

The Urgent Question

by Ronald Glass

The sermon emphasizes the need for revival in the church, highlighting God's prerogative, power, and patience as the source of revival, and the purpose of revival as seeing God's people rejoice in Him.

Duration: 1:01:24

Scripture: Psalm 85:1-3, Psalm 85:10-13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the impact of revival on society and the church. He shares examples of past revivals and describes the profound transformation that takes place during these times. The speaker emphasizes the need for a revival in our own lives, as many people are searching for true joy and fulfillment. He also highlights the byproduct of revival, which is prosperity in all areas of life. The speaker concludes by stating that revival is the solution to society's problems, not government intervention.

Transcript

This morning I ask you to turn with me to the 85th Psalm, please. Psalm 85. Please allow me to read the entire Psalm.

Psalm 85, 13 verses. Follow in your Bible as I read, please. O Lord, you showed favor to your land.

You restored the captivity of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people. You covered all their sin.

You withdrew all your fury. You turned away from your burning anger. Restore us, O God, of our salvation and cause your indignation toward us to cease.

Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your loving kindness, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. I will hear what God the Lord will say, for he will speak peace to his people, to his godly ones. But let them not turn back to folly.

Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Loving kindness and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth springs from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven. Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its produce. Righteousness will go before him and will make his footsteps into a way.

I suspect that most Christians today aren't very happy. Now, we read in the Bible that the fruit of the Spirit is joy, but many of us wonder why we can't find it in our lives. Oh, we're pretty adept at pretending.

Other people see the exterior veneer of a fake gladness. We know how to do happy talk. But when we are really honest with ourselves, many of us would have to admit that something important is missing from our lives.

Joy. Real joy. Now, we've sought this joy in our spouses and our children, and we've been disappointed.

We've looked for it in our careers, and we've become discouraged. We've searched for it in our education and our reputation, our material possessions, and we've been left disillusioned. Sometimes our closest friends have failed us.

Sometimes our church has failed us. And sometimes we even think the Lord has failed us. We are prisoners of hopelessness.

Now, all of this leads me to one very compelling conclusion. We are prime candidates for revival. So come with me today to the 85th Psalm.

It is a late Hebrew hymn, written sometime following the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylonian captivity. That return took place in the year 536 B.C. Who is the author? Well, we don't know. He's an anonymous member of the priestly musicians.

Let me show you what I mean. If you go back to the book of Ezra for just a moment, Ezra and chapter 2, we read that among the group of those who came from Babylon and returned to Jerusalem, Ezra 2 verse 41, the singers, the sons of Asaph, a hundred and twenty-eight. So a hundred and twenty-eight singers returned with the group of Jews who left the area of Babylon and returned to Jerusalem.

The author was an anonymous member of the priestly musicians. Now, the returning exiles were ecstatic with anticipation and joy. If you're still there in Ezra, look in the third chapter down at verse 11.

They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his loving kindness is upon Israel forever. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord, that's the temple, was laid. They laid a new foundation for the temple, and they were rejoicing.

Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the shout, the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away. Now, when you understand this, that these exiles had returned from Babylonian captivity, excited, anticipating what God was going to do after 70 years of captivity, after the judgment and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, they're anticipating now the new city, and they're anticipating the new temple, and their nation getting back to normal. That's the meaning of the first three verses here in Psalm 85.

O Lord, You showed favor to Your land. You restored the captivity of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of Your people.

You covered all their sin. You see, they were under a real sense of God's judgment. God had judged their sins.

The prophets had told them over and over, there was no question as to why God had brought judgment. And God forgave the iniquity of His people. You covered all their sins.

You withdrew all your fury. You turned away from your burning anger as you brought them back. But now, as this writer writes, the returning exiles have been back for a number of years.

Years, time has elapsed, and things have begun to go sour. Most of the Jews had not chosen to return. They were staying in their comfortable homes that they had built in Gentile lands.

And so biblical hope for the emergence of the Messianic kingdom seemed dashed, and the Jews' enemies were relentless, constantly harassing them. So eventually the work was stopped. And in fact, what was accomplished initially was destroyed.

That's why in later years we read in Nehemiah chapter 1 that a report came to Nehemiah who was working for the king there in the Persian capital of Susa. One of my brothers and some men from Judah came, and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and survived the captivity and about Jerusalem, and they said to me, the remnant there in the province who survived the captivity, now here are the words I want you to notice, they are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire. This is a number of years later.

And Jerusalem is still a pile of ruins by and large. And the people are discouraged. Their hopes have been dashed.

And that's why we get this 85th Psalm. The hymn writer realizes that joy that is based merely on circumstances is only temporary at best. They thought they were going to have a new temple, a new city, new walls around the city, a thriving, bustling metropolis of Jewish people flocking in from all over the lands where they had been held captive, and it didn't happen.

And their joy is dashed. Their hopes are destroyed. And what they realize now in this hymn is that something more is needed, and that something more is an awakening of spiritual life, a revival.

In these days, we are studying the great biblical subject of revival. It is a subject that is too often ignored in our churches. It is a sad situation that most Christians today don't have a clue as to the historic revivals that have taken place throughout the history of the church or the revivals that took place in biblical history as well.

So we are looking at this great subject. Revival is when God breathes new life into His church. It is God making bare His sovereign and omnipotent arm in behalf of His people.

It is God awakening people to new life. There's a new dispensation of the Spirit of God flowing through His church. There's a time when God's people are awakened to righteousness.

They see their sin. They repent of their sin. They confess their sin.

They walk in righteousness. And almost always, as we'll see in a little while, many are brought to Christ. My friends, in a day when more and more professing Bible-believing evangelical Christians are angry, are bitter, are depressed, they are flocking to psychotherapists in unprecedented numbers, and many are taking psychotic drugs as well.

In short, Christians today are generally unhappy and without joy, and we are in desperate need of the truth that is taught here. Our misery, whatever the source of it, has left us with a weak testimony at best. The world really isn't too impressed with the faith that we claim, nor do they desire to live the kind of life that we advocate.

On the other hand, we have the counterfeit emotionalism of Pentecostal and charismatic revivalism, trying to look like the real thing, but so often merely an empty shell and unsatisfying illusion. So here in verse 6, the psalmist asks the urgent question. It is a question the heart of every devout believer today should ask frequently.

This psalm also gives us two persuasive reasons to anticipate the genuine new joy that revival inevitably brings. Let's look at it together. First of all, we should be encouraged by the refreshing prospect for revival.

I'm going to focus now on verses 4 through 6. The heart of this, however, is the first part of verse 6. Verse 6 is really the heart of our text today. Will you not yourself revive us again? To understand this is to grasp three factors that are focused on the Lord. I want you to look very carefully with me at these.

First of all, our desire for revival springs from an awareness of God's prerogative. Will you not yourself? You yourself. In the Hebrew text here, the word you is in an emphatic position.

That's why our translators have said you yourself. The emphasis is upon God. And this just reminds us of something that we have seen throughout our series, and that is that it is God alone who gives revival.

He is the one who gives new joy. The psalmist here acknowledges that the lack of joy and the need for revival can be traced back to the Lord's sovereign providence. Look in verses 4 and 5. Restore us, O God, of our salvation.

Cause your indignation to cease. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Now this sounds rather severe, but God is a God of justice. And God demands obedience from His people.

And when they don't obey, God will deal with them. He disciplines His people. Israel was the apple of His eye.

In the Hebrew way of saying it, the pupil of the eye. You touch Israel and you touch God. He protected them.

He loved them. He chose them as His people. But when they disobeyed after repeated warnings, He did judge them.

And so the psalmist now who writes this hymn understands where revival comes from. Lord, you are the one who has to restore us. Lord, your indignation has to stop.

Are you going to be angry with us forever? How long are you going to prolong this anger to all generations? Or will it stop? It's a very bold prayer. And then he adds, will you not yourself revive us

again? Restore us, O God. Will you not yourself revive us again? God alone is the one who brings revival.

This is why I regard thinking of the famous revivalist Charles G. Finney in the 19th century as misguided. And here's what he said, quote, A revival consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature, unquote. What? Did you hear that? A revival consists entirely, beginning to end, completely in the right exercise of the powers of God? No, of nature.

So Charles Finney seems to be saying push the right buttons and you'll get revival. And that's exactly what the famous evangelist R.E. Torrey said years later. He said, and I quote, A revival is the result of the right use of appropriate means, methods.

In fact, in a little tract that he published, he says, big letters, top of it, I can give you a prescription that will bring revival to any church or community or city on earth. And he says, I have given this prescription. He gives it one, two and three.

And then he says, I've given this prescription around the world. And in no instance has it failed. It cannot fail.

Excuse me. Revival is the use of the right, the right use of appropriate means. In other words, appropriate methods.

The powers of nature, the right methods. No, nothing could be more wrong. The Bible teaches us that God revives.

He is the one who brings awakening to his people. And in fact, that's important because what that tells us is that revival happens when God's people once again become God-focused. That's the problem with the church today in America.

We have become not focused on God. We're focused on our buildings and our programs and our budgets. And we're focused on our entertainment and everything but God.

Our desire for revival, as with this hymn writer, springs from an awareness of God's prerogative. It is God's prerogative to bring revival or not. He's under no obligation to do so.

But secondly, our desire for revival springs from an appreciation of God's power. Will you not, yourself, revive us? The Holy Spirit will breathe new life into us. Only the Spirit of God can do it.

If revival could come any other way, the Lord would have told us that. But that's not the case. The spiritual decline of God's people can be reversed only by divine intervention.

What's the root of the problem? The root is sin. Did you notice verse 2? You forgave the iniquity of your people. You covered all their sin.

In other words, past sins have been forgiven. But the present danger is always a danger of a new apostasy. Come down for a moment to verse 8. Notice the last part of the verse.

Well, let me read the whole verse. I will hear what God the Lord will say. For he will speak peace to his people, to his godly ones.

But let them not turn back to folly. One translation says, let them not turn back to stupidity. The word actually means a false self-confidence.

The notion, which is not always expressed, we don't always say it. But the idea that we just don't need God all that much. Self-confidence.

We can do it. That's what's going on in evangelical churches today. We have books and seminars, conferences, papers, articles.

All of these things on strategizing. How to do worship. How to do leadership.

How to do evangelism. How to do outreach to the world. This is all of this stuff out there that is coming out of our brains.

It's coming out of our ingenuity. It's coming from our creativity. And everything we touch is stained with sin.

But the bottom line, the sum of all of this, is that we get to a point of false self-confidence. Where we think we can do church. We can please God in this world.

Interestingly enough, we really don't need God in that process. You see people involved in charismatic worship. I use the term generally.

All hyped up. Pouring themselves out in passion. And yet, I don't see people pouring their hearts out to God in prayer.

Or I don't see them on their knees and their faces before God. Seeking his face humbly. Listen, my friends.

There's another way that this phrase can be translated. Will you not yourself revive us again? You could also translate it this way. And it still makes sense.

Will you not yourself return and revive us? That fits also with verse four. Restore us. God must return to us before we can return to him.

Mark it down. We cannot come back to God unless he comes back to us first. In the 80th Psalm, that very truth is a refrain.

Psalm 80 verse 3. Oh God, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved. Verse 7 of Psalm 80. Oh Lord of hosts, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved.

Verse 18. Revive us and we will call upon your name. Oh Lord of hosts, restore us.

Cause your face to shine upon us and we will be saved. There's a refrain. It keeps coming back.

Lord, you have to restore us. Your face needs to shine upon us again. In other words, your look of approval upon us.

Then we will be saved. And in verse 18 there in Psalm 80, that's the key to revival. Revive us, we will call on your name.

The revival comes first. God has to breathe new life into us before we can call upon him acceptably so that he hears us. The very last verse of that tearful book, Lamentations.

Jeremiah the prophet writing over the ruins of the city of Jerusalem. Listen to this. Restore us, oh Lord.

This is Lamentations 5.21. Restore to us, oh Lord, that we may be restored. Renew our days as of old. Verse 22.

Unless you have utterly rejected us and are exceedingly angry with us, Lord. Unless there's just no hope. Unless you've given us up for good.

Then Lord, restore us and renew our days. It is only the power of God that can revive his people. So our desire for revival springs from an awareness of God's prerogative and an appreciation of God's power.

But in the third place, our desire for revival will spring from an assurance of God's patience. Did you notice the word in our text? Again. Will you not yourself revive us? Again.

Repeatedly throughout Israel's history and then throughout 2,000 years of church history, the Lord has blessed his people with new life. Now, if we were sitting in heaven where God sits, we might be tempted as we look down on earth at the church or Israel in the past, we might be tempted to say, Lord, if we were sort of in the cabinet, God's cabinet, you know, and we were to say, but Lord, those people, you revived them. Look what they did.

They've gone back into sin again. Lord, look at those people. You revived them and then again you revived them and then again and you're going to revive them again? But that has been the history of God's work in Israel and in the church.

The Lord has blessed his people with a new life and then he's done it again and then he's done it again and then he's done it again. It's because we are sinful creatures and every generation falls into sin and we need to be awakened again in fresh zeal. Lord, you showed favor to your land.

You restored the captivity of Jacob. You forgave the sin of your people. You covered all their sin.

You withdrew your fury. You turned away from the burning anger. Then why are you asking for revival? Because we've fallen now again into discouragement and depression and hopelessness and we need a new touch of God's blessing.

Now the prophets, and we've seen this already in our study, the prophets never tired of appealing to history, of going before the throne of grace, of appealing to God on the basis of history. Lord, you did it before. Lord, do it again.

That's always been one of the most powerful ways of praying for revival. Reminding God that he is capable of doing this, that he has done it, that he has sent seasons of refreshing on his church. Pleading, Lord, don't let the previous generation be the only ones that have enjoyed this.

We're thirsty. We're hungry. We need the reviving power of God on our church.

And so the desire for revival springs from an assurance of God's patience. His prerogative, will you and you yourself, the appreciation of God's power, revive us. An assurance of his patience, revive us again.

Yes, we should be encouraged by the refreshing prospect for revival. But now I want to come to the second half of this verse, and the second half of the psalm, and point out to you that we should be excited by the revealed purpose for revival. And here it is stated very simply in the last part, the last half of our verse, in verse 6, that your people may rejoice in you.

Now there's an assumption here, and the assumption is that the Lord is much more delighted in seeing his people rejoice than in seeing them suffer. But it's also clear that real joy is not found in human circumstances. Brothers and sisters, where are we looking for joy in our lives? I'll tell you where most people, and most Christians, are looking today.

They're looking for joy in new passions, something new to get them excited, something new to stir them up, to cease that languishing, meaningless life. Maybe a new hobby, maybe some new friends, maybe a new entertainment, something new. They're looking for it in new possessions.

If I just could get that new car, I'd be happy. I would rejoice if I could move into that neighborhood. They're looking in new positions.

Well, if I could just get a promotion, if I could become assistant manager, if I could become vice president, I would be happy. They're looking for joy in new places. I just can't wait until I leave Long Island.

I'm going to be so happy in my retirement home in Florida. They're looking for new joy in new people. Maybe I need some new friends.

Maybe it's better just to go to a new church and start over. New passions, new possessions, new positions, new places, and new people, and that's where we're looking for new joy. Now listen, the Jews, as reflected in this psalm, had most of these.

They'd come back from captivity. They were back in a new land. They had a new city now, a new start.

But here's what they realized, that their joy was not to be found in these things. Their joy was to be found in God. That your people may rejoice in you.

Wonderful song of ecstasy in the 33rd Psalm that begins with these words, Sing for joy in the Lord. The Old King James Version says, Rejoice in the Lord. Does that sound familiar? Because Paul opens the third chapter of Philippians by saying, Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

He says in the fourth chapter, verse 4 of Philippians, Rejoice in the Lord. And again I say to you, Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord. Now I want you to see a couple of things here.

One, revival produces a fresh love which yields joy. Do you see the connection? Will you not yourself revive us again in order that your people may rejoice in you? We try to find happiness in everything but the Lord, virtually to no avail. And then we wonder why.

We go around with painted smiles. We go around with an exterior joy while we are in agony on the inside. Let me ask you today, what does it mean to find joy in him? Have you ever thought about that? I have to admit I haven't thought a whole lot about that.

I mean, I know the verse, Rejoice in the Lord. But what does that mean? What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? As I meditated on this, I found a helpful analogy in scripture. Come back for a moment with me to the book of Proverbs and the fifth chapter.

Proverbs chapter 5, verse 18. The last part of the verse, the last line, says this. And rejoice in the wife of your youth.

What does it mean to rejoice in someone? Rejoice in the wife of your youth. Now look at the last phrase in the 19th verse. It explains it.

Be exhilarated always with her love. Rejoice in the Lord. Be exhilarated with his love.

There is one more. Ecclesiastes chapter 9. Again, another analogy. Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life, which he has given to you under the sun.

God has given us an analogy. What does it mean to rejoice in someone? Here is the biblical illustration. Men, rejoice in your wife.

What does that mean? Well, God has given me this woman and I live with her. I enjoy her presence. I talk to her.

I draw wisdom from her. I enjoy intimacy with her. She is my companion.

I get great satisfaction from my relationship with her. Now all of that, transfer that to the Lord now. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? To rejoice in his presence.

The fact that he is with you. I will never leave you or forsake you. To rejoice in intimacy with him.

One with him, united to Christ. Companionship with him. He walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there. None other has ever known. And the satisfaction of walking with Christ.

Of looking to him. Of feasting our minds on the excellencies of the Lord Jesus. His purity, his righteousness, his holiness.

His infinite love. His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. And then the imagery struck me.

Oh, look down in verse 10. Loving kindness and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth springs from the earth. Righteousness looks down from heaven. Do you see the picture here? Especially that phrase, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Righteousness. That's what God expects of his people. That's what revival does.

It brings us back. Confession of sin. Putting away sin.

Repentance from sin. Righteousness restored to the people of God. And peace, well-being, shalom from God.

You have here a figure of speech. There's a technical name for it. I won't bother you with it.

But what it is saying is, when it says righteousness and peace have kissed each other, it's saying God's revived people and God have kissed each other. It is a picture of God reaching down from heaven and

embracing his people and loving them and kissing them. What intimacy.

That's what it means to rejoice in the Lord. Even, the Bible tells us, to the point of suffering. Yes.

Listen to Paul in Colossians chapter 1, verse 24, where he says, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I share on behalf of his body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2. The writer there tells us that we ought to fix our eyes on Jesus. The author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

Do you see that? The joy set before him, he endured the cross. Despising the shame, he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And when you and I contemplate the death of the Lord Jesus, the suffering of the Lord Jesus, when we see in our minds' eye the Lord Jesus sweating great drops of blood in the agony of prayer in Gethsemane, when we see him being beaten and struck in Pilate's judgment hall, when we see him mocked and ridiculed by the crowds, when we see him having the nails driven through his hands and his feet, and the crown of thorns on his head, and we see the blood gushing down his face, and we see him in the agony of rejection.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And we see all of that. And you tell me you can't rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, even in his suffering. He rejoiced.

So can we. Yes, revival produces a fresh love which yields joy. All my friends, I want revival so badly in my life because I want to love Jesus like I have never loved him before.

So often my heart feels cold and unloving, and I want to know him as I have never known before. Now let me bring you to a second truth. And that is that revival produces a fulfilling life which yields joy.

Now our psalm tells us how this happens here. Let me give you three ways this happens. First, we will be joyfully refreshed as we find new delight in revelation.

Listen to what the psalmist says here. After he has just prayed, Lord, will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice? Show us your loving kindness, Lord. Grant us your salvation.

Now what does he say in verse 8? I will now hear what God the Lord will say. Are we supposed to sit around waiting for voices from heaven? No. The Lord is known through his word, through this book.

Thus, there is a new hunger for scripture. As it is read, as it is taught, as it is preached, the Bible comes alive. And as we hear God speak, new joy pervades our lives individually, together.

If you haven't felt it in a while, men or ladies, think about when you were dating your spouse. You loved to sit there and just listen and talk. You especially loved to listen to them talk to you.

Now, of course, your wife can't get you out from under the newspaper or in front of the television. You don't want to talk much anymore. See, that's what happens to us.

Your marriage may need a revival. We need a revival. We need to enjoy listening to God again.

By the way, that happens when revival comes. Let me share with you. This is from the words of Jonathan Edwards.

The revival known as the Great Awakening. We've referred to it before, but listen to Jonathan Edwards speak about the revival in Northampton. He said, while God was so remarkably present among us by his spirit, there was no book so delightful as the Bible, especially the book of Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah, and the New Testament.

Some, now listen to this, some by reason of their love to God's word at times have been wonderfully delighted and affected at the sight of a Bible. And then also, there was no time prized as the Lord's day and no place in this world so desired as God's. What a wonderful desire for the word.

Let me also share with you something from one of the preachers. In fact, I read this week somebody who said that this was the greatest preacher America ever produced. We think of Jonathan Edwards or Billy Graham or something, but it's a man named Samuel Davies, a little bit younger than Jonathan Edwards.

In fact, eventually he followed Edwards as the president of the College of New Jersey, which became Princeton University. He experienced a time of revival under the ministry of his mentor, a man named Robinson. Here's what he said.

This is the year 1745. I was there about two months when the work was at its height, and I never saw such deep and spreading concern. The assemblies were numerous, though in the extremity of a cold winter, and unwearied in attending the word.

And frequently there were very few among them that did not give some plain indication of distress or joy. Now listen to his final statement. Oh, he says, these were the happiest days that ever my eyes.

That your people may rejoice in you. We will be joyfully refreshed as we find new delight in revelation. Now, come down to verse 9, and there's a second.

We will be joyfully refreshed as we witness a new display of regeneration. Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. You want to see glory restored to America? Let me tell you when glory comes back to America.

It's when vast numbers of people come in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ. The revivalism is only a weak attempt to imitate, or to do without God what only God can do. Oh, you can get people to walk down an aisle.

You can get people to sign cards, but that isn't revival. And in many cases, that isn't even salvation. When the Holy Spirit revives God's people, he pours out saving grace to unbelievers.

There is a deep conviction of sin. There is sorrow. There is guilt.

There is brokenness. There is an understanding of God's redeeming grace in Christ. There is a new vision of the Lord Jesus and what he did.

And there is a substantial number of conversions. As previously unconcerned, non-religious people come to faith in Christ. And sometimes they even come to faith in Christ without preaching.

I've seen that personally. I've seen them come to Christ when a sermon hadn't even been preached. Can I give you some more examples? You know the name George Whitefield.

I've mentioned him before. Whitefield preached in a place in Scotland, outside Glasgow, a little town called Cambuslang. Listen to this description.

Throughout some preceding decades, the work of God in these parishes had been at a low ebb. The Reverend William McCulloch of Cambuslang and the Reverend James Robe of Kilseth were men of true godliness and thorough learning, and they performed their ministerial duties with notable sincerity. But for years they had seen little fruit for their labor.

And Robe, that is James Robe, one of these pastors, said of the prevailing conditions. Now here he is writing about what it was like in the church. Former strictness as to holiness and tenderness of life was much relaxed.

A formal round of professional duties was the religion of the professors. That is, they didn't live like Christians anymore. They just went through the motions of going to church.

And as to the multitude, they were visibly profane. Most people were just godless. Things were becoming so bad with us that there were few that we, the ministers of the word, could comfort as believers in Christ when we found them dying.

We could not go and visit the dying and comfort them as Christians because we had no confidence they were saved. Robe's abilities as a public speaker were ordinary. Those of McCulloch were somewhat less.

In fact, it is said of McCulloch, he was given the nickname of a yill or ale minister for when he rose to speak, many in the audience left to quench their thirst in the public house. Then revival hit. Whitefield came and preached.

Now here's McCulloch, McCulloch, the ale minister, writing. It is not quite five months since the work began, and during this time I have reason to believe that upwards of 500 souls have been awakened, brought under deep conviction of sin and a feeling sense of their lost condition. Most of these have also, I trust, been savingly brought home to God.

In the great Welsh revival, converts numbered 20,000 within five weeks. 20,000 in five weeks. Now listen to this.

This is a recount from Ulster in Northern Ireland in the town of Coleraine in County Derry. Listen to this. 1859 revival.

A schoolboy under deep conviction of sin seemed so incapable of continuing his studies that a kindly teacher sent him home with another boy who was already converted. The two boys on their way home observed an empty house and they entered to pray. At last the unhappy boy found peace and he returned immediately to class to tell his teacher, I am so happy! I have the Lord Jesus in my heart.

This innocent testimony had its effect on the class as boy after boy slipped outside. The master, standing on something to look out of the window, observed the boys kneeling in prayer around the schoolyard, each apart. The master, being overcome, he asked the converted schoolboy to comfort them.

Soon the whole school was in a strange disorder and the ministers sent for remained all day dealing with their seekers after peace. Schoolboys, schoolgirls, teachers, parents and friends, the premises being thus occupied till 11 o'clock at night. These happenings stirred the whole district.

See, that's what happens. We will play, we will joyfully be refreshed as we witness a new display of regeneration, finally. Number three, we will be joyfully refreshed as we observe a new desire for reformation.

Now this is the heart of verses 10 through 13 here in our text. Loving kindness, that's what God is distinguished by. That's covenant loyalty.

And truth, that's faithfulness to the covenant. In other words, God who makes the promises, the people who obey them, they've met together. They've had a little conference.

They've had a reconciliation meeting. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs from the earth.

Here the illustration is agricultural. Truth springs from the earth like a plant. Faithfulness, this is.

God's faithfulness, the people's faithfulness to God. And righteousness, the righteousness being God here, looks down from heaven. Indeed, the Lord will give what is good.

Our land will yield its produce. Righteousness will go before him and will make his footsteps into a way. What is he saying here? When revival comes, we will experience the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Lives are radically transformed as a spiritual movement towards righteousness takes place. Attitudes and morals change throughout every level of society. And there has never been a revival without social reform.

Again, let me share a couple of examples with you just to remind you. The Welsh Revival again. Because of lack of patronage, theaters and saloons were closed.

Thieves and murderers surrendered to the Lord and the police courts were idle. Sins were confessed, old debts paid, lives were changed overnight, and church members became personal workers, evangelists. Work was forgotten frequently.

One meeting would last days, days at a time. This was mining country in Wales. In the Welsh Revival, 1904-1908, one writer says, employers tell me that the quality of the work the miners are putting in has improved.

Waste is less. Men go to their daily toil with a new spirit of gladness in their labor. In the long, dim galleries of the mine where once the hauliers swore at their ponies in Welshified English terms of blasphemy, there is now but to be heard the haunting melody of the Revival music.

The pit ponies, like the American mules, have been driven by oaths and curses since they first bore the yoke. They're having to be retrained to do their work without the incentive of profanity. There's less drinking, less idleness, less gambling.

Men record with almost incredulous amazement how one football player after another has four sworn cards and drink in the gladiatorial games and is living a sober and godly life, putting his energy into the Revival. At Marty, where I spent Sunday, the miners are voluntarily taxing themselves this year out of their weekly wages to build an institute, public hall, library, and reading room with 2,000 books, capitably selected and well used. In this village, I attended three meetings, and in each case, aisles were crowded, pulpit stairs were packed, and two-thirds of the congregation were men.

And at least one-half were young men, stalwart young miners who gave the meeting all their fervor and enthusiasm of youth. The Iron and Coal Trades Review, a magazine of the coal industry published in Cardiff, reported that as a result of the Revival, non-unionists and unionists who formerly refused to rise in the same cages were meeting together and leading each other in prayer. In some coal pits, the men were gathering at 5 a.m. to pray before commencing the day's work.

And I could go on and on with examples like this, but I would just say that as a result of these Revivals, first the great Evangelical Revival in England, followed by the Second Great Awakening in the early part of the 1800s, that significant developments took place. Men rose up under the influence of these Revivals. William Wilberforce, whose efforts to his dying day were to end slavery in Britain.

Lord Shaftesbury, who took on a whole number of causes. Bills limiting work for those under age 18 to 10 hours a day. Do you realize in England in those days that children 13 to 18 were working 16 hours a day? He passed laws to limit their work to only 12 hours a day.

And finally got a 10-hour day for women and children in textile factories. He took up the cause of women and children who worked in mines. Yes, children, little children were working in the mines.

Outlawed that. Shaftesbury became interested in a lot of chimney sweeps who were being abused. Brickyards had child workers from under 4 to 17 years of age who had to alternate between working outside with cold clay and inside near hot kilns.

Shaftesbury's interest in the poor led him to investigate lodging houses. And he basically found housing for homeless people. City missions, foreign missions, schools, prison reform.

The list goes on and on. That's what happens when revival comes. All of society is impacted.

My friends, what we're doing today in America is trying to do this through government. Trying to meet the needs of needy people through government. It doesn't work.

Revival does the job. Notice the byproduct of all of this in verse 12. And our land will yield its produce.

What's the byproduct? Prosperity. Prosperity. It's not found in the Fed.

It's not found in Congress. It's not found in the industries of America or in the stock markets. Prosperity is found in the revival of the church.

Righteousness exalts a nation. But sin is a reproach. Unparalleled joy, said Jonathan Edwards.

Indescribable rejoicing, said one observer of the Welsh revival. Said another, on all sides there was the solemn gladness of men and women upon whose eyes had dawned the splendor of a new day. Yes, revival restrains the righteous judgment of God.

It restores the exuberant joy of God's people. God first breaks us in repentance. And then he bends us in revival and reformation to do his will.

I want you to listen to one more contemporary description of the great revival in Cambuslang, Scotland under Whitefield's ministry. Quote, During the time of divine worship, solemn, profound reverence overspreads every countenance. They hear as for eternity.

Thousands are melted into tears. Talk of a precious savior and all seem to breathe after him. Describe his glory and how ravished do many appear.

How captivated with his loveliness open the wonders of grace. And the silent tear drops from almost every... I don't know about you, but I long for such a work of God here in our midst, in our day. In terms of verse 10, do you long to see the church and the Lord Jesus again locked in a tender embrace? The prospect is real.

Its purpose is refreshing. If this is your desire, then I want you to pray often through your day. Memorize this verse and pray it often.

Will you not yourself revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Pray it personally. Lord, will you not revive me again that I may rejoice in you? Pray it earnestly from a holy passion for God's glory. Pray it sincerely for your Lord's sake.

From every corner of evangelical Christianity, let it sound from prayer closet and from pulpit alike. Will you not yourself revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? And then, my beloved brothers and sisters, having prayed, let us believe that he will. And then, beloved, we shall be truly.

Oh, wind of God, come bend us. Break us till humbly we confess our need. Then in your tenderness remake us.

Revive. Restore. For this we plead.

Oh, breath of love, come breathe within us. Renewing thought and will, come love of Christ, afresh to win us. Revive your church in every.

Shall we pray? As we tarry just a moment quietly, before you have a chance to leave this room and before you have a chance to let other things crowd your minds, will you sincerely pray this prayer right now? Will you not yourself revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Won't you pray that? What else can we pray, Lord? But in the words of the psalmist, restore us, oh God, of our salvation and cause your indignation toward us to cease. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not yourself revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your loving kindness, oh Lord, and grant us your salvation. And so we pray, Lord, bend us, break us, till humbly we confess our need.

Then in your tenderness remake us, revive, restore. For this we plead in Jesus' name. Amen.

It's a very old hymn. It's a hymn, the words of which go back to the medieval period. Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century, number 501, but it says what we are talking about.

Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts, thou fount of life, thou light of men, from the best bliss, that is from the greatest happiness that earth imparts, we turn unfilled to thee again. In other words, the world hasn't got it to make us happy, but thy truth unchanged have ever stood. Thou savest those who call on thee, to them that seek thee thou art good, to them that find thee all in all.

Oh, what a blessed hymn this is, but it has to be sung devotionally. I want you to sing it from the bottom of your hearts and mean it today as we close. Hymn number 501, stand with me as we sing prayerfully today.

Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19891.mp3>

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