

What Is Revival?

by Walter Chantry

Revival is a time of spiritual renewal and revitalization in the Church, marked by a new life and energy surging through the people of God, and is the result of supernatural intervention in human affairs.

Duration: 47:41

Scripture: Isaiah 62:5, John 14:12, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:23-24

Topics: "Revival", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon on Acts chapter 4, the speaker begins by describing how the apostles were released by the chief priests and elders and returned to their own company. The believers gathered together and reported all that had happened. They lifted their voices to God in prayer, acknowledging His power as the creator of heaven, earth, and all that is in them. The believers experienced fear and witnessed miraculous signs and wonders. They were united in their faith, sharing their possessions and meeting each other's needs. The speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and calling upon God to bring revival to the church. The means to receiving the Holy Spirit are through prayer and the preaching of the word. The speaker also addresses the debate between sovereignty and responsibility in promoting revivals, cautioning against a naturalistic view of God and man.

Transcript

Truth to Acts chapter 4. The book of Acts chapter 4, and I'll begin to read at verse 23. Hear what God the Lord has said through his servant Luke. And being let go, they went to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God which hath made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them is, who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatening.

And grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word by stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy

Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.

And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." I suppose that most of us feel quite comfortable in discussing revivals, so long as the context of the discussion is one of Church history. In Reformed circles it would not take us very long to mention some of the more outstanding revivals of history, and certainly we would begin with what occurred in the first century after our Lord's sojourn on the earth, the spreading of the gospel throughout the Mediterranean region in a very brief time and in a powerful way. And we would very soon mention the Reformation, and we would mention the Great Awakening.

There are other less far-reaching revivals of history, but nonetheless they are outstanding examples of revival. Certainly we would mention the second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century. If from the perspective of history we were asked what we meant by revival, probably we would have a ready answer that there have been eras, there have been times, when portions of the visible Church of Jesus Christ have been remarkably revitalized.

Sometimes the contrast between before and after is so striking. There has been a new life and a new energy surging through the people of God, and in this way the Lord has revived his church. Then, too, if we were asked what difference it made that the church was revived, we would probably speak of more sober and more reverent worship of his holy name.

We would speak of a clear return to sound doctrine, to biblical doctrine, or a heightened understanding of that doctrine. We would speak of a new and serious practice of righteousness among the people of God. We would speak of a remarkable vigor and zeal in serving the Lord of hosts.

Significant advances in these things within the church. And yet even that description lies incomplete, because when the church has new power, she has new effectiveness. And that new effectiveness shows itself in multitudes coming under a fear of God Almighty, and many of these being soundly converted in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Error and unrighteousness are turned back in society at large in a significant way. When I called Ian to tell him that our subject was revival in the local church this year, I thought he would be very happy with the title. After I told him, he paused and said, Well, if you really get one, it won't remain in the church for long.

And you see, he is right to the effect that when the church is revived, there are significant impacts made upon the population in which the church lives. Now these observations from history may excite us and lead us to hope for new revivals emerging. I hope they do lead us to that.

New revivals in our day and in the near future. But any such effort to turn from church history to what we expect and what we look for today leads in the evangelical circles and in reformed circles to a great deal of theological confusion and to a great deal of bickering that helps to kill the expectation. What is the explanation of these great historic phenomena? And from the answer to that first question, we will draw some answers to the more practical question.

I hope that our interest in revival is not just because we are curious about what has happened in history, but because we see that the Church of Jesus Christ in our age is weaker than it should be and ineffective,

and it needs to be revived. What shall we do in the hope of seeing revival in our generation, in our own churches? Perhaps a failure to give clear answers to these two questions has led to the absence of wide-scale revival during the last hundred years. And yet already I prejudice the answer to the questions by saying that because there are good evangelical men who believe that some of the most significant revivals have been carried out in very recent times.

What then is the explanation of these great historic events that we could easily agree that we should call revival? The Reformation, the Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening. What is the explanation of these things? I don't suppose that anyone here would be tempted to agree with Jovius. Now that was a Latin writing name of a man who was a contemporary of Martin Luther, who near the end of Luther's life wrote this explanation of Martin Luther's remarkable influence.

He said that it can be explained as a certain uncommon and malignant position of the stars. This position of the stars which scattered the spirit of giddiness and innovation over the world. Now I mentioned this humorous astrological explanation of a revival in order to remind you that men look at the same set of facts and look at them seriously and arrive at widely variant explanations of what has occurred.

And that prejudices what they will look for in the future. There is not time to examine Voltaire's explanation of the Reformation, though it would be useful to give some attention to that because large numbers of people in the United States still hold to his outlook on what occurred in these periods that we call Great Revival. But even we run into difficulty among evangelicals and Reformed men who are keenly interested in revival, who are friends of what they call revival.

There are so many definitions and inclinations as to what we should seek that we have men looking for and hoping for different things altogether. What is the explanation of what has happened in history? There can be no doubt that the principal figures in the greatest revivals of all time have given the explanation that revivals are the work of God, not of the stars. They are the result of supernatural intervention in human affairs.

We need only think of Edwards' title, A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the conversion of hundreds of souls. Edwards himself was surprised God had done a new thing in North Hampton and other parts of what was then New Hampshire. Divine intervention was his explanation of revival and that of Whitefield as well.

But only a hundred years later, Charles Grandison Finney, a famous preacher during the Second Great Awakening, thought it was most unfortunate that Edwards was surprised. Now as we speak of Charles Finney, let's not make the mistake of calling him an Arminian. That is most unfair to our Arminian brethren.

He was far more a Pelagian than he was an Arminian, very consciously a Pelagian. Well, he didn't identify himself with Pelagius, but what he spoke of in his theology was far more Pelagian than Arminian. He was the man who called the Westminster Confession this wonderful theological fiction.

And Charles G. Finney emphatically taught that revival is not dependent upon the sovereign intervention of God in the affairs of men. But that revival always inevitably follows human use of certain means. Just as surely as you will take good soil and plant wheat in the good soil and water it and cultivate it and you will, if you put the proper seed in, you will get wheat, just so if you use certain natural means there is no question but that you will end up with a revival.

There are laws of revival that are perfectly normal and require no supernatural intervention from heaven. And leading among these, as you read his lectures on revival, are the use of the excitableness of the human spirit in preaching. And so the followers of Charles Finney got to the place that they could announce and advertise in advance that a revival would occur at a certain place and a certain time, because they intended to use the means that were well known to them and there would be no surprising work of God in conversions there, for they were intending to use the means and there could be no doubt that a revival would occur.

And the followers of Finney are very much with us today among evangelicals as they announce that revivals are going to occur here or there. This was a naturalistic twist to the whole idea of revival. There are natural laws which if we make use of them we will get a revival.

Pulling us in a naturalist direction even further than Finney would have liked to go, are those who look at past revivals, like the Reformation and the Great Awakening, as being too pietistic. Edwards, Whitfield and Nettleton gave almost exclusive attention to saving souls, to bringing men and women to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and receiving a pardon for their sins. The great concern and outcry of the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening was, what must I do to be saved? And they directed souls into God's eternal kingdom.

But they did little to reshape society around them. There were powerful results in society and culture around them because of the conversions of these large numbers of people, but they did not set out to change and reshape society. They did not give adequate attention, some say, to the whole matter of the social interests, political interests that Christians ought to be involved in.

And again today, the heirs of this outlook have a similar criticism of the Great Awakening and even of the Reformation and of Puritans in particular, in suggesting that there is a need for evangelicals to give far more attention to social issues. There are some Reformed men who look for a revival that will mean an imposition of the laws of God from the Old Testament upon the nations, and some of them who are teaching almost in a Marxist fashion that this will occur after the collapse of the present social order. I haven't heard of any evangelicals yet who have put a Leninist twist upon it, that we should hasten the collapse of the present social order in order to build the new society, but it's not unthinkable with the wild ideas that do float around through seminaries and colleges.

This was marked shortly after the Second Great Awakening. At the end of the 19th century, there was a passion for concentrating on social change as a means of bringing in the Millennium, and it gained such steam that men thought of the greatest work of God as empowering them in making these social changes and blessing their political action in one way or another. Tugging at our other arm are groups who think the Reformers and Edwards and Whitfield might not have gone far enough in their supernaturalism.

Usually those who assert that revivals come to pass as one or many Christians get a second blessing are in this camp. Teachers of a second work of grace often cite leaders of the Reformation or of the Great Awakening to illustrate what can happen when someone gets it. Whether that it, that second blessing, is the baptism with the Holy Spirit or the sealing of the Spirit or whatever it might be.

Charismatics sometimes are absolutely astounded to learn that the leaders of the Great Awakening positively opposed all charismatic practices as what would ruin their revivals. They sort of have assumed that these men had gotten the baptism with the Spirit, only they didn't know it. Well, I have given this lengthy introduction to ask the question, do we want a Finney-type revival? Do we want a social gospel

revival? Do we want a charismatic revival? All of these groups use the term revival.

Can't we have a just plain old ordinary revival? But then I ask you, what is this plain old ordinary revival? Are your views of revival a patch quilt of negative rejections? Well, we don't mean the social gospel and we don't agree with Finney and we don't agree with the charismatics, but we want something good to happen without a very clear biblical understanding of what that something is. What is a revival from a biblical point of view? In the first century, when our Lord had gone into the heavens, there were a hundred and twenty men and women who believed in the resurrected, ascended Jesus Christ. And from that core of Christians, true religion rapidly spread in numbers and in influence, and soon there were churches throughout Europe and North Africa and the Middle East, and they challenged the Greek and Roman philosophical system and political empire, and eventually they emerged triumphant in their influence.

There were scores of thousands converted from many nations in a very brief period of time. The book of Acts was written to record this for us and to give us an explanation of it, this remarkable occurrence of the first revival of the Christian era, at least. Will you look in Acts chapter one and notice a leading explanation of this in verse eight of Acts chapter one.

Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. Chapter one is taken up with our Lord Jesus pointing them to the coming of this Holy Spirit who would give them power. Chapter two is caught up with the arrival of that Spirit and his stunning influence in the hundred and twenty and through their lives.

And in Acts chapter two and verse four there is an interesting phrase used as that Holy Spirit came upon the hundred and twenty. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

The idea being that the Holy Spirit so filled their minds and hearts that he controlled them and brought to pass certain powerful results. This is really a formula that is often used by the Apostle or by the by the writer Luke, that beloved physician. Notice it says they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and he uses this formula over and over again.

Let me remind you that in Luke one in verse fifteen in the prediction of John the Baptist birth it is said he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost and when he uses that formulation the end connects with the influences the effects of the Holy Spirit's coming and filling John. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost and many of the children of Israel shall turn to the Lord their God. As a result of John's filling many will turn to the Lord their God.

The same formula is used in Luke one forty one Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she spoke with a loud voice and then we have her inspired song. Again the same formula is used in Luke one sixty seven regarding Zechariah. He was filled with the Holy Ghost and and immediately we have the results of his being filled with the Holy Ghost.

And so the unique results on the day of Pentecost were the result of the hundred and twenty who were filled with the Holy Ghost. They had received power and anointing and unction, a filling, the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit in their own lives and through them. A gracious employment of them in being witnesses of God and of his greatness and glory.

Power both in them and power through them because the Holy Ghost had come upon them. Now those of you who have studied carefully the act passage on Pentecost will realize that there are features of Acts chapter two that never again were repeated through the New Testament or to this very present hour. For the first time the Lord of the new covenant exalted at God's right hand poured out the Holy Spirit, the spirit that never again would be utterly taken from his church in a new and fresh measure greater than the measure experienced by the Saints in the old covenant.

This new effusion of the Holy Spirit brought all New Testament Saints to a level of spiritual maturity not experienced by the Old Testament believers. However, let me point out to you that this phrase in Acts chapter two and verse four, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. This phrase they were filled with the spirit is not discarded by Luke as something applicable only to the experience of the day of Pentecost.

Turn to Acts chapter four, beginning with verse five, and notice what happened when Peter and others were seized by the authorities in Acts four and verse five. It came to pass on the morrow that their rulers and elders and scribes and Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel.

Notice the boldness that he has. If we this day be examined of the good deed done in the end to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which is set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, who were filled with the Holy Ghost. You see that formula being used of Peter again.

Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them. Here you have a man who was filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when he stands before the persecuting assembly of the rulers of the day, he is filled with the Holy Ghost. And after they had confounded their accusers and went back to the church, they prayed again that God would give them both.

He had been filled with the Holy Ghost and had boldness. And then in verse thirty one, when they had prayed, the place was shaken, where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And the result of that was they spake the word of God with a new and a fresh boldness that came from the new endowment of the Holy Spirit.

The same Peter has this filling of the Holy Spirit on at least three occasions. It reminds us of Ephesians five and verse eighteen, which commands Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And of course, that is in the imperative mood, but in the present tense, speaking of our continuing obligation to be filled with the Spirit and our continuing privilege of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And yet, lest we put too much emphasis upon tenses alone, it is said three times in the Aorist tense that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. This is reminiscent of the description in the book of Judges and in the early Kings of characters such as Samson. We read in the life of Samson that the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he tore the lion with his hands.

The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he slew thirty Philistines. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he took up the jawbone of the ass and slew a thousand Philistines. Interestingly, it does not mean that he had lost the Holy Spirit or that he had backslid in any way.

And when Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit in this church prayer meeting in Acts chapter four, it does not mean that Peter had backslidden. He had just stood with an absolutely amazing boldness before the rulers of the city, giving testimony to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, accusing them with a finger under their very noses that they were the murderers of the Son of God and that he was ruler over them and that his name alone was the name by which men may be saved. And having done that, he was filled with the Holy Spirit again.

And he spake with a new boldness, as did others of the apostles, with fresh measures of blessing flowing from it. All that God accomplishes through his servants, he does by mighty working of his Holy Spirit. And when it is time for God to work, he fills his servants, sometimes over and over again and in differing measures and with differing results.

The works are quite varied. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached, and from one sermon, three thousand souls were saved. In Acts chapter four, in the earlier part, when Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, there is no record that anyone was saved, but with great boldness he gave witness to the enemies of Christ in his kingdom, of who was the king.

Here, after the prayer meeting and the filling with the Holy Spirit, there is a new liberality in the church. In Acts chapter six, there comes a new measure of the Spirit's blessing, and it's all connected with the governmental structure, granting the apostles their focal work of preaching the Word and praying. In Acts chapter thirteen, something new is done again, as missions are thrust out into the Gentile world.

And so have the revivals of history had some different, differing effects. The Reformation was the rescuing of enormous regions from the apostasy of Rome. The Great Awakening had large numbers of conversions through evangelistic preaching.

The Second Great Awakening was connected with what is the modern missionary movement, in a way that neither of the former revivals of which we have spoken had done. And today, perhaps, as the Spirit of God comes upon his church, there will yet be another peculiar flavor to it. When God's Spirit is poured upon his people, this precious gift always has reviving, energizing, empowering effects.

What is the explanation? It is a divine intervention, and in particular it is the pouring of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of God's servants, in a new measure and with a fresh effusion. What are the means of receiving this Spirit? What can we do if we hope to see a fresh pouring out of the Spirit upon ourselves or upon our churches? Well, our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray for the Holy Spirit. Mr. Riesinger, in his prayer, quoted the promise from Luke chapter 11, that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

It's interesting, in Acts chapter 4, however, it's interesting throughout the book of Acts that there is no prayer recorded of the apostles and those who worship with them asking for the Holy Spirit. Some people make a great deal of the fact that more should be said about the Holy Spirit. They believed firmly in the Holy Spirit.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They asked for boldness, which only the Holy Spirit could give, and the Spirit was given to fill them. And when they were filled with the Spirit, they had that boldness, because

God's grace is sovereign.

Are there any means that we can exercise? Acts chapter 4 leads us to pray for God to give fresh measures of grace to his people, to bring before his throne the peculiar weaknesses and failures and impotence of the church, reminding him of the raging of his enemies, the laughter of those who think that the church has no power, the fact that his honor and his name is connected with his people on the earth today, as it was so many generations past, and praying that he would grant to us, whether it be power, whether it be boldness, whether it be more of righteousness, more effectiveness in managing his truth, or praying for the Holy Spirit. There is something we can do. We can call upon God.

In the second Great Awakening, a great deal of attention was given to the measures to be used in promoting revivals. It was a classic debate between sovereignty and responsibility, a classic debate on the means of grace. Finney, with his Pelagian outlook, suggested that if you put a nickel into the machine of prayer, you will get out a certain measure of the Holy Spirit, and if you put in two nickels, you will get out more of the Spirit.

Use certain kinds of preaching, certain measures adopted, and you will surely have a revival. We deplore this naturalistic view of God and man, and yet some have retreated from the use of means in looking for revival. Asa Nettleton, in the second Great Awakening, also gave careful attention to the measures to be employed in promoting revivals.

There is a true responsibility of crying out to God with all of our hearts for his coming and visiting his Church and in doing us with more power. In Isaiah chapter 62, if you'll turn there, you'll notice an Old Testament encouragement to pray, and I believe one that is intended for those who hold an office then in the Temple, now in the Church of Christ. When our Lord speaks tenderly of his love for the saints in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 62 and verse 5, he says, For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee.

And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence.

Give him, give the Lord no rest till he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Remember those promises of God. I will be exalted on the earth.

I will be exalted among the heathen. Make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Let the nation see what the angels see of his glory.

There is a duty to pray and call upon God to bring his Church to a healthy state again. What is the explanation? Divine intervention, as God pours out his Spirit in fresh measure upon his people and fills them. What is the means to receiving the Spirit? Well, certainly the means of grace.

I have emphasized prayer, certainly the preaching of the Word. The Spirit comes by the Word. We cannot ignore either the sacraments, for early in the book of Acts it is said, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Practicing the sacraments with the right fear of God and in a scriptural pattern brings the Holy Spirit upon the Church. But for what mighty effects of the Holy Spirit do we look? What are the marks of revival? And here it is peculiarly important to mention that those who most experienced the blessing of God in revival

have been careful not to rely upon subjective measures of the Spirit of God's presence. But they have outlined what are the objective signs of the Spirit of God having come.

Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you. What power? For what power do we look? You see, we are facing an insistent party of charismatics in this generation who tell us that the coming of the Spirit must begin with miraculous gifts, tongues and healing and other such things. Fortunately even the venerable Joseph Addison Alexander in his commentary on Acts has said that filling with the Holy Spirit always implies reception of supernatural gifts and powers.

But as you read carefully through Acts you will see that not all of the effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit were miraculous. Just looking back at Acts chapter 2 and beginning at verse 41, they that gladly received the word were baptized, there were added to them three thousand souls. More converts from this one sermon of Peter than we can count from the entire lifelong ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At least there were not that many remarkable evident conversions through his earthly ministry. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers. And fear came upon every soul.

And there were the miraculous. Many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need.

And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Now you can by no means say in that account of what came by the filling of the Holy Spirit that the miraculous gifts are the sum and total and beginning and end of it all.

True, there is much in Acts of the miraculous. And it would take another study to demonstrate from the word that the miraculous was intended to see as the canon of Scripture was finished and the Apostles left this earth. Let it suffice for now to observe that transformed souls made into the likeness of Jesus Christ is a greater miracle than any performed in the natural creation around us.

In John 14 and verse 12, our Lord Jesus Christ predicted, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, he shall do also and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And there is no record in Scripture of even an apostle doing greater miracles in the physical realm round about us than our Lord Jesus Christ did. What are the greater things? Well, the conversion of multitudes, the changing of hearts and minds, wild minds made subject to the word of God, grasping covetous hearts, counting nothing as their own, but liberally giving to all who were in need, contentious and restless spirits who are disagreeable made holy and gentle, the impotent beginning to serve the Lord in their strength.

These are the greater things. When you read of the conversion of Manasseh, is it not more astounding than the stilling of the storm by our Lord Jesus Christ? Just even looking at the conversion in the Old Testament of Manasseh, a man who is reputed to have slain Isaiah the prophet to silence him, a man who threw his children into the fire, hoping that the demons that he worshipped would listen to his prayers, a man who spilled much blood in Jerusalem, a man who put idols right into the temple of God, humbling himself greatly before the Lord, returning to Jerusalem and urging the people to break down the idols and to worship the Lord only, for he is the true and the living God. Such a transformation of an enemy of God,

a determined enemy of God, a devoted enemy of God, made into a willing servant of God by the grace of the Almighty.

This is a great work. No sooner do we fend off an attack from the right than we look to the left, and some will continue to insist that more attention be given to social concerns and politics and national issues. And Acts 6 is very instructive on this matter.

Acts 6 is not to ignore social issues and social concerns. They even led the way in getting involved in meeting the needs of the widows at Jerusalem, but they came to the place where their own involvement and leading the way in social matters hindered the Church of Christ because the priority of preaching the word and prayer had been lost. The focus of Acts, as you read it honestly, is the winning of unbelieving souls to the gospel of Jesus Christ by the preaching of the word and prayer.

And any movement which shifts the center of gravity to political and social concerns has not the marks of revival that is mentioned in the scripture. Well, to what conclusions have I been trying to come with the questions that I asked? Our view of revival is very much tied to our doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is true that once a sinner becomes a child of God and has received the Holy Spirit of Christ, God the Holy Spirit will dwell within him forever and not leave him.

But the grace of the Holy Spirit operating upon a Christian and attending the service of a Christian, of any Christian, is not static. The spirit may be grieved, Ephesians 4:30. The spirit may be quenched, 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

There are greater and lesser measures of the Holy Spirit and of his blessed influence. Sometimes his plentiful coming is momentary. Sometimes the filling is copious and lasts for long periods of time.

We are looking not for new kinds of things for the Holy Spirit to do, only that the normal work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian and through the Christian in his ministry to the Lord have a more wide effect, a more rapid advance, more irresistibly carry the day against error and ungodliness. When this is our perspective, what do we use as means to receive the Holy Spirit? Especially prayer, but the word and the sacraments. What do we look for as he comes? We look for advance in worship and doctrine and practical righteousness and evangelism as leading marks in the book of Acts.

And by this description of revival, it's possible to say that we have seen a little reviving in the last 25 to 30 years. There has been a remarkable return to the solemn worship of the God of Scripture, a putting away of the silly toys that detract from his glory and turn the attention of men away from his greatness and his majesty, a return to the word of God in worship, a return to preaching the word of God with seriousness, a return to pews by large numbers of young people who are eager to hear the word of God and to approach the Lord most high in their worship. There's been a return to the doctrines of grace through no organization.

It's the finger of God, it's been happening throughout the English-speaking world. There's been a seriousness about living in godliness by young Christians. There is a new honoring of God with the right means of evangelism, boldness in doing it, and some mark of success in bringing sinners to Christ.

And yet we have to express the opinion that is not very widespread. It has not carried the day. It has not carried the day in your own churches, by which I do not mean local churches, but wider church affiliations.

It certainly has not carried the day with Baptists yet. We certainly would not say that Baptists as a whole have returned to this, and I dare say from knowing of Presbyterian and other Reformed circles that we have not yet seen the marks of this on a very wide scale. We have not, with all that God has done for us and through us, we have not turned back the tide of immorality and blasphemy in our nation.

It is rapidly accelerating. The shocking things that are occurring before our very eyes, that we have not the boldness to resist or the effectiveness to turn back, are things that our forefathers would never have dreamed could occur in our towns and in the homes of Christians. We are weak and impotent and ineffective.

What of this little reviving that we have tasted of the Spirit falling upon his people in a new way? As you read through the book of Kings and Judges, it is instructive to see that at some times the revivings of God preceded greater revivings, and at times the revivings of God preceded the coming of his wrath, so that there was a remnant to maintain his truth through very dark hours. What does this little reviving mean that God has brought upon us? Which is God about to do? In the days that are before us, is he preparing your people to suffer through very dark hours? Or is he preparing the platform to do even greater things by new fillings of his Holy Spirit? Our only hope is a new filling of the Holy Spirit, new measures of his welcome influence in our hearts, new degrees of power. O brethren, pray upon that promise, you shall receive power.

Yes, you preach. Yes, it is satisfying to hear the truth preached, to know that the doctrine is in order, to know that there are people who love to hear it. But how seldom is the power present, that even those who are strangers to Christ must fall down and confess that of a truth God is in the midst of these people.

We need new degrees of power when we go out into our communities, when we can confront unrighteousness and ungodliness, and when we speak the truth to the unconverted. Through this week, brethren, let us not just take mental note of historic revivals, but let us cry out to God to rend the heavens and come down and make a thousand hearts his own. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14117.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/walter-chantry/what-is-revival/>

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