It's Time!

by Ronald Glass

Revival is the divine intervention in the affairs of men, where God makes his arm bear and works for his people sovereignly and omnipotently, and it is centered on the Bible.

Duration: 1:00:03
Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 119:123-128, Matthew 6:33
Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the Word of God in the lives of believers. He recounts a story from the book of Nehemiah where the people of Israel gathered together in fasting and repentance, and as they read and understood the Scriptures, it confronted them with their sins and broke their hearts. The speaker then shares a poem that highlights the value and power of the Bible in guiding and comforting believers. He contrasts the fleeting concerns of the world, such as finances, with the eternal satisfaction found in God's Word. The sermon concludes with a call to have a passion for Scripture and to prioritize it above all else.

Transcript

This morning I want to draw your attention to one brief passage from the great 119th Psalm. Psalm 119. And today my thoughts are going to be focused on verses 123 through 128.

Beginning in the hundred and twenty-third verse of Psalm 119. My eyes fail with longing for your salvation and for your righteous word. Deal with your servant according to your loving-kindness and teach me your statutes.

I am your servant. Give me understanding that I may know your testimonies for it is time for the Lord to act. For they have broken your law.

Therefore I love your commandments above gold. Yes, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem right all your precepts concerning everything.

I hate every false way. We American evangelicals may not be at the point of desperation yet, but we may be soon. Sooner than we might expect.

The economic, political, cultural, and especially the spiritual climate of our nation is collapsing. The enemies of our ways of life are no longer chipping away at our freedom. They are taking a sledgehammer

to it.

It's unprecedented. So when we come to the point of desperation, what are we going to do? Panic? Resist? Fight back? Give up in fear? Run away and hide? Politics won't change things. God himself is the one who can bring about a systemic transformation of our world, our nation, and most importantly of the believing Church.

So the appropriate action for the Church at the present time is to plead to God for a thoroughgoing nationwide revival. But evangelical Christianity today is largely soundly asleep. We're complacent in our worldliness, we do not have a concern for the holiness of God, and we need awakening.

And that's why we are speaking in these days on the great subject of biblical revival. What is revival? Last week I gave you a definition from Welsh preacher Geoffrey Thomas. He said it this way.

Revival is the arraigning of the heavens. It is the divine intervention in the affairs of men. It is God making bear his arm and working for his people sovereignly and omnipotently.

Another writer has put it this way. It is an abnormal method God uses to bring his subnormal children into a normal Christian walk. It is the Holy Spirit breathing new life into his church.

And that's what we are exploring from the pages of scripture in this series. I am so burdened about this because of the fact that so few evangelical Christians today understand what revival is. They don't know about it, they've never heard about it.

And that's what I am trying to do, both from scripture and history, to alert you to the dynamics of biblical revival. I want to read you, to begin with today, something from Dr. Samuel Prime, writing in 1858 about the revival that began the previous year in New York City. We talked about that earlier in our series.

Dr. Prime writes about the world, the environment, in America in 1857. Here's what he said. As a nation, we were becoming rapidly demoralized by our worldliness, our ambition, our vanity, and our vices.

The true, the great end for which we believe this nation was raised up was being lost sight of. The very foundations were moving. We needed this great awakening to bring us to our senses, to rouse up the national conscience, to arrest the national decay, and bring us back to a high tone of moral health.

Nothing but the influence of a deep and all-pervading earnest piety, that means godliness, can save this from the fate of all past republics. The tide of corruption must be rolled backward. This was felt, everywhere felt.

Now, he could have been writing that in 2009, but he was writing it in 1858. Then, as now, the need was for revival. Most Christians don't have any idea of what revival is, and how it comes, and how its fruits are preserved.

That's why today, I want to look at this further, by coming to the 119th Psalm, which was probably written by David in the latter years of his reign. In this great discourse, a poetic masterpiece on the subject of the Word of God, we discover that the foundation of revival is, in fact, nothing less than God's Word. This is what should be the urgent burden of our lives today.

We need to stand where David stood in these verses that I have read. You see, real revival is centered on Scripture. God's inspired, inerrant, and inhuman language.

True revival never violates the truth of God's Word. Never. That's one of the reasons, or one of the criteria, it is really the only criteria by which we can judge that which claims to be a revival, or that which claims to be the awakening power of God, or that which claims to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

We subject it to the standard of God's Word. The Bible is always at the center of genuine revival, and we're going to see that today from our text in three ways. So I want you to look with me and listen carefully as we focus on this particular subject related to revival, and that is, what role does the Bible play in the revival of God's people? And here it is.

First of all, revival means a desperate longing for God's Word. We see that in verses 123 to 125. Let me put it to you this way.

Number one, the zeal for revival. Some people would rather use the word passion today. All right, use that word then.

The passion, or the zeal for revival, is born in our frustration of spiritual desire. Verse 123, David says, my eyes fail with longing for your salvation and for your righteous word. There is a tone of disappointment here.

David apparently has been looking for the awakening power of God for a long time, and it hasn't come. Reminds me of the great preacher in England of the past generation, David Martin Lloyd-Jones. He was a man who was possessed with a desire for the awakening of the church there in England and around the world.

He said at the end of his long life that the greatest disappointment of his life was that God had not sent the revival for which he had prayed. This verse, you can almost see David shipwrecked on an island out in the middle of the ocean somewhere, and David has been looking every day, every night, constantly going to the highest point of the little island, and looking out across the horizon, looking at the at the sea all around for a desperate glimpse of a ship on that horizon, somebody to come and help him and rescue him. But that help has not come.

I want you to notice that there is a definite relationship here between the disappointment of desperate longing for deliverance and the absence of biblical teaching. The last part of the verse says, for your righteous word. My eyes are failing.

I'm just, I'm failing. I am disappointed in the fact that salvation, deliverance has not come. My hungering, my desire is for deliverance, for salvation, and for your righteous word.

David is saying here, I'm starving to be fed from God's Word. When you come back earlier in this long poem to the 25th verse, David said there, my soul cleaves to the dust. Now, instead of the shipwrecked man on an island, here you can see a man lost in the middle of a blazing hot desert, and he's thirsty.

My soul cleaves to the dust. Revive me. Bring new life to me according to your Word.

The zeal for revival has always begun in the hearts of some individual or some small group of people who are frustrated with spiritual desire. They are disappointed. They have prayed, God, send your Spirit.

As they said in the Welsh Revival, bend us, bend us, break us. As we sometimes sing, let your glory fall. We are thirsty, Lord.

And day after day, nothing happens, nothing happens, nothing happens. Lord, my eyes fail with longing for your salvation. How many people today, how many of you have come here, how many of you could say honestly and mean it, I have come to church today because I'm starving to be fed God's Word.

Not many Christians would say that today. A zeal for revival is born in our frustration of spiritual desire. Secondly, the zeal for revival is nurtured through our instruction in biblical truth.

Notice verse 124, deal with your servant according to your loving-kindness and teach me your statutes. David asks for the Lord to deal with him according to his... Now here we have that biblical term, and I've often spoken of this word loving-kindness. This is a word in the Hebrew text which means covenant loyalty, faithfulness to his promises.

Where are the promises of God? In the Word of God. So, what David is praying here is for God to go back to the promises that he had made, the covenant promises, the promises attached to the relationship that he had established with Israel. Where do we see that? Earlier in our study, we pointed back to Deuteronomy chapters 28 through 30.

There God's established the covenant with Israel. He said there, if you obey me and you do the things that I tell you, if you follow the words of this law, my word which I have given you, then I will bless you. And if you disobey, then I will punish you.

And history had proven that God meant exactly what he said. So when David pleads with God to deal with him according to his loving-kindness, he's asking him to deal with him according to the promises that he had made in his word. That's why the verse we looked at previously, 2 Chronicles chapter 7 verse 14, is a promise of revival.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and turn from their sinful, their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sins and I will heal their land. You see, what God is saying is, if you go back to the promises I made and you obey me, then I will respond with blessing and with healing. So revival is grounded in God's promises and his promises are contained in his word.

If you go further towards the end of this great psalm, look at verse 149. Hear my voice according to your loving-kindness, according to your covenant promises. And then David prays, revive me, O Lord, according to your ordinances.

You see, that revival always happens according to God's word. Always. Now I want to examine this for a few moments from a historical viewpoint.

First of all, God's word was at the center of Israel's revivals. Listen, God's word was to be at the very center of the life of the nation. When God gave instructions in the law, Deuteronomy chapter 17, he gave instructions with regard to the behavior of the king.

They didn't even have a king yet. It would be hundreds of years before Israel would have a king. But listen to this.

Now it shall come about when he, the king, verse 18, Deuteronomy 17, 18, now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to

fear the Lord his God by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the left or the right, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel. The king had an enormous responsibility and it was first and foremost to make a copy of the law, to read that law virtually every day of his life and to administer the affairs of the nation by that law.

Now when Moses passed off the scene and Joshua took over, God very quickly said to Joshua, here's the secret for your success as the leader of my people. Joshua chapter 1, verse 8, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success. This was just the problem in the book of Judges, which is one of the most heart-wrenching books in all of the Old Testament.

It is a book of constant apostasy, Israel sinning, Israel sinning, and so the sins just get worse and worse. When you come to the end of the book, it's so foul you don't even want to read it, but listen to what is said there more than once in those last chapters of Judges. There was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

You see why the problem was that there was no king? There was no king and there was no one who was reading the law of God every day and administering the affairs of state by the principles of God's law. So of course, the course of the nation was everybody does whatever they please. It is a total, the whole nation is living as a bunch of libertarians, doing whatever they want to do, no restraints.

Now that was Israel's problem. For years they had been deprived of God's Word. Now when you come, let's just for a moment go back to 2nd Chronicles to the 15th chapter.

This is a passage we looked at earlier in our study. This is Asa, but listen to this verse again. This is 2nd Chronicles 15.3. This is the message of the prophet Azariah to King Asa.

For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. You see that? Without the law of God, without a teaching priest. Now he's referring to the days of the judges.

You read the record in the days of judges. What were the priests doing? There's a very sad story toward the end of the book of Judges that gives us the answer to that. The priests were unemployed and they were wandering around looking for a place to minister and one of them ended up serving in the house of a man who had gotten idols.

It's a sad story, but the point was the priests were unemployed. What should they have been doing? Well, let's go back to the book of Deuteronomy again and here was God's plan. Deuteronomy chapter 31, beginning in the ninth verse, and it reads this way.

So Moses wrote this law and he gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them saying, at the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the feast of booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which he will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and the children and the alien who is in your town so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God and be careful to observe all the words of this law.

Their children who have not known will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess. Men, women, old, young, young people, children were all to hear the word of the Lord as it was taught every seven years by the Levites. They were to read it and teach it thoroughly and then the parents were to go home and make sure that they taught it to their children.

In fact, here's what it says when Moses blessed the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 33 verse 10 concerning Levi, he says, they shall teach your ordinances in Jacob and your law in Israel. That was the job of the priests, a job which they spectacularly avoided throughout the history of the nation. What was Israel's solution? When Jehoshaphat the king saw that the nation needed to be revived, what did he do? We read it earlier, 2nd Chronicles chapter 17.

Listen to it again. Verse 7, in the third year of his reign, he sent his officials, now he names them, Ben-Hael, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nathanael, Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. He sent his own officials out to be teachers of the people.

Along with them, he sent the Levites. They're named in verse 8. And then at the end, we're told, Elisha and Jehoram, the priests, went with them. In other words, he reactivated the priests and the Levites to do what they should have been doing all along, which was teaching the Word of God.

Verse 9, they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them, and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among all the people. Let me give you another example of this from the history of Israel, and that is the very godly priest, Ezra. In Ezra chapter 7, verse 10, we find about Ezra personally, this is a great comment with regard to Ezra the man.

Ezra 7.10, Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel. Here was a godly man. The first thing he did is he studied the law of God, and then he lived it, and then he taught it to the nation of Israel.

There's the order. Study it, live it, teach it. That was what Ezra did.

Now, the result of that we find in the next book, and that is the book of Nehemiah, chapter 8, where we see a great awakening that took place at a place in Jerusalem called the Watergate. Nehemiah, chapter 8, verse 3, Ezra the priest now brings the law, the book of the law, and the people come to listen. Verse 3, he read from it before the square which was in front of the Watergate from early morning until midday.

In the presence of men and women, those who could understand, all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood, and these men are mentioned. Verse 5, Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands. Then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Verse 8, they read from the book, from the law of God, translating it to give the sense so that they understood the reading. What was the impact? Verse 1 of chapter 9, now on the 24th day of this month, the sons of Israel assembled with fasting in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day, and another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God. Simply stated, when the Word of God was read and taught and translated and understood by the people, it confronted them with their sins, and when it confronted them with their sins, it broke their hearts. They confessed, they repented of their sins, and God breathed new life into his people Israel.

Now this is just a couple of instances to show you that when God revives his people, it is the Word of God that is at the center of that. Now let me move forward to the history of the church. The church's problem, historically, going back about 500 years, was that medieval Rome, the Roman Church, had taken the Bible away from the people of Europe for literally a millennium.

The Roman Church had denied the Bible to the common people. They did not have the Bible in their own language, and even if they did, many of them couldn't have read it. They couldn't read, and most grievously, the priests of the Roman Church did not preach the Word.

Martin Luther, when he finally emerged as the great reformer, his great battle cry of the Reformation was, the priests do not preach. That was his great gripe, one of them, with the Roman Church. What was the church's solution? Well, let me look for a moment with you at the greatest revival in church history.

We call it the Reformation. Let me quote a few sentences from Martin Luther, one of Martin Luther's biographers, Roland Bainton. Here's what he says, the Reformation gave centrality to the sermon.

You see, before that, the centerpiece was the Mass. Now, the Reformation gave centrality to the sermon. The pulpit was higher than the altar, for Luther held that salvation is through the Word, and without the Word, the elements are devoid of sacramental quality, but that the Word is sterile unless it is spoken.

He says the Reformation did exalt the sermon. The reformers at Wittenberg undertook an extensive campaign of religious instruction through the sermon. Listen, this is what happened at Wittenberg when Luther began the Reformation.

There were three public services on Sunday, from 5 to 6 in the morning. Did you hear that? 5 to 6 in the morning on the Pauline Epistles, from 9 to 10 on the Gospels, and in the afternoon a variable hour on a continuation of the theme of the morning or on the Catechism. The church was not locked during the week, but on Mondays and Tuesdays there were sermons on the Catechism, Wednesdays on the Gospel of Matthew, Thursdays and Fridays on the Apostolic Letters, and Saturday evening on John's Gospel.

And though there was a staff of clergy, Luther took a lion's share of the preaching in all of this. He often spoke four times on Sundays and quarterly undertook a two-week series, four days a week on the Catechism. The sum of his extant sermons, sermons that we have written for him from Luther, 2,300.

The highest count is for the year 1528, in which there are 195 sermons distributed over 145 days. His preeminence in the pulpit derives in part from the earnestness with which he regarded the preaching office. The task of the minister is to expound the Word, in which alone are to be found healing for life's hurts and balms of eternal blessedness.

That's Martin Luther in Wittenberg. Now, besides Luther, we have the great Reformer John Calvin. In just a few weeks we are going to celebrate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth.

John Calvin, who labored in the city of Geneva in Switzerland, a slightly younger contemporary of Luther, listened to him writing in his classic magisterial work, The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Here's what he says, therefore, illumined by power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God. But above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty that it flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men.

Calvin was convinced that the Word of God was, in fact, directly from God. John Piper, pastor in Minnesota, has written a little booklet on Calvin to commemorate this year. I want to share with you some of what he says about Calvin.

Calvin had seen the majesty of God in the Scriptures. This persuaded him that the Scriptures were the very Word of God. He said, quote, we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God because it has proceeded from him alone and has nothing of man mixed in it.

His own experience had taught him that the highest proof of Scripture derives, in general, from the fact that God in person speaks in it. Now, these truths led to an inevitable conclusion for Calvin. Since the Scriptures are the very voice of God, and since they are therefore self-authenticating in revealing the majesty of God, and since the majesty and glory of God are the reason for all existence, it follows that Calvin's life would be marked by what he calls invincible constancy in the exposition of Scripture.

Now, about Calvin, he wrote tracts. He wrote the great institutes. He wrote commentaries on all the New Testament books except Revelation, plus the Old Testament books of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

He gave biblical lectures, many of which were published as essentially commentaries. He preached ten sermons every two weeks, but all of it was exposition of Scripture. John Dillenberger says, Calvin assumed that his whole theological labor was the exposition of Scripture.

In his last will and testament, Calvin said, quote, I have endeavored both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries to preach the word purely and chastely and faithfully to interpret his sacred Scriptures. Piper goes on to say everything was exposition of Scripture. This was the ministry unleashing, unleashed by seeing the majesty of God in Scripture.

Scriptures were absolutely central because they were absolutely the Word of God and had as their self-authenticating theme the majesty and glory of God, but all these labors of exposition of them all, preaching was supreme. Emile Dumergue, the foremost biographer of Calvin in his six-volume Life of Calvin, said that as he stood in the pulpit of John Calvin on the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth, quote, that is the Calvin who seems to me to be the real and authentic Calvin, the preacher of Geneva, molding by his words the spirit of the Reformed of the 16th century. Calvin's preaching was of one kind from beginning to end.

He preached steadily through book after book of the Bible. That was unusual, by the way. He never wavered from this approach to preaching for almost 25 years of ministry in St. Peter's Church of Geneva, with the exception of a few high festivals and special occasions.

On Sundays, he always took the New Testament, except for a few psalms on Sunday afternoons. During the week, it was always the Old Testament. The records show fewer than half a dozen exceptions.

The scope of Calvin's preaching. To give you some idea of the scope of Calvin's pulpit, he began his series on the Book of Acts on August 25th, 1549. He ended it in March of 1554.

After Acts, he went on to the Epistles of Thessalonians, 46 sermons. Corinthians, 186 sermons. The Pastoral Epistles, 86 sermons.

Galatians, 43 sermons. Ephesians, 48 sermons, until May of 1558. Then there's a gap when he was ill.

In the spring of 1559, he began the Harmony of the Gospels, preaching through all of the Gospels. He was not finished when he died in May of 1564. On the weekdays during that season, he preached 159 sermons on Job, 200 on Deuteronomy, 353 on Isaiah, 123 on Genesis, and so on.

One of the clearest illustrations of this was a self-conscious choice on Calvin's part was the fact that on Easter Day of 1538, after preaching, he left the pulpit of St. Peter's, banished by the City Council. He returned in September of 1541, over three years later, and he picked up the exposition in the next verse. I read you all of that because I want you to see the degree to which the preaching of the Word of God brought about the awakening that we call the Reformation.

In fact, to come a few years later to the great teacher and preacher of the colonial America, Jonathan Edwards, revival came and Jonathan Edwards wrote about revival one of his biographers puts it this way, a genuine revival of religion he regarded as being caused not by appeals to the feelings or the passions, but by the truth of God brought home to the mind in a subordinate sense by the preaching of the gospel, but in a far higher sense by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. He considered such an event so far as man is concerned as the simple effect of a practical attention to truth on the conscience and the heart. He felt it to be his great and in a sense his only duty, therefore, to urge divine truth on the feelings and consciences of his hearers with all possible solemnity and power.

How he in fact urged it, his published sermons will show. In fact, Jonathan Edwards had to write a book, a little man, a little treatise to defend the revival in Northampton and here's what he said in a little work called The Distinguishing Marks of the Spirit of God. The spirit that operates in such a manner as to cause men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures and establishes them more in their truth and divinity is certainly the Spirit of God.

In other words, you want to know what the Spirit of God is really at work or whether this is a work of the devil, it just looks like the work of the Spirit of God. He says if it causes people to take the scriptures seriously and the hunger for them and to be grounded in the truth, that is the work of God. So a zeal for revival is nurtured through our instruction in biblical truth.

Let me come to the third one and that is that a zeal for revival is fulfilled in our possession of biblical understanding. Verse 125, David says, I am your servant, give me understanding that I may know your testimonies. I think this is how the church ought to be praying today.

You and I ought to be praying. This is how I want to pray and I have prayed. Lord, I am your servant, give me understanding that I may know your testimonies.

We must understand. We must devour this book. We must read it and study it, but we need to understand it.

Lord, we can't do this on our own. You have to be the one to give us this understanding. Now my friends, just listening to one sermon in each week isn't going to suffice any longer.

We are determined to hear God's Word, to understand God's Word, to obey God's Word. Why? Because the truth of God, as Paul points out in 1st Corinthians chapter 2 verses 12 to 14, is not humanly understood. It is spiritually revealed to us.

That's why there is such an urgent need for the revival of systematic biblical exposition in our churches. The preaching and the teaching of the Bible in its context with accuracy and with precision. My dear friends, I don't do what I do in this pulpit just because it's a good idea, because somebody told me I ought to do it.

I stand here week after week expounding the Scriptures because of this very truth, that it is only in the preaching and the teaching, in a systematic way, in a detailed way, with the Scripture interpreted, with accuracy and precision and clarity. That is the only way you will fully understand the Word of God. And that's what David's praying for here.

Give me understanding. And that's what I pray. Lord, give me understanding, because when I stand before you and I see your faces coming back at me, that's what you're saying.

You're saying, Pastor, give us understanding. That has to be a thirst for knowing the mind of God. And how do we know the mind of God? We know it in this book.

Tragically, today we are witnessing the death of expository preaching. We've talked about this, some of us informally. Years ago, some of the leading preachers in America got a burden for this and they started an organization called COBE, C-O-B-E, the Congress on Biblical Exposition.

I went to the first meeting out in California. That organization very quickly died for lack of interest. Today, the seeker-sensitive mentality is, people on the outside don't want to be fed expository sermons.

Tell them how they can have a happy life. Tell them how they can handle the problems in their marriage or the problems on their job or the problems in rearing their children or whatever it may be. Give us something practical.

Don't do exposition, which by the way, exposition is the most practical thing in the world when it comes to understanding God's truth. Revival means a desperate longing for God's Word. Well, now I must hasten on to the second principle I want to give you and that is that revival means a decisive looking for God's work.

Notice verse 126, and here's the heart of this passage. It is time for the Lord to act, for they have broken your law. This is the point to which we must come.

Lord, give us understanding, O Lord. It's time. It's time.

When our patience has been exhausted, we look for the Lord to work. It is time for you, Lord, to act. When the world is deteriorating at an alarming rate, God's Word is ignored.

God's mercy is withheld. God's people seem to be utterly oblivious to it all. To whom can we turn? We are literally at the Lord's mercy.

Without His intervention, there is no hope. At such a time, to put it in the words of one writer, it is either rapture, ruin, or revival. No other choice.

Rapture, ruin, or revival. Yes, it's time. And because God's Word has been devalued, we look for the Lord to work.

Look at that last phrase in verse 126, for they have broken your law. Why is David so passionate that it's time for God to go to work? The answer is they've broken your law. Now friends, we've lost our reverence for Scripture today.

Let me give you three ways in which that happens. First of all, the Church disregards biblical inspiration and inerrancy. Why do we not revere the Scriptures as we used to? Because by and large today, people are disavowing a commitment to the inerrancy and the inspiration of Scripture.

Now, we're not afraid to say, oh yeah, there are mistakes in the Bible. Yeah, we think it's a good book and it's got good principles and it teaches good things, but you can't say that it's without error. After all, it was written by men.

The foundation of historic orthodoxy, the foundation of historic fundamentalism, is being abandoned. It's being abandoned because we have lost our conviction that the Word of God is God-breathed, that it is inspired, that it is inerrant. Secondly, the Church discards biblical authority.

Here's the real problem. It's not so much the inspiration issue, I mean that's important, but why do men argue against inspiration and inerrancy? The reason they argue against it is they want to find weakness in the Word of God. Why do they want to do that? Because if the Word of God is full of errors, then they don't have to obey it.

It's not authoritative, and that's where the rubber meets the road. Biblical authority is rejected because professing Christians today don't want to believe it, and they don't want to obey it. And all you have to do is preach God's Word in its naked simplicity and its powerful demands upon lives, pointing out sin and urging men to holiness, and people will say, we don't want that.

And they leave. They walk out. And that authority has been discarded throughout culture today.

That's why we have humanism, which saturates our society's humanism, which is a very foundation of our universities and now our public school systems. Man is the measure of all things, and along with that, of course, comes the doctrine of evolution, the faith, and that's what it is, the faith of evolution, and anti-supernaturalism, which denies that God created the world, which denies miracles, which denies answered prayer, which denies the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Let me give you an example.

Some of you are aware of the name of Harry Emerson Fosdick. Fosdick was one of the leading liberals, theologians, and pastors in the early 1900s. Back in about 1924, he wrote a book called The Modern Use of the Bible.

He taught at Union Seminary, by the way, which is a bastion of liberalism in Manhattan. This is just a sample of the kind of thinking that exploded in the 1920s. By the way, he was a Baptist.

Riverside Church in New York City. Approaching the Bible so, there are some narratives of miracles there which I do not believe. To suppose that a man, in order to be a loyal and devout disciple of our Lord in the

20th century AD, must think that the God of the 9th century BC miraculously sent bears to eat up unruly children, or made axe heads swim, seems to me dangerously ridiculous.

Folk who insist on that kind of literal inerrancy in ancient documents are not fundamentalists at all. They're incidentalists. Joshua, making the sun stand still, may be poetry, and the story of Jonah and the great fish may be a parable.

The miraculous aspects of the plagues in Egypt and the magic fall of Jericho's walls may be legendary heightenings of historical events. The amazing tales of Elijah and Elisha may be largely folklore, and in the New Testament, finding a coin in a fish's mouth to pay the temple tax, or walking on water, or blasting a tree with a curse, may be just such stories as always have been associated with an era of outstanding personalities and creative spiritual power. He concludes, certainly I find some of the miracle narratives of Scripture historically incredible.

The word incredible means unbelievable. Can't believe it. Now that's the kind of thinking that absolutely rotted Christianity to the core over the last hundred years, and today we have other instances of it, contemplative spirituality undermining the written propositional truth of God.

We have replacement theology denying God's covenant with Israel, the second coming of Christ for his church, and so on. Church discards biblical authority. Thirdly, the church distorts biblical interpretation.

The death of expository preaching is being precipitated today by the death of, let me get technical for just a moment, but it's something we call the literal, historical, grammatical method of interpretation. It means that we take this book for what it says. When we read it, we say that's what the writer meant, that's what God means.

We're gonna try to find some kind of hidden meaning, some sort of allegory in the words. Spiritualizing or allegorizing has been the result of what's gone on. Let me go back to Fosdick for a moment.

He has something interesting to say about John Calvin. This, to my mind, sets perfectly the contrast between a man like Calvin and a man like Fosdick. Calvin, in a word, was a stern and exact literalist.

He hated the vague and insecure renderings of Scripture, which made allegory possible. When he appealed from the Pope to the Bible for his authority, he had to know with steady certainty what the Bible meant to say. So Calvin believed that every passage in Scripture had but one original and true sense, which allegory only travestied, and that one sense he passionately desired to know.

Especially did his renunciation of allegory disturb his contemporaries. The Roman Catholics called Calvin a Mohammedan, in other words, a Muslim. Why? Because he took literally the Word of God.

So far as theory was concerned, not only Calvin but also Luther, like Calvin, rejected allegory. Now, here's what he says. Indeed, the fundamental principle of biblical exegesis, to which the Reformers gave their theoretical consent and tried to give their practical allegiance, was that every passage in Scripture has but one meaning, the original native connotation of the words, and in that practice, in that principle, no one succeeded so well as did John Calvin.

Good for Calvin. Good for the Church. The man dared to stand up in the pulpit in Geneva and say, this is what God says, and this is what God means, and you can believe.

Now, let me hurry on to my final observation, and that is that revival means a deepening love for God's Word. And now I'm back again in Psalm 119, the last two verses of our text. Verse 127, Therefore I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.

God's Word provides the only sure anchor for God's people in chaotic and uncertain times, like the times in which we're living us, and there is no other anchor, there is no other foundation. Two things quickly to say about these verses. First, in verse 127, Scripture is the satisfaction of our desire in challenging times.

Remember, we talked about the disappointment in verse 123. Here's the satisfaction. Today, all we hear about is the economy.

You listen to the news, you listen to commentary. All most people are caring about today are their contracts, their investments, their pensions, their 401ks, their mortgages. In short, the financial condition of their lives.

Even many Christians today are being seduced by shrewd advertisers into placing their faith in gold. But what does David say here? I love your commandments above gold. Yes, above fine gold.

As the King of Israel, he had all the gold he wanted or needed. But David said, there's no satisfaction in gold. Listen to what he says in the 19th Psalm.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true.

They are righteous altogether. Now listen, they are more desirable than gold. Yes, than much fine gold.

Sweeter also than honey, the drippings of the honeycomb. Beloved, this book is our treasure. And when we experience revival, we will not only say that, that is we will not only say that we honor the Word of God, that we believe the Word of God, but we will mean it and we will live it.

Scripture is the satisfaction of our desire in challenging times. One other thought here, and that is that scripture is the secret of our discernment in challenging times. How do we sort all of this stuff that's going on in our world out today? How do we listen to the politicians? How do we listen to the news media? How do we, how do we sort out what we're being taught in our classrooms in school? The answer is that the Bible is our standard of truth and error, of right and wrong.

Listen to David, therefore I esteem right all your precepts concerning everything I hate every false way. Now I want you to notice those words, I esteem right all your precepts concerning everything I hate every false way. David is saying that the authority of Scripture extends to everything to which it speaks.

Enough of this nonsense that the Bible is only a religious book that belongs in church. When it speaks about moral issues, it is authoritative, it is right. Marriage is one man and one woman for life.

And look at all of the other issues that are out in front of us today, and the reality is that it's all governed by the Word of God. Now this verse absolutely defies our current obsession with political correctness, with tolerance for everything, with religious pluralism. This religion is right and this religion is okay and this religion, we're all together trying to find God in our own way.

How could that possibly be when they're so contradictory? David says I esteem right all your precepts. Not just good, not just best, not just preference, not just opinion. David says the Word of God is right.

And that means everything else that stands against it is wrong. We have a right, as David did, he says I hate every false way. We have a right to hate every false religion.

That's not politically popular to say that today, but David would have said it. We have a right to hate every form of immorality today. Well, you're biased against gays, for example, to use the example I used a while ago.

No, he says I hate every false way. He didn't say every false person, he says I hate every false way. In fact, if we esteem God's Word as right, we will inevitably hate everything that is false.

God does. Let me share some important insight from the Welsh revival of 1904-1908. I want to read you something here.

I know I'm long today, but just bear with me for a moment. This is from a biography of Evan Roberts. I want you to listen carefully.

Every church leader, pastor, and evangelist must have hoped fervently that the fires of the Welsh revival would burn onwards through Britain, Europe, and the world. When it became sadly evident that somehow the Spirit of God had been quenched and the work of revival put within bounds, godly people began to look for reasons. Some blamed the demon drink, which recaptured shallower converts.

Some blamed modernist theology and preaching for confusing the newborn babes. Some accused revival leaders and workers of assuming that remorse and confession were the same as true regeneration. Some accused the churches of failure to counsel, to nurture, entertain, or make use of the converts.

A number of ministers made efforts to safeguard the fruits of the revival. They wondered why so many ministers and churches had lost the vision and gone back to sleep. Was it due to carelessness, disobedience, compromise, failure to witness boldly, failure to seek cleansing and consecration, or failure to obey the divine command, be filled with the Spirit? Or could it be that Satan was making war on the church and overturning the revival? Interesting, isn't it? As the revival fires waned, they started asking why? Why? Why? Why? Trying to blame something for the apparent cessation of the Spirit of God's work.

You see, in the Welsh revival there was a passion for purity. There was a passion for prayer. There was a lot of praying.

There was a passion for the winning of souls. There was a passion for spiritual warfare. It was all good and it accomplished much of great good for Wales and for England.

But here's something interesting. In that revival there was an absence of the anointed preaching of the Word of God. In Wales they chose a more mystical way and ultimately petered out.

When revival comes, the need is for men of God to take the Word of God into the pulpits of the churches of God and preach it over and over and over again. That's what sustains the reviving. A couple of conversations in the last week, listening to one of our folks talking about a conversation they had with somebody referring to our ministry here in this church, expository preaching, and the reaction of the person on the other end of the conversation was, expository preaching is dry.

We don't want that. A local pastor talking to one of our people recently ventured an opinion on the ministry of Wading River Baptist Church here and said basically not very many people to whom that kind of ministry is going to appeal. Well, maybe so, but that's a sad commentary on the state of Christianity.

And so, beloved, it's time. It's time for God to awaken his people and that means it's time for a revival of consistent, systematic, sequential, detailed exposition of God's Word rightly interpreted in the pulpits of America's Evangelical Church. I believe there are thousands of preachers across America that agree with me on this.

The problem is there are very few who are actually doing it. On a personal level, revival is not going to come where the Bible is not taken seriously. If you dismiss the authority of the Scriptures, you will eventually dismiss the severity of sin in your life.

Only when you and I come face to face with God's claims against our sins will we be in a position to experience the Holy Spirit's work of conviction and spiritual awakening. Alright, I'll leave you with this question today. Were you determined to take the Bible seriously in your life? Take the risk of being called a narrow-minded bigot or a Bible-thumping fundamentalist? Don't be ashamed or intimidated when even our president laughs at those who cling to their Bibles.

Oh, Lord, it's time. It's time for you to work. Revive us according to your Word.

Years ago, the pastor under whom the Lord called me to the ministry began every sermon he preached with this old poem. We got to know this poem very well, but it really made the point. I'd forgotten about this.

I ran across it just recently and it brought back memories. Every sermon he preached, he started with these words. Though the cover is worn and the pages are torn and though places bear traces of tears, yet more precious than gold is this book worn and old that can shatter and scatter my fears.

When I prayerfully look in this precious old book, many pleasures and treasures I see, many tokens of love from the Father above who is nearest and dearest to me. This book is my guide, tis a friend by my side. It will lighten and brighten my way, and each promise I find soothes and gladdens my mind as I read it and heed it each day.

Study it carefully. Think of it prayerfully. Deep in your heart, let its precepts dwell.

Slight not its history. Ponder its mystery. None can e'er prize it too fondly or well, except the glad tidings, the warnings and chidings found in this volume of heavenly lore.

With faith that's unfailing and love all-prevailing, trust in its promise of life evermore. May this message of love from the Father above unto all nations and kindreds be given, till the ransom shall raise joyous anthems of praise, hallelujahs in earth. Let's pray.

Father, once again, inflame our souls with a passion for Scripture as David had. We think of these 176 verses, all on the theme of the preciousness of your Word. O God, revive us according to your Word.

O Lord, they have made void, they have invalidated your Word. It is time for you to act. Revive us, Lord.

Yes, revive us according to your Word. In Jesus' name.

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