

Tear Open the Heaven and Come Down!

by Ronald Glass

Revival is God's supernatural intervention in behalf of his people, bringing new life and power to his people through prayer and longing.

Duration: 1:07:59

Scripture: Isaiah 59:12-64

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the topic of revival and provides insights on when it can be anticipated. The first insight is that revival can be expected when we acknowledge our limitations and recognize that it is God who works in us. The second insight is that revival comes through a devout minority who rejoices in doing righteousness and remembers God's ways. The speaker shares a personal experience of revival where he realized the power of the blood of Christ and experienced a deep sense of healing and God's presence. The sermon also highlights the sad reality that a majority of believers have accepted sinful practices and abandoned serious prayer, leading to a lack of revival.

Transcript

I invite you this morning now to the 64th chapter of Isaiah, chapter 64 of Isaiah. I want to read this chapter, and then I want to have a brief word of prayer. I think it's appropriate that we not forget our missionaries of the month.

And so we want to remember the Borsigs. We've just had a letter from them with some prayer requests. And so I want to remember that today before we study together.

So let's read together these verses from the 64th chapter of Isaiah, beginning in verse 1. Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence, as fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil, to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at your presence. When you did awesome things for which we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides you who acts in behalf of the one who waits for him.

You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, who remembers you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, for we sinned. We continued in them a long time, and shall we be saved? For all of us have

become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.

And all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, who arouses himself to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, you are our Father.

We are the clay, and you are potter. And all of us are the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever.

Behold, look now, all of us are your people. Your holy cities have become a wilderness. Zion has become a wilderness.

Jerusalem is a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned by fire. All our precious things have become a ruin.

Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord? Will you keep silent and afflict us beyond measure? May God bless the reading of his word. Join me for just a moment of prayer, won't you, as we ask God's blessing on this time. Our Father, your word is very precious to us.

It is a treasure that we must cherish, and we do. We believe, Father, that it is our responsibility, God-given stewardship, to minister, to preach, to teach your word without compromise. We pray, therefore, that your Holy Spirit might be the one who energizes this ministry of the word today.

Lord, we pray that you might use it to revive us individually and to revive us as a people. We do want to pray today for our missionaries of the month, for Mark and Charity Borsek and for their four daughters. We would like to lift up before you today the requests that they have made.

And we pray for wisdom in the timing of and the preparation for starting the training classes that they are planning for the pastors and leaders there in the great city where they are located. Father, they are going to be building new relationships as they move from one apartment complex to another. They would have us thank you with them for the contacts that they have made over the last three years.

And although they must leave these people, we pray that the seed that has been planted in their lives will continue and will blossom. But we're also thankful for the new opportunities and the direction that you are giving as far as their new place of living. And we pray that many new contacts will be made there as well.

We pray that you will give continued growth in the lives of those who come to their weekly Bible studies. They've asked us to pray in particular for Nello and for Ned and for Josh, that you will work in their hearts. Please give the Borsig's wisdom as they discuss the issues that concern you and your word during their study times, sometimes informal times over lunch or dinner.

And as they conduct these studies and have spiritual conversations in the language that they have been learning, please grant them strength and ability for the language, listening and speaking and in reading. Now, Father, Mark and Charity have asked us to pray for Y's time management. Sometimes they feel overwhelmed by the very different and demanding responsibilities that are taking much of their time, particularly their continued language study and the whole family.

Pray for Charity as she homes schools and as she provides hospitality for Mark as he figures out the issues regarding the continuing development of this business of tax laws and benefits for employees and

so on. And also we pray for the meeting and the discipling process and for the classes that they're starting, especially these classes at the beginning of the new training institute. So we pray that it'll start in a correct way and that they'll model true discipleship training with these students.

Lord, we thank you for the way you have worked in their lives. We pray that you will continue to provide everything that they need by way of finances and physical health, by way of encouragement as they walk daily with you. Bless that ministry there in the Far East, we pray.

Now, Lord, we ask you to guide us in this time. Focus our minds. May your spirit be the one who enables us to think clearly.

May you take Satan and his hosts and all of the distractions of the world out of our minds for these next moments, we pray. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Last week, I introduced you to a name that you may not have heard before.

His name is Duncan Campbell. Duncan Campbell was a man who was involved as God's instrument of revival in the New Hebrides Islands, which are the Outer Hebrides Islands, which are off the coast of Scotland in the year 1949. I want to read you a description that he wrote of what went on during those days of revival.

Here's what he says, and I'm quoting, God came, a crowded church. The service is over. The congregation, reluctant to disperse, stands outside the church in a silence that is tense.

Suddenly, a cry is heard within. A young man, burdened for the souls of his fellow men, is pouring out his soul in intercession. He prays until he falls into a trance and lies prostrate on the floor of the church.

But heaven has heard, and the congregation, moved by the power of God, comes back into the church. And a wave of conviction sweeps over the gathering, moving strong men to cry for mercy. The service continued until the small hours of the morning.

But so great was the distress, and so deep the hunger, which gripped men and women, that they refused to go home, though others were already assembling in another part of the parish. The number of those who now made their way to the church were moved by a power that they had not before experienced. Others were deeply convicted of sin and crying for mercy in their own homes before coming near the church.

None who were present at this early morning visitation will forget the moving scenes. Some weeping in sorrow and distress, others with joy and love filling their hearts, falling upon their knees, conscious only of the presence and power of God who had come in revival blessing. Within a matter of days, the whole parish was in the grip of a spiritual awakening.

Churches became crowded, with services continuing until 3 o'clock in the morning. Work was largely put aside, as young and old were made to face eternal realities. Scenes like this have been witnessed a number of times throughout history as God has sent times of refreshing to his church.

I've begun a series of studies with a premise that seems to me to be absolutely irrefutable. That is that the most urgent need of Christianity at this moment in history is for a widespread revival of religion, as the older writers used to call it. Look at the church today.

It is gravely ill with doctrinal error and carelessness. Corruption and immorality abound. The church is virtually indistinguishable from the world.

We find a general lack of interest in spiritual things. We find widespread ignorance of the Bible, almost universal neglect of prayer, a decline in anointed preaching, and all of this in favor of carnal entertainment and a preoccupation with selfish material concerns. Then you go into the churches, and you find them filled with dissension and hatred.

We have no spiritual power today. We struggle to evangelize. And more and more, we sense a collective mood of indifference and even of hopelessness.

How will we ever reverse this decline? Obviously, we can't. But God can. And the answer is revival.

I speak with a tone of urgency in this series. I believe that in the life of this church, and we can all sense in the life of this nation, we have come to a strategic point of desperate need. And as a Christian and as a part of this church, you need to know what God has done in the past and what God can do again and what God has promised concerning the spiritual awakening of his people.

And that's why we are examining the biblical doctrine of revival from a variety of perspectives in order to help you catch the vision of what God can do at this time here in this church and in this nation. So many of God's people in the churches just do not know what God has done in the past and what God has promised in his word. I can tell you that the knowledge of these things revolutionized my own life in ministry.

Toward the end of my years at the university, I was exposed to real revival and a great working of God in our church. And I have seen it a couple of other times as well. And as I was alerted to what God had done, I became interested in learning more about what God had done historically in the past.

And I read voluminously in the history of the revivals and the biographies of the great men that were used in those revivals. And all of this has revolutionized my own life in ministry. I have to even confess to you that over the past few years, even that passion has grown cold in my own life.

And it's just been recently God's awakened it again. And I just sensed in my own heart and life that this is desperately what we need. Now, we've noted that the biblical doctrine of revival is primarily taught in the Old Testament.

That's because Israel had a long history of decline and awakening. God constantly awakening his people when they slipped into periods of deep sin. And the principles that govern God's awakening of his people are contained primarily in the Old Testament.

Our text is a prayer today. This text is a prayer of the Jewish people. If you've been with us a while, you know that I believe that this great section of Isaiah that begins in the 40th chapter and extends to the end of the book, the last part of Isaiah, is, I think, the message that is delivered to the Jewish people during the Great Tribulation period.

And so this is really the preaching of primarily those 144,000 Jewish evangelists. And what we have here is a response to that on the part of the people of God. And it's true, of course, that these words could have been prayed by some of those who were devout in the Babylonian captivity after the destruction of Jerusalem.

But I really think that this is forward-looking. Now, it's interesting to me that this urgent prayer to be delivered from the horrors of the Tribulation period and the persecution and the destruction and all of that, that this prayer is a prayer that is born out of God's silence. Go back for a moment to the 15th verse of the previous chapter.

Isaiah 63, verse 15. Listen to the prayer here. Look down from heaven and see from your holy and glorious habitation where are your zeal and your mighty deeds.

The stirrings of your heart and your compassion are restrained toward me. Now, here's a saint of God that is passionate, that is zealous for the truth and for the reawakening of his people. And the thing that he does is he, if I can use the term reverently, assaults heaven with a prayer and says to God, where are your zeal? Where's your zeal? Where are your mighty deeds? You read the history of revivals, you will find that those who got a hold of God in prayer prayed in this very same spirit.

Lord, your compassion is restrained. Your power is held back. We read of you in the word of God of your great power, but we haven't seen that great power.

Where is it? That's why I believe now the 64th chapter is a very appropriate prayer for the church in these apostate days in which we are living. Here is a prayer that has been offered many times throughout the church history. I read books on revival that have been written over the years, and many of them come back to this text and especially, quote, this first verse.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. Here's a prayer that is bathed in passion, a prayer that is saturated in urgency. And here we have three key insights into understanding biblical revival.

And once again, I don't apologize for the fact that I am repeating myself from week to week on certain points, but I want you to see these things. And they're taught over and over again in scripture, and I want you to get them firmly in your minds. Let me begin with the first insight.

And we must understand what revival is. Let me review. Revival is not evangelism.

Revival is not, like many churches in some parts of our country, where they schedule revivals every spring or every fall. That's not revival. Evangelism is good.

Evangelism is important and necessary, and we want to see people come to Christ. But evangelism is not revival. Secondly, revival is not Pentecostal emotionalism.

It's not the kind of thing that you see on religious television of people jumping up and down and screaming and sweating and rolling on the floor and hallelujahs and praise God all over the place for essentially nothing. That's not what it is. That, if you look at the history of it, is really a cheap imitation of what has happened in real revival.

What is it? Rather, let me give you two things here. First, biblical revival is God's supernatural intervention in behalf of his people. Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence as fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil, to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at your presence.

Years ago at a conference in England, I heard a Welsh pastor preach on this subject. His name was Geoffrey Thomas. And he defined revival.

It's a definition that I've always remembered. It's one that really is one of the best I've heard. Here's what he said to us.

He said, revival is rather the arraignment of the heavens. It is the divine intervention among the affairs of men. It is God making bare his holy arms and working for his people sovereignly and omnipotently.

Unquote. Revival is new life infused by the visitation of the Holy Spirit in great power. I want you to notice here, revival is something for which devout saints long.

I see that in just that first word, oh. I've been reading the biography of Evan Roberts who was used so mightily in the Welsh revival. Time and time again, as young Roberts just in his 20s would go into churches and he would stand, he rarely preached, but he would stand before the people and sometimes would break down in prayer and in sobbing, just sobbing uncontrollably in front of the people because God had so gotten ahold of his life.

And he would just say sometimes over and over again, all he could utter was, oh. Oh. Oh.

Well, here's Isaiah, the same thing. Oh. It is an expression of intense, deep seated longing.

We could perhaps translate it, if only, if only you would rend the heavens and come down. It expresses desire. These are saints who are tired of business as usual.

They groan under the coldness and the sinful indifference of the majority of God's people. Look at the Jewish people today. If this is indeed, as I think it is, a passage that pertains to the future, the Jewish people today are scattered all over the world in nation after nation.

Most of them not caring for the faith of their fathers or the faith of the word of God. Most of them involved in their lives and their businesses and caring nothing. But when they are placed under severe persecution in time to come, there is going to become a groaning.

A groaning. They are cold and indifferent. And there are those who get ahold of this and they say, oh God, you are our only recourse.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. The fact of the matter is, and history proves it, that unless a remnant of faithful believers begin to long for revival, the church is never going to experience awakening. God does not awaken people when there isn't someone, somewhere, or some group somewhere that are getting ahold of God and as Jeffrey Thomas used the word, are reigning the heavens.

Revival is something for which devout saints long. Notice also, it's something for which devout saints pray. Here is a prayer that God will literally tear open the heavens and come down.

That he might remove everything that hides his face from his backslidden people and work with unusual power in their behalf. Remember what the problem was. Isaiah, again, 59th chapter, verse two.

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. And so the peoples essentially see the heavens closed. The doors of heaven are closed.

We can't access God anymore. God has hidden himself from us. No, Isaiah would say your sins are the problem.

And so they begin to pray. They pray, oh, that you would tear open the heavens and that you would come down. Now, Israel had a history of this.

God came down on Mount Sinai with burning fire and smoke and an earthquake and apparently a noise that was so loud they could not understand it. The voice of God. God had rent the heavens, had torn apart the heavens and come down.

Mentioned a couple of weeks ago, that incident in which Elijah stood on Mount Carmel. And as Elijah prayed over that sacrifice that he had offered on that altar, he prayed for God to demonstrate who he was by fire. And that fire came down from heaven.

God tore apart the heaven. The fire came down and consumed that altar. It consumed the stones, every part of it.

Yes, even those stones on that mountain quaked and melted under the fire of God. Why is this prayer offered with such passion? Notice in the last part of verse two, there are two reasons. One, to make your name known to your adversaries.

That the enemies of God might be forced to confront him. I don't know if you ever get frustrated, but sometimes I feel frustrated. How is it that the Godless people out here who are living totally Godless lives and don't care are enjoying their sin and don't have any inkling of the fact that there is a heaven and there is a hell and there is a savior in heaven to whom they must come in faith and repentance.

Have no concept of that. They're drowning in their sensuality and their materialism and all of that. And they laugh in your face if you talk about God.

How are we ever going to impress these people with their urgent and desperate need? And one answer to that, really I think the best answer to that is the revival of the church. Oh, that you would tear the heavens and come down for what? So that your name might be known to your adversaries. All of those Godless people out there who curse and blaspheme might actually come to a point of acknowledging you.

That isn't going to happen unless there is this supernatural working. God making bare his holy arm and working for his people sovereignly and omnipotent. The other thing he says, the other reason for this is also there in verse two, that the nations may tremble at your presence.

That the name of God might be known throughout the world. Missionaries will tell you it's getting harder and harder to do missions work. The same spirit of spiritual lethargy is pervasive across the world.

And as the various nations of the world, the religions of the world become increasingly hostile to Christianity and increasingly militant and defensive. Whether it's Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam or any of the other world religions, it is getting harder and harder to win people to Christ out of other cultures. And so he prays for the power of God to be revealed in order that the name of God might be known throughout the world.

God's glory and God's will are our supreme concern. The nation's problems are primarily spiritual. We talk about the global economic crisis today.

Now the world does not really have an economic crisis. That economic crisis is just a symptom of a far deeper crisis, which is the fact that the world has rejected their creator. And it can only be solved by divine

intervention.

Yes, until the Lord God breaks in upon us, we are still responsible to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. But sometimes it seems like an overwhelming task. So few missionaries, so many billions of people lost.

Communism in China and the Far East, lost in Islam, a religion that has closed the door to Christianity. Persecution rising from many quarters throughout the world against Christians. How in the world will we ever make an impact? The answer is, oh God, tear open the heavens and come down.

So revival is something for which devout saints long. It is something that devout saints pray for. And then thirdly, revival is something for which devout saints wait.

Let me jump down to verse four. Notice the last phrase. Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for him.

Listen, the Lord will test his people to see how urgently they want revival. The histories of revivals will prove that people prayed in some cases for weeks, for months, for years, some for decades before God broke in and revival. But it is something for which devout saints will wait.

So biblical revival is God's supernatural intervention in the behalf of his people. Notice also that biblical revival is God's surprising intervention in behalf of his people. We see it in verses three and four.

God intervenes in unexpected ways. Now Isaiah had seen this. You may remember the account.

We find it in fact in Isaiah chapters 36 and 37. You find it also elsewhere in the Old Testament with the story of the invasion of King Sennacherib. Sennacherib sent his armies.

They surrounded Jerusalem. They had already subjugated a number of other cities there in Judah. The northern kingdom was long since carried off into captivity by Assyria.

And now the Assyrian armies are surrounding Jerusalem and they are going to take Jerusalem. And the Assyrian armies send their leaders, their chief military men and the advisors to the king. They send to the very gates of the city.

And in the hearing of the people on the wall, they tell him essentially, surrender now and it'll go well with you, surrender. You remember the story of how King Hezekiah took the letter that had been given to him by the Assyrians and he went into the temple of God and he spread it out in the temple of God and he prayed to God to intervene in behalf of the people. And you remember how Isaiah was sent to the King Hezekiah with the message that God is going to work.

He didn't say how. And then night fell one night with the armies of Syria surrounding the city of Jerusalem. And when the sun dawned the next morning, 186,000 Assyrian troops lay dead.

God intervened. God intervened. The King himself, King Sennacherib went back home to Assyria, went into the temple of his God and was murdered by two of his own men.

God had intervened. Israel didn't expect that, but they prayed earnestly. Now here's the point.

Based out of that experience, Isaiah understood this, that biblical revival is God's surprising intervention in behalf of his people. Revival is almost always unexpected by most believers. There will be a few who are

praying.

There are a few who are expecting, but the vast majority aren't even expecting it. And yet no other deity ever devised by man, and not even Satan himself has ever demonstrated such power in behalf of his people. God tore open the heavens and came down on Sinai.

What God ever did that in that way for his people? God intervened for the people there at the Red Sea. There at the Red Sea, Moses said, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. And God parted the waters.

Again, he tore open the heavens and he came down and delivered his people. Just as God has intervened for his people in the past, he can do so. So my summary here on this point is simply this, that biblical revival is the expected, unexpected work of God in breathing new life into the church.

So the first insight has to do with what revival is. We must understand what revival is. Let me come to the second.

And that is we must understand how revival comes. I want you to notice this from verses five to seven here in our text. Let me say two things about this.

First of all, the prospect of revival centers on a devout minority. Look at verse five. You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, who remembers you in your ways.

Behold, you were angry for we sinned. We continued in them a long time and shall we be saved? The last two phrases in this fifth verse are difficult and the commentators argue a lot about it. I think essentially it means this.

Lord, you were angry because we sinned. Your ways don't change and we need help. Do you see? Looking back at verse four from it.

From the days of old, they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has I seen a God beside you who acts in behalf of the one who waits for him. No other nation has a God like this. In fact, you actually meet those who rejoice in doing righteousness.

That's not our culture today, is it? Not very many people actually rejoice in righteousness. They make fun of people who do righteousness. They rejoice in sin.

Who remembers you in your ways. Behold, you were angry. We sinned.

But your ways don't change. We need help. You see the contrast here? God who is holy, infinitely holy.

God's people who have sinned. They have lost their vision of righteousness. God's people have moved away from him.

God hasn't moved. God hasn't changed. Your ways don't change, but Lord, we have.

And we are in desperate straits. We need help. Now here are people who actually rejoice in righteousness.

They think often about the Lord. This is a devout minority. They think biblically.

They understand God's providence in history. They're looking back to history. They get it.

They understand what God has done. They have read their Old Testament. And they understand that sin is costly and God's sinful people deserve judgment.

That's what they deserve. Not mercy, judgment. But they seek God's reviving mercy anyway.

That boldness in prayer. The prospect of revival centers on a devout minority. Notice the other thing here though is that the problem in revival centers on a defiled majority.

And we see that particularly in verses six and seven in two ways. First of all, the majority of believers have accepted sinful practices. Notice verse six.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean. And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. And all of us wither like a leaf.

And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. This is an extremely graphic verse. And it is one of the Bible's strongest statements on the truth of human depravity.

We are unclean. That's what he says. We have all become like one who is unclean.

That takes us back to Israel in the wilderness and the instructions that God gave to Israel with regard to lepers. Do you remember? Leprosy, which became a symbol in the Old Testament for sin. Listen to this.

This is Leviticus 13.45. As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn and the hair of his head shall be uncovered and he shall cover his mustache and shall cry, unclean, unclean, and he shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection. He is unclean. He shall live alone.

His dwelling shall be outside the camp. What a miserable situation. You have a disease from which you can't recover.

You can't live in the camp. You live by yourself. You live outside and any time a healthy person comes near you, you have to cry, unclean, unclean.

Here's Isaiah saying, we have all become like one who is unclean. We're all lepers in your sight. And then he says, all our righteous deeds are like the filthy garment, a bloody rag.

And all of us wither like a leaf, like a leaf and fall that falls off a tree and blows away. The image here is very striking. We are good for nothing.

You ought to just throw us away. The leper who had to go outside the camp, the bloody rag that you toss, the leaf that blows away. That's how significant we are in the scheme of things.

We are rotten, miserable sinners. This is the people of God. Not even the world, not even the pagans.

This is the people of God. A revived church will be a holy church. It will be a church that gets a glimpse for what God expects in terms of righteousness.

Listen to these words from James chapter four, verses four and five. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Now notice that there is no common ground between the world

and God.

You cannot have a foot in the world and a foot in the things of God. You're on one side or the other. Do you think that the scripture speaks to no purpose? He jealously desires the spirit which he has made to dwell in us.

God wants the Holy Spirit to be working in us, but he can't work in unclean vessels. Let me come back to the revival in the Outer Hebrides. In Duncan Campbell, one of his sermons, here's the way he put it.

Listen to this. After spending 17 years in a barren wilderness, he's speaking of his ministry now, spiritually in a barren wilderness, baffled and frustrated in Christian work and witness, I suddenly came to realize that God has made provision for clean hands and a pure heart. And on my face and my own study at five o'clock in the morning, I came to know the recovering power of the blood of Christ.

And could, with the hymn writer say, through all my soul, its waters flow, through all my nature stealing and deep within my heart, I know the consciousness of healing. He got right with God in some area of his life. I know that in some small measure, I say in some small measure, the revival in Skye and later in Lewis, these are the towns in the Hebrides, must be related to the experience of that morning.

You ask me, how did it begin? What was it that led me into the full realization of glorious deliverance in the Holy Ghost? I answer in a word, it was the anointing of God. The experience was in my case, preceded by a spiritual hunger, a longing for God to do something. And he goes on.

This is where and how it began. A number of men and two elderly women there were who were made conscious of the desperate need of their parish. All human effort had failed and left them baffled.

They realized that their one source was to fall back upon God. Oh, how true it is that despair often is the womb from which real faith is born. When man comes to the end of himself, to the end of all human resources, he has reached the beginning of God.

And that was where I had arrived. And that was where the men of Lewis had arrived. So they entered into a solemn covenant that they would not rest or cease from prayer until he made Jerusalem a praise on their island.

And according to the report given me by the minister of the parish, you find men waiting through the night in confidence that God was able to manifest his power. You find two elderly sisters on their faces before the peat fire, three nights a week, pleading one promise. I say one promise.

Quote, I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. A promise made as they declared by a covenant-keeping God who must ever be true to his covenant engagements, so they waited. And months passed and nothing happened until one morning, a young man in the company read the portion of Psalm 24 that we have read.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. The word of God speaks about heart purity. He shall receive the blessing of the Lord.

Looking down at his praying companions and speaking in Gaelic, he said, brethren, it seems to me just so much sentimental humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting here. If we ourselves are not rightly related to God. And then he prayed, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? He

got no farther.

At that moment, there came to them a realization of God, an awareness of his presence that lifted them from the sphere of the ordinary into the sphere of the extraordinary. Three of them fell prostrate on the floor. They realized at that moment that they were now moving not in the field of the natural, but in the plane of the supernatural.

Revival had come and the power that was let loose in that barn shook the whole community of Lewis. A majority of believers have accepted sinful practices. The other thing that's so sad is that a majority of believers have abandoned serious prayer.

Now look at verse seven. There is no one who calls on your name, who arouses himself to take hold of you for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. Now friends, I want you to face this squarely.

I have to, and I don't like what I see in my life. Look at your own devotional life. How much power in prayer do you have? How much time do you spend? How much attention do you give to prayer? Look at our prayer meetings, how badly attended they are.

There is no one who calls on your name. There is no one who arouses himself to take hold of you. I mean, I'm talking a regularly scheduled prayer meeting.

When these revivals came, they weren't regularly scheduled. They got together spontaneously. They prayed, they prayed all night long, not just to go through the motion, but they prayed because God got hold of their hearts.

Here's the way they pray. Listen here to the 59th of Isaiah 12, verse 12. Our transgressions are multiplied before you.

Our sins testify against us. Our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities. Transgressing and denying the Lord and turning away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving in and uttering from the hearts lying words.

Justice is turned back. Righteousness stands far away for truth has stumbled in the street and uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking.

And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey. Now the Lord saw, and it was displeasing in his sight that there was no justice, and he saw that there was no man and was astonished that there was no one to intercede. Then his own arm brought salvation to him and his righteousness.

Now the language of Scripture doesn't often tell us that God's surprised, but here it says that God was astonished, that in the midst of the sinfulness of this nation, nobody, nobody was interceded. Our need today is for praying Christians. The great commentator in the 18th century, Matthew Henry, said this.

When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is set them praying. We must understand how revival comes. Let me come to the third insight now.

And that is that we must understand when revival can be anticipated. I think there are four indications in these closing verses, this last paragraph, that gives us the things for which we should watch to understand when revival can be anticipated. Let me give them to you quickly.

Number one, revival can be anticipated when we acknowledge the extent of our limitations. Verse eight, but now, oh Lord, you are our father. We are the clay and you are our potter and all of us are the work of your hand.

We must face the fact that we are merely clay in the potter's hands. We must stop trusting our own wisdom and strength and come to a point of total disgust with our miserable efforts. The church is utterly misguided today.

If you look at the magazines and you read the websites and you listen to the broadcasts and you sit in the seminaries and Bible colleges of this country, you realize that what is being stressed are better programs, better organizational efforts, and virtually nobody's talking about getting right with God. If I were to preach a series of sermons like this in one of today's great mega churches, there wouldn't be anybody left within a month. They'd all be gone.

But revival can be anticipated when we acknowledge the extent of our limitations. We can't make the church any better. Our power, our ingenuity, our strength, our wisdom, our energies, our money, nothing is going to bring an awakening to God's people.

Nothing is going to straighten out the sinful condition of God's people. Secondly, revival can be anticipated when we appeal the expression of His displeasure. Notice verse nine.

Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever. Behold, look now, all of us are your people. God is displeased with His people.

And we can anticipate revival when we finally get that and we come to a point where we appeal to God. We have to come to a point of desperation, tired of living worldly lives, tired of suffering the consequences of it. Tell me, my friend, what lasting pleasure do you get out of your job, your house, your boats, your bank accounts, your family even? And all of the toys that you have and want and all of the sinful pleasures that you think about and dream about and fantasize about, all of that, what good is it? God's displeasure can't go on forever.

When God's people get to a point where they say, God, you cannot be angry forever, we must have your favor restored. We sense a bit of that in Job, excuse me, in David, in Psalm 30. In Psalm 30, David put it this way, and it's a very hopeful verse, really.

Verse four, sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones. Give thanks to His holy name, for His anger is but for a moment. His favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may last for a night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. Now that's a great hope. But now listen, here's how we get into the problems we get into the next two verses in Psalm 30.

Now, as for me, I said, in my prosperity, I will never be moved. I'll look at my, I've got money, I've got possessions, houses, lands, I've got all of this stuff. Nothing will ever move me.

Oh Lord, by your favor, you have made my mountain to stand strong. Lord, you gave me all of this. But now listen to the last phrase.

You hid your face, and I was dismayed. I got so enamored, so enthralled, so immersed in all of my material possessions and all the good things of life, that God said, all right, if that's what you're gonna do,

I'll just say so long. And God backed out of the situation.

And finally, when life got miserable, David realized, the weeping endures for a night, joy comes in the morning. But that comes when you get back to God, when you get right with him. But our misery is not the only concern here.

Left in the third place, revival can be anticipated when we appreciate the extremity of his cause. This is important. Notice in verses 10 and 11.

Your holy cities have become a wilderness. Zion has become a wilderness. Jerusalem, a desolation.

Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised you has been burned by fire. All our precious things have become a ruin. They are disturbed because God's house and God's cities, in a sense, God's nation is lying in ruins.

We must become disturbed that our churches have become places of such pervasive irreverence. I am fighting a battle. I am striving as much as I can as your pastor to keep our church from becoming that.

And in church after church today, what should be beautiful has become cheap and disgustingly informal. One of the magazines recently had a picture. I forget if it was on the front page or if it was in the article.

It was a big picture of a pastor. And he was standing on a platform with a Bible in his hand with a informal sport shirt hanging out over his blue jeans, flip-flops on his feet. How dare you stand in the pulpit and hold this book in your hands looking like a slob.

That says volumes about what you think of God. And I can almost, without even setting foot in that man's church, I can tell you what his worship in his church is like. It's chaos.

And when we walk into churches like this and we see this kind of nonsense, and you see it on television, I guess. I don't have TV, so I don't see this stuff, but I hear about it. And you can see the kind of total irreverence and godless chaos in churches today.

It ought to disturb us. Lord, your holy churches have become a wilderness. The beauty of biblical worship has been defiled by the ugliness of worldly entertainment with electric guitars blaring so loud that it damages your eardrums, drums pounding, nobody can hear anything, people jumping up and down.

The beauty of Christian unity has been destroyed in so many cases by bitter dissension within churches. Churches are constantly fighting. Lord, your holy churches have become a wilderness.

Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised you has become a ruin. And that's one of the great motivations for seeking God's revival is to realize how desperately, desperately far we've fallen in our churches for what God wants. Finally, revival can be anticipated when we access the extension of his mercy.

Listen to verse 12. Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord? Will you keep silent and afflict us beyond measure? We need to develop a holy impatience, a desperation that says we can't go on like this any longer. We simply must have times of refreshing from heaven.

We can no longer tolerate the absence of divine power. And so it is that we plead God's mercy. One more time back to the Hebrides.

I want you to listen to this story. We were in a village where things were really difficult. A certain section of the Christian community were bitterly opposing me on the grounds that I was not teaching truth because I proclaimed the truth that John Wesley proclaimed and that the New Testament proclaims that there is a savior from sin.

Now, I proclaimed the truth and I was opposed and the opposition was so successful that only seven from this community came near the meetings at the parish church. At the close of one meeting, the session clerk of this particular congregation in which I was ministering came to me and said, Mr. Campbell, these go not out but by prayer and fasting. And so we are meeting tonight in the farmhouse.

We are going to spend the night in prayer. So we met. There were about 30 of us and prayer began.

I found it a very hard meeting. I found myself battling and getting nowhere as the hours passed. After midnight, between 12 and one o'clock in the morning, I turned to a young man in the meeting and I said, I feel led of God to ask you to pray.

That dear man rose to his feet and prayed in his prayer. The prayer he uttered was such words as I had never heard before. He said, Lord, you made a promise.

Are you going to fulfill it? We believe that you are a covenant keeping God. Will you be true to your covenant? You have said that you would pour water on the thirsty floods and thirsty floods upon the dry ground. I do not know how others stand in your presence.

I do not know how the ministers stand. But if I know my own heart, I know where I stand. And I tell thee now that I'm thirsty.

Oh, I am thirsty for a manifestation of the man of thy right hand. And then he said this, Lord, before I sit down, I want to tell you that your honor is at stake. Duncan Campbell continues.

Have you ever prayed like that? Here's a man praying the prayer of faith. I love to believe that angels and archangels were looking over the battlements of glory and saying to one another, this is a man who believes God. There is a man who dares to stand solid on the promises of God and take from the throne what the throne has promised.

Believe it? Or disbelieve it? And you can verify this if you like. The house shook like a leaf. The dishes rattled on the sideboard.

And an elder standing beside me said, Mr. Campbell, an earth tremor. I said, yes. And I pronounced the benediction immediately and walked out to find the community alive.

With the awareness. I have always liked one definition of revival, which I read many years ago. It is an abnormal method God uses to bring his subnormal children into a normal Christian walk.

Today, however, we don't realize how subnormal evangelical Christianity has become. For many of us, our present condition is all we've ever known. We've become accustomed to our lifeless and powerless condition.

The great saint of God and pastor from Scotland, Andrew Bonar, wrote in his famous memoir of Robert Murray McShane, he said this. Quote, we get contented with our old measure and kind as if the windows of heaven were never to be opened. We get so content with things the way they are that we don't believe

God can ever do anything differently.

Beloved, it doesn't have to be that way. The Lord today is looking for committed intercessors. Are you prepared to pay the price of being one of that devout minority? That means that you need to learn all you can learn about revival.

Read the abundant and often neglected literature on the subject. Learn about the past revivals, then commit yourself to searching the scriptures and poring over these pages and praying them back to God. Separate yourself from the world.

Get serious about prayer. The words of the prayer in that old revival hymn are as relevant today as ever. For mighty works for thee prepare and strengthen every heart.

Come, take possession of thine own and nevermore depart. All self-consume, all sin destroy. With earnest zeal, endue each waiting heart to work for thee, O Lord, our faith.

Speak, Lord, before thy throne we wait. By promise we believe and will not let thee go until the blessing we receive. Lord, tear open the heavens and come down.

To make your name known among your adversaries that the nations may tremble at your presence. Indeed, please look, we are your people. Lord, tear open the heavens.

Oh, Father, when we think through a text like this, especially in its historical and prophetic context, we realize how truly hopeless we are apart from your sovereign and omnipotent power. We're like lepers. We're like dirty, bloody rags.

We're like, Lord, we're like leaves that blow away. And in that miserable condition, we look up to you. Father, we're ashamed of this condition of the church today, of those who call themselves Christians, of those who've departed.

But Lord, it's easy to point the fingers at others. We are ashamed of our own sins, how much we defile ourselves every week. Lord, as sinful human beings, we're going to leave here today and go back into the world.

And before this day is out, we will have sinned again. Father, there is a sense in which we have to pray right now that we really don't care as we should. We're really not there yet.

We don't necessarily get it yet. We pray that your Holy Spirit may be given to us in unusual power. Lord, we claim the promise.

Jesus said, if we, fathers, know how to give good gifts to our children, we'll not, but Father, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. We ask. We desire him.

And Lord, it's your promise. It's your word. And in a very real sense, your truth is at stake.

But bring us into the position of obedience, of repentance, of confession of sin, that we may stand before you and together with each other in your presence with clean hands and pure hearts. Lord, don't let us run away from our sins. Make us deal with them.

And Lord God, we pray that at Wading River Baptist Church, you will tear open the heavens and come down and meet us in a fresh and vital way. Oh God, do it again. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, the secret, ultimately, in the Bible is, and if you read the histories, you will sense this. You will pick this up. A passion to know Jesus Christ, that he is the one who is greater and more important than anything else.

All of the things that we work for and the material things, all of the activities of our lives and all of the stuff we look at and read and hear, our friends, our family, all of that has got to take second place to Jesus Christ. And in a lot of cases, it's just gotta be discarded. Number 517, the writer says, I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold.

I'd rather be his than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands. Notice the last line of the chorus.

I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords. We can sing the words. The question is, can we sing them and meet them? I trust this will be our secret.

Sincere prayer today. If you have no desire in your heart for this, don't even sing these words, because you're singing a lie. You say, well, I'm imperfect.

I'm not sure I can, God understands that. But if this is the true desire of your heart, lift it up as a prayer as we sing. Stand with me as we sing.

Number 517.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19887.mp3>

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