

# Revival in Our World

by Stephen Olford

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*The sermon emphasizes the need for revival in our world today, highlighting the importance of prayer, obedience, and vision in bringing about a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 31:24

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:9, 2 Kings 10:30, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 29:18, Jeremiah 20:9, John 15:7, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the theme of revival in our world today. He highlights the current state of society, characterized by exploitation, division, immorality, and insecurity. The preacher emphasizes the need for unity and honesty in personal, social, spiritual, national, and international relationships. He shares a personal story about his church's journey towards accepting integration and experiencing revival through preaching and prayer. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God has made us all one in Christ Jesus.

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## Transcript

Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, fellow delegates. I turned to Dr. Abinasi just a few moments ago and I said, you know, this is a Baptist show. He said, yes, only one thing lacking, we ought to have the immersion as well.

I remember the preacher who went out with his text, Adam, where art thou? He said, my first point is, where Adam was. Well, my second point is, how Adam got there. My third point is a word on baptism.

I want to address myself to the theme that has been assigned me, and that is revival in our world today. And as my beginning point, I want us to turn just for a moment or two to the epistle of James, chapter 5. James, chapter 5, and we'll break in if we may at verse 16. Contest your fault one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

And he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Fellow delegates, I am absolutely convinced after years of preaching and reading and praying that there is no problem facing us

today which cannot be solved by a heaven-sent revival. We're living in a very unhappy world.

It's a world of infidelity, growing infidelity. Whatever revivals have swept the earth in recent years, nothing has happened in recent times to stem the tide of evil and unrest and racism and hatred and lust across the world, and particularly our own country. Infidelity, as I say, is growing apace.

An author has written a book entitled *The Good Pagan*, and has pointed out that more and more our nation is becoming a nation of pagans. And by pagan he means empty of those values and beliefs that once made us poor. Carl Jung once said, the central neurosis of our times is a sense of emptiness.

And as pastor of a city church, going to campuses, moving amongst the hippies in the park, going down to the ghettos and various other places where my ministry takes me, I sense this emptiness amongst men and women today. No longer conviction, no longer belief, no longer faith. Yes, and materialism is sweeping our land.

One of our thinkers, and indeed a great thinker in Britain, has recently stated that the realization of economic values is the prerequisite for the realization of spiritual values, by which he says, live for the temporal things, and eternity will take care of itself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, stood upon this planet and he said, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. But I never knew that materialism was such a power, until I finished my nine to ten years in a city church, and discovered that it's a spirit, a spirit that gets into people, a spirit that mobilizes, yes, and organizes, and in terms of spiritual paralyzes.

We're living in an hour not only of materialism, but of anti-godism. Under the instigation of communism, anarchism, yes, and the followers of Herbert Marcuse across our campuses and our country, there is a blatant and aggressive anti-godism. And some of us are deeply concerned as we talk to people we once knew who had a faith, who today are quite militant and blatant in their atheism.

It's a growing infidelity. Somehow or other we cut ourselves off from the only source of blessing, the only source of beneficence, even Almighty God. It's a world of immorality, and by immorality I mean those ingredients that are in the minds of so many of us at this time.

Dishonesty, delinquency, dehumanization. Talk to sociologists, talk to religionists, talk to those who are in the streets, and you'll get at the dishonesty of our hour. Husband doesn't trust wife, wife doesn't trust husband, parents don't trust children, children don't trust parents.

Personal, social, spiritual, national, international, commercial pledges are broken with impunity. There's a dishonesty. As one writer has put it, when bribery becomes a way of life, when extant account keeping is the common thing, when union jubilee is a fiercely defended right, our nation is in danger.

But with that is the delinquency of the hour. Was there ever a time when crime had spiraled to such heights? What shall we say of the La Cosa Nostra, the mafia? What shall we say of the crimes against the body, against the home, against the church that sweep our country today? We've been told that the American taxpayer today pays no less than \$30,000 a minute to pay for the crimes of our so-called Christian country. Delinquency.

What shall we say of dehumanization? One of the great psychologists of our time Dr. Philip Zimbardo has pointed out that this hour is an hour of de-indignation, a word that he has brought out of the dictionary and filled with a new connotation. That the pressures, the psychic pressures of great cities, the destruction of

the family unit, the erosion of those moral standards that once made us great, has made us capable of a nation of potential assassins. And this dehumanization has taken so many forms.

There is the form of racism that hurts me and bruises my spirit. I see it across this nation. I feel it wherever I move.

I see it in the faces of men and women that hate. The last, the exploitation, the incompatibility, the division that has come upon us, a dehumanization of the very dignity and nobility that God intended for man. It's an hour of growing immorality in those kind of aspects that are ugly and grim and sinister.

Strangely enough, it's an hour and a world of insecurity. It's a strange thing that when man has walked on the moon and is now prepared to explore the far great planets of our constellation, we're all afraid of the future. We're all afraid of tomorrow.

There's the insecurity of resources. Isn't it an amazing thing that in affluent America today, there is famine, there is starvation, there is poverty, there is the ghetto situation. Yes, not only famine and poverty, but even worse things that are going on in this so-called rich and wonderful society.

And let me tell you, the countries in the East, the communist countries have it no better. I've just come back from Europe, and I remember just a few weeks ago attending a home of an official with all the riches and all the valuable things that are accosted in this country. Yes, by men and women who think that they are the great things, that unless I have them, I haven't anything.

And in that same town, that same town in Europe, I went to hovels, I went to ghettos where I saw poverty such as I hadn't seen it in other parts of the world. Communism isn't the answer for that. We are in a state of insecurity in resources.

Yes, and not only resources, but the insecurity of population altogether. There's a physicist who's just stated that on the date, the 13th of November in the year 200, 2000 and 26 or thereabouts, he said, we're going to die not of starvation, but suffocation by population explosion alone. What shall we say of the insecurity of civilization? By the splitting of the atom, we have produced a situation now where we could say for holocaust, that would destroy our entire civilization, reduce the planet to a cinder.

But you've heard and you've heard again and you've heard still again throughout these days are the terrible and dark situations we face in the world today and in particular our own country. The question, what is the answer? I am personally committed to the view that the answer is God, the answer is Jesus Christ, the answer is the coming of the Holy Ghost in revival. And I repeat what I said at the beginning, that there is nothing that revival couldn't solve in our country if we were prepared to pay the price.

As I read my Bible, the dawn of creation, the dawn of redemption is the sweep of revelation consummating in the coming again of our mighty King and Lord, even Jesus Christ. But in the middle there in the history of the unfolding drama of redemption is the story of the great prophet. And I've been given to study again the life of Elijah, and somehow or other I see a parallel between his time, between his life, between his ministry and ours as leaders in the Christian church today, as those gathered in this very auditorium this afternoon.

And I see him coming out of retreat, called of God, to face an hour of darkness, an hour of drought, an hour of death, an hour of famine, an hour of trouble in the history of Israel. And through this man God changed the entire course of things, the destiny of men, the history of his immediate nations and times.

And I've searched the Old Testament again and again to find out what was the answer to his life, what was the secret of this man's power.

And I've discovered it. It's found in the New Testament, it's found in the words we've just read together. James, this mighty apostle, this man of prayer, this man who's come down through tradition to be known as the man of camel knees because of the great deformities, the great paralysis on his knees because he was such a man of prayer, he cites Elijah as his great illustration of prayer.

And he says, The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth not. Elijah was a man of such passions as we are, and he prayed and heaven was shut, and he prayed and heaven was open. And I believe in that story and in that illustration we have what I'm turning this afternoon, Revival Praise, the greatest need of the hour, the greatest need of your life, the greatest need of my life.

I want you to notice what I mean by the ministry of Revival Praise. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. He was an ordinary man, just an ordinary man, subject to like passions as we are.

He was no human or superhuman individual. He was purely a man, just a man, subject to like passions as you and me. He was a man who fled from a woman.

He was a man who shrank under prophet's yoke. He was a man who sat under a juniper tree and longed to end his life. He was a man who had his problems, but he was a man who knew how to pray.

He was a man of obedience, a man of obedience. It's the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, says James, and Elijah was such a man as that. And as you go into the book of Kings and read his story, we read, he went and did according to the word of the Lord.

He went and did according to the word of the Lord. He went and did according to the word of the Lord, a man of obedience. God has made it a principle that prayer can never find an answer.

Prayer can never move the hand that moves the world. Prayer can never open the heavens to bring down the reign of revival until we know obedience in our eyes, basic, radical, unchanging obedience. For the Bible says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Jesus said, if ye abide in me and my words abide in you, he shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. He was an obedience man. And I want to say that the greatest need in the church of Jesus Christ at this hour amongst ministers and Christian leaders is obedience, total obedience to the word of God, total obedience to the word of God, total obedience to the commands of God.

He is a man of obedience. But supremely, he was a man of vision, a man of observation. He was a man who could see what is happening in his country.

He could say to a king upon the throne, thou and thy father's house has bowed to Baal, and thou hast not obeyed the commandment of the Lord. A man of vision. And I believe with all my heart that when Solomon wrote those words under inspiration, where there is no vision, the people perish.

He was challenging the prophetic vision of his day and the prophetic vision of men, women down through the centuries. Where there is no vision, the people throw off all moral restraint. Where there is no vision, the people go naked.

Where there is no vision, the people go wild. He was a man of vision. And as you see, so you pray.

Jeremiah says, mine eye accepteth mine heart. Mine eye accepteth mine heart. Observation leads to intercession.

And here was a man who was an intercessor. I'm all for education. We need more of it.

I'm all for legislation. We need more of it. I'm all for education.

We need more of it very often. But I believe the greatest need for the hour is men of intercession. Men who know how to pray.

It is a ministry of prayer, but a manner of prayer which impresses me deeply. Yes, here was a man who knew how to pray. We are told that it was sovereign praying, the effectual sovereign prayer of a righteous man.

The text tells us that he prayed earnestly, or he prayed in his prayer. So many of us say prayers, but we never pray. Oh, to know how to pray.

Oh, to know how to echo the prayer that is in the heart of God. For all prayer starts in heaven, not upon earth. Prayer starts in heaven, if you study your eighth chapter of Romans.

Prayer starts in the heartache of God, and it's alleviated to man by the Holy Ghost who indwells us. And when we know how to pray in the Holy Ghost, we really know how to pray. But so few of us are prepared to give these bodies of ours, these lives of ours, over to the Holy Spirit, and say, Holy Spirit, whatever it costs in fasting, whatever it costs in sacrifice, whatever it costs, I want this body of mine to be a temple in which the Holy Ghost prays, and prays, and prays, until that travel brings to birth the purposes of God.

He knew fervent praying, this man Elijah. He knew more than that. He knew what it was to pray and pray again.

His was not spasmodic, intermittent, irregular praying. His was praying constantly. We read, he prayed, and he prayed again, and he prayed again.

His was focused praying. Here is a man who knew his God in such a fashion that he could say, God shut heaven, and heaven was shut. God opened heaven, and heaven was opened.

And whatever Elijah prayed, God did. This is the effect so far from prayer of a righteous man, which is there is much. But my burden this afternoon, heavy upon my spirit, is what I'm going to call the miracle of revival praying.

We've looked at the ministry of it, the manner of it. Look at the miracle of it. Had we time to go through the life of Elijah, I could give you abundant emphasis on this matter of miracle.

Revival is miracle. But let me just choose three simple illustrations as I bring my dress to a close, and let me put it this way. There's a man who knew triumphant praying, miracle praying, and that miracle had an effect on three areas that are troubling us today.

He had victory and triumph in this miracle praying, revival praying over the powers of darkness. This is when he took his prayer to the Mount Carmel, and built an altar before the Lord, and cried out to God, O God, let it be known that thou art God in this day. And he revealed the glory of God in such a visitation of fire that evil was slain with a sword, and God was vindicated in the minds and hearts of the people.

We need to see the glory of God afresh. We need to see the vindication of the righteous judgments of our God, and the love and mercy of our God. We need a new awareness of God again in this country that was founded on God.

We need to see victory over the powers of darkness. But not only the powers of darkness, this man was a miracle man. Because of his praying he had victory over the powers of drought.

He knelt and he prayed and he said, God send the rain, and the rain came down. And if power over darkness illustrates the vindication of the glory of God, the rain falling on upon a dry and thirsty land illustrates the revival of faith. Rain has always been a picture of revival, of refreshing, of renewal.

And revival has always come through prayer. If I've done any research in any reading in my lifetime, it's been on this theme of revival. I'm taken back immediately in my mind to the beginning of the 18th century.

Britain was never in a worse mess. We talk about dark days today, but you should read your history and see what Britain was going through at that time. What was God's answer? God's answer was to raise a man named Wesley, to raise a man named Whitfield.

And as those men joined hands together and they crossed the country and they started prayer groups all over, especially John Wesley with his classes and his prayer group. A wave of prayer swept through that land and God rained righteousness from heaven. You know my friends, listen to it very carefully if you know my friends, that the impact of that revival has been described by historians down through the years.

Samuel Greene says the temper of the English people seemed to be transformed overnight. Yeti the historian says Wesley saved Britain from a revolution of blood. Right Honorable Lloyd George writing as Prime Minister of Britain said, Wesley changed the history of the British Isles.

And I want to tell you everything cleaned up. There was such a cleansing in that country that crime was dealt with, evil amongst the workers was dealt with, trade unions in their proper sense were instituted, the bloody games of cockfighting and bird-baiting were exchanged for the greedy fields where the crickets and football all emerged out of that mighty awakening of the Spirit of God. Come to our own country here in 1857 when revival swept this country and at its height, at its height, prayer meetings were held all over this country.

Two thousand men gathered for prayer in Philadelphia at noon, another three thousand in Chicago. At the height of that revival, fifty thousand men and women were being swept into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ every week. And I want to remind you that it's out of that revival that anti-slavery began with all its force in this country.

In New England and then through down to the south and whatever else has happened, let me tell you that the beginning of anti-slavery came out of revival, came out of a heaven-sent revival. It touched not only that area of life, humanitarianism and the uplift of men and women, but I want to remind you that it touched education. Out of the nine colonial colleges of those days, six of them were born out of revival.

Later that tradition was followed, some of you may not know, but that Christian school we call Wheatley College was instituted as an anti-slavery school, an institution of learning against anti-slavery and oppression. Revival, revival, heaven-sent revival produced it. Nineteen hundred and four, the Welsh revival that men and women popularly have limited to the principality of Wales, now researchers have discovered that that revival, that revival not only swept Wales, not only Scotland and England and Ireland,

but came over to this country, brought to birth the greatest movement and the fastest growing church in South America that we know today.

It went right through to India and South Africa. I have sat for hour after hour at the feet of some of those men who went through the revival in my years in Wales. I've looked into the face of Evan Robert who cried after hearing a sermon, God bend me, God bend me, God bend me, and God broke him and made him the spearhead of revival throughout Wales.

I've heard the story and seen the faces of men who told of the great cleansing that swept the country of Wales. Do you know that there is an expression in Wales today called the magistrate's white glove, the magistrate's white glove, and that is rooted, stems from the revival of 1904 because the judiciaries across the principality of Wales were given white gloves because the judges had no crime to sit and judge. Revival swept through the land.

The very donkeys in the mine ceased to work were told, why they were unused to kindness. The great valleys of Wales rang and echoed and re-echoed with the song of revival. From morning until night men and women met to worship God, to testify.

Gambling was cleaned up, crime was cleaned up, horrible things that were happening in the churches were cleaned up and God swept through that entire land in a mighty sweeping revival. Can God do it again? I believe he can. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Our God is unchanging and faithful. The mighty spirit of the living God is waiting, brooding over this land to pour out another refreshing before the coming of the Lord. I believe our savior in heaven waits, waits for that latter rain until the harvest is complete.

That latter rain of revival is that for which I pray, and I want to tell you that in my own personal life, and I want to say it in one, say it very humbly, I've never seen anything happen either in my evangelistic work or church work that hasn't come out of revival. I'm ashamed to have to own the fact that when I came to New York City ten years ago, I came to a church that was segregated. But I felt it was a challenge.

I felt it was an opportunity to prove the releasing power of the gospel. And although many pressures were put on me to force the issue, I maintained my stand that through the preaching of the word of God and through a moving of the spirit of God, the situation would be resolved. I remember talking with Dr. Martin Luther King for two or three hours as we flew down to Rio to Abgenero nearly nine or eight years ago to the great America, to the great Baptist convention and conference down there.

And I told him this story and it moved him very deeply, moved him very deeply. I said I took a poll of our church to discover just how many there were who would not accept integration. And to my astonishment, I discovered it was a high proportion.

I could have split the church. I could have ruined my ministry. I could have left possibly in disdain.

But we began to preach. We began to pray. And revival came to Calvary.

A moving of the spirit, and I sensed the hour in which to put to the church the challenge of the scripture, so clear, so clear, that God, as we heard in the opening reading, has made us all one in Christ Jesus. The answer is not a black man or a white man, but a Christ man. Let's unite in him.

And I put the challenge to the church, and we held the most famous church meeting I suppose ever held at Calvary Baptist Church. The amazing thing about it is, having finished speaking and putting questions to the floor, we took the vote, and the vote was absolutely overwhelming. Only 11 against.

The church was almost 99 percent against integration. Now only 11 against. Now only 11 against segregation.

Four of those came to me and confessed their sins. Some of them are dead. God's judgment day.

Every one of them's buried. We've had the happiest fellowship at Calvary Baptist Church. I was born in Africa.

I love my black brethren. I love the wonder of that glorious wisdom of God, the orientated wisdom of God, the variegated wisdom of God, which sees all colors, all personalities, all dispositions, making up the great jewel with all its flashing passage of the manifestation of the person of Jesus Christ. And the church is only a miniature of that.

That is a local church. And thank God we've enjoyed the happiest joy in these years of ministry. I wouldn't have exchanged experience for anything, but what did it solve in revival? And I don't believe any healing, any cleansing, any righting of wrongs in our country will ever come about merely by legislation, merely by education, merely by education.

God must work through revival. But we've got to face the price. We've got to be men like Elijah, like Elijah, ordinary men, obedient men, observant men, who are prepared to give themselves to fervent, frequent, focused praying and pay the price for revival.

But being rebel hearts as we are, we'll try everything else, write the church up, explain everything away, rather than paying the price for God to move in. And God won't work until we come on his earth. And God is calling for repentance.

God is calling for obedience. God is calling for faith, for revival. Are you ready for it? Are you prepared to enlist? Are you prepared to do the hardest work God has ever called us to do, its unpublicized work? You won't read about it.

It won't be in the press. It's work behind closed doors. It's work on our knees.

It's the work of prayer. But it's the work that brings revival. If you really mean business, and you mean to say yes to that, as we close this simple challenge to your heart, I'm going to ask those of you who mean business with God and are prepared to go back to your study to pray, back to your church to get your church to pray, back to your organizations to lead them into revival prayer, I'm going to ask you to stand for a closing prayer.

Almighty God and Heavenly Father, we stand before thee, bankrupt men and women, bereft of anything. We pride all our gimmicks. We pride all our ideas and devices to change the course of history, to bring blessing into our churches, into our homes, into our lives.

And our Father, thou knowest that we have failed in the greatest of all ministries, the ministry of prayer. As we stand to our feet, we confess our sins. We come to the repentance.

We pledge our obedience. We exercise our faith. And we cry to thee that thou begin today, begin now, to revive our hearts, and reviving us personally, to revive our land, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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