but today we're going to be looking at two texts. First, I direct your attention to Lamentations, the fifth chapter, the little book of Lamentations following the book of Jeremiah and right before the book of Ezekiel.

Lamentations chapter 5, the last four verses of the book, verses 19 through 22, and then we're going to read together from the book of Habakkuk, the third chapter, and the last four verses of that chapter, verses 16 through 19. Follow, please, as I begin in Lamentations 5, verse 19. You, O Lord, rule forever.

Your throne is from generation to generation. Why do you forget us forever? Why do you forsake us so long? Restore us to you, O Lord, that we may be restored. Renew our days as of old, unless you have utterly rejected us and are exceedingly angry with us.

Now Habakkuk, chapter 3, beginning in the 16th verse. I heard and my inward parts trembled. At the sound, my lips quivered.

Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble, because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exalt in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength, and he has made my feet like hinds feet and makes me walk on my high places. Dr. David Martin Lloyd-Jones was one of the great expositors of the 20th century. Preaching from the venerable pulpit of London's Westminster Chapel, he was primarily responsible for the recovery of Puritan literature and theology, the rediscovery of the doctrines of grace, and the resurrection of biblical expository preaching.

Through his books and his recorded sermons, Lloyd-Jones has become something of a patron, or even an icon, for many preachers of my generation. I know I personally have looked up to his model, his example, as an inspiring one in my own ministry. One of Lloyd-Jones' greatest passions was to see revival in his time.

In fact, he preached a significant series of sermons, which has been printed and published as a book on the subject of revival. He preached on it, he prayed for it, and not long before his death in 1981, he is reported to have said that his greatest disappointment was that revival had not come. Disappointed? Yes.

Lloyd-Jones, however, was supremely convinced of the sovereignty of God. It was a theme that he had preached often. Although a church is right to pray for revival, and I have been urging that throughout our series on revival, and though we ought to expect revival, it is not always the Lord's will to give it.

So what are the practical implications for us when the Lord Jesus denies, or at least delays, our prayer for the revival of his church, or for the spiritual awakening of our nation? As we approach the conclusion to this series on biblical revival, this is another matter that we need to consider. What if we continue as a congregation and as individuals to pray and pray and pray for revival, and God doesn't give it to us? Well, this is a subject that was on the hearts of two of Judah's prophets. Habakkuk had to consider the consequences for his own life should the Lord withhold the revival blessings that he sought.

In fact, he writes his little prophecy staring at the certain prospect of approaching judgment. Years later, the prophet Jeremiah wrestled with the reality of revival withheld, but he did so as he walked weeping among the piles of rubble that once were Jerusalem. We are reminded by these two passionate men of God that the Lord is not obligated to give revival in response to our prayers.

I want you to remember something that had been said many years earlier by the prophet Isaiah. You know these verses well, but I'm talking about the 55th chapter, verses 8 and 9. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

So we might say, Lord, it is time, as the psalmist said, it is time for you to work. Lord, revive us in the midst of the years. Make revival known.

Revive us again that your people may rejoice in you. Revive us that we may have understanding of your truth. All of these ways that we have prayed, and we can pray that way, and yet God may say, not now.

Now understanding this, both Habakkuk and Jeremiah, one, did not stop praying. Even in the face of judgment, they did not stop praying. Two, they did not bitterly question or blame the Lord for unanswered prayer.

And yet, three, they did humbly submit to whatever the Lord's providence ordained. Now my proposition to you today is that this needs to be our attitude as well. Sometimes the door to revival opens, and sometimes it is closed.

We're going to explore those two alternatives in the final two sermons in this series in the next two weeks. Today, however, our attention is turned to this question. What if revival doesn't come? We're going to base our thoughts on Jeremiah's heartfelt prayer.

Lamentations is, in the words of one commentator, and I'm quoting, a funeral dirge over an irrecoverable past. It is a set of solemn hymns, of hymns of mourning over a once great city, now utterly decimated, and a nation that has been exiled in misery. It's a reminder of God's sovereign power in judgment.

Our text, however, is a prayer for revival, for the restoration of the nation. Now the restoration to the land is obviously in view. Scripture promised it, but so is spiritual restoration, because Scripture both promises and demands it.

I want to say to you this morning that I see a parallel between Israel then and America now. And here is the way I see this parallel. First of all, both are nations that were blessed with unusual privileges among the other nations of the world.

Secondly, both are nations that had ample warning of judgment. And third, both are nations that paid no attention to the preaching of repentance. So I want you to consider three certainties with me from this passage in Lamentations chapter 5, beginning in verse 19.

Let me set before you the first of these certainties. When revival doesn't come, it is not because the Lord is unable to give it. We must not fall into this erroneous way of thinking that somehow the revival we seek, somehow the power of God that we long to see come upon the earth is no longer possible.

That somehow, and sometimes I have picked up this theme in certain preachers over the years, that somehow things have gotten so bad that church has slid so far into apostasy. The nation has become so corrupt that it is beyond God's ability to restore it. That's nonsense.

God is sovereign. We have been singing that today. So if revival doesn't come, it's not because the Lord is unable to give it.

Therefore, what's our attitude to be? Well, first of all, we must not question His sovereignty. Notice in verse 19, Jeremiah says, You, O Lord, rule forever. The word literally here is you sit.

The idea is you sit enthroned forever. Your throne is from generation to generation. You go back to Isaiah 6 and you remember the picture of the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate form seated upon a massive throne in heaven surrounded by the seraphim.

God is still on the throne. The Lord sits forever. He is forever enthroned as creator.

He is forever enthroned as governor of His universe. And what I am saying to you today is that regardless of world conditions and events, regardless of what is happening in Washington, D.C., or at the other

capitals, regardless of wars and famines and natural disasters, the Lord Jesus Christ is building His church today. And He does not change.

Now, I know you know that, but let me just reinforce it with the words of the psalmist, Psalm 102, verses 27 and 28. He says, But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end. The children of your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before you.

A tremendous confidence in the covenant faithfulness of God. When you go back to verse 12 in the 102nd Psalm, But you, O Lord, abide forever. You abide forever.

And it is that same word. You sit enthroned forever. And your name to all generations.

Now, we can go back through the entire Old Testament, and particularly the Psalms, and we pick up this theme over and over again. For example, the 9th Psalm, verse 7, The Lord abides forever. There we have it again.

It is that word sit. The Lord sits forever. He has established His throne for judgment.

He will judge the world in righteousness. He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. 10th Psalm, verse 16, The Lord is king forever and ever.

Nations have perished from His land. They are in His hand. The 90th Psalm reminds us that from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

James reminds us, chapter 1, verse 17, that in God there is no variation, not even a shifting shadow. God does not change. And God will be gracious to His people.

Let me go back again to that 102nd Psalm, verses 13-17. Listen to the confidence of the psalmist here. You will arise and have compassion on Zion.

It is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come. Surely your servants find pleasure in her stones and feel pity for her dust, so the nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth your glory, for the Lord has built up Zion. He has appeared in His glory.

He has regarded the prayer of the destitute and has not despised their prayer. God hears and answers the prayer of His people. And here is a psalm that anticipates the answer to those prayers and the restoration of His people.

What I am saying to you at this point is that the Lord has proven Himself to be a God who does revive His people. History is replete with that, both in Scripture and throughout the annals of church history. But revival is a sovereign work of God.

It is not something we can bring about at will, as some of the revivalists have taught in the past 150 years or so, where we have heard them saying to us that a revival is simply a matter of doing the right things at the right time. That a revival can be engineered by human beings. That all we have to do is pull the right strings and push the right buttons and presto, God gives revival.

It is not that way. We must never question the sovereignty of God. He is in control of His world and the Lord Jesus is in control of His church.

Now, while we must not question His sovereignty, there are times when we may well question His silence. And that is what Jeremiah does here in verse 20. Why do you forget us forever? Why do you forsake us so long? If God is indeed sovereign, as we have said, then why would He not respond in mercy to the cries of His saints? If God invites us to pray to Him, if God says that He will be faithful, then why would He not respond to our prayers? Why is He silent? Now, Jeremiah again, in these circumstances, again let me remind you that at the point that he writes Lamentations, Jerusalem has been destroyed by the Babylonians, the Chaldeans.

The armies have come in. They have torn down the city. They have ripped down the temple.

They have looted the city. They have carried off most of the inhabitants into exile. Jeremiah is left among the few who were left there in the city.

He is walking around in the rubble and crying out to God in pain. And he echoes the words of David in Psalm 10. Why do you stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Or in Psalm 13, where David asks, How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Now, the Lord answers David's questions, especially with regard to the restoration of his people, through the mouth of Isaiah the prophet.

Isaiah chapter 59, verses 1 and 2, here is the answer. Behold, look here, pay attention, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save. God has not lost any of his power, nor is his ear so dull that it cannot hear.

He is not out in the distant reaches of the universe and lost touch with his world. God is not deaf. What's the problem then, verse 2? But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear.

Problem comes back to our sins. See, Jeremiah knew the reason for the Lord's judgment. Not only did he know that, he also knew how long the judgment was going to last, because he is the one who records it.

And not just once, but twice. In the 25th chapter of Jeremiah, and in verse 11, the whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon 70 years. 29th chapter of Jeremiah, verse 10.

When 70 years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word to you to bring you back to this place. But even though Jeremiah knew the reasons for the judgment, even though Jeremiah knew how long it was going to go on, it didn't take the pain away as he walked among the rubble of that city that had once been the proud capital of Israel and Judah. And he cries out to God for the restoration of his nation.

In the midst of the suffering, it seems so long. Did you hear those words we read earlier in our service today from the 60th Psalm? Did you hear that refrain that kept coming back? Verse 1 of the 60th Psalm, O God, you have rejected us, you have broken us, you have been angry, O restore us. Save us, verse 5, with your right hand and answer us.

Verses 10 and 11, O Lord, have you not rejected, you yourself rejected us, and will you not go forth with our armies, O God? Give us help against the adversary. Why? For the deliverance by man is in vain. Why does God remain silent? The very simple answer is our sins.

And as long as we grasp onto our sins, as long as we hold onto our unrighteousness, God may very well withhold the blessing we seek until we come to a point of repentance and confession of sin. I believe that God is, as it were, waiting for his church to repent today. And so when revival doesn't come, it is not because the Lord is unable to give it.

Second certainty that I want to put before you, and I'm looking at verse 21 now, when revival doesn't come, it may not be because we are unconcerned to receive it. Now, Jeremiah's final response to this request, in this book, is contained in verse 21. Restore us to you, O Lord, that we may be restored.

Renew our days as of old. Literally, he says in this final prayer, in this book of mourning, turn us back to you that we may be restored. This word that is translated turn us back is one of the main words used in the Old Testament for revival.

Revival is a turning back to God. If revival doesn't come when we pray, that doesn't necessarily mean we don't care. When God doesn't respond and give us the revival we seek, at least when we pray for it, we should not conclude that somehow we are so bad, that we are so sinful, that we are so apostate, that we don't really care.

No, you might have a real heart for God. You might be praying earnestly. You may care passionately.

We may long to be restored. You see, revival is a restoration to spiritual life. Restore us to you or turn us back to you, O Lord, that we may be turned back again or restored.

Jeremiah recognizes that his disastrous circumstances are the result of sin. The nation has turned their back on the Lord. Listen, God never leaves us unless we leave him.

Then he really doesn't leave us, but he lets us go. He turns us loose on a very long leash and lets us go. Jeremiah also recognizes here that revival is a work of sovereign grace.

The very nature of this prayer in verse 21, Lord you restore us, we can't do it. As the psalmist said, the help of man is vain. Only God can restore us.

He must turn us back to himself. We long for those times. We read the history of revivals and we say, Lord, we've never experienced anything like this.

We'd love to experience this. We'd love to see people broken and confessing sin. We'd love to see sinners repenting and coming to Christ in great numbers.

We'd love to see the churches, not just ours, but all evangelical Bible believing churches, packed. We'd love to see the word of God being proclaimed in courage and power. We'd love all of that.

We don't see it. Well, you remember what Jeremiah said as he preached to the people of Israel. Jeremiah chapter 6, verse 16, he said, stand by the ways, this is the words of the Lord to Judah, stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls.

But they said, we will not walk in it. We say, Lord, we'd love to see us go back to the old way, back to the old ways of a revived church. But so many today are saying that's not the way we're going to walk.

We turn back to him. The promise of scripture is that he will turn to us. Again, another psalm with just a ringing refrain, Psalm 80.

Psalm 80, three times, listen, O God, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved, verse 3. Verse 7, O God of hosts, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved. Verse 19, O Lord God of hosts, restore us, cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved. That's the prayer.

Lord, you do it. We can't. We don't have the power.

We don't have the strength to do it. You return us back to you. You shine upon us and then we'll be revived.

Ian Murray, in his book on Revival and Revivalism, makes reference to the great doxology of Romans chapter 11, verse 33, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. And he makes this comment. He says, the vast and sudden spreading of the gospel, which we call revival, follow no observable plan or pattern.

With respect to time and place and instrumentality, all attempts to account for them in mere human terms soon break down. No one can say why Whitefield saw only one great awakening, though he was preaching for nearly 20 years after its conclusion. In other words, why did he not have any more awakenings during those 20 years? Why did God withhold the blessing? No one can explain why the same prayerful efforts, even undertaken by the same people and in the same place, were attended by such different results at different times.

So we may long to be restored. We may also long to be renewed. Second part of that verse, renew our days as of old.

Again, we read the history of revivals. We're impressed with the large number of Christians who are restored. We read the history and we read of sinners flocking to Christ and churches and nations being transformed.

We long to see that again. We realize that our sins have been no benefit to us. We want to return to the Lord.

We want to go back to the old ways of yesterday and make them the new ways of tomorrow. I think this is an indispensable step in the whole process. A broken church that is praying to be restored and praying to be renewed, preaching and praying for revival, confessing and repenting of sin.

That's what we ought to be doing. That ought to be our business in these difficult days. But then, now I come to the third certainty, when revival doesn't come, it is never because the Lord is unreasonable to withhold it.

It is never because the Lord is unreasonable to withhold it. The Jewish rabbis didn't like the way the book of Lamentations ended. So they shift the verses around a little bit.

They move verse 22 up before verse 21 and let verse 21 be the final verse. Because it's a very sad sort of ending. Unless you have utterly rejected us and are exceedingly angry with us.

Well, God had not utterly rejected Israel. He makes that very clear. But God had rejected them temporarily.

And God was exceedingly angry with them. Jeremiah closes this song of grief and prayer for revival on a note of resignation. Lord, restore us! Renew our days of old! Unless, unless Lord, our sins are such that you have decided not to do so.

Again, he is standing amid the ruins of Jerusalem. Everywhere he looks there is rubble. Everywhere he goes he sees a few poor peasants digging around through the trash to find something to salvage.

He understands a couple of things. First, he understands that the Lord has reasons for withholding revival. Jeremiah knows that he cannot manipulate the Lord.

God may very well withhold revival as a matter of judgment. Jeremiah himself had heard the Lord's instructions. Let me go back to the great sermon that Jeremiah preached on the steps of the temple.

This is contained in Jeremiah chapters 7-10. Let me just read to you one verse here from chapter 7. Listen to what God told Jeremiah and Jeremiah related to the people. Listen to this.

God speaking to the prophet, As for you, do not pray for this people. Do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you. That doesn't sound like the God that we worship.

Oh yeah. In fact, he gives the reasons. Here they are.

You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. You shall say to them, This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord God or accept correction.

Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouths. This is Jeremiah preaching God's message now. Cut off your hair, cast it away, take up a lamentation on the bare heights, for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

That's the message. Now God goes back to speaking to Jeremiah. He says, For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in my sight, declares the Lord.

They have set their detestable things in the house which is called by my name to defile it. Think about what's going on in evangelical Christianity today and how much defilement is going on in churches today. May I just pause here to say, I listened to this week.

It was recommended to me to listen to a sermon from Dr. John MacArthur, and all of you ought to listen to it online if you can. I forget the exact title, but it's actually not a sermon, it's an interview which deals with what he calls the R-rated church. The R-rated church.

It's a very high opening, and it makes this very point. Evangelical Bible believing churches today, many of them are defiled. They've built the high places of Topheth which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire which I did not command and it did not come into my mind.

They totally desecrated God's house and the religion that God had given. Therefore, behold the days are coming declares the Lord when it will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter for they will bury in Topheth because there's no other place. The dead bodies of this

people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth and no one will frighten them away.

Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride for the land will become a ruin. No more singing, no more music, no more weddings, no more feasts, only sorrow and destruction. Now that isn't enough.

In Jeremiah chapter 11, listen, the Lord said to me, a conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear my words and they have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, behold I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape. Listen, though they will cry to me, yet I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in time of disaster.

In light of that, listen again, the very next verse or the verse following. Therefore, Jeremiah, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, for I will not listen when they call to me because of their disaster. There is a point at which a culture, a society, a nation, even a church crosses over the line.

God says, I will give you space to repent and a little more and a little more and I am gracious, come back to me, but there comes a point where God draws the line and when that point has been reached, it does not matter whether we pray or not. Now, sometimes God has reasons for withholding revival. The second thing that I notice here in this 22nd verse is that we have reasons for holding out hope.

We have reasons. It is really implied in that little word, unless. Lord, you may have reasons for withholding revival, but I still have hope.

Let me ask this question now. What should we do if revival does not come and we face disaster? As some are predicting, even in our own precious nation, the United States of America, you cannot help but be discouraged sometimes as we listen to the reports of what is going on in Washington, what is going on in the economy, what is going on in our nation's universities, even in our public schools, immorality everywhere, greed and graft and corruption everywhere, general lack of concern for things spiritual. The question is, if God withholds revival, are we doomed to despair? The answer to this question is found in our other texts.

So let me invite you now to the book of Habakkuk chapter 3. Habakkuk chapter 3 and verses 16 and following. The answer, of course, to that question, are we doomed to despair, is no. I want you to remember, because way back earlier in this series, I preached a sermon on verse 2. Here was his great prayer for revival.

Lord, I have heard the report about you and I fear. Oh Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years, make it known.

In wrath, remember mercy. There is the prayer for revival. Habakkuk was a man of prayer for revival, but he also understood the judgment was coming.

So he says something very interesting at the end. In fact, the ending of this chapter is very similar to the ending of Lamentations. But he goes a step further and he talks about how we react to this.

Jeremiah just says, Lord, restore us unless there is a reason why you can't. Habakkuk goes a step further and says, Lord, if there is a reason why you can't, here is what I am going to do about it. First of all, you will notice that we can't eliminate our fearfulness.

You read the news today. You listen to television. You read the news on the internet or the newspaper, wherever it is.

You look around at what is going on. You talk to people and you can't help sometimes but being discouraged. Listen to Habakkuk speak.

I heard in my inward parts trembled at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones and in my place I tremble because I must wait quietly for the day of distress for the people who arise who will invade us. God said judgment is coming and I am afraid.

Congratulations Habakkuk, you are human. So much so that he even says, I suffered physical effects from understanding the Lord's revealed plan for the future. I actually felt sick as I looked at the society I lived in and knew what God was going to do.

He has to wait as he says, I have to wait quietly for disaster to fall. That is not a pleasant prospect. What if the Lord should call us to do the same? I am not saying he will.

I would love to see God answer with revival but I don't know. We can't eliminate all the fear. Habakkuk said I am afraid but we can anticipate the Lord's faithfulness.

Notice how Habakkuk resolves to rejoice in the midst of economic collapse. Verse 17 outlines that economic collapse. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, listen, it was an agricultural economy, an agrarian economy.

He is talking about the meat and potatoes of what drove that society. Now if he is talking about America today, he might be talking about Wall Street collapses or energy crises, things of that sort. Though the economy should fall apart what are we to do? Fall apart? No.

Look at what he says. Verse 18. He says God is our salvation and we can therefore praise.

Yet I will exalt in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk, you are crazy. The world is falling apart all around you and yet you are going to rejoice in God? God who had the power to make those things not happen to save you out of it and yet he let all that happen and you are going to rejoice in God? Yes.

Habakkuk says I am going to rejoice in God. What if revival does not come? And what if hard times come along with that refusal on God's part to give revival? What then? What then? Keep worshipping. Keep worshipping.

God is our salvation and we can therefore praise but he says something else. In verse 19 he says God is our strength and we can therefore persevere. The Lord God is my strength.

He has made my feet like Heinz feet. He makes me walk on high places. He is talking about the mountain deer.

The deer that run around the mountains. Those rocky mountains over in that part of the world in the Middle East. These were animals that God had given the special ability to walk in places where human beings would be afraid to walk.

Where the rocks are all craggy and rocks might fall. In other words God has given these particular animals, these Heinz as he calls them, these deer, he has given them an ability to walk without falling in very rough terrain. He says that is what God has done for my feet.

He makes me to walk as though I were walking in the mountain places. The Lord is not going to abandon me. So what if revival doesn't come and what if hard times come with it? Keep trusting.

Keep persevering. Keep enduring. Don't give up on God.

Keep worshipping. Keep persevering. Now once again the fundamental truth of all that I said today is the sovereignty of God in revival.

Against the writings and the practice of a whole century or more of revivalists, we cannot manipulate God into giving revival. Just as we cannot manipulate God into saving a sinner, we cannot manipulate him to give revival. God, remember this, God is not in our service.

God bows down to no man. And when the Lord Jesus Christ chooses to revive his church, it will experience times of refreshing, but not until then. In the middle of the nineteenth century, a man named Dr. John Giraudeau pastored a black congregation in Charleston, South Carolina.

As in so many other places, his church had experienced a great revival in the year 1858, the year of the great prayer revival in New York City and it spread all over. And this church had been praying, Giraudeau's church had been praying earnestly, and God blessed them with a great awakening in that church. But I want you to listen to something that the biographer of John Giraudeau, this pastor from South Carolina, wrote in that biography.

Of this event, this revival, and what followed, this biographer wrote these words, and I quote, Dr. Giraudeau frequently referred to this as the Lord's mercy in gathering his elect for the great war was soon to sweep so many of them into eternity. Do you see that? They were standing on the very precipice of the Civil War, and God gave revival, many were converted, men who ultimately gave their lives. After the war, another great effort was made to secure a revival of the same kind.

A sunrise prayer meeting was organized for the sole purpose of praying for such a work of grace. And although the people went into it with great enthusiasm and with high expectations, after several months of earnest and persistent effort, many of them began to cease their attendance. Some with stronger faith continued for a year before becoming discouraged and finally giving up hope.

In speaking of this great struggle, Dr. Giraudeau was accustomed to say, God is sovereign. God is sovereign. We read our newspapers and our internet news sites.

We hear current trends being reported and discussed on radio and television, and we don't know what to think. Our government is in a mess right now. It's frightening, and you and I may be worrying, maybe upset

over it, especially if you're being impacted financially.

What should we do? What should we do? Jeremiah and Habakkuk have given us the answer. Pray for revival to come, but trust the Lord if it doesn't. Keep praying, but keep praising, and keep persevering.

Though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure.

One little word shall fell him, and thus, my beloved, when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well. Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we're not going to stop praying.

We're not going to quit praying for revival. We're going to keep trusting for your awakening, but today we've seen that sometimes the answer to that prayer is delayed, and sometimes the answer never comes. Then the tendency is to blame ourselves, or even worse, to blame you.

When really the answer is your sovereignty, you're in control. Lord Jesus, we plead with you today as sovereign Lord of the church, look upon your suffering people, look upon the misery of a church mired in the corruption of a stinking world. Lord, look upon a church that is turning its back upon your truth and upon the true worship of God.

Look upon our misery and be merciful, we pray. Oh Lord, will you not yourself revive us again? Lord, as we have prayed, we will not let you go until you bless us. As Jeremiah prayed, unless, unless Lord there is something more important on your agenda, something more significant that we need to learn through hardship, then Father, much as Jeremiah implies by the way he ends that book, we resign to your wisdom.

Revive us again, but keep us worshiping and persevering, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's sing that hymn number 493.

It is well with my soul. Number three, among number 493. Please stand with me as we sing.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19906.mp3>

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