

The Prodigal Church

by Ronald Glass

The sermon emphasizes the need for revival in the church, highlighting the importance of returning to the Lord, acknowledging sin, and seeking healing and restoration.

Duration: 58:43

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:39, Psalm 108:12, Isaiah 59:2, Hosea 6:1-3, Hosea 14:4

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the lack of appreciation for the majesty of God, the depth of our sin, and the urgency of spreading the gospel in today's society. He emphasizes the need for a united remorse over our alienation from God and a declaration of a united resolve to address this situation. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of developing a conviction about our condition before the Lord, recognizing the lack of faithfulness and knowledge of God in the land. Lastly, he encourages believers to seek a deeper knowledge of God through prayer, studying the Word, and sharing the gospel with the lost, while also assuring them of God's mercy and compassion.

Transcript

Welcome to the book of Hosea in our study of biblical revival, and my text today is found in the 6th chapter, verses 1 through 3. Now we were in the 10th chapter last week, this week the 6th chapter, verses 1 through 3. Let me read these verses please. Come, let us return to the Lord, for he has torn us, but he will heal us. He has wounded us, but he will bandage us.

He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before him. So let us know.

Let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn, and he will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth. One of the most familiar of all Bible stories is our Lord's parable of the prodigal son.

It's found in Luke chapter 15, verses 11 to 32. Now you remember the story of that rebellious young man who wasted his father's inheritance in self-indulgence, partied himself into poverty, and was feeding pigs in some farmer's barnyard when he finally came to his senses. There he was feeding the hogs and looking at the husks of corn that they were eating, and it finally dawned on him that day that the servants of his father ate better than he did there in the barnyard.

And so the young man said, essentially, I will return to my father, and that's exactly what he did. Now whatever other application you might make of this powerful story that the Lord Jesus told, it certainly is relevant to evangelical Christianity at the beginning of the 21st century. I'm afraid that there are increasing signs that evangelical Christianity is living in the barnyard, that we are fellowshipping with the pigs, as it were.

For example, this week I got my latest issue of World Magazine, a little article, actually it's a column, by Janie Chaney, who is one of the regular columnists in World Magazine entitled Can We Talk?, and frankly, it's a little disturbing. She mentions one evangelical, well-known evangelical leader among the emerging church group. His name is Mark Driscoll, and her point in this article is frankly, and that's what I have to say is frankly, that there's too much sex talk in the pulpits of our churches today.

Among the evangelicals, Mark Driscoll's expositions of the Song of Solomon online and in person have drawn praise and groans. He was also featured on a recent Nightline interview where he was asked, there seems to be two lightning rod topics when people talk about Mark Driscoll, sex and Jesus. Is that fair? He said, yeah, I like both.

For the record, sex with my wife and I dig Jesus, absolutely. This alone, says Janie Chaney, doesn't shed a whole lot of light on either subject, although the pastor of Seattle's Mars Hill Church has been accused of shedding too much light on Solomon's song, ripping the veil from metaphors that should be left to private interpretation and modest exegesis. In fact, she asks this very important question, is it necessarily prudish to ask that private matters be discussed privately? No, it isn't, and that is a very good point.

Another one of our well-known television young evangelical preachers, Ed Young Jr., is doing the same thing. Why? Because they can raise viewers, they can get people to watch, they can get people to show up to their churches by talking about this, and yet this becomes the obsession of so many churches today. Where I ask is the glory of God? Where is the glory of the cross of Jesus Christ? Where is salvation by grace? Where is the exposition of man's sin and all of the things that used to be associated with the gospel? No, now we have to talk about the things that the world is thinking about and to bring it down to the gutter in our evangelical churches.

And that's why today I am believing that it is time for the prodigal church to decide to return to the Lord. The final days of the northern kingdom of Israel were just such a time. Now, last time in our study in the 10th chapter, I pointed out to you that as we listened to the anointed words of the prophet Hosea telling people it was time to seek the Lord, that he was doing so because of the gross apostasy of Israel, and particularly among the leadership of Israel, and most specifically the priesthood.

The priests who were charged with the preaching of the law of God, teaching the people the law of God, as well as also the king. And that's why we hear him say in these opening words, chapter 5 verse 1, hear this, O priests give heed to the house of Israel. You remember how he had condemned the priests in chapter 4, where he had said in verse 6, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Well, whose fault is that? Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being my priest. Now, what God did was he made Hosea a very graphic object lesson of his point. He told Hosea to go marry a prostitute.

He married a prostitute. She had three children. Two of the children were named, one, Lo-ruamah, which means no more mercy, no more compassion.

God is saying, I'm not going to have compassion on my people any longer. Secondly, a son was named Lo-ami. That means no longer my people.

You are not my people anymore. And yet the amazing thing when you read this account, is that in the second chapter, after he has just had these children and named them thus, God says, yet there is coming a day when it will be said, you are my people. Chapter 2, verse 1, say to your brothers, ami, my people.

And to your sisters, ruamah, compassion. So whenever God pronounces judgment, he holds out the possibility of repentance and awakening, revival and restoration for repentance. Now that's biblical revival.

So that's what we're doing in these days. We are exploring the subject of biblical revival. I realize it's not the most popular subject to preach on today, because it brings us face to face with the reality of the apostasy of the church, and it brings us face to face with our own sins.

Before the 18th century revival that we usually call the evangelical awakening, the moral and spiritual climate in England had reached a state of virtual paralysis. The revival, as powerful as it was, and as important as it was in awakening the church and the nation, was still ridiculed by many in the British public sector for interrupting their godless fun. Religion is getting in the way of our fun.

Thomas Secker, at the time bishop of Oxford, wrote these words, quote, in this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of this age, unquote. Well, he could have said the same thing about America in the early 21st century. In fact, a couple of decades or so back, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, famous pastor in London, said, and I quote, the greatest problem confronting us in the church today is that the vast majority of professing Christians are not convinced of the reality and the desirableness of revivals, unquote.

Not convinced of the reality because they don't know the history of revivals, not only from the scriptures but also from church history. And they are not convinced of the desirableness of revivals because we love our sins too much. Now again, our text is the conclusion of Hosea's message that begins in chapter 5 and verse 1. It is a message that is directed at Israel's spiritual leaders, as you see.

Hear this, O priests, give heed, O house of Israel, listen, O house of the King. So to the priests and to the King, to those in positions of authority and leadership, Hosea is directing his remarks. By the way, it's always the case, or usually the case, let me put it that way, that in God's work of revival, the first ones that get right are a few preachers.

They get their lives straightened out first, and then very often God's people will be revived. Now Hosea's sermon here looks ahead to the day of Israel's national repentance. There's certainly a prophetic element here that looks to the day when God will indeed revive the nation as a nation.

The very dynamics of that process are already underway as we see Israel again established in the land of Palestine. But I think there's more to it than that. The message is vitally important in understanding God's work of revival.

Now the text to which we have come today, I think, is the most complete picture of revival given in the Bible. There are three great words that are used on this subject throughout the Old Testament, and all three of those words appear in this text. And they are return, they are heal, secondly, and third, revive, or come back to life.

Those are the three great Old Testament words defining revival, and they're all here in this text. I think as we read this, we find four steps to revival. They are briefly and simply outlined here, and I think that they can help us understand, again, the dynamic of God as he awakens his people, and it's something we desperately need.

And again, I don't apologize for repeating myself because this is a subject that is so desperately urgent in the church today, and so pervasively unknown by most Christians today. So here are the steps. Number one, we must develop an awareness of our alienation from the Lord.

That's where we have to begin. We have to develop an awareness of our alienation from the Lord. Look at the first part of the first verse, come, let us return to the Lord.

Why would we have to return if we weren't away from him? Now that was the predicament of the prodigal son, remember? The prodigal son gathered his inheritance from his very indulgent and tolerant father, and took his money off and wasted it in perverse living, and then came to his senses, and realized that not only had he sinned against his father, but he had sinned against God because he said, I will go back to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. In that pig pen, feeding those hogs, the prodigal son realized how deeply alienated he had become from God and from his own father. Now until we as a church, until we as Christian people in this perverse world in which we live begin to develop an awareness of our alienation from the Lord, we're never going to make any progress in this matter of awakening.

What do I mean? Well, we must develop a united remorse over our alienation. What does that mean? That means waking up to the seriousness of the crisis. Just how serious was this crisis that Israel was in? Well, I think it was so serious that one of the most frightening verses in all of the Bible happens to occur in the fourth chapter.

It's in verse 17, and it's very brief. Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.

My friends, when God says of his people, let them alone, they're in trouble, big trouble. My prayer is, Lord God, don't ever say that. About Wading River Baptist Church.

Now remember, the sobering words of no less than our Lord Jesus to the apostate church in Ephesus when he said in Revelation chapter 2, repent or else. See, God is no longer smiling. If you look here in Hosea, look at verse 6 of chapter 5. They will go with their flocks and their herds.

They're going to go about their business to seek the Lord. They're going to bring their sacrifices to Jerusalem to seek the Lord, but they will not find him. He has withdrawn from them.

Verse 15, I will go away and return to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In their affliction, they will earnestly seek me. This is a very vivid picture in verses 14 and 15, actually.

Go back to verse 14 for a minute, for I will be like a lion to Ephraim. God pictures himself as a lion, and here's what the lion does. He goes out and he hunts, and he pounces on his prey, and he kills the animal, takes that animal in his teeth, and he retreats back to his den, and back in the shadows of the cave, he sits, and he waits.

God's saying, I'm like a lion, and I am going to retreat into the cave. I will tear to pieces, and then I will come, and I will sit there, and I will chew on my prey. I will go away and return to my place until they

acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.

God is in hiding until God's people seek him. You see, then, in their affliction, because he has torn to pieces, they'll seek me. Eventually, they'll come.

They'll come back, and God's going to let them do it. Now look at us today in America. Listen to those words to Ephesus again, repent or else.

Here is evangelicalism in America today, biblical illiteracy, doctrinal infidelity, dissension, and division, spiritual deadness, moral compromise, materialism, and a general lack in spiritual things, holiness, prayer, evangelism, missions. There's no appreciation today of the majesty of God or of the depth of our sin or the greatness of the Lord Jesus, of the urgency of the day in spreading the gospel, of the reality of hell, and the lostness of men, and the nearness of the coming of Christ. These things are just not on our minds today.

That ought to disturb us. Yes, we must develop a united remorse over our alienation, a point where we come together and we say to each other, what are we to do about this situation? And the other thing we see here in this first part of the first verse is that we must declare a united resolve. When you look at the alienation, that's not enough.

It's not enough to just say things are bad. No, you have to make a decision. What are we going to do about it? Come, let us return to the Lord.

That's what the prodigal did, right? The prodigal son said, I know what I'm going to do. I am going to go back to my father. This must become the passion of the prodigal church.

Now there's a great promise that our Lord makes to Christians in the context of his condemnation of the Laodicean church in Revelation chapter 3. Here's what he says to the church, and this is in virtually unequivocal terms, verse 16. Because you are lukewarm and neither cold or hot, I wish you were cold or hot. Because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Now that's a pretty severe and pretty shocking thing for God to say. What are Christians going to do in a day when God says, I'm going to spit the church out of my mouth? Well, here's the promise that's attached to that. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with me. What's he saying there? The Lord Jesus is saying in the day when I spit the church out of my mouth, individuals who really care, individuals who have a heart for me, who want me, who want to fellowship with me and know me and obey me, I will open the door. And they can come in and we'll have fellowship together.

But we're interested in corporate awakening. I don't want our church or the church of this generation throughout America to be spit out of the mouth of God. What does this mean? Once again, and we mentioned this last time, but here's what Hosea tells the people to do in chapter 14, verses 1 and 2. Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God.

For you have stumbled because of your iniquity. You need to come back. That's what he says in our text.

Let us return to the Lord. Now what does that mean? Well, as I pointed out to you last week, he says take words with you and return to the Lord. We need to hear some repentance here.

You sinners, bring your words and say to him, take away all iniquity. And receive us graciously that we may present the fruit of our lips. Lord, our worship is an abomination to you.

We understand that. Until our sins are dealt with, Lord, forgive us our sins. Take away our sins.

Receive us back graciously. And then we can worship you in a way that is pleasing to you. Times of revival are times of united brokenness and intercession for the restoration of the church.

I was reading this week in the biography of Rees Howells. Rees Howells was a man from Wales. His life as a young man was touched by the Welsh revival.

And he became an outstanding man of prayer. More distinguished as a man of prayer than perhaps anything else. But for a period of time, about six years, he and his wife went to Africa as missionaries.

Now, unless you think revival only happened in England and America, let me remind you, not so. I wanted to read to you a little bit of what how Rees Howells describes the revival in a place called Gazaland back then. Gazaland is in what is today part of Mozambique and part of Zimbabwe.

There in what used to be called Portuguese East Africa. This is in the year 1915. Sunday was October 10th, my birthday, and as I preached in the morning, you could feel the spirit coming on the congregation.

In the evening, he came down. I shall never forget it. He came upon a young girl, Kufasi by name, who had fasted for three days under conviction that she was not ready for the Lord's coming.

As she prayed, she broke down crying, and within five minutes, the whole congregation were on their faces crying to God. Like lightning and thunder, the power came down. I had never seen this, even in the Welsh revival.

I had only heard about it with Fenny and others. Heaven had opened and there was no room to contain the blessing. Howells says, I lost myself in the spirit and prayed as much as they did.

All I could say is, he has come, he has come. We went on until late in the night. We couldn't stop meeting.

The next day he came again and the people were on their knees till 6 PM. This went on for six days and people began to confess their sins and come free as the Holy Spirit brought them through. They had forgiveness of sins and met the Savior as only the Holy Spirit can reveal him.

Everyone who came near would go under the power of the Spirit. People stood up to give their testimonies and it was nothing to see 25 on their feet at the same time. At the end of one week, nearly all were through.

We had two revival meetings every day for 15 months without a single break and meetings all day on Fridays. Hundreds were converted. And he goes on to say this.

Meetings lasted from early morning till sunset with only a short interval. The people weeping and confessing their sins so that the missionaries could not put in a word but simply wept with them and prayed for them. Sometimes everyone would be kneeling and confessing together in great agony of soul

and then one and another would get free and begin to sing for joy.

This went on day by day from Sunday till Thursday. The Spirit doing a mighty convicting work in souls and leading to confessions such as no human agency could ever have extorted from them. At the first meeting at 9 AM on Thursday, the building was crowded.

The missionaries told how the blessing had come to Roussitou and what were the conditions of the blessing. After two or three of the Roussitou Christians, it was a mission station, had given their testimonies, crowds began to cry for mercy and to confess their sins. The numbers being so great that it was impossible to help them all, though the meeting lasted till one o'clock in the day.

All met again at 2 PM and there was a wonderful time. The men who had held back somewhat in the morning coming forward in open confession of sin completely broken down. Teachers, evangelists, and scholars all praying and confessing and this went on without any confusion under the Spirit's control until sunset.

That day about 100 souls came to complete deliverance and on Saturday scores came through into new life of peace and surrender. And instead of soul agony, the majority were praising and singing with joy. On Sunday, over 200 had come into liberty and there was no need for the missionaries to speak as four or five were standing at a time, each taking their turn for their testimony.

Well, it could go on, but you see the point. As God's spirit comes upon God's people corporately together, there becomes an awareness of their alienation and awareness of their sin and they resolve in a united way to address their sins, to confess their sins. That has happened repeatedly in the revival of the church.

But so the first step, we must develop an awareness of our alienation from the Lord. Now here's the second. We must develop a conviction about our condition before the Lord.

The father of the prodigal son let him go. When that young man came to his father, he said, Father, give me my inheritance. Now the father could have said, no, you're not old enough, or no, you're not responsible enough, or no, I'm not dead yet.

But the father gave him the inheritance and let him go. Sometimes the Lord does the same thing in order to bring us to a state of conviction. Listen to those words in verse one again.

For he has torn us, but he will heal us. He has wounded us, but he will bandage us. Beloved, the Lord must sometimes wound his people.

Again, up in the 14th verse of the previous chapter, I will be like a lion to Ephraim and a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away. I will tear to pieces.

That sounds pretty severe for God, doesn't it? Listen, we don't pay much attention to the state of our bodies when we are healthy. There's not a thing wrong with you. You're young and you're vigorous.

And you've never been sick a day in your life other than maybe a cold or the flu. So you don't think anything of stopping by McDonald's and getting a milkshake and French fries and a double cheeseburger and doing that today and tomorrow and the next day, you don't think anything of loading yourself up on pizza. And then one day, the doctors tell you, you have major medical problems.

And all of a sudden, you start thinking about what you eat, or you start thinking about your lack of exercise, or you start thinking about the substances that you are abusing. Do you see, as long as you're healthy, you don't care. It's only when you're sick that you start to think about it.

And that's the way it is with God's people. It was in Israel. It is in the church.

When things go on as usual in the church, we do not show much concern for our spiritual condition. We come on Sunday, we sit in a pew, we sing the songs, we listen to a sermon, we go home unchanged. And then we do it all over again the next week, month after month, year after year.

So sometimes the Lord mercifully wounds us in order to bring us to conviction. Sometimes the Lord wounds his people, but listen to this. He will heal us.

He will bandage us. For while the Lord must sometimes wound his people, the Lord can surely heal his people as well. No one else can help.

Look again in chapter five, in verse 13. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, what did they do? Well, this is talking about military things. And what happened was the northern kingdom went to the kingdom of Assyria and asked for Assyria to be their protector.

Ephraim went to Assyria and said to King Jerob, now listen to these next words, but he is unable to heal you or to cure you of your wound. They went to the wrong place. They went to the wrong doctor trying to find an answer.

Who can help? Well, Israel had God's word on it a long time before. 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, the song of Moses that they were supposed to learn. 39th verse says this, see now that I am he and there is no God beside me.

It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal and there is no one who can deliver from my hand. God says I'm the one who wounds.

I'm the one who can likewise heal. Psalm 108 and verse 12. Oh, give us help against the adversary for deliverance by man is in vain.

Hosea tells Israel, it is the Lord who will heal us. It is the Lord who will bandage our wounds. No matter how serious the wound, the great physician is equal to the task of healing.

Again, back to the final chapter here in the 14th verse. 14th chapter, the fourth verse, God says, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely for my anger has turned away from them.

Why? Well, because, verse 2, they took words and they said, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously. They repented of their sins and God said, when they repent, then I will heal and I will love them. Jeremiah used the same kind of language.

I think Jeremiah was very much influenced by Hosea. Jeremiah says in the third chapter in the 22nd verse, return, oh, faithless sons, God speaking here, I will heal your faithlessness. And then the words of the nation, behold, we come to you, for you are the Lord, our God.

Oh, that that would be repeated in the Church of Jesus Christ today. Even right here in Wading River Baptist Church. Sometimes God wounds us.

God allows us to be hurt. And we ask ourselves, why? Why do these things happen? Why are we allowed to experience dissension or division? Or why are we allowed to go through these difficult things? Listen, the answer is here. God wounds us in order to show us our sins and make us feel the desperation of our condition so that we will return to the Lord.

That's why. Now let me come to the third step. And it is this.

We must develop an assurance of our awakening by the Lord. Verse two, he will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before him.

Listen, the Lord does not leave us in despair. God is righteous. God is holy.

God demands that we obey him. God judges sin. But God is also merciful and compassionate.

And he loves his people. Now listen, the prodigal's life changed when he reassured himself of his father's willingness to take him back. We do not read that as he stood in the middle of the pen, feeding the hogs and saying, I know, I'll go back to my father.

We do not read that he had a debate within himself as to whether his father would take him back. Never a moment of questioning, saying, if I go back to dad, what will he do? If I return to my father, will he throw me out? Will he close the doors? Will he tell the servants, I will never look on that young man again? No. He was assured that if he went home, his father would receive him with open arms.

He knew his dad that well. And so with the prodigal church. There is always hope.

The immediate reference now here, of course, is to Israel's political and spiritual restoration. But I want you to notice how we need to develop an assurance of awakening. If we return to God, if we repent of our sins, there is an assurance.

Notice the expectation of revival is unleashed among us. This is a literary device here in verse 2. He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day.

This is something that's called the climactic use of numbers. It's a literary device in the Hebrew language. What it does is it intensifies the meaning.

Here what it does is expresses a short time. An era of expectancy. In other words, what he's saying here is, when we repent and we come back to God, in two days he'll revive us.

In three days he'll raise us up again. If God's people will return to him, he will revive them. And it won't take him forever to do it.

If we return to the Lord now, then he can revive us. One of the wonderful things about revival is that when we read the histories of revivals, what we see is that whole decades, decades of spiritual backsliding have been wiped out overnight. Decades of sin have been erased in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The expectation of revival is unleashed among us. It was here. And then the essence of revival is understood by us as well.

Notice, revival is nothing less than the infusion of new life that we may live before him. Wait a minute. You're dead? No, not physically.

But spiritually, yes. Spiritually dead. Wake up.

Repent of your sins. And when God revives, he breathes new life. That's what the meaning of revival, by the way.

That's the meaning of the word. It is new life. New life.

Revival is a spiritual resurrection. And when we understand this, we become intensely dissatisfied with things the way they are. We need to emerge victoriously from this sleep of spiritual death.

And we won't rest until we do. That brings me to the fourth step. And that is that we must develop a commitment to our continuing in the Lord.

Verse 3, Let us know. Let us press on to know the Lord. See, our desire becomes that of living in a continuous state of revival.

True revival is marked by a growing awareness of God. I've mentioned to you the revival in the Outer Hebrides Islands in 1949, 1953, and Duncan Campbell, the man who was so central in that revival, said that the outstanding feature of that Hebrides revival was an awareness of God. We generally are not too aware of God in our churches today.

If we were aware of God, there are a lot of places we wouldn't go. There are a lot of activities in which we would not engage. There are a lot of things we wouldn't say.

There are some attitudes we'd give up. If we knew that God was there, if we understood that God is with us, that God is watching us, that we are never out of sight of God. In fact, if you are a Christian, that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God.

But in revival, we become intensely aware that God is present. And what happens is revival leads to an intense personal desire to know God. That's what it is here.

So, let us know. Let us press on to know the Lord. See, the problem was, chapter 4, verse 1, the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land because there is no faithfulness or kindness, that is, there is no truth, there is no covenant loyalty, or knowledge of God in the land.

Verse 6, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. But when they get revived, verse 3 of our text, then let us press on to know the Lord. When God's people are awakened, there is a sense within them that says we are not satisfied with things the way they are.

We have to know God better than we know Him. They go back to the Word of God. They go back to hours of prayer.

They go back to just sitting in the presence of God and bathing in His glory and in His light. And then they go forth to share the gospel with those who are lost. They know Him.

Revival is marked by a widespread preoccupation with God. Here is the way Jeremiah put it. Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 23 and 24.

This is God speaking. Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. There is too much of that in the church, by the way, today.

Now the only thing that seems to matter is how many PhDs do you have? How many books have you written? Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. And let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches.

But let him who boasts, boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for I delight in these things, declares the Lord. God says if you want to boast in anything, boast in your relationship with Him. The greatest thing that you can say is that I know God.

The greatest thing that could be said about you when you're dead and gone is he or she knew God. This is apparent in a renewed life of devotion to Scripture and prayer and holiness. Knowing Christ becomes our priority.

His cause, the health of His church, our deepest concern. Let me take you back again to Massachusetts, Northampton, and to the awakening that took place in the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. Let me just share a little bit about what it was like there.

Presently, writes Jonathan Edwards, upon this a great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the internal world became universal in all parts of the town and among persons of all degrees and all ages. The noise amongst the dry bones referenced to Ezekiel 37 waxed louder and louder. All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by.

All the conversation in all companies and upon all occasions was upon these things only unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. In other words, they had to go about their regular business to some extent. But everything else, all the conversation in town was on spiritual matters.

Other discourse than of the things of religion would scarcely be tolerated in any company. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world. It was treated among us as a thing of very little consequence.

They seemed to follow their worldly business more as part of their duty than from any disposition they had to it. In other words, they just went to work because they had to. The temptation now seemed to lie on that hand to neglect worldly affairs too much and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion.

This was exceedingly misrepresented by reports but can you imagine that the temptation was to be too much involved in religion. But although people did not ordinarily neglect their worldly business yet religion was with all sorts the great concern and the world was a thing only as he puts it by the by in other words it was just something that was there because they had to deal with it. The only thing in their view was to get to the kingdom of heaven and everyone appeared pressing into it.

The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid. It appeared in their very countenances. It then was a dreadful thing among us to lie out of Christ in danger every day of dropping into hell and what person's minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives and to fly from the wrath to come.

All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls and were want very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes and such meetings when appointed were generally thronged. There was scarcely a single person in the town old or young left unconcerned about the great things of the

eternal world. Those who were want to be the vainest and the loosest those who had been disposed to think and speak lightly of vital and experimental religion were now generally subject to great awakenings and the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner and increased more and more.

Souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day for many months together might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvelous light and delivered out of a horrible pit and from the miry clay and set up on a rock with a new song of praise to God in their mouths. The work of God as it was carried on the number of true saints multiplied soon made a glorious alteration in the town so that in the spring and summer following the year of 1735 the town seemed to be full of the presence of God.

I want you to think if this could ever be Wading River it was never so full of love nor of joy and yet so full of distress as it was almost then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy and families on account of salvation being brought unto them.

Parents rejoicing over their children as newborn. Husbands over their wives. Wives over their husbands.

The goings of God were then seen in his sanctuary. God's day was a delight and his tabernacles were amiable. That means they liked going to church.

Our public assemblies then were beautiful. The congregation was alive in God's service. Everyone earnestly intent on the public worship.

Every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the word was preached. Some weeping with sorrow and distress.

Others with joy and love. Others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors. He goes on to say that their public praises were greatly enlivened.

That is their worship was stimulated and then he makes an explicit point of how during that revival the young people were transformed. The young people when they met were want to spend the time in talking of the excellency and the dying love of Jesus Christ. The glory of the way of salvation.

The wonderful free and sovereign grace of God. His glorious work in the conversion of a soul. The truth and certainty of the great things of God's word.

The sweetness of the views of his perceptions and so on. Can you imagine that? Young people sitting around talking about those things. And so this revival is sustained by an ongoing commitment to know the Lord.

Let us press on to know the Lord. Then true revival is marked by a growing abundance of grace. Revival always brings great blessing.

Notice the last part of verse three. His going forth is as certain as the dawn and he will come to us like the spring rain watering the earth. His return to his people is as sure as the dawn.

As sure as the sun comes up in the morning. God comes back to his repentant people. As abundant as a rainstorm or a gushing well.

Now when you read verse three you have to read it in light of the previous chapter, verse ten. Notice what it said there. The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary.

On them I will pour out my wrath like water. But here to a repentant and revived people he says that he will come like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth. I will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.

The love of the God who stood ready to revive his people in order to return to the Lord. Make no mistake he has wounded us but how are we going to view that wounding bitterly angrily with resentment against God. No don't be misled God has wounded us so that he can heal us.

The problem is that we will not part with our sins that's where the rub comes verse 4 of chapter 5 their deeds will not allow them to return to their God for a spirit of harlotry is within them and they do not know the Lord do you see they don't know the Lord let us press on to know him they don't know why because their sins have gotten in the way they will not allow them to return to their God we cannot come back to God as long as we cherish our sins we will only return to him when we let go of those sins and those sins are confessed and those sins are repented classic verse I commend it to you I referred to it before Isaiah chapter 59 behold the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save nor his ear so dull that it cannot hear God is not deaf God is not powerless but your iniquities your sins have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear during the Welsh revival of 1904 and 1905 young here's how he operated his meetings these were the principles upon which he conducted this revival ministry not a ministry of preaching but here's what he said number one the past must be made clear by confession of every known sin to God and every known wrong done to man and Evan Roberts when he said every he meant every sin when was the last time you searched your heart got along with God and said Lord Spirit of God I want you to bring to mind every sin that I have not confessed to you and every person I have wronged that I have never confessed that was the first thing second step every doubtful thing in the believer's life must be put away now what that means is that we have to stop justifying and making excuses for our sins that's what we do when we confronted with our sins we tend to look at somebody else and we say well but look I'm better than they are I'm not like that as if somehow that makes us acceptable in God's eyes or we say well that's just a cultural thing I've got freedom I've got liberty I can do that it doesn't bother me do you ever ask whether it bothers God every doubtful thing in the believer's life must be put away Evan Roberts would say thirdly prompt and implicit obedience must be rendered to the spirit of God when the spirit of God speaks when he moves on your heart you obey him at that moment you don't say well later spirit of God brings to mind a sin of which you've been guilty someone you've hurt someone you've harmed perhaps it was years ago I want you to go deal with that well I'll think about it maybe tomorrow Lord no Roberts said implicit and prompt obedience when he speaks obey and finally number four public confession of Christ must be made within and without the church speaking of Christ in the church and outside of the church and because based on those principles the moving of the spirit of God there was great revival in Wales the great evangelist R.A.

Torrey said that the first requirement of revival is this he said I quote let a few Christians get thoroughly right with God let a few Christians get thoroughly right with God and then the second sentence he writes in all capital letters if this is not done the rest will come to nothing period it doesn't say all Christians it doesn't say the whole church he says a few Christians will get thoroughly right with God that's the secret of revival will you commit yourself to getting thoroughly right with God that's my challenge to you today implicit obedience to the spirit of God nothing else is more important in his introductory letter to Jonathan Evers of surprising conversions the very godly British hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote this letter at the beginning

here's what he said there's been a

great and just complaint for many years among the ministers and churches of old England and in new England that the work of conversion goes on very slowly that the spirit of God in his saving influences is much withdrawn from the ministrations of his word notice God's not working through the preaching of his word that there are few that receive the report of the gospel with any eminent success upon their hearts in other words not many people getting saved but as the gospel is the same divine instrument of grace still gospel hasn't changed as ever it was in the days of the apostles so our ascended savior now and then takes a special occasion to manifest the divinity of this gospel by a plentiful effusion of the spirit where it is preached then sinners are turned into saints in numbers and

there is a new face of things spread over a town this is why Isaiah's words as recorded by Hosea are so important you see someday Israel will call on the Lord in this way that's going to happen someday but right now the evangelical church in America and elsewhere needs to claim this text and call upon the Lord in repentance and pleading for his reviving mercy the prodigal church needs to get out of the world's pig pen and return home that's why I like John Morrison's adaptation of this text as a hymn for the Christian church I close with it come let us to the Lord our God with our contrite hearts return our God is gracious nor will leave the desolate to mourn his voice commands the tempest forth and stills the stormy wave and though his arm be strong to smite it is also strong long has

the night of sorrow rained the dawn shall bring us light God shall appear and we shall rise with gladness in his sight our hearts of God we seek to know shall know him and rejoice his coming like the morn shall be like morning songs his voice as do upon the tender herb diffusing fragrance round as showers that usher in the spring and cheer the thirsty ground so shall his presence bless our souls and shed a joyful light that hallowed morn shall chase away the sorrows and when it does we shall be a prodigal church no longer come let us return to the Lord that is our prayer today Father bring us back to yourself Lord may we flee to the foot of the cross you who have wounded us oh Lord may we seek you until we find you may we press on until we know you again we pray Father convict us of our

sins turn us from our iniquities purge us from our uncleanness and our unrighteousness and set us once again rejoicing Father you know the condition of everyone who is in this sanctuary may your spirit do the work that needs to be done in each life and we pray it in Jesus name Amen

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