

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Revival! What Is It?

*Selected Passages*

**Keywords:** Revival, revivalism, Holy Spirit,

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** I believe there is a massive need for revival in America, but I also believe that we have little clue what that looks like. On one side we have people grasping after the most silly and extreme words of charlatans while the other side yawns and scratches itself. What is revival? How do we know if it occurs? And why should we desire it? These are the questions I will seek to explain over the next two messages.

## Dismiss

### I. Introduction.

### II. Corrective–Revivalism.

- A. My background with revivals and camp meetings.
- B. The idea of having ‘revivals’ is a very new tradition. And its history, though popular in many circles is a sad one overall.
- C. Finney.
  - 1. In the mid 1800's he rose as an influential evangelist and revival preacher.
  - 2. A former lawyer who had little theological training. And though he was licensed to preach through the Presbyterian church he quickly abandoned their doctrine.
    - a. Rejected the total depravity of man.
    - b. The imputation of Adam’s sin/original sin.
    - c. And most importantly the doctrine of man’s inability.
    - d. These rejections drove his methods as a preacher and today we still find many churches who use them.
  - 3. For Finney, salvation (as he understood it) was something that man does himself.
    - a. He rejected the idea that God gives sinners a new nature (regeneration); rather, man simply changes his mind and will. For

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- him, every person has the ability to change themselves for the glory of God.
- b. In his gatherings he told sinners that they did not need God to work in their lives; rather they just needed to summon that power in themselves to convert to God.
4. His “new measures.”
- a. He instituted many changes from how the church functioned.
  - b. Most important was the encouragement of public confession of sin and the “anxious bench.”
    - (1) These were special seats for those who wanted to get saved.
    - (2) This eventually evolved into the altar call and other devices that flowed from the idea that when you raise your hand, say a prayer, walk an aisle, etc. you are promised that you are saved right then and there.
  - c. Another key influence due to Finney was the importance of being a charismatic speaker.
    - (1) A revival preacher is someone who can control crowds with their voice.
    - (2) They are the ones responsible for getting the sinner to repent.
    - (3) This often involves a lot of emotionalism and music that are all designed to build up until the preacher calls for decisions.
- D. The essence of revivalism is predictability.
- 1. Instead of people seeing a surprising work of God in the lives of people, it is something we schedule.
  - 2. The revival is believed to be based on meeting certain conditions that then will cause things to change in a person’s life.
  - 3. Often you hear things such as, “God is up to something, and it is big.” and there is this drumming up of anticipation. Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, said that he had received from God the assurance that God was going to transform America.
  - 4. How do we get this revival fire to happen?

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- a. Usually prayer and fasting is the answer. If we do this enough, then revival is certain.
  - b. Along with these there is the common expectation that only if we repent enough from our sins as Christians will God then act. The idea is to have clean hands and pure hearts.
5. 2 Chronicles 7:14.
- a. Read in context of 11-16.
  - b. Given to Solomon for Israel.
  - c. Established in the Old Covenant promises of blessing the land.
  - d. It is not a promise of a revival, it is simply the promise of God to be faithful to the covenant promises He has given.
  - e. The Old Covenant is NOT something that applies to any other nation, ever.
  - f. The Old Covenant is NOT what the Christian is under. We are partakers of the New Covenant and one of the key blessings is the giving of the Holy Spirit.
    - (1) John 7:37-39.
    - (2) This is pointing to the unique baptism of the Holy Spirit we saw in Acts 2.
  - g. The Church is not truly an earthly entity.
    - (1) It belongs to the new age that was inaugurated with Jesus' first coming.
    - (2) We look to the day that all is made right again.
    - (3) We do not look to a day where our land is healed here and now. We believe what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:31, “. . . the form of this world is passing away.”

### **III. Revival.**

- A. What is revival?
  1. Revival is simply the sovereign intervention of God in the lives of mankind where He converts sinners and revives hearts of believers.
  2. A common phrase used by pastors and theologians in the 1700s and early 1800s was, “A surprising work of God.”

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. This is key to understand, it is not something that you can force upon God and it is never something caused by human will. It happens according to God's own pleasure and purpose.
  4. It is a work where dead sinners, who have had no interest in God come to life and pursue Him through the gospel.
    - a. Consider the effects of the work of God on the Day of Pentecost—3,000 souls saved.
    - b. How? Because God acted on their hearts as the gospel was preached.
- B. What are some of the marks of true revival?
1. There is an awareness of God's presence.
    - a. Not that silly stuff you see on TV, but rather it is often an awful sense of His holiness and our sinfulness—Isaiah 6:1-5.
    - b. An awareness that you are a creature under the scrutiny of your Creator.
  2. A response to God's Word.
    - a. The gospel must be present for any true revival to occur, for it is the ONLY means by which God saves sinners.
      - (1) The old preachers did not employ clever methods to bring people forward.
      - (2) Rather they did what we must do, speak much on God, sin, judgment that is to come, the person and work of Jesus, and the free offer of salvation.
    - b. But if a purported revival is occurring then there has always been tremendous hunger for the Word of God.
    - c. People desire to hear the Word preached. They will travel great distances to hear it. And they do not grow weary of it.
    - d. Over and over in accounts of true revival the churches are filled with people.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- e. It is interesting that this hunger is not merely a private hungering for the Word through bible study (though that occurs) but of a corporate gathering to hear the Word preached.
- 3. A heightened awareness of sin.
  - a. Remember Isaiah's response to seeing God—"Woe is me!"
  - b. In Acts 2, the people were cut to the core and cried out for what they must do to be saved from the coming wrath of God.
  - c. John 3:16-36. (Show the nature of how preaching Christ brings an exposure of our sinfulness and the only answer is to trust in Jesus).
  - d. True revival is not manifested in silliness but usually in grief of the highest level as sin is seen in a way never seen before.
  - e. It is in that moment that God then compels sinners to flee to the only place that forgiveness and reconciliation can be found—Jesus.
- 4. A spirit of repentance.
  - a. As sin is exposed and the gospel proclaimed and believed there is a radical change in people's lives.
  - b. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.
- 5. A liveliness in the community.
  - a. Acts 2:42-47.
  - b. The gathering of believers is not a burden, not a duty, rather it is a delight and the desire of the heart.
- C. What to do until revival occurs.
  - 1. First, we must acknowledge that God may never move again among us.
    - a. This is painful to consider.
    - b. This is wise to consider.
  - 2. Second, we must remember that we cannot cause real revival, or somehow 'help' God along in the process.
  - 3. Third, we need to be busy with pursuing God in our everyday lives.
    - a. 1 Corinthians 3:5-8.

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- 4. Fourth, pray.
  - a. This is simple yet amazingly how little of it occurs.
  - b. We must remember James 4 “you do not have because you do not ask.”
  - c. Understand that we cannot make God move through prayer, but rather, we are to pray for it is how we lay our burdens and desires before the Lord.
  - d. A people who profess to love God and desire to see Him work, yet who do not then convert that into prayers to Him should not expect much at all.
  - e. God invites us to pray.
    - (1) “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).
    - (2) “Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear” (Isaiah 59:1).
- 5. Fifth, reform.
  - a. God may never again move in a wonderful way in America. But this is no excuse for the Church.
  - b. We are too often like Israel of old.
    - (1) “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (Deuteronomy 8:11-18)

(2) We become comfortable and content and we do not drive ourselves to, as Peter commands, ". . . grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

c. We need to be people of the Word.

(1) A deep knowledge of it for in it we see God.

(2) We need to be a church that is ready to receive an influx of new Christians who need to be taught, disciplined and grown.

(3) How can that happen if we are all but children in the Word ourselves?

(4) There needs to be the prominence of the Bible before God's people—2 Timothy 3:16.

(5) There needs to be the accurate proclamation of the Word—2 Timothy 2:15.

(6) There needs to be a constancy of the preaching of God's Word—2 Timothy 4:1-2.

## **IV. Conclusion.**

A. Beloved, it is good and right to desire to see the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church today in a unique way.

B. But realize that you cannot make God move.

C. Instead, let us be a people who pray that He would move and then be busy pursuing Him with all our heart.

D. A song I sang with other seminarians at each graduation. "Rise Up O' Men of God"

1. Rise up, O men of God!

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and mind and soul and strength

to serve the King of kings.

2. Rise up, O men of God!

The kingdom tarries long.

Bring in the day of brotherhood

and end the night of wrong.

3. Rise up, O men of God!

The church for you doth wait,

her strength unequal to her task;

rise up, and make her great!

4. Lift high the cross of Christ!

Tread where his feet have trod.

As brothers of the Son of Man,

rise up, O men of God!

---

---

## Small Group Questions

•