

# When We Need Revival: Barrenness of Soul

by Ronald Glass

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and overcoming spiritual barrenness through personal revival, seeking God's reviving grace, and avoiding the world's attractions.*

**Duration:** 57:06

**Scripture:** Psalm 85:6, Psalm 119:1, Psalm 119:17, Psalm 119:125, Isaiah 64:1, Habakkuk 3:2

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of seeking God's word and rest when we become exhausted in our ministry. Using the example of Elijah, who ran away in fear, the preacher emphasizes the need for a word from God, rest, and encouragement. The preacher also highlights the role of revival in awakening spiritually asleep believers and the danger of being attracted to the world. The sermon references various Bible verses, including Psalm 44:20-21, to support these points.

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## Transcript

This morning, I'm turning to Psalm 119. Psalm 119, and our text is verse 25. Verse 25 of the 119th Psalm.

Just these words. My soul cleaves to the dust. Revive me according to your word.

In recent years, it's become fashionable to have a midlife crisis. Especially men. You know how it is.

All of a sudden, they become obsessed with their appearance and their health. They hit about 40, 45, some a little earlier, maybe some a little later. And all of a sudden, they care about how they look.

And then they go out and spend money. Sometimes for irrational ways. Things like luxuries, cars, things of that sort.

Or little toys that they like to play with. Some have even gone so far as to have midlife affairs. Well, underlying this strange behavior, there seems to be a mental disillusionment.

They've worked hard for years. And they aren't achieving to the level of their expectations. They find themselves physically exhausted, emotionally drained, and psychologically unmotivated.

And they realize life does end at some point. You know, I also find this same dynamic colliding with the spiritual lives of Christians. Today, it seems that there are many Christians who are finding themselves

stressed out by routine and unfulfilling jobs.

They have family problems. They're busy in the church serving the Lord. But it seems like their lives lack focus and purpose.

Now, perhaps you've come to a point where you're exhausted and you're disillusioned. And you're tempted to ask, what's the use? I just don't need this anymore. What you find is that you are living in a spiritual wilderness.

You are in a desert. You're tired, you're thirsty, and you're feeling very lost. Now, is that you this morning? I hope not, but maybe it is.

I want to talk about that today from this verse in the 119th Psalm. As we continue our series on biblical revival. Now, to this point in our series, we have discovered what revival is.

We have gone back into scripture and we have reviewed not only the biblical revivals, but we've also seen what God has done in some of the movements where he has awakened the church in the past 2,000 years of church history. What we have seen is that revival is the supernatural intervention of the Spirit of God into the affairs of the church. It is God, in the words of one pastor, making bare his omnipotent arm, working sovereignly, working powerfully to stir up his people who have fallen asleep spiritually.

Waking them up once again. And we've seen how desperately in our age we, too, need this work of revival. Now, we've also seen how revival comes.

The last three messages in this series we saw that revival comes through the sovereignty of God. We saw the awakening in Nineveh under Jonah and how God sovereignly awakened that pagan city. We have seen that revival comes with the desperation of the saints.

When God's people get so desperate, we saw that in the life of Jacob. And then looking at the early history, the first day of the church's existence, we saw what happened when God gave life initially to the church and how he gives life to his church now. Well, our study, I hope, has left us with some biblical prayers on our lips in these intervening weeks.

I hope that you prayed something like this. Isaiah 64, remember all that you would tear open the heavens and come down. Or Psalm 119, 125, and 126.

Give me understanding that I may know your testimonies. It is time for you, Lord, to work. Every time we go to the newspapers or watch the news on television, we should be saying, Lord, it is time for you to work.

Psalm 85, verse 6, I commend it to you. Will you not yourself revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Habakkuk 3.2, O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. Make it known in wrath, remember mercy.

And then the words of Jacob as he wrestled with the Lord. They're in the banks of that little brook. And he cried out, I will not let you go until you bless me.

Now, these are the kinds of prayers I hope that you are praying today for our church here and for the church of Jesus Christ around the world. We move now to the very personal and very practical aspects of revival. Let me just simply put it to you this way.

Genuine revival in a church happens only when there is revival in many individual lives. In other words, corporate revival is really personal revival multiplied many times over. I think sometimes when we talk about revival, there are many who sit in our churches and say, yes, this would be a wonderful thing.

We long to see God work this way just as long as I don't have to change. Well, that's the problem. We all need to look at our lives and seek God's reviving grace for our lives.

Now, during the next five weeks, I want to answer this question of how we know we need revival by going back to the 119th psalm. Now, the psalmist here, and we don't know who the psalmist was. Many believe it was David.

I think it probably was. But even if not, this psalmist had a passion for personal revival. And we'll see it as we study it together.

Now, if you are a believer, you probably wish you could live a consistent life of godliness, as is described in the opening eight verses of this psalm. Now, listen to these words. How blessed are those whose way is blameless.

Is your way blameless? Today, is your life blameless? Who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe his testimonies, who seek him with all their heart. They also do no unrighteousness.

They walk in his ways. You have ordained your precepts, that we should keep them diligently. Oh, that my ways may be established to keep your statutes.

That ought to be the heart cry of every faithful believer. Then, I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all your commandments. When we come face to face with the word of God, we won't be ashamed by understanding how far short we fall.

I shall give thanks to you with the uprightness of heart. When I learn your righteous judgments, I shall keep your statutes. Do not forsake me utterly.

Now, this is the ideal for the man or the woman of God. This is the way we ought to be living. Blameless, walking in the law of the Lord.

Observing his testimonies. Seeking him with all of our hearts. Too often, however, we have to admit that we find ourselves right where old William Cooper, that great old poet and hymn writer friend of John Newton's.

A man who wrestled with depression all of his life. And here's what he wrote in one of his hymns. Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and his word? Well, you probably know that sentiment.

Sometimes you just say, Lord, I seem to have lost it. See, the problem is we don't often realize just how barren our lives have become. We become so enamored, so caught up in the world.

We come to a point of spiritual thirst. And then all of a sudden it dawns on us that we're in a desert and we're thirsting. And that we must have those living waters to refresh our souls.

We begin to understand just how dry our souls really are. Today I want to ask the question, what is the solution to spiritual barrenness? How do we overcome its deadening impact in our lives? And if you are a

Christian here today, I dare say that you have experienced this. I have.

And I dare say that every one of us go through these times. How do we overcome it? How do we experience personal revival? Our text provides the answer. And we're going to actually be in two places today.

I'm taking the basis for my thoughts here in the 25th verse of Psalm 119. But we're also going to be going back to those Psalms 42, 43, and 44. Because they have a lot to say as well.

All right, there are two dynamics that I think beg our attention on this subject. And here they are. First of all, you can identify spiritual barrenness by its common symptoms.

Its common symptoms. Now, look at our text once again. The first line says, My soul cleaves to the dust.

Now, that word cleaves is a word that, in fact, it's the same word that is used of the marriage relationship. And it's the word that is used in Genesis chapter 2. When it says that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. It is a word that means to be stuck together permanently.

The writer says, My soul sticks to the dust. Now, the imagery here probably is that of mourning. When they were sorrowing, when they were mourning in the ancient world of that day, what did they do? They went out and they sat in ashes.

They sat in the dust in sackcloth. They threw ashes on their head. Now, this is apparently the picture.

You have a man here who is mourning. A man who is down. His soul is very low.

It can't get any lower. It can't rise up. He said, Yes, I'm sitting in the ash heap.

I'm sitting in the dust and my whole soul is stuck to that dust. He's saying, I'm stuck in depression and my soul is barren and I don't know how to get out of it. Now, when we read about what we as Christians ought to be doing, how our attitude ought to be, we have a passage like Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2. Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. The Christian's perspective is up. This man's perspective is down.

In barrenness, there are times when you just feel, I can't rise. I can't get up. I am stuck in this misery.

Now, another psalmist experienced the same discouragement. So, let's go back now to the 44th Psalm, which we read earlier in our service. Let me just say this.

First of all, let me have you look with me at the 25th verse in the 44th Psalm. Verse 25. Here, the language is very similar.

For our soul has sunk down into the dust. Our body cleaves, and this is the same word as in the other verse, our body cleaves to the earth. The writer in Psalm 119 says, my soul is stuck to the dust.

Here he says, our body is stuck to the earth. Our soul is literally bowed down with the heavy weight of spiritual oppressiveness. Now, Psalms 42, 43, and 44 seem to go together.

Psalms 42 and 44 have the same inscription. Psalm 43 was probably originally a part of Psalm 42. So, they seem to fit together.

And I want to take a look at these psalms as we look at five symptoms of spiritual barrenness. How do you know if you are really in a condition of spiritual barrenness? Let me give you five symptoms that often come about in the life of a believer. Number one.

You experience an apparent abandonment by God. Look here in the 44th Psalm, verses 23 to 25. Rouse yourself.

Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake. Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is sunk down into the dust and our body cleaves to the earth.

Look also, if you turn back to the 43rd Psalm and verse 2. For you are the God of my strength. Why have you rejected me? Now, why does the psalmist think this? Well, come back now to the 45th Psalm and follow beginning in verse 9. Look at what he says here. You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor.

Do not go out with our armies. You cause us to turn back from the adversary. And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.

You give us as sheep to be eaten and you scatter us among the nations. You sell your people cheaply and have not profited by their sale. You make us a reproach to our neighbors, a scoffing and a derision to those around us.

You make us a byword among the nations, a laughing stock among the peoples. All day long my dishonor is before me and my humiliation has overwhelmed me. Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles.

Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger. Nothing is going right. Here is a nation that supposedly is obeying God and yet they are being oppressed.

They are being defeated. The problem here is the difficulty of their circumstances. The battle seems unending.

Where is God in the struggle? Now when you come to a point in your life where you are asking that question, Lord, where are you? Why have you rejected me? Why have you abandoned me? Lord, this isn't fair. This isn't the way you should treat one of your children. You get to a point where you say, I just don't sense that God is near anymore.

I just can't sense His love to me anymore. It seems that God is very far away. We are exhausted perhaps.

Our souls are crushed under the weight of the enemy's onslaught. It seems like Satan is getting the better of us all of the time. And then God's Word loses its freshness.

You get to a point where you can't even open the Bible. You take your Bible home from church and it sits on a shelf or on a table for the entire week. You know when you get up in the morning you should open the Word of God and read it.

But you just can't bring yourself to do it anymore. And prayer? You know you should be praying, but it's like the heavens are brass. You can't get a word through to God.

There's no heart to pray anymore. Every time you want to pray, thoughts come to your mind that just make you resentful and bitter. You've been abandoned by God.

Spiritual barrenness. You experience an apparent abandonment by God. Second circumstance.

You experience an extended absence from worship. Now notice this. In the 42nd Psalm, verses 1 to 4, As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, Where is your God? These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with a voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude-keeping festival.

Now, here's a psalmist who is prevented from being in the house of God. For whatever reasons, he is not able to worship God, with the people of God, in the temple of God, like he wanted to, like he had in the past. And so, because of that, he is feeling very, very, well, he's feeling barren.

His soul is thirsty, and he cries out that he's like a deer that's out running in the desert, and that he is very thirsty. When you stay away from the fellowship of God's people, the result of that can very well be barrenness, spiritual barrenness. I've always wondered why it is that when people have problems, when they have deep-seated troubles, perhaps in their family, perhaps problems in their personal lives, that the first thing that they do is they stay away from the fellowship of God's people.

They stay away from church. It's the worst possible course of action. Here's what the writer of Hebrews says.

You know it well. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. See, that's a big issue.

That's a very important issue today. We know that. We, as God's people, are called to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

We need each other to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, that we stay faithful to the Christian faith. He who promised is faithful. Then, let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and to good deeds.

We are to be encouraging each other by loving each other and encouraging each other to love one another and to do good works. Now, we can't do this if we're not together. And so he goes on to say, not forsaking our own assembling together is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing nearer.

Now, when you start staying away from the fellowship, the assembly of God's people, when you decide that you can do without church or you just can't bring yourself to come to church anymore, a sign of spiritual barrenness. There's a problem and it needs to be addressed. Here's a third sign.

You experience a persistent loss of hope. Now, let's go back again to that 42nd Psalm. Here's the refrain that we hear throughout Psalm 42 and 43.

Verse 5. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet again praise Him for the help of His presence. The 11th verse. Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God.

Psalm 43, verse 5. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God. See, there's a despair, there's a depression, there's a discouragement and a loss of hope. The psalmist feels rejected by God and his soul is barren.

You see, when we endure difficult testing for extended periods of time, we tend to lose hope. We begin to think that God is never going to do anything for me. God is never going to answer my prayers.

Am I doomed to live like this the rest of my life? We lose hope. Now, the psalmist knows what he needs. Psalm 43, verse 3. Send out your light and your truth.

Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your indwelling places. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.

And upon the lyre I shall praise you, O God, my God. What does he say he needs? Two things. He needs light and truth.

That is, he needs the word of God. He needs to be back in the environment of truth. And secondly, he needs renewed worship and fellowship with God's people.

That's what he says. I need to go back to the altar and I need to get out my lyre and join in the praise of God. Renewed worship and fellowship with God's people.

What are the symptoms of spiritual barrenness, an apparent abandonment by God, an extended absence from worship, persistent loss of hope? Number four, you experience a growing attraction to the world. Now, in this particular case, the psalmist denies falling into this sin. But I think he acknowledges the danger.

44th Psalm, verses 20 and 21. If we had forgotten the name of our God or extended our hands to a strange God, would not God find this out? For he knows the secrets of the heart. The danger is always there that we will reject God, that we will forget his name, that we will become idolaters, extending our hands to a strange God.

In our current contemporary culture, it means becoming so attracted and so absorbed in the world that we forget God. When God seems far away, the world appears to be enticingly near. When you let God go from your life, when you don't spend your time in the word of God in prayer and with God's people in worshiping and fellowshiping, what happens is the world becomes increasingly attractive.

And the more its attractions occupy us, the less we are occupied with the Lord. And our souls dry up. Now, this was Israel's experience.

And we can just sort of shake our head as we read the history of Israel. But listen to these words regarding what happened to Israel not long after God did a miracle in delivering them from Egypt through the Red Sea. Verse 13 of Psalm 106.

Listen to this. They quickly forgot his works. They did not wait for his counsel.

They forgot his works. They didn't bother to talk to him and ask him for his guidance. They craved intensely in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert.

They craved. Well, we know that what they craved was the food that they had been eating in Egypt. We want to go back and eat the leeks and the onions and the garlicks.

And at least back there we had meat and we never were without water to drink. Well, they intensely craved in the wilderness and they tempted, they tested God in the desert. Now, notice verse 15.

So he gave them their request, but he sent. Now, our text here says, a wasting disease among them. I don't know why our New American Standard translates it this way because it's not what it says.

And the old King James has got it right. Other translations like that. He sent leanness into their souls.

That's what it says. He sent leanness into their souls. Now, listen.

When we get away from God, that's what can happen. There are times when you say, I just, I don't want to read the Word. I don't want to pray.

I don't want to be with God's people. I don't want to obey God. I want to do what I want to do.

Fine, says God. Do what you want to do. But there is a penalty to pay for that.

And it is barrenness of soul. This is a New Testament principle as well. And we need to remember it in James chapter 40.

Those familiar words. Verse 4. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? You have a choice to make. The world or God.

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose? He jealously desires a spirit which he has made to dwell in us, but he gives a greater grace. Therefore, he says God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Verse 8. Verse 7. Submit, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. That's what we ought to be doing.

Now, notice verse 8. This is a cure for barren souls. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

So, becoming worldly in your focus, submitting to the attractions of the world, is a good way to experience the judgment of this barrenness. Sometimes God will let you go your own way for a while. And you will experience leanness in your soul.

Well, let me come on to the fifth evidence of barrenness here. And that is you experience a crippling exhaustion from ministry. Yes, it's possible that you're even faithfully serving God, and yet your soul is barren in the midst of it.

Look again in the 44th Psalm, verses 15 to 18. Now, listen to what he says here. Verse 15.

All day long, my dishonor is before me. My humiliation has overwhelmed me. Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

In other words, my whole life, I am subject to dishonor and humiliation and reproaches. Nothing is going very well here. But now, verse 17.

All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten you. And we have not dealt falsely with your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, and our step has not deviated from your way.

So here we are, faithfully trying to serve you, and yet, Lord, look at what's happened here. No wonder, he says, our soul is sunk down to the dust and our body cleaves to the earth. Is it possible to serve God faithfully? Is it possible to be obeying, essentially obeying his word, and yet be so overwhelmed? Yes, the spiritual battle is intense.

And there is a great example of this in 1 Kings chapter 19. We can become so exhausted from serving the Lord that we neglect our time with him. We succumb to the enemy's temptations, even.

We find ourselves living a life of hypocrisy, putting on a good show that we're good Christians, but deep down, inside, we know that we're not. The classic example is Elijah. 19th chapter, 1 Kings.

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he killed all the prophets with a sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, So may the gods do to me, and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. Same dynamic as with the psalmist.

Elijah had just been faithful. He had slaughtered the prophets of Baal. He had proven the glory of God, called fire down from heaven.

He had shown that God is truly the Lord. He had been a witness for the true and living God of heaven alone among all those false prophets. Now Jezebel says, I'm going to kill you.

And Elijah essentially says, What have I done to deserve this? He was afraid. This is what I get for serving God? And he arose and he ran for his life. And he came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, left his servant there, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree.

And he requested for himself that he might die. He said, It is enough. O Lord, take my life.

I'm not better than my father's. And he lay down and slept under a juniper tree. And behold, there was an angel touching him.

And he said to him, Arise, eat. And he looked, and behold, that his head was a bread cake baked on hot stones, a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

And the angel of the Lord came again a second time, touched him, and he said, Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you. So he arose and he ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb in the mountain of God. So God refreshes him.

And now for forty days and forty nights, he hasn't eaten anything else, but he's running from Ahab, from Jezebel. Now I want you to look for a moment, jump down to verse 13. Now, this is after Elijah has come to the mountain there, and God has shown that he was not in the fire and the earthquake and the strong wind, but rather in the voice of quietness, the sound of gentle blowing.

And Elijah heard it, and he wrapped his face in a mantle, and he went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? Now listen to what he says, verse 14. I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, as if God needed to be informed of this.

But he says, I have been very faithful. But the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, killed your prophets with a sword, and I am alone left, and they seek my life to take it away. The Lord said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram, and Jehu the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint king over Israel, and Elijah the son of Shaphat of Abba Meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place, and it shall come about the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elijah shall put to death.

Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal in every mouth. That has not kissed him. Now what was the point here? Elijah had faithfully served God, but Elijah had become exhausted in that ministry.

He was under the threat of the enemy, and so Elijah is afraid. And he becomes so afraid that he runs away. Now in this situation, Elijah needed some things.

Four things at least that I can see he needed. First of all, he needed a word from God. When you get so worn out, so exhausted from trying to serve God, there are times when you just need to step back and say, I need to hear from God.

He needed a word from God. He needed God to meet him. That's very important when we're experiencing spiritual barrenness.

We need to have a word from God. Secondly, he needed some rest. He was tired, and God gave him rest and fed him there and gave him strength for the journey.

Third, he needed some encouragement, and God indeed encouraged him. He told him that I've reserved 7,000 people in Israel that haven't bowed their knee to Baal or that have not kissed him. You are not the only one who is left, so be encouraged.

And then the fourth thing that he needed and that God told him here was get back to work. See, one of the worst things you can do is sit around and think how bad you feel. One of the worst things you can do is feel sorry for yourself.

That often is a sign of spiritual barrenness when you constantly are singing the blues, constantly the woe is me kind of mentality. So, five symptoms here that often crop up when we are spiritually barren. You feel like you've been abandoned by God.

You have this desire to stay away from church, from worship. You don't want to be around the people of God. You experience a loss of hope.

It'll never get better. You start feeling yourself increasingly attracted to the world, and then you find yourself just totally disillusioned and exhausted. You don't even want to serve God any longer.

Now, these five symptoms all have one effective antidote. There is one answer for all of them. You know, it would be nice if every time you had a sickness, you went to the doctor, all he would have to do is say, take the medicine.

What medicine? Well, there's one bottle of medicine, and it'll treat anything. You know, it's like they used to advertise these elixirs. You know, they were good for just about everything.

Well, would that that were the case, that you had one bottle of medicine that could heal any disease? Well, there is one bottle of medicine here for all of these symptoms, and the effective antidote is what our psalmist speaks of in the last part of verse 25 in Psalm 119. My soul cleaves to the dust. So what does he say? Revive me according to your word.

Here's the second matter I want you to see today, and that is that you can rectify spiritual barrenness with a common solution. A common solution. What is it? Now, the need is for personal revival here, and the means for personal revival is God's word.

What does the psalmist say here? He says, literally, bring me back to life. That's why revive is a good translation of it. The word is literally, bring me back to life according to your word.

He understands that God's word is the answer to spiritual barrenness. Now, you're probably sitting here saying, Pastor, you've talked all of this time up to this point in order to tell us that. You don't need to tell me that.

I know that. You've heard it over and over again, right? Especially if you've been a Christian a long time, if you've grown up in a Christian church, you've heard it from the time you were a kid in Sunday school. Read your Bible.

Read your Bible. Read your Bible. Study your Bible.

Memorize these verses. You've heard it over and over again. Yeah, but the problem is that too many of us, in spite of the fact that we know it, we don't do it.

And when we become spiritually barren, we don't even want to do it anymore. That's one of the great secrets of spiritual barrenness, because there's not one of us here who are Christians who want to say to a brother or sister in Christ, I don't want to read the Bible anymore. I'm tired of reading it.

But I dare say that if you're like me, there are times in your life where you've said that to yourself. I've had that same battle in my own heart. Look, we have a vicious enemy, and he is attacking us, and this is the point where he will attack you over and over again.

You look at what we're seeing here in Scripture today, and you will see that God's Word is the answer to spiritual barrenness. The devil knows that, and he's going to do everything he can to keep you from the Scriptures. Everything he can.

He's going to crowd your schedule. Every time, how many times, you and I can testify, I can tell you, how many times when you have determined, you've gotten the Bible out, you've sent it down, and the first thing that happens, the telephone rings, somebody comes out to talk to you, something happens that all of a sudden, or you're sitting there, beginning to read the Scriptures, and suddenly you remember something you absolutely have to do. Your mind begins to trail off on the things that you have to do later on in the

day, or you get your Bible out in the evening, and you start reading, and you're so tired you fall asleep.

You know what I'm talking about. There are two realities we don't often understand, but we need to assimilate. I want you to get this, because this opened my eyes as I looked at this this week.

God's Word is the seed of spiritual life. It is the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to give you life in the first place. Now let me just remark on this, or comment on this, by giving you some words from the New Testament, beginning with the words of the Lord Jesus himself.

In John 5, verse 39, he said to the Pharisees, You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. Well, yes, you do have eternal life, but in the right object. It is these that testify about me.

It is because they testify about Christ that they are words of life. Jesus said in John chapter 6, he said it twice, verse 63, It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

And then when Jesus says to the disciples, Are you also going to go away? Peter says, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Now the writer of Hebrews says that the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is so powerful that it can actually divide, it can reach to the dividing point of soul and spirit.

We were having a conversation after prayer meeting this past Wednesday night about this. Where is it? Can you identify the place where soul and spirit divide? No, but the word of God has the ability to pierce to that very depth in your soul. And it is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

That's how powerful it is. Now, because of all of that, we read in 1 Peter chapter 1, that it is the scriptures, it is God's word that was the source of our life. In verse 23 of the first chapter, he says, For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable.

That is through the living and enduring word of God. Now what are we saying? We're saying that you didn't get spiritual life the first time any other way than in some respect through the scriptures. At some point in your journey to the foot of the cross, God's word was opened and you received the truth of the scriptures.

And God used his word applied by his spirit in order to breathe life into your dead soul. There is no spiritual life apart from the scriptures. Now, if that is the case, then God's work is the source of renewed life.

Look, if you're still here in the 119th Psalm, look back up at verse 17. Listen to this prayer now. Deal bountifully with your servant that I may live and keep your word.

Live and keep your word. They go together. You see that? Now, if God used his word to give you life the first time, then when the need becomes that of revival, that is, of bringing us back to life spiritually, isn't it only logical that God would use his word again? Now here's our intention.

Verse 10. Here's what the psalmist said. With all my heart I have sought you.

Do not let me wander from your commandments. Isn't that what you want as a Christian? All my heart I have sought you. I'm afraid very often we don't do that.

But there comes a point when you just cry out to God, Lord, with all my heart I'm seeking you. Don't let me wander away from your commandments. Now here's where we make the mistake.

Like everything else in the Christian life, you cannot do this in your own strength. This is where a lot of Christians fail. We know that we can't be saved by our own efforts.

Salvation is by grace through faith. But listen, you can't live the Christian life by your own efforts either. And when you are facing spiritual barrenness, you can't pull yourself out of that.

It's God who must do that work of bringing you back to spiritual vitality. Now the psalmist understood this here. Again in the 119th Psalm.

Look at verse 30 for a moment. I have chosen the faithful way. I have placed your ordinances before me.

Lord, I know what I need. He knows what he needs in verse 25. My soul cleaves to the dust.

Revive me. So what does he say? I have chosen the faithful way. I have made my choice.

I have placed your ordinances before me. Here it is. Lord, I've made a choice.

I want to be revived. But now listen to what he says as to how this comes about. Verse 26.

I have told of my ways, and you have answered me. Teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts, so I will meditate on your wonders.

My soul weeps because of grief. Strengthen me according to your word. Remove the false way from me.

And graciously grant me your law. Do you see what he's saying? What he's saying is that the answer to my barrenness is the word of God, but God is the one who has to bring me back to his word. Make me understand.

Teach me. Strengthen me. Remove the false way from me.

Grant me your law. So when we come to a point of spiritual barrenness where our souls cry out, as the deer pants after the waterbrook, so pants my soul after you, O Lord. When we say that my soul is stuck in the dust, revive me, breathe new life into me, O Lord.

Bring me back to life again. Then you also have to pray, Lord, I know it comes through your word. And Satan is a vicious enemy.

Lord, I'm having a struggle. Open my eyes to see what you have here. Make your word precious to my soul once again.

Give me a passion to read it and study it and meditate on it and even memorize it. Then, Lord, there will be new life. I hear something else we don't understand very well.

And we see it so clearly in this 119th Psalm. The Lord frequently uses sickness to revive us in his word. You see, here's the reality.

Many of us won't slow down enough to saturate ourselves with the word of God until the Lord himself slows us down. The psalmist went through this experience. Look for a moment at verse 67.

Here's the before. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word. Here's the during, verse 75.

I know, O Lord, that your judgments are righteous and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. Apparently sick at this point. He's looking back and remembering.

At this point he is sick and he's saying, Lord, thank you for the sickness because it's your judgments are righteousness. And you're being faithful to me. Now here's the after, verse 71.

It is good for me that I was afflicted that I may learn your statutes. What was the result? It was revival of his soul, verse 50. This is my comfort in my affliction that your word has revived me.

On the table beside your bed, next to the bottles of medicine, put a Bible and read it. Or have somebody else read it to you. You see.

I think as a church we often miss the significance, may I even say blessing, of our prayer list. Chris mentioned this morning how long the prayer list is. You know what most of those prayer requests are for sick people, injured people, people with physical needs.

Maybe we need to pray a little differently for our brothers and sisters who are struggling with illness. I don't think I've ever heard this prayer. Lord, I pray for sister so-and-so who's struggling with such-and-such.

We pray, Lord, that you will use this illness to revive her in your word. You see, God has a reason why we experience sickness. A lot of times we in our churches just sort of wring our hands.

And there are times of frustration. I've had times like this where another one's sick, another one in the hospital, another prayer request for a hurting brother or sister. What's going on, Lord? And then as I thought through the 119th Psalm again, I said, well, this is what's going on.

They were praying for revival around here, right? How did David or whoever wrote this psalm, how did they get revived? Well, one way they got revived was they had to go through sickness. And when they were sick, they came back to the word. When they came back to the word, they experienced a new breath of spiritual life.

And thus, although spiritual barrenness is a common experience among God's people, I would leave you with the thought today that God's answer is always the same. Personal revival comes through the word of God as it is applied to our minds by the spirit of God. I think that the present work of the Son of God is clear indication of this.

What is the Lord Jesus doing? Well, according to Ephesians chapter 5, this is what he's doing. Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her so that he might sanctify her.

That is, that he might make the church holy, having done what? Cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. That he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she would be holy and blameless. This is the work of cleansing that I think stands behind the glorious history of the revivals of the past 2,000 years.

We've talked about some of them in this series. When the church gets to a position of such depth, of such apostasy, where the truth is lost and spiritual life has declined, when it gets to that point, then God sweeps through the church with his spirit and he does a cleansing work. And as you look at the history of revivals,

and we pointed this out already in the past, you will see that it is the word of God that has been used as the instrument for cleansing the church.

Well, let me ask you today, is your soul, for whatever reason, barren? If you were to be real honest with me today, would you say, yes, pastor, I have to admit, my soul is a desert. You have to admit, yes, I can empathize. That verse, our text, resonates with me.

My soul is stuck in the dust. Revive me according to your word. I need new life.

Whatever it may be, your discouragement, the fact that you feel like you're wasting away in a spiritual desert, perhaps you're exhausted, perhaps you're disillusioned, you're ready to give up and walk away from it all. I want you to listen to the promise of God to ancient Israel. When you're stuck in the dust, when you're in the desert place, God said, for I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.

And he will do that for you, too. Ask the Lord to revive you and ask him to bring you back to life spiritually. Now, he will always do it according to his word.

Dear friends, you've got to get out the old book. And you sit down and you say, Lord, I just don't feel like reading. Father, when I read this book, it doesn't make any sense to me.

I'm just reading words. It's not getting through. That's your invitation to say to the Lord, Lord, make me understand it.

Strengthen me. Grant me your word. Lord, give me understanding that I may know your testimonies.

It's time for you, Lord, to work. In your church, yes, and in my life. Give me understanding.

Now, whatever circumstances he may use to bring about revival in your life, the word of God will be at the center. And you will be able to sing once again with old William Cooper, So shall my walk be close with God. Calm and serene my frame.

So purer light shall mark the road that leads me. Let's pray together. Father, I don't think that I am far from the mark today when I pray for brothers and sisters who are spiritually barren.

Lord, we'd all like to think that we're on the top of things, that we're all living righteous lives, glowing with the freshness of holiness and zeal for you. Sometimes we put on those glowing faces when we get out of the car in the parking lot and walk in, and we take those faces off when we get in the car to go home. Everybody at home realizes that we're really sitting in the dust.

We're stuck to the dust. Father, I plead with you for my brothers and sisters today. Lord, we're praying for revival, but it won't happen until we get ourselves out of the dust.

And yet, we can't get ourselves out. And so today we have seen the good news that it is your word that is the key to revival. It is your word that is the antidote, the medicine for spiritual barrenness.

And so I pray for my brother, my sister, sitting right here in this room today. Perhaps they're the only one that really knows it, but they know that they're hurting, and they know that they're barren. And they know that they take no joy in reading your word.

They have no intimacy and fellowship in prayer with you, and they just don't know what to do. Father, may they hear by your Spirit, may they hear what has been said today. May they throw themselves before you and plead that you will open the word to their minds and hearts to receive it in a fresh way, and that in so doing you will breathe new life into them, into their weary, barren souls.

Now, Lord God, this is something only you can do. And therefore we ask, we bring our empty cups, and we ask, fill them up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.

Bread of heaven, feed us till we want no more. Yes, Lord. That's our prayer today.

In Jesus' name.

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