

THE REVIVAL WE NEED



*A series on the need for revival in
our day, by David Legge*

preachththeword.com



David Legge is a Christian evangelist, preacher and Bible teacher. He served as Assistant Pastor at Portadown Baptist Church before receiving a call to the pastorate of the Iron Hall Assembly in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He ministered as pastor-teacher of the Iron Hall from 1998-2008, and now resides in Portadown with his wife Barbara, daughter Lydia and son Noah.

Contents

- 1. What Is Revival? - 3**
- 2. A Revival In Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching – 11**
- 3. A Revival In The Bible – 18**
- 4. A Revival In Prayer - 27**
- 5. A Revival In Holiness - 36**
- 6. A Revival In Love - 46**
- 7. A Revival In The Holy Spirit - 57**
- 8. A Call To Arms - 66**

The audio for this series is available free of charge either on our website (www.preachtheword.com) or by request from info@preachtheword.com

All material by David Legge is copyrighted. However, these materials may be freely copied and distributed *unaltered* for the purpose of study and teaching, so long as they are made available to others free of charge, and the copyright is included. This does not include hosting or broadcasting the materials on another website, however linking to the resources on preachtheword.com is permitted. These materials may not, in any manner, be sold or used to solicit "donations" from others, nor may they be included in anything you intend to copyright, sell, or offer for a fee. This copyright is exercised to keep these materials freely available to all.

The Revival We Need - Chapter 1

"What Is Revival?"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

Our Father, we come before You now very conscious within ourselves of a deep need for Your grace, for Your strength, for Your power, for Your enablement, for Your anointing. We acknowledge, our Father, all of us together this morning, that without Thee we can do nothing. We are impotent, but we come to the omnipotent, almighty El Shaddai - the God with whom nothing is hard or impossible. So Lord, we pray that in the midst of our deep weakness, and so many of Your people touched this morning with the frailty that is, Lord, something that we carry in our flesh through this life - weakness, infirmity, emotional brokenness - but Lord, we are in the right place, and we bow before the right One now. We ask for Your divine aid and Your presence, O God come into our midst, presence Yourself with us now that we may go out of this place having heard a word from the Lord, and that we will be the different for it. For we ask these things in the Saviour's name, Amen.

Now, as has already been said, this is a revival week, and I have entitled the series really 'The Revival We Need'. Very early on, as I directed my thoughts towards this week, I felt I should preach on Sunday morning now on 'What Is Revival?'. Now let me say, before I say anything else, that I am no expert on the subject of revival. Indeed, last year I was invited to a convention on revival to speak, and I felt unable to attend for a number of reasons - not least a sense of being unqualified. How could I speak on a subject that I had never experienced, that I felt I needed to experience, and that other men are far more qualified in speaking on. Now I am going this year to that convention, not because I feel any more qualified to speak on it, but because I feel the Lord has directed me to go, and the Lord has provided the means to go - but I still very much feel out of depth. I suppose we should be worried if we were addressing a subject like this and we didn't feel out of depth.

But I have learned a lesson - and it might help some of you, I don't know - out of this true sense of unworthiness and inability to address this subject: the Lord reminded me that I constantly speak of Him, and I constantly speak of Christ, and how much more out of depth can one be than as a creature speaking of the Creator, or as sinners speaking of our Saviour? I now realise that if we're going to experience revival, we must speak of it. If we're going to experience revival, we must pray for it, and hope that we one day will see it. We speak of divine Persons because that's what God has called us to do, to be His ambassadors, to be His representatives. We speak often of heaven, and none of us have experienced that yet, but we preach on it all the time and we anticipate it with great hope. So we must speak on the revival we need.

Now this week I want to deal with issues related to the revival we need. This morning we're looking at 'What Is Revival?'. This evening I'm going to preach a solid gospel message - Christ-centred Gospel preaching - that's what we need: 'A Revival in Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching'. Tomorrow evening, in the will of the Lord, I want to preach on 'A Revival in the Bible'; Tuesday night, 'A Revival in Prayer'; Wednesday night, 'A Revival in Holiness'; Thursday night, 'A Revival in Love'; and Friday night, 'A Revival in the Holy Spirit' - and I will be bringing the Gospel in every evening as well. But none of those subjects each evening are an answer to this question that's before us this morning: 'What Is Revival?'. Those subjects each night, if you like, are descriptions rather than a definition of what revival is. Often when

we try to define it, we simply find ourselves describing it, not defining it.

To illustrate that for you, if you think of the attributes of God - we could go through many of them - but the attributes of God are not God Himself. Do you understand? They are ways of recognizing God, but they are not God Himself. They describe Him, but they do not define Him in essence. Again, to illustrate, the doctrine of the Trinity is truth, and we believe it with all our hearts. It helps us to understand the Godhead, which is a divine mystery, but the doctrine of the Trinity is not the Godhead itself. We know that God is indescribable in His attributes, God is indescribable in His essence - that's why we call God 'transcendent', it means He is beyond us, we cannot intellectually conceive of Him. That's why we call God 'holy', thrice holy, 'holy, holy, holy' - and 'holy' just simply means 'unique', separate from us, beyond us, indescribable. So when we often try to define God - and we should never try to do that, because that is an utter impossibility; if we could define God, we would be God ourselves - but when we try to define God we end up describing Him. That's all we can do, is describe Him!

Brian Edwards, in his book 'Revival', gives a good description of revival. It goes like this, it's quite long: 'A true Holy Spirit revival is a remarkable increase in the spiritual life of a large number of God's people, accompanied by an awesome awareness of the presence of sin with a passionate longing for holiness and unusual effectiveness in evangelism, leading to the salvation of many unbelievers'. Now that is a description, a very good description, of revival - but we're wanting this morning to get beyond descriptions to try and define what revival is in essence. This has been before me now for weeks, and I've been asking God in my heart: give me, Lord, what revival is in a nutshell. I asked the Lord, and the Lord answered me and gave me the answer - and He pinned it to a verse as well in Isaiah 57. So I want you to turn with me to Isaiah 57 and verse 15 - what is revival? Isaiah 57 and verse 15, now let's read it slowly and let it sink in: *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"*.

Now my wife could tell you this morning that two or three Saturday mornings ago I was in bed reading and praying, and the Lord just enforced this upon my heart - and as I received this from Him, I give it to you this morning: what is revival? First of all, revival is a reaching high - a reaching high. Look at the first part of the verse: 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy', look at it, 'I dwell in the high and holy place'. Revival is a reaching high. Now, if you know anything about revival, you will know that revival often begins with an awesome sense of dissatisfaction with yourself. It's only right that that should, in a sense, be our starting place; and a desire to have a higher experience of the Christian life. 'Lord', we say, 'Plant my feet on higher ground' - and boy, do we need that!

Our theme this week is 'The Revival We Need', and if you are any weight of salt of a Christian at all you will know that we need a revival. We need a revival! Individually, corporately as a church, and right across our land nationally we need to see a revival! We ought to feel this dissatisfaction with the way things are in our homes, with the way things are in our hearts, with the way things are in the house of God, with the way things are in the nation - that will lead us to desire a higher experience. We must, as has often been preached down through the years, break up the fallow ground. Now, you rural folk know better than me from East Belfast what it is to break up the fallow ground - but I've read a wee bit about it. This is the ground that has become hardened, it has become calloused and coarse through lack of rainfall and lack of farming over the years. It's like concrete, it's rock hard! If there's ever going to be any fruit that comes from it, that ground first of all needs to be broken up. So, whether the farmer

uses a pick or a plough or some other instrument, it has to be broken up. It's a very painstaking exercise, there's a lot of sweat, but it has to be done!

Charles Finney, the revivalist, he talked about how we need to sit down at times, periodically, like spiritual MOTs; and write down our sins that we can recall of commission and omission, and weep over them. Really that's what breaking up the fallow ground is: to come to terms with the things that we know we have committed against God, and not really felt, and not really dealt with. We have to take time over this, and yet what I want to say to you this morning is: there is something more than that. Yes, revival, what is it? It's a reaching high for a better experience of the Christian life, and there must come this breaking of fallow ground, but we need to read all of that verse in Hosea 10:12: 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you'.

So this 'reaching high', though it is a given that we must be looking for something better in our Christian experience, we must have a dissatisfaction with the status quo as it is now; this 'reaching high' that I believe God wants us to have is a desire for a higher knowledge of Him, a desire for a greater knowledge of God! Now listen, if ever there was a definition of revival - not a description now, a definition - it is this: revival is when God comes. I don't want you to miss this, listen: revival is when God comes. Now let me explain that: God is always with us, God is omnipresent. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and He hasn't left. He is with us among His people, where two or three are gathered, the Lord Jesus says, He is in the midst. But what we are talking about is something other than this, something different, something special.

Let us never get to the point, either, of thinking that God is not at work. Boy, God is at work today! He's at work in His church, He is at work in Ulster, and His work is not always blessing, His work is disciplining; His work is not always planting and sowing and reaping, His work is also pruning. I believe that's what God is doing, to a large extent, today in our land. God is at work, and we must not despise whatever God is doing at this present moment, even in this day of small things - but revival is a special manifestation of God's presence and God's power. God is with us, God is working, but this is on another level, this is another realm, this is another dimension where God comes down in mighty power!

Now listen, this is what this 'reaching high' is: more than a reaching high for something better in our Christian experience, there must be a reaching high for God, a desire for Him! You see, our desire for revival should ultimately be a desire for God. Let me repeat that: our desire for revival should ultimately be a desire for God. The authenticity of our desire for revival is only relative to our desire for Him. Do you hear what I'm saying? You see, you can desire revival of sorts and not have a real desire for God, but that's not really a desire for revival at all - for, let's face it, who in their right mind, whether they were saved or not, wouldn't desire conditions to be better in our world, or things to be better in our province? Who, with their eyes open, and their heart soft at all, could not wish for conditions to be better in the church of Jesus Christ in our land? Who wouldn't want their family and their friends and their neighbours to be saved? But that's not the question concerning revival, the question is: who wants God? That's a different thing!

Revival comes when Christians are longing for God - let me add - and God alone. You see, revival is a desire for and the realisation of the divine presence - a reaching high for the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. Isaiah actually displayed this in his 64th chapter when he cried in his wonderful revival prayer: 'Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou

wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!'. 'At thy presence!', what was Isaiah doing? He was reaching high for God Himself, God Himself!

I challenge you today - and I have to say to you, dear folk, that you have been such a blessing to me, because I have never met a group of people who had such a desire for revival as you. I feel like the wee fellow here, standing up before you - but I'm asking my own heart and, as I preach to you, I'm preaching ten times more to myself: do I have a desire for God above all things? I'm sure you know as much about Duncan Campbell as I do, but I feel that Duncan Campbell gave one of the best definitions of revival that there has ever been when he said that 'Revival is a community of people saturated by God'.

People who have experienced revival say that 'God was everywhere'. I was preaching last Sunday morning, not this sermon now, but another message on revival. I met a man there - I quoted Duncan Campbell - I met a man at that meeting who knew Duncan Campbell, and who had spoken to him. In his later years, he said, he had the privilege of spending some time with him, and he said that he kept saying over and over again: 'Everything is real in our churches today except God!'. Oh, how right. Brian Edwards says: 'When we are reading the serious, yet exciting, stories of God in revivals of the past, the only response possible is an awesome: 'God has come''. God has come! Is that the longing of your heart? Can you say with F. Brook:

'My goal is God Himself, not joy' - Oh, we all want that - 'nor peace,
Nor even blessing' - who wouldn't want all those things? - 'but Himself, my God'

What is revival? It is a reaching high, not just for a greater experience of our Christian life, for more blessing, but for God Himself - even if we don't get all those other things. You see, a lot of us, the desire of our Christian life is for something rather than Someone, it is for an 'it' rather than Him. Do you understand what I mean? You see, your 'it' could be an experience, and a good experience at that. It could be a doctrine - and boy, do we need more doctrine in these days - but that could be your 'it'. It could be a church, it could be a specific type of church, it could be this church, it could be work you're doing for the Lord, it could even be a scheme of Bible interpretation - perish the thought, it could be revival itself! But an 'it' will not do, it must be Him! Do you understand?

A.B. Simpson put it well when he said: 'I wish to speak to you about Jesus, and Jesus only. I often hear people say, 'I wish I could get hold of divine healing, but I cannot'. Sometimes they say, 'I have got it'. If I ask them, 'What have you got?' the answer is sometimes, 'I have got the blessing', sometimes it is, 'I have got the theory'; sometimes it is, 'I have got the healing'; sometimes it is, 'I have got the sanctification'. But I thank God we have been taught that it is not the blessing, it is not the healing, it is not the sanctification, it is not the thing, it is not the it that you want, but 'it' is something better. It is 'the Christ'; it is Himself'. He continued: 'Plenty of people get the idea and do not get anything out of it. They get it into their head, and it into their conscience, and it into their will; but somehow they do not get Him into their life and spirit, because they have only that which is the outward expression and symbol of spirituality'. It was A.B. Simpson that wrote that wonderful hymn, you can find it in Redemption Songs I think:

'Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord;

Once it was the feeling;
Now it is His Word;
Once His gifts I wanted,
Now, the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing,
Now Himself alone.

All in all forever,
Jesus will I sing;
Everything in Jesus,
And Jesus, everything!

Now that's what revival is, if ever there was a definition: a reaching high for nothing but God, and Christ alone! The late Henry Jowett was a very well-known preacher in his day, and he attended, at the end of last century, the coronation of King Edward VII. He recorded how, in Westminster Abbey, he sat there observing the assembly gathering, the seating of Princes and Princesses, and dignitaries - Dukes, Duchesses - and others of lesser nobility, and how homage was paid to them. But he writes: 'But then the King arrived, and all eyes turned away from those of lower rank and were fixed upon him' - then the King arrived! Is that what we're looking for? Nothing else will do, anything else is a substitute - and that means idolatry, if we're not looking for Him and Him alone.

What is revival? It is a reaching high, but here's the second and the last thing God laid on my heart: it's not just a reaching high, it's a bowing low. Read the verse again: 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place', that's where He dwells, a high and holy place, but look, 'with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. There must be a reaching high to the high and lofty One, but there must be a bowing low. Here's what God did in my mind and heart, He married those two things, and this is the message: the reaching high can only be attained by the bending low. Do you get that? The reaching high can only happen, it can only be achieved, it can only be acquired by bowing low!

We all want to see many sinners coming to Christ, our friends and our family, and we're breaking our hearts for them, we're crying to God that they may be saved: but you know, that is only ever the result and the effect of Christians coming to Christ. People being saved is only a side-effect in revival, because revival, awakening, begins in the personal experience of individual Christians who have their hearts revived! Now how does that happen? Let me give you it in three ways, how we bow low in order that we might reach high.

Three things, first of all: brokenness, brokenness. It was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who said: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit'. We need, as Christians, to experience brokenness. What is brokenness? Brokenness is a dying to self, a dying to selfish attitudes if you like. Paul said in Galatians: 'I am crucified with Christ', he said, 'Nevertheless I live, yet not I' - he's saying, 'I'm not physically dead, but the old man in me is crucified with Christ, my old nature is dead and it is Christ and His life that lives through me. The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me'. So the message of brokenness in the New Testament is that there is not one cross, but two crosses - and we are meant to be on the other one!

In a sense it's the same cross, for there, when our Lord Jesus died, our old nature was put to death with Him. Our cross is to recognize that we are dead with Him, and alive unto God through Him. Self has been put to death, if you're saved, on the cross - but we have a job to reckon it dead. How is your self? It's a very nebulous term, isn't it? Let's put a bit of flesh on it: self is when we are critical of others; self is when we are envious of others with more than ourselves, in whatever capacity; self is when we - oh, and the deep conviction that comes over me - when we are irritable, when we express annoyance at the least things, when we are resentful towards others for whatever reasons, when we are anxious, when we worry. But self is also when we are shy, overly shy, when we are self-conscious, when we are reserved to the extent that we won't speak for Christ, we won't step out for Christ, we won't be unashamed for Christ. Then when we relate to others, here's where self comes in: self is when we are hard, when we are unyielding in our attitude to others.

Sometimes in this great theme of revival we become so personal about ourselves and so introverted that we forget that how we behave towards others has got as much to do with why we're not experiencing personal revival as how we behave or don't behave towards God. Others! Genesis teaches us that, in Genesis 3 man sinned towards God and his communion and fellowship was broken, but what happens in Genesis 4? Man sins towards his brother and murders! As soon as fellowship is cut off with God, it's so often the case that our fellowship is cut off with our fellow man. You know, self is so often manifested in our lives through unyielding to others, our unyieldedness to God can often be measured by our unyieldedness to others!

Do you know - we're talking about brokenness now - do you know what God's, probably God's number one way of breaking us is? Using other people, and sometimes other Christians. Now this is staggering, it frightens us, we become uneasy because we don't react well when other people try and vex us - particularly the Lord's people, because we think 'Well, they should know better, and I shouldn't be taking that from them of all people'. But this is the way God humiliates us at times, He allows it to happen for our good - why? So that there would be a deeper channel carved out of our lives, so that the life of Christ may flow through, so that our selves may be put to death.

I don't think I've grasped this yet myself, because I'm sure - like many of you, if not most of you - when these vexing trials come into my life, particularly caused by other people, my natural reaction is to want to fight it, to want to resist it. 'I'm not going to allow this to break me!', when what God actually wants me to do - and some of you have been experiencing great perplexities and difficulties and tests this week - God actually wants us to embrace them! Embrace them into our hearts to allow those things to break us - why? Because when our earthen vessels are broken, the light of His glory will shine forth! You see, when we try to do things in our own strength, we've missed the plot - it's not by power, nor by strength, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. There is a breaking process, a wearing down process, where God deals with our self and breaks our self - do you know what this means? This matter of brokenness is the case of being a thousand choices every day of our lives, how we react to things in our attitudes.

You know, revival, personal revival, can be a continuous thing - it ought to be. Norman Grub wrote a book many years ago 'Continual Revival', brokenness is a daily occurrence. Our Lord said: 'Take up the cross daily, and follow me', that means there's meant to be a daily brokenness where we bow before our Lord and we lose ourselves. Self-denial is when you don't put salt on your chips, and you don't put butter on your bread, and you go off chocolate for a couple of weeks - that's not what the Bible is talking about. Denial of self is when you

lose yourself, everything! People say, 'Boy, that would make you miserable! No wonder nobody is joining your churches these days!' - wait till I tell you, this is what Christians in particular need to realise very very quickly: it makes you miserable not to lose yourself to Christ! How many Christians are going around our land bitter, why? Because they are resisting, they're unyielded not only to God but to their brothers and sisters in Christ. They're not able to bury the hatchet, that old iron Adamic will is asserting itself!

But you know, something else, this brokenness relates to how many Christians try to live the Christian life - and the imperative word there is 'try'. You're trying, perhaps, to live the Christian experience by self - and that's why you're getting frustrated, that's why it's like the Grand old Duke of York: when you're up, you're up; and when you're down, you're down. It's like a roller coaster experience, because you're looking to inner strength, you're not willing to be broken. Now listen: there's only one remedy, whether you're saved and struggling and selfish, or whether you're a lost sinner and you're bound by sin and habits, and you're on your way to hell, there's only one answer - and that's at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only place, because it's only there you see your sin and your self really the way it is - where it broke the blessed Son of God, you're not likely to be broken until you see Him broken for you, until you see your own inability to do anything about your spiritual life, and you bow beneath the cross of Jesus and say: 'Lord, bend that stiffnecked 'I', help me to bow the head and die, beholding Him on Calvary who bowed His head for me'.

Are you broken, Christian? Are you allowing yourself to be broken? Here's the second thing: after breaking there is cleansing. First John chapter 1: 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us' - goes on cleansing us - 'from all sin'. Don't struggle with your sins, there's a message for someone here today: you're lost and you think you can't get saved because you can't handle sin, and you know sin has got you in its grip - that's a lie of the devil! You've got to understand: you can't struggle with sin, you can't wrestle it down onto the canvas and overcome, you've got to bring the sin into the light - Christian you've got to bring your sin and yourself into the light, you can't put it to death, you've got to bring it to the cross and confess it to the Lord. When you bring it into the light, He sees it, He cleanses it, and His blood will go on cleansing you from it. More than that: His blood will deliver you from it.

There's got to be brokenness and cleansing, and you'll only find those two things at the cross of the Lord Jesus. Here's the third thing: filling. This is revival, what is revival? It is a reaching high for God, but that can only be attained by the bending low in brokenness, in cleansing, and in filling:

'Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me,
A clean vessel in Thy hand;
With no power but as Thou givest
Graciously with each command.

Channels only, blessed Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour'.

Is that not what we need? Andrew Murray said: 'Just as water ever seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds you abased and empty, His glory and power flow in' - but God does not fill dirty cups, God does not fill selfish cups. Anything that springs from self and sin,

as Roy Hession put it, all of those sins were put into the other cup which the Lord drank to the dregs at Calvary. If we allow Him, in His light, to show us what is in our cups - our self and our sin - and then give it to Him, He will cleanse them in His precious blood. That's what we need: brokenness for our sin and our self, we need cleansing in the blood of Christ, and we need filling.

Here's a lesson I learned very early on in my Christian experience, and it has never left me. It's very very simple: the only life that pleases God is His own life. Did you hear that? The only life that pleases God is His own life, and that's what revival is: the life of the Lord Jesus poured into the human heart! A reaching high for God that is attained by a bending low in brokenness, cleansing, and filling with the full life of God itself. Personal revival must precede widespread revival. This reaching high for a greater experience, reaching high for God in greater knowledge, can only be attained by a bending low - and we have Isaiah 57:15 for it, but we have the Lord Jesus Himself. He said in John 14: 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' - it's the same thing. The God who inhabits the high and lofty place, inhabits that transcendent sphere with the man, the woman, the teenager, the boy or girl who bends low in brokenness, cleansing and confession.

What is revival? A reaching high that is only attained by the bending low. I heard a lovely story, and with this I finish, of a family - a father and a mother - who went on holiday in a boarding house. The wee girl was taken into her room, and she was all delighted with it - and there was a picture of the Lord Jesus above the headboard. There was a dresser in front of the bed with a mirror, a vanity mirror in front of it is. The next morning when she woke up, she shouted: 'Mummy, Daddy! I can see Jesus!'. She could see the reflection of the picture of the Lord in the vanity mirror in front of her, and she was so enamoured by it that she shot up, and then she couldn't see Him! Then she lay down again, and then she saw Him; then she shot up again, and she couldn't see Him - and then she lay down, and with her eyes fixed on that mirror and that picture of Christ, she shouted into her Mum and Dad: 'Mum, when I lie down I can see Jesus, but when I sit up I can only see myself! Every time I see myself I can't see Him!' - that's it, that's it! Revival in a nutshell: a reaching high to the high and lofty One will only come, God will only come into my personal life - what He does with this church and this community, that, in a sense, is up to Him - but what He does with me is up to me, what He does with me can affect so much...if I allow Him to affect me.

May God bless His word to our hearts, and may this week we experience something - oh that we wouldn't just be talking about this, but that we would experience something with God's help.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 2

"A Revival In Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

I want you to turn with me please to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. We began our series of meetings, effectively, this morning with the subject 'What Is Revival?' - and we'll not repeat any of that. Tonight I want to start the series by looking at the need - the whole series I've entitled 'The Revival We Need' - and the first thing we're considering tonight is, we need 'A Revival in Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching'. So our text tonight is 1 Corinthians chapter 2, and we're just reading the first five verses - verses 1 to 5.

Paul is writing to a group of Christians in Corinth, and he says: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save", or 'except', "Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God".

I think it is generally true to say that preaching is in disrepute. People don't like preaching today - if they ever liked it, that's debatable, but certainly they detest it today. The sad fact is that there is an aversion to preaching, it would seem, in ranks of the church of Jesus Christ. Now there are many reasons for that, and we're not going to go into them - one reason that is not the least, I am certain, is the matter of boring sermons. It's not all the people's fault, often the fault is the pulpit. There's an old saying that goes: when you're drilling for oil and you hit it, stop boring once you hit it. Sometimes preachers, and I'm as guilty as any I'm sure, can go on and on when they have nothing to say. We all would like to hear somebody who has something to say, but many a man has nothing to say and he doesn't know when to stop saying it! I hope I'll not be like that for you.

But we see that, certainly in New Testament times, and indeed in revival - and if you don't know what revival is, revival is simply, we thought about it this morning, when God comes in a very special sense, manifests His presence and His power among His own people, the Christian church; and that has an overflow that benefits unbelievers - not just unsaved people in our friends and families, but it touches whole communities and has been known in the past to, indeed, touch whole nations. Now when that happens, I'll tell you, there's no boring preaching! No boring preaching! That was what was going on in the New Testament era. Paul could say that he didn't come to these people with wise philosophies and intellectual highbrow teachings, not the wisdom of men, but the testimony of God. He preached among them Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He was weak among them in fear and much trembling, and his speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit of God and of power. Indeed some of his enemies castigated him for being weak in body and speech, contemptible - he wasn't one of the world's great orators, although I'm sure he was a mighty preacher.

He didn't come to these people who needed Christ with great eloquence, he came with the power of God upon him - and that's what we need today! The demonstration of God's Spirit and power. We need preachers, not boring ones - God deliver us from boring preachers - but we need Spirit-anointed preachers like Paul and, indeed, like our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Do you know that the Lord Jesus was a preacher? In Mark chapter 1 verse 14 we read that 'after that John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom'. Our Saviour and Lord was a preacher, and He preached repentance from sin, He preached faith toward God - and yet many people, even in the church today, think that their methods are better than those that Jesus used.

Last year I received a leaflet in the post announcing a visit to Ireland of a guy called 'Steve', and it just said: 'I'm a full-time gospel-illusionist. I use tricks and illusions to present the gospel message. Just to let you know that I have an hour-long show which I am taking to Ireland from the 2nd to the 20th of March. The show is evangelism based and is ideal for a church family service, mission week, youth event, social event, or Alpha supper'. Attached to this leaflet were reviews from various churches in England and Scotland, and here was one, I quote: 'It was great to see people leaving church with a big smile on their faces, clearly having enjoyed their time, while also having heard a clear gospel message'. This is what's happening today: preachers are being replaced by illusionists, contortionists, ventriloquists. Praise God that here you've got a preacher in the pulpit, a man who will fearlessly and faithfully preach God's word!

To illustrate this again, in our local press at home - East Belfast, I'll not name the church - but they were having a week of 'mission' I suppose they would have called it, and from Thursday through to the following Thursday they were having various events. 'Friday night: East Belfast's Got Talent, for all the family, and' - wait for it - 'a wine and cheese evening at nine o'clock'. A wine and cheese evening in a church! The following Monday, 'an international food tasting evening', and to crown it all - as if that wasn't bad enough - the last night of this 'mission': 'Mid-September Murder, a murder mystery night' - in the church of Jesus Christ! Now man or woman, you mightn't be saved here tonight, but you have enough in your head and enough conscience still left in your heart to know that that's not the business that the church of Jesus Christ ought to be in! It's preaching the gospel, preaching it in power!

Yet Christ-centred Gospel preaching is very scarce today, even in churches that preach the word, the gospel is not being preached. As I go around on my travels - I'm sure other preachers are the same - people will say: 'I haven't heard the gospel like that in years', haven't heard the gospel preached! Now listen: if you're a preacher of the word you'll be a preacher of the gospel. Paul said in 2 Timothy chapter 1 that he was appointed a preacher, but he said he was appointed a preacher of the gospel - and it was for that he suffered.

The devil has got men talking about everything but Christ, and Him crucified. You see in our preaching, if we don't get to the cross we have wasted our time - I firmly believe that. At the beginning of chapter 1 of this the same book in verse 23 we see Paul said: 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock' - they couldn't understand this message that was humiliating, that a man would die as a slave. As far as they were concerned anybody dying on a tree was cursed of God, and they stumbled at this great preaching of the cross. It was moronic to them - that's what the word means - they were morons for preaching it. To the Greeks it was foolishness, it was a message that was ridiculous as far as they were concerned. They wanted strength in their gods and in their ways to heaven, not weakness and death! Paul says: 'We preach Christ', His person, Jesus Christ - that is my message tonight to you my friends: Jesus Christ alone! 'And Him crucified', that's His work, what He has done for

you: He has died on the cross, bled for your sins.

I'll tell you, that's what we need to be doing as the church. My friend, if you're here and you're not saved, that's what you need to hear. You don't need to see a magician, you don't need to watch a film - you might want to do those things, but what you need, my friend, is to see Christ and Him crucified for you!

This is what happened during revivals. So much of the church can get taken up with other things. In 1859 in our own province one preacher in the open air who was used of God started to hammer another denomination - it happened to be the Presbyterians. One man shouted out to him as he preached: 'Leave the Presbyterians alone and preach Christ!'. That's what our job is: to preach Him. I could go on and give you other examples, I'll not take time - but in one of Count Zinzendorf's letters he described the kind of preaching that was typical among the Moravians in their revival in 1727, and I quote him again: 'Our method in proclaiming salvation is this: to point out to every heart the loving Lamb who died for us. Never, either in discourse or in argument, to digress even for a quarter of an hour from the loving Lamb!'

That's what they did in this book - at the very beginning of the church they preached Christ. My friend, that's what you need to hear. An Ethiopian eunuch was coming from a festival of sacrifices, and God's Holy Spirit sent Philip the evangelist to speak to him. He heard him reading from Isaiah 53 about the cross: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed'. Philip asked him: 'Do you understand what you're reading?'. He says: 'How can I understand, except someone explains it to me?'. Then Philip, the Bible says, opened his mouth at the same Scripture, Isaiah 53, and preached unto him Jesus!

My friend, you need Jesus Christ - that's what I'm called to preach, that's what the church is meant to do: present the unsearchable riches of Christ, God's unspeakable, God's indescribable gift. Oh, some of you could preach Him better than me, perhaps, tonight, you've heard about Him that much. Well, I'm just going to do it again, and pray that God will use this message, the remainder of the time we have, to present you with Christ and what He has done for you - the unsearchable, indescribable riches of Christ.

God calls us to preach His indescribable birth, not just at Christmas but all the time. We believe not in a virgin birth, as such, but a virgin conception. You see, after the child Jesus was born Mary had other children - so she didn't remain a virgin for the rest of her days, and His birth was normal. It was His conception that was supernatural. The Angel pronounced to Mary that a child would be born, and she objected, she couldn't understand, it was indescribable, unspeakable: 'How can this be, seeing I know not a man?'. Even the Angel had trouble describing it, he said: 'That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' - 'holy thing', you see the world had never seen anything like this.

His birth is indescribable - and not only His conception, but His actual incarnation. You know what that means: you see Jesus didn't begin His existence in the manger of Bethlehem. This is the eternal Son of God, this is the One who made the heavens and the earth at the right hand of the Father, the One who was with God and was God. It was He who took upon Himself human flesh. That's why Paul said: 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh'.

Now my friend, I want you to understand tonight: this is what God did for you. There are a lot of people running around the world tonight saying: 'God never did anything for me. What has

God ever done for me?'. I'll tell you: He performed a miracle to conceive His own Son in the womb of a virgin teenager, to be born in flesh - not like our sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh - it was real flesh, and yet He wasn't sinful. Why? That He might come to be your Saviour, He is God's gift to you - that's what God has done for humanity, that's what He's done for you my friend!

We are to preach His indescribable birth, but we are to preach His indescribable life - and it would take a lifetime to do it. There has never been a life like the Lord Jesus Christ's. Not only was His birth miraculous and prophesied hundreds of years before He came into the world, authenticating the Holy Scriptures, but His life was unique. Think about His words. The religious Pharisees of the day sent soldiers to go and arrest Him - they didn't like what He was doing, and religious bodies still don't like what He's doing today - but the soldiers came back and they couldn't do it! These weren't pansies now, these were big rough rugged men, and they said: 'We can't do it! For never a man spake like this man!'. His words were indescribable.

His works were indescribable, the mighty miracles He performed. Indeed, you remember He stilled the storm and the disciples were overwhelmed, and they marvelled and said: 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'. What works! Making blind eyes to see, deaf ears to hear, the dumb tongue to speak, the lame legs to walk, the dead to raise! I challenge you: was there ever a life like this life? Never!

His words, His works indescribable - His worthiness indescribable. They bring Him to be tried, and even Pilate - who was no friend of Christ - said: 'I find no fault at all in this man'. Spotless, blameless, no one could point the finger! His worthiness - and let me tell you, if there had been one iota that they could have laid at His door, they would have done it...but they couldn't. What worthiness!

What works, what words, and what wonder in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Didn't they prophesy hundreds before His birth: Isaiah said, 'He shall be called Wonderful, Wonderful Counsellor'. Nicodemus, a religious man, came to Him at night and said: 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'. Mighty works! Have you considered His life? Don't you bury your head in the sand like most people do! You need to face Christ, my friend. You need to face what we preach: His indescribable birth, His indescribable life - but we preach, above all I think, His indescribable death!

Who could ever describe the great miscarriage of justice, the trumped up charges that were brought to the Lord Jesus? An illegal trial held in the dead of night. I'll tell you: for 2000 years there hasn't been one public enquiry into this miscarriage of justice - the Son of God, nobody bats an eyelid - an indescribable miscarriage, the crime of history! But who could describe what went on at Calvary? Oh, I know there was a lot of spitting and blaspheming and buffeting went on even before He got to the cross, and what about the nails in His hands and His feet, and the spear in His side? What about what He endured when every bone was out of joint as the cross dropped into its socket, and He was held sky-high? Ah, but that's nothing my friend - and I say that very reverently. We heard this morning round the table how His face was unrecognizable as a human being - but my friend, that was nothing to the indescribable nature of what it was for the Son of God to become the substitute for sinners. 'What do you mean?' He was a sacrifice, He wasn't a martyr! He was God's Lamb, His sacrificial Lamb, dying for your sins, dying in your place - and I know, as I'm preaching to you tonight, that it means nothing to some of you, and that grieves me - but it grieves the heart

of God even more.

The indescribable death of His Son, a darkness came over the land for three hours - and whatever it means for every soul to bear an eternal hell, that was compressed into three hours of time and laid on God's Son. Indescribable!

'None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost'.

My friend, that's what He went through - it's indescribable, it's unspeakable, it's unsearchable - because He loves you. The wrath He endured there, the almighty and eternal wrath of God, He laid on Him - God the Father on God the Son - the iniquity of us all. You're finding it hard getting through this half-hour, aren't you? It's a struggle - people can watch a contortionist for an hour and go out with a smile on their faces, but I'm presenting to you Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and it's hard to handle, isn't it? The love Christ displayed in His unspeakable death is beyond measure. Paul said it's four dimensional - Oh, that we could comprehend, with all the saints, the breadth, the length, the depth, the height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! You might think you know something of love, my friend, the love of a father, or a mother, or a boyfriend or girlfriend, a husband or wife, or a child - it's nothing, nothing compared to the love of God for you!

There's no picture, no portrait, there's no film, no sermon could ever portray the reality of Calvary - especially Christ's love in going there for you. The love of God, as the hymn says, is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell. It's an all-encompassing universal love, and it ought to make you sit up, it ought to make you wide-eyed, it ought to make your jaw drop to the floor - and say like the centurion, who saw it and stood beside the cross: 'Truly this man was the Son of God'!

Do you see Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ and Him crucified? There is something else: we preach His indescribable resurrection. Do you know He was the first ever to resurrect like this? 'Oh', you say, 'You don't know your Bible, sure didn't He raise others from the dead? There was the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus - and what about those in the Old Testament raised from the dead?'. Aye, but one day their family gathered again for a second funeral service and put them in the ground - not Jesus Christ! He was the first ever to rise again in the power of an endless life! What an indescribable resurrection: the reason why He lives forever is because He defeated death, He defeated sin, He defeated the grave and the devil himself; and now He has risen, He assures us who believe in Him of eternal life! 'I am the resurrection, and the life' - some of you have heard that recently - 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live'. Oh, my friend, what a resurrection!

We preach Christ's indescribable birth, we preach His indescribable life, we preach His indescribable death, we preach His indescribable resurrection - and we preach His indescribable grace! 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich'. You see we preach not works - we're not telling you to join the church, and get baptised, and catechised, and take your communion, and take your name over us - no! We're telling you that it's a free gift of God, and there is nothing expected of you only that you come to your senses - which is repentance - you realise what your sin is doing to you, and that it will damn you, and you turn

to Christ and by simple faith alone, nothing more, receive the gift! Oh, it's wonderful grace, it's amazing grace! Is that not what John Newton said: 'Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!'

There's a lot of folk going to church this very evening, and they haven't grasped this grace - maybe that's you, my dear friend. Maybe you're religious, maybe you're moral, maybe you're ethical, an upstanding fine member of the community - but my friend, you've got to grip grace, and grasp what it means. Old John Newton did, when he was seven years of age his mother died - a godly mother who had taught him the scriptures - and he was sent off packing to other members of the family who weren't Christians, and it wasn't long before he forgot everything that his mother had taught him. Eventually he became an apprentice seaman and he decided to join the British Army. He didn't like the discipline of the army, so he decided he would flee to Africa. On his way to Africa he met some Portuguese slave traders. He decided: 'I'm going to' - this is what he said now - 'I'm going to sin my fill!'. Some of you are doing that, aren't you? Sin your fill - and he did. Oh, the story is long, he got so debauched and distant from God that he ended up lying in the dirt, which was his food. He was a gaunt rake of a man, and he was very angry against God and everything that happened in his life. On one occasion he was picked up by a passing ship, and because he was a skilled navigator he got a job on that ship - but he was so reprobate that he broke into the ship's rum when the captain was off-board, and he got the whole crew drunk. When the captain came on board again, he knocked him flying overboard - and he would have died only one of the men threw a hook over the side of the boat, and grabbed him behind his thigh, and to the day he died he had a wound in his thigh that he could plunge his fist into. This was a rough man.

Eventually he got to Africa, and you know on another boat trip, off the shores of Scotland, a storm hit. Now I don't know whether you know anything about boats, I know very little about them - I try planes as much as I can! But I have watched a couple of programmes about the fishermen going out from Kilkeel and all the rest, and I'll tell you: they know what a storm is, and John Newton would have known what a storm was - but this storm was the storm of storms. He got on his knees and he cried to God as a helpless wretch in all his sin, and he got a grip of God's grace, and he was saved. He became eventually the chaplain to the English Parliament, he became instrumental in the abolition of slave trade - this vile blasphemer who one day wrote out his life story, if you like, in hymnology and said:

'Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!'

Listen: God has saved the chief of sinners - and it wasn't John Newton, it was the Apostle Paul - and He can save you! For that precious blood that Jesus shed can cleanse from all sin, all manner of sin and blasphemy may be forgiven of men! Indescribable grace, but there's something I have to finish on: we don't just preach Christ's indescribable birth, His indescribable life, His indescribable death, His indescribable resurrection, His indescribable grace - but we preach His indescribable return. You see, the story is not over - no matter what anybody says - His return is going to be indescribable. First of all for the Christian, for the redeemed: it will be indescribable glory. The suffering of this world is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Paul said on one occasion that he was caught up into paradise, into heaven, and he heard unspeakable words, indescribable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Do you know that's what heaven is like, my friend? Are you going? Eye has not seen, nor ear

heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for them that love Him. Are you prepared for heaven? He has prepared that place for you: it's indescribable heaven - but it would be remiss of me not to preach the indescribable nature of Christ's return for the lost, those who don't know Him as Saviour. It will be torment, the Bible is very clear and explicit: 'The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night' - indescribable! That's what you're heading to without Christ.

Now listen, I don't like the idea of hell, because I don't like thinking of my loved ones going there - I don't like thinking of millions going there. I don't like it, but the Lord Jesus taught it - but let me say this: do you not think, let's turn the tables here for a moment, do you not think that a man or woman who rejects such an indescribable Saviour, do you think they deserve heaven? The blessed Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you...

Let us pray. You have been witness to, this evening, Christ Himself - now I can't do any more than I have done, I've just presented you with Him, and He's indescribable, He's unsearchable, and I'll tell you better than that: He's here. He is here at this very moment, and He's speaking to your heart, my friend. You have a responsibility if you hear His voice, not to harden your heart. You're looking at the nail-prints now, you should be. You're looking at the bloody sweat that ran down His face, you should be. But are you looking into His heart, and seeing your filthy sin, Him being cursed for it, you should be - for that's the indescribable love of the Lord Jesus for you. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to be indescribably ignorant and say, 'I've no room for you, loving Saviour. I'm going to sin my fill, I'm going to live my life, I'm going to do my thing my way'?

Now I know some of you are uncomfortable, that's the way you should be, that's the way we've got to get - for Christ made everybody uncomfortable, He divided the whole empire, He's still dividing society today - but it's personal now with you, isn't it? What are you going to do with the Lord Jesus? Now you say: 'David, what do I need to do?'. Well this is grace, that's what we've been talking about, you just need to accept Him. You just need to say: 'Lord, I realise my need of You. I am a sinner and I'm lost, my life is empty and I know I'm heading nowhere, and I want You to save me'. None but Christ can satisfy, my friend, and you're trying to find it in all the wrong places. He alone can satisfy that longing and deep aching void in your breast - only Christ alone. Will you take Him tonight? You will know indescribable peace and joy that passes all understanding, as your present personal possession. Just say, where you are, from your heart: 'Lord, save me!' - that's it! - 'Lord, save me!', and believe that He'll hear your voice, He said He would. Believe it, and you'll receive Him as Lord and Saviour.

God is speaking to you tonight, I know He is, you know He is - but He might never speak again. May you hear His voice and not harden your heart.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 3

"A Revival In The Bible"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

So we're looking at the need for 'A Revival In The Bible', and I want you to turn with me to Nehemiah, the book of Nehemiah chapter 8 please. Each night, of course, as has been announced, I'll be bringing the Gospel in as well as a message for believers.

Nehemiah chapter 8, and we'll read the whole chapter. Verse 1 - Nehemiah, Esther, Job, and then the Psalms; so if you find the big book of Psalms and go back a couple of books you'll get there - Nehemiah 8 verse 1: *"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the*

children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner".

Let us pray: Father, we thank You for the book of God, we thank You for Your holy Word, we thank you that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Father, we thank You that our Lord Jesus Christ is exalted and enshrined within the pages of this holy book. Lord, we just pray that beyond the sacred page now, we would seek and find Thee, Lord. Our spirits pant for Thee, the Living Word - O, Living Word, come into our midst by the Spirit that inspired these pages, come into our meeting tonight, Lord, and come into our hearts we pray - and help us now for Christ's sake, Amen.

The book of Nehemiah is divided into two sections. The first is found in the first six chapters, and that deals with the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after, of course, they had been destroyed by God's enemies - the reconstruction of the walls of the city of God. Then the last section, the second, comprises of the seven remaining chapters. If the first six chapters deal with the reconstruction of the city of God, the last seven chapters deal with the re-instruction of the people of God. Now in every genuine revival of God's people - and by that I mean, if you don't know what that is, when God's people again get a grip with God's truth, and that it makes such an impact on their lives that the fire of God is aflame again in their hearts; and it affects not only their lives and their homes, their churches, but the whole community around.

In every true revival of God's people there are two major features, at least. First: the preaching of God's word. We saw last night the need for Christ-centred gospel preaching: people need Christ. My friend, if you're here and you're not saved, you need Christ. But the other aspect is the response to that preaching of God's word, an active reaction, responsiveness to God's word in obedience that brings great joy to the hearts of God's believing people.

This has been characteristic through every revival in Bible times and throughout church history: the powerful preaching of God's word that has ignited the church by God's truth again. It's how the Reformation took place in Europe when the word of God was translated out of Latin that no one could understand, and was put into the language of the people that the ordinary ploughmen could read and find words whereby he might be saved. During one of the greatest revivals in the 18th century, one of the revivalists used during that time was George Whitefield, and he records his own relationship to the scriptures, and how a fresh sight of God's Word ignited his own heart. He says: 'I began to read the holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over - if possible - every line and every word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh light and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men'.

Jonathan Goforth was greatly used in China and elsewhere in revival from 1908 onwards, and looking back on those years he says: 'We wish to affirm, too, that we can entertain no hope of a mighty globe-encircling Holy Spirit revival without there being first a back to the Bible movement'. Now Goforth practised what he preached: for 19 years he read the Chinese New Testament 55 times. Add to his name John Wesley, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Brownlow North, Jonathan Edwards, John Wycliffe - all men who knew the importance of God's word, and indeed it was a revival and reaffirmation of the necessity of a revival in God's word that started in their hearts and spread a flame right across many a nation, and indeed the world.

Now God's Word has always been under attack, always. In Genesis 3, right at the very beginning of time, Satan came into the Garden and cast doubt upon God's word. He said to Adam and Eve: 'Yea, has God said, in the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall surely die? You shall not surely die, but you shall be as gods'. Now we are used, in the church of Jesus Christ, to doubt being cast upon God's holy word from without the church, but what is happening more and more often these days is that from within the ranks, at least of Christendom, doubt is being cast upon God's holy word. You don't have to go too far from this building either for it.

Archbishop Alan Harper, during the recent homosexual debate that is raging among Anglicans, during his remarks pointed out that it's important, when looking at the Bible, to distinguish the parts of the Bible that were considered the direct word of God, and other elements that were human interpretations of God's teaching in the context of time. So he's now dividing God's word into two: the actual spoken word of God, direct; and men's comments upon what God has said. Now that is liberal revisionist rhetoric, that's just liberal theology - whereby Scripture is being interpreted by the conditions of the day - that's what we're seeing now. People are putting on 'society spectacles' and reading the Bible according to what we think today in our very civilised age - that's not the way the word of God was ever meant to be understood. It's God's word - it's just a great shame (I say it sarcastically) that the apostle Paul wasn't alive in the day of Alan Harper, for he said: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable'. Our Lord Jesus instructed the religious people of His own day to 'search the scriptures, for they testify of me' - all the scriptures.

The Archbishop went on to accuse, I think, even some in his own church of 'bibliolatry' - that is, worshipping the Bible over God. He said: 'It is the mother of all dogmatic fundamentalism'. Now listen, if you were here last night you'll know I'm not in the business of bashing other denominations or churches, but I'll tell you this: one of the reasons why people around in pulpits of our land and churches are falling for everything, is because they'll stand for nothing. They won't stand on God's holy word. This is a point of historical fact - now listen carefully, believers: revival never ever began in the liberal wing of the church! It only started when men and women understood and revered God's holy word.

In Nehemiah's day, although the walls of the city were finished and rebuilt, there was still a great spiritual vacuum in the life of the people. Now according to chapter 7 the people were now well ordered, well defended, well governed - and yet in this community of nice homes, good jobs, and great security, something was missing! Boy, there's a lesson: it's not enough to have well constructed superstructures and church buildings if there's little life on the inside. Don Francisco, an American singer, once sang a song that went like this:

'I don't care how many buses you own, or the size of your sanctuary
It doesn't matter how steep your steeple is, if it's sitting on a cemetery.
I don't care if you pave your parking lot, or put pads upon your pews,
What good is a picture perfect stage, if you're missing all the cues?'

We could be missing the cues, God's cues. We can have beautiful architectural structures, we can have well-oiled programmes, but it all means nothing if God's presence and God's power is absent! It will be absent if God's word is not central to everything that we do, and everything that we are. This is what we see in Nehemiah's day: in verses 1 to 7 they read the Bible - what a simple message there is for you tonight, friends! They read the Bible. It says in verse 1 they were as one man, united around the Bible. Psalm 133 says that that is where God commands the blessing, when brethren dwell together in unity. Now this wasn't a Bible

Conference - you know there's a difference between a Conference and Convention? A Conference is a place for discussion, a Convention is a place for decision. They were met around, as one man, God's word. They were there for a decision, a united people waiting on God.

Where were they? It says in verse 1 they were at the water gate. You know water in the Bible is often a picture of the word of God. It speaks of its cleansing influence on our minds and our hearts, how it refreshes us, how it can revive us - the power of God's word. This is the place where they are met together as one man. They're here in an open place before the water gate. What a message: if God's people unite together around the word of God to seek Him, that's a starting place for any revival.

May I ask you, just for a moment: believer, do you gather at the water gate? Do you gather with God's people, as one man, around God's word? I know you're here tonight, and it's tremendous, but do you do it regularly? How do you gather? There's a lot of people, and they come to hear what the preacher will say wrong next. They don't put the cards up in the air, but they do it in their heart: marks out of 10, and they carve the preacher up at the kitchen table with the roast. They don't come asking: 'What will God say to me today?' - that's the way they were here. What a cry went out from the people, this is wonderful, this is when you know God is doing something - verse 1: 'They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book'. Bring out the book!

You know, it's sad for me to have to say tonight that fewer believers are bringing the book even to church. Sometimes we're preaching, and ask people to turn to this passage, and you can't hear the leaves turning over because they haven't brought their Bible with them. Do you bring the book to church? More than that, fathers, do you bring the book out when there are decisions in the home that have to be made? Businessmen, does this book have any reflection on what you do in your business affairs, in your tax dealings? Leaders in the church, are we looking to this book or some other 'purpose driven' book, or human man-management book, for God's pattern, and God's leading, and God's guidance? Notice in verse 1, they didn't seek Ezra's opinion about the book, they said to Ezra: 'Bring out the book'. They didn't want Nehemiah's opinion, they didn't want Zerubbabel's opinion!

Sometimes we quote men, we're all guilty of it. We adhere to them as if they had the authority of God's word - Calvin said this, and Darby said that, Pink said the other. When we are debating something, someone says: 'So-and-so taught that', and then people begin to be content because they think that they hold what Mr So-and-so held and believed. Jesus said: 'Do not teach for doctrine the commandments of men'. We ought to respect all of God's servants, particularly those He's used down through the years rightfully, but all of them - if they were worth their salt - were only ministers of God's word, they were only messenger boys. That's what we are, bringing the message - we're not meant to be students of science, or philosophy, or even theology, we're meant to know this book, and we're meant to preach this book.

Now, who was there? Look at the gathering, the congregation, in verse 2. They brought out the law before this congregation, both men and women, and all who could understand. Everybody gathered there. Look how it was done: there was a public reading, verse 4 shows us this, from an erected wooden pulpit - and it went on from daybreak until noon, 12 o'clock. What was the reaction? Did the people say: 'Oh boy, you went over your time tonight!?' Sometimes you hear that God is moving in certain lands, particularly in the Third World, and we're asking God to do it there - and we're thinking: they sit there for hours and hours

listening to God's word, and they're crying out 'Preach more, preach more!', and they're praying more and more - and do you know what I hear people in Ulster saying? 'Sure those people, they don't know any better! They've nothing else to do!', that's what people are saying in Ulster, 'They've nothing else to do. Sure they've no TVs, they've no gyms'. Do you think that's all the reason why they're sitting listening to God's word? Not a bit of it! God is moving, and they are having the reaction that these people had: they reverence God's word - and it wasn't 'bibliolatry', they weren't worshipping the book, but they were acknowledging the Author of the book! It was God's word, and they were acknowledging God's will that is expressed through His word.

Look what it says in verse 6: they lifted up their hands and cried 'Amen, Amen', and bowed their faces to the ground. What a cry! 'Bring out the book!' - that's the cry that we need to hear these days. It was the cry, 'Bring out the book!', that freed them and delivered them. You know, it freed us from the Dark Ages, when the Roman Church - the only church there was - the establishment chained the Bible so that ordinary people couldn't get at it. Now it's not chained, but we can't even bring it to the place of worship, we can't even cast the dust off it, take it down from the shelf, from under the bed. It comes out once in the week! My friend, this is tragic, because this is what we need: we need to bring out the book, and it will free us again. We are a nation that has had the book, the Bible is in our history and yet it's not valued any more. There's men and women and teenagers who bled and died and were burned at the stake, that we might have it - but now we don't want it!

Now, I want to talk to unbelievers here just for a moment: have you ever considered this book? This is a mighty book. This book claims over 3000 times to be the inspired word of God, and I hear people say: 'Ach, well that's self-authenticating. It wouldn't matter what you said you were, I wouldn't believe you until you could prove it'. Well, that's why the Bible can be self-authenticating, because it proves itself to be what it claims. If you count each book in this volume, you'll find that there are 66 books written by 40 or more authors over a period of over 2000 years - 66 books, over 40 authors, many of them never met or knew one another, and yet it's clearly one book with a perfect unity, with a consistency throughout it. The writers, when they were writing these books, had no idea that their message eventually would be incorporated into a book - yet there is, now you listen carefully, not one contradiction in the whole volume. I know there are folks who say: 'Oh, the Bible is full of them!', but I have challenged man after man, time after time, and nobody has been able to show me one. Maybe you're the man or woman tonight who can show me the contradictions in the Bible - if it's full of them, it must be easy to get one, at least. Nobody has ever shown me one. It's in complete harmony.

The structure authenticates it to be what it says it is. Prophecies fulfilled - I haven't got time to look at this, but Jesus Christ alone fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies, and that was only concerning His first coming - and there are eight times more prophecies concerning His second coming in the Old Testament alone. The prophecies of His birth, fulfilled; His death, fulfilled; His life; His resurrection. What about the historical accuracy of this book? Dr Nelson Glueck, probably the greatest modern authority on Israeli archaeology, has said, listen: 'No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. By the same token' - now this is profound - 'by the same token proper evaluation of biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries'. So rather than archaeology contradicting this book, this book has actually led archaeologists to great finds!

What about its scientific accuracy? Irrespective of what Richard Dawkins and the like of him say, the fact of the matter is: though the church in the Middle Ages might have burned people at the stake because they said the earth was spherical, and they taught that it was flat, the Bible never taught that the earth was flat - that was their own foolishness. Isaiah said: 'God is the one who sits on the circle of the earth', and this book taught the roundness of the earth before the church even, in the Middle Ages, knew anything about it. There are many other things, the hydrological cycle of water is in the word of God - 'all the rivers flow into the sea', the Bible says, 'yet the sea is not full' - why? Because it evaporates and precipitates as rain, and there is a water cycle - the Bible knows all about it before we did. There are many other things I could tell you about, like gravitational fields - the Bible says, 'God hangeth the earth upon nothing'. Before Newton, God declared it! This book, it's not a book of science, now - but it's scientifically accurate.

What about the survival of the Bible? It's still here. You suppose for a moment that there was a man who had lived on earth for 1900 years, that he had been thrown into the sea and couldn't be drowned; that he had frequently been cast before wild beasts, but they were unable to devour him; and many times he had to drink deadly poison, which never did him any harm; that he had often been bound by iron chains, and locked in prison dungeons, yet he had always been able to throw off the chains and escape from his captivity; that he repeatedly had been hanged until his enemies thought him dead, and yet when his body was cut down he sprang to his feet and walked away as though nothing had happened; that hundreds of times he had been burned at the stake, until there seems to be nothing left of him, yet as soon as the fires were out he leapt up from the ashes as well as he ever was. We don't need to expand the illustration, because we would stand back and exclaim: 'Such a person was superhuman!' - but you know, that's the story of the Bible, a miracle of miracles, all because God has declared in this very book that heaven and earth would pass away, but My word shall never pass away.

What about its unique effects, because the written word of God only testifies to the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ who was with God before the world was, and was manifest in flesh, and lived the life He lived of perfection and holiness because He was the Son of God walking around in humanity. He went to the cross, and He bled and died for your sins, and He suffered your shame, and bore your hell; and He rose again the third day - and it's that message that changes lives! No other book can affect humanity like this book! The very power of God is infused in it because it testifies of Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of men.

Now believers, there's a lot of believers struggling in these days. When I was involved in more pastoral care than I am now, you know many a person came to me and said: 'Look, I'm struggling, I'm really not making anything of this Christian life at all. I'm having problems' - you know, time after time I learned to ask a question: 'Are you reading your Bible?'. Are you reading your Bible? More often than not the answer was 'No', or 'Not as often as I should do'. We need to eat daily, and we need to read God's Word daily more. Watchman Nee said that if he didn't read the word of God he wouldn't have his breakfast. Do you believe that? 'Man shall not live by bread alone'. George Mueller believed it, he read this book over 200 times. William Evans, who pastored a church in Wheaton, Illinois, he memorised the entire Bible in the King James Version, and the New Testament in the American Standard Version - imagine that! Billy Graham's father-in-law was a missionary, a medical missionary, Nelson Bell. He rose every morning at 4:00 or 4:30 to spend two to three hours Bible reading. He didn't read commentaries, he didn't read magazines, he didn't do correspondence or any other work, he wasn't preparing sermons - but he was just reading the scriptures every morning. It's testified of him that he was a walking biblical encyclopaedia, and people used to wonder at his holiness

and the greatness of his life! It was Spurgeon who said: 'A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone whose life isn't'.

Is your life falling apart tonight, or feels that way? Bring out the book. When was the last time you brought out the book? If you want revival in your life, you need a revival in Bible reading - it's as simple as that: they read the Bible. It doesn't get more simple than that. You read the paper today, didn't you? I timed my reading last night - not for this meeting, just out of interest - to see how long it took me reading my portion, and it was just over 10 minutes - that's the reading now, that's just the reading, three chapters. By that time, every day, I'll get through the Bible in a year - and that's all it has taken, just over 10 minutes. We haven't got 10 minutes for God, and we want revival? Well, if we want revival, we need to bring out the book!

But there's more: they recognized the meaning. Verse 8, and this is characteristic of authentic Bible exposition - verses 1 to 3, they read the word, that's where it begins. We start with the Bible, we're not interested in man's opinion, we establish that all truth comes from God, so we read the word. Then came respect for God's word: the people listened, all of them, verses 5 and 6, attentively. Then what happened thirdly was, the truth was explained for everybody to understand - in verse 8, those who were gifted to give the meaning, that is, Ezra and Nehemiah, gave the sense. Now you might think that they were just doing what I'm doing here tonight, but it was more than that: the word means 'translated', the Hebrew literally has the sense, 'to make something distinct'. Now here's the big question: who did the Bible belong to in these days? It belonged to the Jews, the Hebrews! Who were these people? They were the Jews, the Hebrews - so why did they need the word of God translated? Well, you've got to remember that these were born Jews, but by tongue they had lost the Hebrew language, their culture, they had been saturated in godless pagan Babylon. This was their book, but because of the mentality and the lifestyle that they imbibed in captivity, they were reading their own book but they were hearing it through Babylonish ears. They had a different language now.

Dear Christian friend, have you been in the world so long that the very holy words of God are grating on your ears? Do you find it difficult to accept because you have imbibed the mentality and the culture of this world? But here what was happening was: they were being spoken to in a language they could understand, and the word of God was being unlocked to their understanding. Maybe Ezra's Bible was the only Bible they had in their own language, but praise God: they heard it, and they began to understand it because it was explained to them. Most importantly of all: they obeyed it.

You know something believers, now listen carefully tonight: we spend a lot of our time - and this is what's going on in churches today - grappling in our minds with unanswerable questions that we will never know the conclusion and solution to, we deal with irreconcilable matters rather than dealing with what is clear and plain in the word of God. Mark Twain was far from a Christian, but he got it right when he said: 'It's not what I don't understand about the Bible that bothers me, it's what I do understand'.

We often worry: what's God's will for my life? Can I tell you this: 90% of it, at least 90% of it, is revealed here in these pages - and you don't have to pray and fast to get it. Are we obeying God's word? You know how to apply that to your own heart. Well, they responded in obedience, verse 9. The truth was applied, and they're crying - why are they crying? Because they're guilty before God's word, they have seen themselves in the mirror of God's truth. They had lived for years without any spiritual input in carnality, and it was gripping them, it was piercing them - when was the last time any of us wept with an open Bible?

Something else you need to see is: they recovered lost truths. We read in verse 13 that on the second day - now they have been one day at this business - on the second day the chiefs of the people came together and the reading continued. One day wasn't enough! Then a notable discovery was made in verse 14: they found written in the law that Moses told the children of Israel to dwell in booths in the feast of seven months, the feast of the tabernacles. Now that was significant - you might think, 'Well, it doesn't look significant, does it?' - but here was a challenge for them to obey, here was something that, now mark the import of this, for a thousand years had not been practised, and yet it was still in the book!

Look at verse 17: 'All the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of' - that word is 'Joshua' - 'Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day', this very day, Nehemiah's day, 'the children of Israel had not done so'. Now you think about this just for a moment: during the days of David, the glory days, the days of Solomon, no attention had been paid to this one precept. Oh yes, they practised the feast of tabernacles, but they hadn't kept God's word in form by building these booths. Now people say today: 'Ach, as long as you keep the spirit of God's word, it doesn't matter about form' - isn't that right? If the form is given in the word of God, we are obliged to follow the form! People say: 'Ach, it's so awkward these days to implement all these things, they don't fit in with today's culture, they don't make sense' - they could have said that! 'This hasn't been implemented for a thousand years, it didn't happen in the day of Samuel, David, Solomon - they didn't need it, and God blessed them, so it's not essential', but it says here that they found it written in the book, and they did it. That is a picture of unquestioning obedience - and my friend tonight, whatever God is saying to you, you do it whatever the consequences! If you know it's God, you do it!

Through this, verse 10, we see they rediscovered strengthening joy. They were told to stop weeping, for this was a holy day, 'neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength'. They had lost touch with God, and they had got fearful of Him. Maybe you're here tonight, and that's something you're worried about - you think God's angry with you. Well, God can chastise us like a father chastises a child, but if you are saved, my friend, God loves you with all His heart - you've no idea how much God loves you. God wants you to realise that He has strength for you, if you will come to Him. Now sometimes we can be so conscious of our sin, and the accuser of the brethren can say: 'You're no use, you forget about it! You're a hopeless sinner, give in and give up!', but the answer is here in verse 10: the joy of the Lord is your strength. Now listen carefully: that's a very misunderstood verse. It doesn't mean their joy was their strength, it doesn't even mean their joy in the Lord was their strength, the phrase should be understood as: the Lord's own joy - it's the joy not 'in the Lord', but the joy 'of the Lord' - this is the joy of God Himself that can be ours, and it's the secret of our strength. The Lord always delights in obedience, and when we obey He has joy - 'I have no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth' - and He gives that same joy to us when we're in obedience to Him.

My friend, do you see this book that I hold before you? I got it in 1979, and I can't even remember getting it at Christmas from Sunday School - it's nearly 30 years of age. Timothy was told by Paul that through the words of holy Scripture he was made wise unto salvation. He had a godly mother and a godly grandmother, and I thank God I had as well. Twenty four years ago this very day I was saved because of the book, and because of the Man of the book - the Man of Calvary, the Man of the empty tomb.

There was a young man like me, but he had a different end - he left home to attend college

and study medicine. His mother worried about him, so she gave him a Bible on his way, and printed a verse of Scripture on the flyleaf. The young man soon discovered that college life was an endless series of parties. He spent all his money on one occasion on his pleasures, and one night he needed money for another whisky, and he pawned his Bible and bought the whisky. Well, he got through medical school and eventually became a doctor in a large hospital. One day - his name was Dr Mackay - he treated a dying patient. He knew that the man was dying, and the man knew himself, and he cried out for his book. The doctor didn't know what he was talking about, and then the man pointed to his Bible. He gave him his Bible, and after the man eventually passed away, Dr Mackay lifted the old man's book among his effects - and he couldn't believe his eyes, for when he opened the flyleaf he saw his mother's writing. It was his old pawned Bible. He gave his life to Christ, and in later years he became a preacher of the book, and a writer of the old hymn - and do you know what the old hymn was? 'Revive us again, revive us again'.

We need to get back to the book. What will you do tonight, believer? I pray to God that if you haven't the book with you tonight, or whether you do, you'll get home and get into it. Unbeliever, it's in this book that you have eternal life - not in the book itself, but the One that the book sets forth. Will you come to Him tonight? He is your only hope.

Let us pray: Father, we thank You that they read the book, they recognized the meaning of the book, they responded in obedience and in tears to the book, they recovered lost truths in this book, and they rediscovered strengthening joy. Lord, there are folk here tonight, known more to You than to me - and boy, do they need to get back to this book! They need to eat it, they need to digest it - 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart'. Oh Lord, this book is no good to any of us unless we read it. Even reading it is not enough, we must obey it. There might be folk here tonight, and they have never obeyed the command to repent and believe the gospel. Lord, may they do it tonight, may they see that in this book there is the Christ that bled for them, this book is covered in crimson bloodstains! They need to be washed in that blood, and may that happen tonight for them. But Lord, oh for Your children, there is a great need: may they fall in love again with the holy book of God, for Christ's sake we pray, Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 4

"A Revival In Prayer"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

Tonight we're looking at Nehemiah chapter 9, I want you to turn with me to it. We looked at Nehemiah chapter 8 last night, and each night we're ministering really to the saints of God, for revival is for them - and yet we're seeking each night to bring the good news, a gospel challenge, for those who perhaps don't know the Saviour as yet.

So Nehemiah chapter 9, we'll not be reading the whole of the chapter - it's a very long chapter, not that there's anything wrong with reading whole chapters when they're long, we saw that last night: the people had to stand for a very long time and listen while Ezra read the law of God to the people! But we want to cut it down a little tonight, verses 1 through to 21 first of all of chapter 9:

"Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day", that's three hours, "and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God", another three hours. "Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion

appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not".

Then just down to verse 32: *"Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God", not the teddy bear god that some people worship these days, but "the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it".*

Let us pray: Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You that it is infallible and ineffable, inspired by God Himself. We thank you that it sets forth the Living Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His name - we invoke His name tonight - that the power of the Holy Spirit might be poured upon us, and His glory would be manifest in the salvation of lost souls, and the reviving and refreshing of Your own believing people. Oh God help us, we need Your help. Come into our midst we pray, for Christ's sake, Amen.

Last night we looked at chapter 8, and we saw that this revival in Nehemiah's day - if it could be called that - and indeed every revival that we have seen in the history of the church of Jesus Christ and in the nation of Israel, there was central to it the preaching fearlessly and faithfully of God's holy word. Last night we saw, secondary to that, there always came a very immediate response of obedience to what God was saying through His word and through His servants. Those two things have always been central to revival, but if we were to add a third thing it would be what we have read tonight in chapter 9: prayer is an essential ingredient that God often uses when He is preparing His people to revive them. He sets them a-praying.

Now what we read tonight - we didn't even read it all...it might have seemed long enough to some of you! - but it's the longest prayer in the Bible. It's the longest prayer in the Bible, and it's got to do with revival. Now can I say to you tonight, just in case you're not saved: long prayers will do you no good. You've got to understand this: we're looking at the subject of prayer, and I'm sure there is not a soul gathered here under this roof that's never prayed - we have all prayed. Even the atheist, when he gets his back against the wall, cries out: 'Oh God!'. Now he mightn't be praying, but there's something deep within his heart that he denies

religiously, that cries out for something outside of himself for help. The tragedy is this, my friend: there are people right throughout this dear land of ours and world, who pray longer prayers than I have ever prayed, and God doesn't hear a word of it! There's no value in long praying if you're not saved. Are you saved?

You see, God has taught us that He can make the heavens brass so that our prayers reach the ceiling but no more. He can make the earth stone, concrete, so that it yields for us no fruit - and indeed it is metaphorical of our lives, we don't have any fruitfulness or satisfaction in our lives or indeed from our prayers, because He has declared in His word that our iniquities - that's sin, now - have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid His face from us. Now do you understand that? If you're still in your sin, that means if you're not saved, and you've never been cleansed in the precious blood of Christ that He shed for sin - with sin on Himself, bearing the guilt and the curse, and the burden and the wrath for sin - if you've never been cleansed in His precious blood by simple faith, God does not guarantee to hear your prayers. Now I'm not saying He never hears them, sometimes He does - but He doesn't guarantee that He will hear them.

'If I regard iniquity in my heart', the Psalmist said, 'the Lord will not hear me'. You forget about long prayers, you need to worry about the shortest prayer - one of the shortest prayers in this book. It was when Peter was sinking, and he saw the Saviour, and he cried: 'Lord, save me!'. Have you ever prayed that prayer? You need to pray it tonight. You might not hear anything in the rest of the message that I preach, and it mightn't seem too relevant to you because I'll be addressing believers many a time, but you need to hear that tonight: you need to cry out to God! You're sinking deep in sin, sinking to rise no more, and the Master of the sea is ready to hear your imploring cry: 'Save me, or I die!'. I'll tell you: if you cry out tonight, He'll save you, for He has promised to save you. The tragedy is, in Luke's gospel chapter 16 there was a man who lived his whole life and he was a religious man - now that means he prayed many a prayer - yet it wasn't until he was in the bowels of hell, and lifted up his eyes being in torment, that he prayed and asked for help...but it was too late. You make sure it's not too late for you, my friend. Make sure you don't learn to pray the repentant sinner's prayer in hell, for it will be no use.

This is the longest prayer in the Bible, and it's got to do with revival - isn't that interesting? Does that not tell us something about God's heart? You see: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land'. Prayer has always been central to revival. Prayer was intrinsic among the Moravian community in Herrnhut in Saxony, when the Spirit of God came powerfully through them in August 1727. The adults among them covenanted to cover each of 24 hours in prayer, and by the end of a month even the children were holding their own prayer meetings - spending many hours themselves, young people, praying, singing, weeping!

The same pattern was found in our own land in the 1800s when James McQuilkin was converted in 1856 in Ballymena by the witness of an English lady. Later he went on to lead three of his close friends to the Saviour, and the four of them agreed to meet every week in prayer and Bible study. They chose an old schoolhouse near Kells, and during the winter of 1857 and 1858 each of them gathered with a Bible under one arm, and an armful of peat under the other, they warmed themselves around the fire and around the word of God. They met every Friday evening, and the fire of God fell upon them and warmed their souls. Two more folk joined them, including an old man named Marshall - but it wasn't until New Year's Day 1858 till they saw their first convert, only one man. But by the end of that year the group

had grown to 50, and they prayed for - this is what James McQuilkin said, I believe - 'for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon ourselves, and upon the surrounding country; this was the one great object and burden of our prayers. We held right to the one thing, and did not run off to anything else'. That prayer group was ridiculed for praying in this way, but he said: 'We kept on praying until the power came', and it did come. By the close of the following year 100,000 souls were converted to Christ in our wee land. As the revival spread, so did prayer. In the Connor district alone there were 100 weekly prayer meetings commenced, and prayer meetings were everywhere - from graveyards to gravel pits - and Ballymena's Wellington Street Presbyterian Church could be, it was said, 'Crowded in all its parts by a prayer meeting, this even on a Saturday, the weekly market day, when at normal times a dozen persons could scarcely have been convened for such a purpose'.

The Bible testifies, and our Christian heritage testifies, that if we are to know true revival, God's people on fire again and people in the community saved as an outflowing of that, personally and corporately we need to have a true revival in prayer. So I'm asking you tonight, point blank: how's your prayer life? How is your prayer life? J. Oswald Saunders in his book 'Spiritual Leadership' quotes Dean C. J. Vaughn, to rattle the skeleton that hangs in many of our closets as Christians, I'm quoting him: 'If I wish to humble anyone, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions'. Of course it was Murray M'Cheyne who said: 'A man is what he is on his knees, and no more'. The truth of that question: 'How is your prayer life?', it humbles all of us - preacher included, pastors, elders, deacons, members, evangelists, missionaries, theological professors, authors. Saunders goes on: 'Most of us are plagued with a subtle aversion to praying. We do not naturally delight in drawing near to God. We pay lip service to the delight, and potency, and value of prayer. We assert that it is an indispensable adjunct of mature spiritual life. We know that it is constantly enjoined and exemplified in the scriptures - but in spite of all, too often we fail to pray. 'When I go to prayer', confessed an eminent Christian, 'I find my heart so loathe to go to God, and when it is with Him, so loath to stay'.

Someone once described praying to me as like ducking your head underneath the surface of the water and holding your breath. You try to do it for as long as you can, and then you burst up to take a mouthful of air - is that what prayer is like to most of us? I fear it is. We can make all the excuses we like, but fail to admit that we have a real problem - and its prayerlessness. We might want revival, we might want to see people saved, but prayerlessness is a great obstacle. The great question is not: 'Do we want revival?', but 'Are we willing to pay the price for revival?'.

Here we see in this longest prayer four principles that were implemented in Nehemiah's day, and God is just the same today. He's just as eager, I believe, to pour out His abundant blessings - but we must come to Him humbly and broken and ask. Let's see these four principles - the first is repentance, repentance. The walls in Nehemiah's day had now been built, you remember I told you last night they had been destroyed by the enemy - the walls have been reconstructed. In chapter 8 we saw that now the people of God were being re-instructed, and the law had been expounded and read, the feast of the tabernacles had been restored - and it was being observed, we saw, for the first time since the days of Joshua, chapter 8:16.

After a few days interval, after they were told to feast, not weep but feast, suddenly the feasting give place to fasting, and the joy became humiliation. Are we surprised at that, that feasting should give way to fasting, that joy should give way to humiliation? Well, we shouldn't be, because that's what the Christian life is meant to be: it's meant to be a balance

of both feasting and fasting, they go together. We're meant to constantly be repeating this cycle of communion and fellowship in joy with God, and yet this denial of self and humiliation, and brokenness and repentance, and taking up the cross - they go together! The tragedy is, and this is one of the problems and obstacles to revival, many a believer thinks that confession and repentance is something that was done at conversion and is never repeated again! What nonsense! Our Lord Jesus said: every day we're meant to get beneath the cross.

Now, my friend, you need to be saved tonight if you're not converted, you need to repent - and you've got to understand what repentance is. It's not trying to clean up your life, it's not trying to get rid of your habits - you can't do that! You haven't the power to do that! It means changing your mind about your sin, realising it's against God and it grieves Him, and it's damning your soul - and turning your mind and your heart to Christ, and by faith alone being saved! Have you ever done that? You're lost if you've never done it. But believer, when was the last time you did it? We ought to be, I suppose, converted every day - not that we're lost every day, once saved always saved, but we need to have this conversion experience, don't we? A humble and contrite heart God delights in, He does not despise.

Did we not look at this on the Lord's Day? Do you remember the verse that I brought to you, very definitely from the Lord: 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him' - we've to reach high to God, but we only get it by bowing low. God dwells in the heights with the one who will bend himself, the 'contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'. If we refuse to humble ourselves before God, it will not be long until we are hardhearted, cold and indifferent to the things of God. Prayer will suffer in our lives, if not be completely non-existent.

These people had got hard hearts - believer, is your heart hard through prayerlessness? I tell you: sometimes our hearts are so hard that we don't even feel how hard they are, we're oblivious to it. God can come graciously and warm our hearts, and thank God that He has done it with me time after time again, for I needed it. My friend, you need it tonight, you need to get on the dust and on the dirt, and realise that God will never plant a seed of His life upon soil that is hard and unbroken in spirit. You've got to break up that fallow ground, you've got to come before the Lord: 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy'. This is a misnomer to people, it's a contradiction in terms. We saw it on Sunday: how can brokenness bring you blessing and happiness? It's the opposite that is the truth: that if you don't have brokenness you'll be miserable! It is tears and brokenness that brings joy to your heart!

Many a believer has relegated brokenness to their immature Christian past, in the past, at one time - and they have to say tonight: 'Where is the blessedness I knew, when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His word?'. If we want revival, one principle of revival is brokenness of heart: 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you'. Listen my friend tonight, saved or unsaved, one thing is for sure: it's time to seek the Lord! Time is short for you, you don't know the day or the hour that He will call your soul from you. Your life is a vapour, here for a moment and gone, and the Lord is coming very soon - another reason for getting right with God as quickly as possible.

Repentance is found here, and that's what we need to do if we want to get back to the path of prayer. The second thing that's found is reflection. What a prayer of confession and praise this is: note the constant repetition. In verse 6, if you look at it, through to 15 the word 'and' is found I don't know how many times - maybe some of you will count it for me, but don't do it

now! There are many times, and really what the pray-er is doing is, he's reflecting on God's goodness - and he just goes on and on: 'and...and...and...and...and', because of the bountiful manifold goodness and mercy of God. But then there's a problem, verse 16, this conjunctive word 'but', but...all of God's goodness 'But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments'. You see, the goodness of God is meant to lead us to repentance.

Whether you're not saved or are saved, there's a danger that your heart can be stubborn, proud and unyielding to what you know is right and God's will for your life - whether it's being saved, or whether it's being broken. You need to be careful, Proverbs 29:1 says: He that hardeneth his neck, he can be cut off, he can be destroyed, cut down suddenly. You might think this doesn't happen, but it is happening all the time. My dear friend, take the warning. Then next in verses 26 to 32, he goes on to say what God did for them regardless of their rebellion - and that's what God's grace is! You can be sticking your fist in the face of Almighty God - and this is the wonderful thing about Him! The BBC are afraid to talk about Mohammed and the Muslims, why? Because they'll get a letter bomb, or maybe worst of all their heads cut off - but they can throw all the blasphemy and vile sacrilegious nonsense at the Lord Jesus Christ, why? Because He's merciful, He's gracious, He's long-suffering, He's slow to anger. He hung on a cross, bled and died for them, and so He gets it in the teeth all the time.

Even in their rebellion here, God is merciful - that's the story of grace. It's toward us all, in our indifference, in our coldness, hardness of heart toward God - but you know, believer, can I just say something? In this context, in the Old Testament, God was outside the people. He didn't come and dwell in their bodies as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, He dwelt in the Temple and the Tabernacle that they had around them - but isn't it sobering, and it should be devastating to us, to think that we, if we're saved, are the Tabernacles of the Holy Ghost and He dwells inside us? Yet we can still be hard, we can still be indifferent. Do we ever take time to reflect upon the goodness of God, reflection that will actually affect us and melt our hearts?

'Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word'.

This is a problem we have today - and I have it like the rest of you. We have all the mod cons that were invented, supposedly, to give us more time - and we get so many mod cons that we've no time to do anything else but operate them and pay for them. Very few of us find time to be before God. Verse 3 says they took hours in the word of God, three hours, then they took three hours in prayer and worship - three hours searching their hearts! Three hours worshipping God! One man has said: 'The word was first, and then prayer', and there is a danger that if you have the word of God and you neglect prayer, like many today, you'll become heady and knowledgeable and doctrinal, and likely to quarrel about this point and the other point, and occupied with theoretical Christianity to the hurt of your soul, and even to the irritation of other brethren and sisters in Christ. There is a danger the other way: if you've got prayer and neglect God's word, you can become introspective and mystical, and sometimes fanatical. But they had this balance, and you find that revivals that had the longest lasting results had this balance - the word of God and prayer!

Is it in your life? I'll tell you: if it is, it will take time. It will take time for the spirit of prayer to get hold upon your heart. Nehemiah, before he even started building the walls of Jerusalem, spent four months in uninterrupted thought, reflection upon what God wanted to do in his life. Before he set a brick upon a brick! When the opposition came from the enemies of God, he thought it over first before he acted. It's all teaching us that we must give time, take time -

and boy, what an exercise it would be for we believers to set aside one day away from the normal daily tasks and show the Lord, just for one day, that fellowship with Him is more important than anything else in the world is. That would be fasting, in a sense, and maybe we could set aside, if we could, our dinner as well, or maybe another meal - and cry unto God, and show Him: 'I want You more than my steak and kidney pie! I want You more than my television programme! I want You more than the news! I want You more than the shops!'. Is that the message God gets from us? Do we take time to reflect on God's goodness, and go back over the story of our life, and the milestones in the past? This is a principle of revival: counting God's blessings, seeing God's goodness, taking time to reflect on Him.

'O the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend'

How long has it been since you spent even an hour in the word of God and prayer? Oh, we needn't talk about revival if there's no repentance, or reflection in our prayer life. But something else here: recognition, verses 33 and 38. They looked into the face of God, and they had to say to this terrible God: 'Thou hast done right', verse 33, 'but we have done wickedly'. What they were saying, to put it in our vernacular, was: 'Yes Lord, You're right, and I'm wrong'. Unsaved person: can you bring yourself to that problem, that great dilemma that human beings have? To say: 'I'm not going to go my way any more, but I'm going to go Your way. Lord, You're right and I'm wrong!'. Conversion happens when we stop arguing with God, and revival happens in the life of the believer when we drop all controversy that we have between us and our Lord. Have you ever got to that place, believer, since you were saved? That place of surrender?

Dr Alan Redpath said he was often asked the question by people: 'What is the unpardonable sin?', and he said, 'I've only one answer: the sin you won't confess'. You can go through 20 years of life, perhaps, covering it up, refusing to recognize it - what is it? Am I touching on something - I haven't even mentioned the word, the particular sin, the issue - but there is something in your life, believer, and you know fine well, and God is giving you now what it is, and it's the very thing that you won't let go of! For revival a price must be paid: open sin in the assembly has to be confessed openly. Sin against another has to be confessed to that person. Sin against God, and all of those things aforementioned are sins against God, but they have to be confessed to Him. We need, as believers, every day, and perhaps periodically from time to time to more excess, do a spiritual MOT, an inventory of our lives where we're at - it's the price of revival, and it doesn't make you morbidly introspective, or it shouldn't, it should lead to action that we see in chapter 10 and verse 29. Look at it: 'They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes'.

This business of repentance, reflection, recognition, it led to action! They didn't sit in the doldrums, they repented, they got on with God. My friend, that can happen for you tonight. I have a firm belief now, I have a firm belief that any and every believer can know personal revival this very night - I believe it. For I don't think personal revival is anything different than the normal Christian life that the New Testament sets forth. The problem is: we have got a subnormal Christian existence.

Finally - repentance, reflection, recognition, and restoration. Obedience touched every part of their lives. It touched their home life, their social life, their church life, their congregation life. Repentance is not simply an emotional upheaval, it leads to action! Verse 30 of chapter 10,

they covenanted 'that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons'. It affected their domestic lives, their families were restored; they got their family altar together, where they worshipped God and read the word and prayed to the Lord - it had been broken down! Oh, that is in desperate need of repair in all our homes, isn't it? We all get so busy that we shut out our family time before God. We need to bring back that discipline to the home life. Husbands need to pray with their wives, wives with their husbands. We need to pray with our children.

Family life was affected, but social life was affected. In chapter 9 in verse 2 we see this: they separated themselves as the seed of Israel 'from all strangers', who were pagans worshipping other gods, 'and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers'. Their social life was affected, the friends that they were hanging around with. Now we are to befriend unsaved people and try to win them for Christ, but sometimes unsaved people can drag us down into the mire. John Wesley, before he was saved - now think about this - before he was saved, when he was a student at Oxford University, said he would only have friends who would help him to heaven - and he wasn't even saved! Your friends are taking you to hell, and you'll be in hell on your own - they'll not be able to bail you out. Are your friends helping you to heaven?

It affected their social life, it affected their congregational life in verse 39 of chapter 10. We read at the end, the people got together and they sang and prayed, and they said 'We will not forsake the house of our God'. The emphasis was on faithfulness, and they gathered together all their gifts and they gave it to the Lord - giving their firstfruits, all that they had. They couldn't enrich God - you can't be saved or revived by giving something, or paying into the church, or doing charitable works - but this was what was happening here: they had failed to do this in the past, they were restoring the things that were broken down. Are you forsaking the assembling of yourself together with the Lord's people? I know you're here tonight, and it's great to see you, but it could be that your habit is not to be with God's people. People say to me: 'Going to meetings doesn't make you spiritual', that's right - but staying away doesn't make you spiritual, that's for sure!

We suffer spiritual leanness when we're not with the congregation of God's people. This revival affected the congregation, this prayer before us tonight reached four directions we have spoken of. It caused them to look up in adoration and praise to God. It caused them to look back with thanksgiving to what God had done in their past in blessing. It caused them to look at the problems, and look into themselves, and cry unto God to look ahead for Him to move. They repented, they reflected, they recognized and they restored. They brought out the book - we saw it last night - and here in chapter 9 they are putting prayer back in the right place. Hovie Lister wrote a song many years ago, and it asks you the question:

'How long has it been
 Since you talked with the Lord,
 And told Him your heart's hidden secrets.
 How long since you prayed?
 How long since you stayed on your knees
 Till the light shone through?
 How long has it been
 Since your mind felt at ease
 How long since your heart knew no burden?
 Can you call Him your friend?
 How long has it been

Since you knew that He cared for you?

How long has it been
 Since you knelt by your bed
 And prayed to the Lord up in heaven?
 How long since you knew
 That He would answer you,
 And would keep you the long night through?
 How long has it been
 Since you woke with the dawn,
 And felt that the day's worth the living?
 Can you call Him your friend?
 How long has it been
 Since you knew that He cared for you?'

Dr J. Wilber Chapman was once preaching in Hereford, England. For days there was a signal absence of the presence of God and conviction of sin in the meetings, however Chapman said that when John Hyde, the missionary from India, visited the district all of a sudden God came to town as well. God and Hyde walked together, hand-in-hand. As a result, when Chapman made an appeal on the first night after Hyde was in the town, as a result 50 men came to Christ. Chapman begged Hyde to come, 'Pray for me', he said. Into a room the two men went after one meeting, Hyde turned the key in the door and turned his face up to God, and then turned the fountains of his great heart open. Chapman adds, I quote: 'I felt the hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God. With upturned face, down which tears were streaming, John Hyde said these words: 'Oh God'. Then for five minutes at least, he was still, and then when he knew he was talking with God his arm went around my shoulder', Chapman said, 'and there came up from the depths of his heart such petitions for men as I had never before heard. I arose from my knees to know what real prayer was'.

Let us pray: Oh Lord, in this moment we are conscious that there are created souls in this gathering that were made to worship, praise, and magnify the Living God - and they have never prayed: 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner'. They are living a life You never intended for them, and it's going to take them to hell - and then they will pray, but You will not hear. There are believers here and, Lord, they - oh, they maybe said their prayers today - but it's been a long time since they really prayed. God, we must confess, I confess that so often I engage in vain repetition as the heathen do - oh God, give us hearts that are broken, repentant, cause us to reflect upon Your goodness until we are almost translated to greater heights of ecstasy in Your presence as we think of the great God we have, the blessings that we are blessed with in heavenly places in Christ. Lord, may we recognize what is lacking in our lives, and restore the things that need to be put right. Lord, You are here, may Your presence not be wasted on any of us. For Jesus' sake we pray, Amen.

 Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 5

"A Revival In Holiness"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

If you've been with us on previous occasions, you'll know that we started on Sunday morning, really, looking at 'What Is Revival?'. Then we took up a series 'The Revival We Need', and we saw on Sunday night that we need 'A Revival in Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching'. On Monday night, we need 'A Revival in the Bible'; Tuesday night, 'A Revival in Prayer'; and tonight we're looking at 'A Revival in Holiness'. Tomorrow evening we're looking at 'A Revival in Love', and on Friday night 'A Revival in the Holy Spirit'. It has been tremendous to see some of you out every night, and it's a blessing to my heart.

Tonight we're looking at the book of Nehemiah again, for the last time, we'll be turning our attention to other portions of Scripture tomorrow night and Friday night - but tonight we're looking at Nehemiah, and I want you to turn to chapter 9 again just to read the last verse, but we'll be looking primarily at chapter 10 of Nehemiah. So do turn with me, if you don't have a copy of the scriptures don't worry about it, just listen as we read together, and it will come together as we expound it in a moment or two.

So Nehemiah 9 verse 38 - and you remember that they had come to a place of humiliation and repentance, God's people that is, and in verse 38 we left them last night making a sure covenant, an agreement with God: and they *"and write it"*, they wrote it down, *"and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it"*.

Verse 1 of chapter 10: *"Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah"*, and then there's a long, long list that we'll not read just now of the names of the people that sealed this covenant with their name. Then at verse 28 we'll take the reading up again: *"And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and*

our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God".

Let us pray: Father, we thank You for Your word. We acknowledged the other evening that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. Lord, we pray that the inbred profitableness of these words will be opened up by the Holy Spirit now, and applied to all our hearts. Whatever our needs may be personally, those among us without Christ, and without hope in this life and that which is to come, Lord, save them by Your grace. Come by that Holy Spirit conviction, make them aware of the need of Christ. Oh God, we pray for Your own people, and we have a great need too, Lord. Oh, every single one of us, Lord, none of us can say we have no need of God. Lord, we have great need of more knowledge of holiness. Oh God, we pray that our own eyes would be opened to our own sinfulness, defilement and unworthiness in Your sight. Lord, that we would get not only a glimpse of ourselves, but for one glimpse of ourselves we would have ten glimpses of the Saviour. Lord, that we would see in Him all that we need, and all that has been provided for our holiness and sanctification in Christ. So help us, Lord, oh do something new tonight, Lord, in all our lives. Corporately together may the flames of revival even start, if they haven't already started, may they start tonight. Lord, may each of us be able to say: 'May it start in me'. Oh God, help us we pray, for Christ's sake, Amen.

We're looking tonight at 'A Revival in Holiness'. Now, if you don't know what 'revival' is, let me just reiterate it again: revival is for God's people, it's for Christians. You can't revive a dead corpse, there's no life in it. Revival is for those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, but have grown cold in their faith and need to be stirred up again, set on fire afresh for God. But just in case there are folk here with us tonight and you're not saved, I want you to understand that we are not preaching that you should seek after holiness - far from it. Yes, the Bible teaches that God is the holy God. Right from the very beginning of this book God is set forth to us as holy, holy, holy - thrice holy, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is depicted as the God who cannot look upon iniquity. That doesn't mean that He doesn't see our sin, what it means is: He takes no pleasure or delight in our sinfulness. The whole message of the Bible is that, because of our sin, we are estranged from this holy God. Our sins and iniquities have come between us and God.

Sin, therefore, had to be dealt with - and that was a great problem for the human race: their sin. If I can say it reverently, this is the great problem for the Almighty Holy God: our sin. God loves us, but God is a holy God and He cannot contravene His own nature of holiness. This is where the message of the Christian gospel comes in, because God came in the person of His own Son, Jesus Christ. He died on the cross, He Himself was separated, in some strange way forsaken by God at Calvary, because He was bearing in His own body our sins on that tree - and that's why He cried out: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'. Now He answered the question Himself in Psalm 22 where that was prophetically uttered: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?', verse 1, in verse 3 the answer comes, 'For thou art holy'.

Because God is holy, He can't just, you see, sweep the sin under the carpet. He can't just wipe the slate clean, He has to be just and deal with sin! Yet because He loves us, and He is long-suffering, and He is not willing that any man, woman, boy or girl should perish, He himself was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. He took the rap Himself, went to the cross in the Lord Jesus Christ, and bore our sins, took our shame. Mrs Alexander put it like this:

'He died that we might be forgiven.
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to Heaven,
Saved by His precious blood'.

You see, we cannot become holy in and of ourselves - that's why Christ had to die on the cross, that's why He had to take our sin. If you never understood this, we call it 'imputation' - but don't be confused by that big word. When Jesus Christ, on the cross, took the burden of my sin and your sin, the great exchange was potentially there - that, if we have faith in Him and trust in Him alone, He can give us God's righteousness back. If we acknowledge that He took our sin, and trust Him alone for our salvation, he gives us the righteousness, the holiness of God Himself. That's amazing! So that when God looks down upon us as sinners, He sees the pure and spotless life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that's wonderful, surely that's worthy of a 'Hallelujah', child of God tonight? This is judicial forgiveness, it means that in God's court of law, if you like, we are forgiven. We have been declared righteous, not because of anything that we can do, but because of what He has done and we are trusting in that. My friend, are you trusting in that tonight? That is the only thing that can save you. A modern chorus asks the question:

'How can I be free from sin?
Lead me to the cross of Jesus!
How can I be pure within?' - Not through works, not through ritual, not through religion!
'Lead me to the cross of Jesus!'

But though it costs nothing to become a Christian, it costs everything to be a Christian - there's a difference. It's by faith alone that we are saved, but Jesus Christ didn't just die to make converts, He died to make disciples. He didn't just die to cleanse our sins in the past, but He died to give us power over sin in the present, and even deliver us from the very presence of sin in the future. You see, this is a complete salvation in this Bible. When we get saved God gives us a divine nature. Now what that simply means is: He implants within our hearts His own life. You see, we can't live holy lives in and of ourselves - that's why we are indwelt, the Bible teaches us, by the Holy Spirit. He comes into us, but the old sin nature is still there. You see, when we become Christians, whether or not we live practically holy lives is really down to the issue of which nature we feed. Whether we feed the sin nature and try to breathe new life into something that Christ has put to death on the cross, or whether we feed the new nature and allow God's Holy Spirit to live the very life of God through us.

Believer, what nature are you feeding? Do you need a revival in holiness? Brian Edwards, in his book 'Revival', said: 'God looks for men who will be willing to surrender anything and everything, so long as their life can be kept clean. Without exception, those whom God uses in revival are men and women who fear God and sin, and nothing else. They take seriously the command 'Be holy', God says, 'as I am holy'. Great revivalists of the past all had this emphasis on personal holiness. John Wesley declared in 1734: 'My one aim in life is to secure personal holiness, for without being holy myself I cannot promote real holiness in others'.

Incidentally, that was four years before his conversion! David Brainerd recalls a time when among the Indians in North America at night, before a pagan festival, he went to the woods to be alone with God. His experience during that night reveals the kind of men that God can trust with revival, holy men. He said: 'All things here below vanished, and there appeared to be nothing of any considerable importance to me but holiness of heart and of life, and the conversion of the heathen to God. All my cares, fears and desires which might be said to be of a worldly nature disappeared, and were in my esteem of little more importance than a puff of wind. I exceedingly longed that God would get to Himself a name among the heathen, and I appealed to Him with the greatest freedom that I knew, that I would prefer Him above my chiefest joy'.

Are you there, believer? Duncan Campbell describes his own experience of surrendering fully to Christ. He was shot from his horse and seriously wounded in one of the last cavalry charges of the Great War. While a Canadian trooper was carrying him on horseback to the casualty clearing station, Campbell reviewed his life and saw how empty it had been - even as a Christian. He prayed Murray M'Cheyne's prayer: 'Lord, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be'.

Now in chapter 10 of Nehemiah we have something akin to that, for if you count the names - 84 men put their seal to this covenant - they wanted God, and they wanted people, God and people to know they were serious about obeying God's word and living holy lives! The signatories of this declaration of dependence on God, after Nehemiah's signature, were the names of 22 priests between verses 1 and 8, 17 Levites from verses 9 to 13, 44 leaders of the people from verses 14 through to verse 27 - and by the way, these names are not exhaustive. We see from verse 28 that these names only represented whole families, so there were more involved in this covenant with God.

Now we have seen already that reading God's word is important, chapter 8 - 'Get out the book!', they said, that was their cry, 'Bring out the book!'. They opened God's word and they started obeying it again. We need to get back to the book if we're going to see revival. We saw last evening in chapter 9 that praying was important: they had to repent, they had to reflect, they recollected, and they reconstructed the things that had been broken down in their lives. So they were putting prayer back in its place - but now we're seeing that they actually took pen and paper and wrote down their intentions. They signed a covenant that they wanted to be totally obedient to the Lord and separate from the world!

You've probably been hearing a lot today about the United States of America, and the President-elect - but when the US Declaration of Independence was signed, that did not establish the country's independence. The US Declaration of Independence merely stated an intention, a cause and a reason for action. It had to be converted into fact, and that was done by force - the War of Independence. What an illustration that is to us Christians, for many times we have been to meetings just like this, many times we have heard God's word and we have been stirred and we've been blessed. Maybe you're here tonight, and you're not saved, and there have been times that your heart has been touched by God, and His grace and His forgiveness that you've heard about, and the precious blood of Christ that was shed for you because God loves you - and yet you, and even the believer in a similar position, walks out the same way they came in. You've heard God's word, you've been stirred by God's word, but you've failed to obey God's word.

This declaration in chapter 10 affected whole lives, and that's what Christianity is meant to do. It's not Sunday-go-to-meeting, and in the midweek maybe if I'm a really strong believer -

that's not Christianity. Christianity is for the whole man, salvation is to save the whole man - for God wants the whole man, Jesus died for the whole man! Vance Havner said: 'Most church members live so far below the standard, that you would have to backslide to be in fellowship with them. We are so sub-normal, that if we were to become normal, people would think that we were abnormal!'

This dedication of the people was public, and it was also specific. Generally it affected their attitude to God's word, they were going to obey it - but what I want you to see tonight is: specifically, this declaration affected three areas of their life. First of all, the home; second, society; and thirdly, their worship. Now let's deal with these one by one. First of all: it affected the home. Their behaviour, specifically, in their marriages. Verse 30, look at it, they declared in this signed document: 'that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons to marry'. So here the Israelites were making this covenant that they would keep their relationships swept clean from foreign influence.

Now, can I say something to you? At the very beginning of time God created a man and He created a woman, and He instituted marriage - not society, God did. God planned it, He blessed it, He ordained it, and from the very beginning of time it has been the devil who has attempted to destroy it - and he's still doing it today right across our land. I believe the latest statistics are in our own province that one out of every three marriages now end in divorce, and the staggering thing is - believers - that the statistics aren't any different, I'm led to believe, in the church.

Now, from experience, Israel knew that this was their Achilles heel - for the young men in Israel were no different to anywhere else in the world, and when they saw a beautiful girl it didn't matter what background she had, or what nation she was from...the red blood started pumping. Many of these young girls that these young Israelites were marrying and setting up home with, it didn't matter in one sense that they were a different race - God's not racist - what God was concerned with was that they followed different gods, they worshipped pagan deities and idols, and often they worshipped these idols in great immorality and practices that are so vile we couldn't even mention them tonight. So they were exchanging sons and daughters, and with that exchange in marriage came an exchange of religious beliefs - and eventually their fidelity to the God of Israel, Jehovah, had been diluted.

Now many great men of God have been affected in this way: King David, King Solomon fell. They weren't the first, and they won't be the last. Yet the injunction is still given in the New Testament to God's people: 'Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers'. This principle needs to be stressed today, because there is such an increasing blurring of the lines between light and darkness. Holiness ought to affect our homes, holiness ought to affect our behaviour in marriage, holiness ought to affect all our relationships among family and friends. Can I ask you tonight: is there purity in your home? It's all right coming to a meeting with a Bible under your arm, and a suit on, and a big ten gallon hat - but what happens when the door is closed?

There is a severe problem, I think I mentioned it to you before, but I only mention it again because it is such a serious problem. The internet - whilst God is using it, and I know that - the internet has proliferated such vileness into homes that is unimaginable, inconceivable. Now all of us - but for the grace of God go I - because we're all susceptible to it. All of us, to a man - in particular - have fallen in the flesh, if not in the deed, by the eye, and the Lord Jesus said that's as much adultery as anything! But there is this anonymous sin, internet pornography - and I'll tell you: there are Christians that are in the grip of it. They're so ashamed that they can't seek out help, and I want to tell you tonight: if you have a problem

with this, don't you be ashamed, because we're all only sinners saved by grace - and you need to get help before it destroys you, before it destroys your marriage, before it destroys your children.

But can I take this a step further, because it doesn't have to be the internet - it can be The Sun and The Star newspaper that some Christians read, imagine it! It could be television programmes - and we're all susceptible to this when we're on a lazy night and we're flicking through the channels, and something comes on and we just sit there and watch it! Now listen carefully: the immorality that marked these idolatrous pagan gods was a fertility cult that worshipped sex. I tell you: our nation worships a lot of things these days, but one of the things is definitely sex. It can get such a grip on believers lives, because it's everywhere around us - immorality on every hand, and all of us need to keep purity in our homes. Listen, can I appeal to you - and I'll come up against the teenage years very soon with my children, and I know it's easier preaching like this than dealing with it - but if you can, in all your power, keep a computer and a television out of their room, you make sure you do that.

What about purity in our relationships? There was a university study taken very recently, I believe, in the United Kingdom universities. It was a survey taken among 'evangelical' students and Roman Catholic students. They were comparing these students who had religious profession of one kind or another, with students that didn't have - and they found that there was no percentage of a difference between professing students and those who had no faith, regarding those who went into marriage without their virginity intact. Purity in relationships: listen, if Christians aren't any different from the world, how are we ever going to have revival?

What about purity in our attitude? The apostle Peter said, speaking of the home, if a relationship isn't right between a Christian husband and a Christian wife, our prayers will be hindered. It's serious, isn't it? Holiness affects the home. We can have all the holiness meetings we like, but if it doesn't touch the kitchen table, and it doesn't affect our habits, and it doesn't affect what we do in our leisure time - sure, what's it worth anyway?

It specifically affected their behaviour in their marriages and in their home in general, but secondly: it affected the whole society, because this declaration affected the behaviour on the Sabbath day and the sabbatical year. Verse 31: 'If the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath', that's what they declared, they wouldn't buy them, 'or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt'. Charles Swindoll says that for Israel to be holy in an unholy world, they had to learn to resist the powerful urgings psychologists call 'herd instinct' - doing what everybody else does, because they do it! Herd instinct is the pressure to conform to our peers, usually in order to avoid ridicule and rejection. Boy, how powerful is the herd instinct! Dr Ruth Berenda did a study on one occasion, and she got several groups of ten teenage young people. She brought them all together, group by group, and she said: 'Now, I'm going to bring you into a room, and I'm going to show you ten lines on a blackboard. I want you all to put your hands up when I point to the longest line on the blackboard'. They all agreed to this, but what one poor soul of the ten didn't know was that the rest of the nine had been taken off in secret, and told not to put their hand up to the longest, but to put their hand up to the second longest. So through each of these groups of ten, they made this experiment, and they found that there was one poor soul - when everybody put their hand up for the second longest line, they looked around them, and you could see their eyes bouncing, and maybe the sweat breaking, and the hand starting to rise. They knew, point of fact, that it wasn't the longest line - but everybody else had their hand up, so they put their hand up. In

75% of the cases, that's what happened.

You see how strong peer pressure can be. Dear unsaved friend here this evening, I said last night that John Wesley - even before he was saved - said when he was in Oxford University that he would only have friends that would help him to heaven. Are your friends taking you to hell, or are they giving you a hand up to the glory? The sad fact of the matter is, believers, it's not just unsaved people that are affected by peer pressure, but it seems today that Christians are judging standards of holiness upon what others are doing. Now this is tragic, churches are doing the same - such-and-such a church does this, so it must be OK; or such-and-such a place of worship has stopped doing that, so it's OK for us to cease - beware! I'll tell you: beware if we are in the Conservative crowd, and we think that we are all right - because you can have this same mistake in the pride of right position doctrinally, when you feel that you're being directed by God's word, and you've got it all right, and all the 'i's are dotted and all the 't's are crossed. Do you know something? You can be dead right, 'dead' being the imperative word! You see, you can have the doctrine right and the life is not. What counts is that we are obedient and subject to God's word. It doesn't matter where we belong in a sense, if the life is not intact in holiness for God.

Alan Redpath said: 'Is it not a fact that to many the voice of the Assembly has been louder than the voice of God in holy Scripture? Is it not a fact that the traditions of the elders have, in critical times, been more relied on than 'Thus saith the Lord?'. So often, wherever we come from in church experience, we can miss the truth of separation, and we can be satisfied with being ecclesiastically separated from the established church, or physically separated from the world - while socially in our everyday humdrum mundane life, we're no different than our neighbours, we're no different than anybody else. What about business? Sure, the list is as long as I can think of, of the businessmen that are professing believers, and they'd cut your throat as quick as look at you! They'd walk all over you to make a pound, and the testimony of Christ is in disrepute because of businessmen, at times, who operate just like the Philistines! A sore point in our land is politics, and for too long - I'll tell you - the Gospel has been misunderstood as being something political. Can I say to you: the gospel has got nothing to do with politics. I'll tell you something better than that: do you know what politics is? It is the greatest manifestation of the world that I've ever seen. It is worldliness personified! Some are very quick to hammer other churches, and don't realise that they are in marriage with the world and it's affecting their spiritual lives.

What about the entertainment that we enjoy? Would we let a drunkard into our home? Would we let a man that swore like a trooper sit and talk to our children? But we watch it on the television, don't we? What about the soaps that will never make you clean? Every single one of them revolves around a public house, and yet you never seem to see anybody drunk! This is serious when we consider this. What about the clothing we wear? The immodesty at times that is seen even in places of worship, the company we keep, the language we use - what does it matter if we're separated from the crowd, or the other crowd, or physically the world, if we don't know this true holiness within our hearts? We can be correct, but there might be other people less correct and they're more holy!

We can go with the crowd like anybody, and it's a dangerous principle on which to live your life - to go with the crowd - remember Peter succumbed to the herd instinct, when? When Pilate, the enemy of the Jews, and Herod united together in an ungodly alliance against Christ - and Peter went along with the crowd! That's democracy for you. You see conformity to the world means that God's people lose the distinction of who they are. Conformity with the world and loss of distinction go hand-in-hand. Now the day of distinction for Israel was the Sabbath

day, but the lines of that distinction have been blurred. At the very beginning of time in creation, God established a principle that one day in seven should be a day of rest. After the exodus from Egypt God gave the Sabbath day as a gift to Israel, as a sign of their special covenant relationship with God as a nation. So the observation of the Sabbath, Saturday, carried a certain spiritual overtone. It was more than just having a rest for your physical well-being, but it spoke of a testimony that they had toward God.

Now the Christian celebrates the first day of the week, and it's also meant to be a memorial of a new creation. This is something you need to hear, unsaved one: the Jews kept the Sabbath day, which is the seventh day, which is a Saturday. They worked the whole week, and they could only rest at the end of their work - that's the law. But we keep the first day, why? Because we rest on a finished work, there is no work for us to do - and everything derives from something that is already done. Don't you be working for your salvation, it's finished. Jesus, our Lord, rose from the dead on the first day, and He brought to bear an entirely new order. Following His resurrection, almost every significant development in the life of the early Church took place on the first day of the week. If the Sabbath for Israel was a witness to surrounding nations that they were different, that they belonged in covenant relationship to Jehovah, in a similar way the first day of the week is telling people around us that we belong to the Lord, that it's the Lord's Day, it's special.

Now the Sabbath was hedged about with many observances and rules and rituals that we are not under in this age, but the fact of the matter is: we can learn an awful lot about how we should behave on the Lord's day by considering what the Lord Jesus did. What did He do? After His resurrection, between His resurrection and His Ascension, those 40 days - look at what He did on the Lord's Day, look at what the early believers did on the first day of the week. It gives us guidance as to how we should observe the Lord's Day, there is a pattern from the Lord and the apostles as to how the day should be spent in worship, in service to God, in meeting with God's people. It ought to be a different day than any other day!

Now, I know people have to work, some folk, but a lot don't - a lot don't. There's something else in verse 31, the seventh year - this had to be kept. Now what they would do was, the leaving of the seventh year, they wouldn't plough and sow the fields, they would leave it to settle and to rest. Now, what does that matter? Well, it was showing, imagine this, a whole year - they didn't have supermarkets, they didn't have GM crops, they didn't have mass produce, they were subsistence farmers, they lived off the land themselves, they provided for themselves - so they went a whole year without a harvest, that's living by faith if ever there was!

Now don't think living by faith is something that itinerant preachers do, it is something believers are meant to do. It just simply means - this seventh year left - we are to hold loose the things of this world, hold them loosely and be ready to let them go when the Lord asks. Now, what we are really saying here is: this holiness covenant challenged their relationship with society - and I'm asking you tonight as believers, are we any different from the world at all?

Thirdly and finally - it affected not only their home, and their society, it affected their worship: their behaviour toward God, their support of the Temple, verse 32. They brought the things that they hadn't done before that they should have done. They brought, in verses 33 to 39, gifts and sacrifices for ministry. Now nine times Israel's place of worship, the Temple, is mentioned. Verse 39 sums up really, at the end, their attitude, they said: 'We will not', we covenant and sign, 'that we will not forsake the house of God'. You've got to understand

something: this is not the house of God, you see this building? It's only bricks and mortar. No church building is a house of God, now understand that. God used to dwell in temples made with hands, but God has got a new Temple now - and the church of Jesus Christ is not a building, it's not a denomination, it's a body of redeemed people, living stones that He's placing together for His glory. He has put into them His life, His Spirit! But individually that's the same: the believer's body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now, dear unsaved friend, if you've ever tried to kick a habit, or you've ever tried to overcome a sin - this is what you're missing: you need the Holy Spirit in your heart. You need God's life, the only life that pleases God is His own life. He is the only one who can give you the power, John 1 verse 12: 'To as many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons and daughters of God, even to as many as believe on his name'. But believer, you're the walking Temple of the Holy Ghost - and therefore it ought to affect where we go, it ought to affect what we say, what we think, what we do. Believers, whether they like it or not, even those that are as carnal as goats, are carrying the presence of God into ungodly places. It's serious.

When we are right with God, we'll be like the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we'll support God's work, we'll support God's house, God's people, and we will not neglect the house of God. But here's something else, Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 says there is an expected worship of us all, and it's not coming on a Sunday morning and a Sunday evening, it's presenting our bodies, our whole selves, wholly unto God, acceptable unto God, in His will giving ourselves unto God - have we done that? Paul is more or less saying: you'll not get a pat on the back for doing this, it's expected.

Do you not agree with me that we need a revival in holiness? I need, I need a revival in holiness. The island of Lewis, before the awakening, the revival, was in dire straits spiritually. This was a place that had experienced refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and had begun to grow cold and indifferent. The view of the situation as being dire was shared by the Free Church Presbytery of Lewis who, in the following declaration in the Stornoway Gazette and West Coast Advertiser, publicly expressed their deep concern for the need of holiness. Now I'm quoting this to you, and with this I finish: 'The Presbytery of Lewis, having taken into consideration the low state of vital religion within their own bounds, and throughout the land generally, call upon their faithful people in all their congregations to take a serious view of the present dispensation of divine displeasure manifested - not only in the chaotic conditions of international politics and morality, but also and especially in the lack of spiritual power from Gospel ordinances, and to realise that these things plainly indicate that the Most High has a controversy with the nation!' It went on: 'The Presbytery affectionately plead with their people, especially with the youth of the church, to take these matters to heart and to make serious inquiry as to what must be the end should there be no repentance! They call upon every individual, as before God, to examine his or her life in the light of the responsibility which pertains to us all - that haply, in divine mercy, we may be visited with a spirit of repentance and may turn again unto the Lord whom we have so grieved with our iniquities and waywardness'.

Next year will be the 150th anniversary of the 1859 revival in Ulster, and there will be great commemorations - but really there should be commiserations, because the only thing that stops a revival is sin. This anniversary teaches us that there must be 150 years of sin, that we haven't had a visitation of God since 1859.

Let's bow our heads. Now I know that a great deal of what I have said is to believers, but you

know it applies to you, my dear friend, if you are still in your sin and have never been delivered from it. Don't you try to be holy now, you can't be holy, none of us can be holy in our flesh. You must come to the foot of the cross, you must bow there in brokenness and humility and confess your sin, and take the salvation that is a free gift that God offers to you - true life, and He will put His own life in your bosom. He will live His life through you. People say: 'Ach, I don't think I could keep it' - it's not you keeping it, it's Him keeping you. Would you let Him in tonight to cleanse you from the inside out, to know what it is to be holy? But believer: what responsibility there is upon us! We are meant to be holy priests, royal priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices. Where are we? Can you pray like M'Cheyne tonight: 'Lord, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be'? Do you know something? I believe this: you can be as holy as you want to be, you can be as holy as you want to be. God wants you holy, so He's not the obstacle - the problems are always on our side, aren't they? Surrender, bring your dirty cup to the Lord now, offer it up, be cleansed in the blood and filled by the Spirit, and you'll not regret it. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 6

"A Revival In Love"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

We have taken a series this week, 'The Revival We Need', and oh how we need a revival. On Sunday morning we looked at the subject, 'What Is Revival?'; Sunday night, we looked at the need for 'A Revival in Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching'; Monday night, the need for 'A Revival in the Bible'; Tuesday night, the need for 'A Revival in Prayer'. Last night we looked at how there is a great need for 'A Revival in Holiness', and tomorrow evening is going to be an important night - now every night is important, but tomorrow evening we're looking at the need for 'A Revival in the Holy Spirit'. I will be focusing in particularly on the doctrine of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. There's a great deal of confusion about these days concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Now I'm not going to iron out all the creases tomorrow evening, but one thing I'll seek to do is: get beyond all the debates and see our great need for the Holy Ghost. We want to seek to get to the root of our great need of divine power in our personal lives, in our churches, and in our land. We can't have that without the Holy Spirit. So come tomorrow night if you haven't planned to, and make it a date tomorrow evening.

Tonight, a very important subject, the need for 'A Revival in Love'. So we're turning to Matthew's gospel chapter 22, just as a launching pad, if you like, for this great subject: the need for a revival in love. Matthew chapter 22, please, and beginning to read at verse 34: *"But when the Pharisees"*, that's the religious crowd, the sect of the Jews that were very strict and exclusive, and almost were trying to trip the Lord Jesus up and put Him to the test, *"When the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence"*, the Sadducees were another crowd that didn't believe in miracles, the resurrection, didn't believe in the supernatural at all, and these two religious groups - among the same religion, the Jews - were fighting against one another. That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Well, the Pharisees thought: 'Oh, He's on our side now, because He shut the Sadducees up'. Then in verse 35, one of these Pharisees *"which was a lawyer"*, and these men were skilled in the Old Testament law and the rabbinical laws of Judaism, they were experts. So this expert *"Asked him a question, tempting"*, or testing, *"him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him"*, now you've got to understand that this is something these boys would have debated to the middle of the night, they would have debated it to every jot and tittle of the law - what is the greatest commandment? Has it got to do with the Sabbath day? Has it got to do with rituals? Has it got to do with sacrifices? Has it got to do with cleanliness? Has it got to do with ceremony? What has it got to do with? *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"*. Can I ask you tonight: do you love the Lord? Do you love the Lord? *"This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"*. We'll end our reading there.

Let us pray: Oh God of love, who has manifest love in the person of Your Son, oh come among us and display Your love in our midst. We know that the apostle Paul could say to the church at Galatia that they had witnessed crucified Christ among them, they saw and understood His love. Lord, may that be our experience tonight, may we see Christ crucified, may we see His love, may we have His love imparted to our souls, shed abroad in our hearts by faith. May we learn what it is to express that love to a world that so desperately needs it

tonight. Oh God, pour out Your divine love on this gathering tonight. Fill our hearts with the love of Christ, and help us now by Your Spirit, we pray, Amen.

The love of God is an inexhaustible subject. Paul the apostle described God's love as four dimensional - it is past knowledge, it is past finding out, no human mind can fathom it, no human heart can hold it. The poet was right when he said that if all the oceans were filled with ink, and the sky above us was one enormous stretch of parchment, and every blade of grass was a quill pen, and every person on earth was a writer - to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky. God is love, that's what John's first epistle teaches us. That's not defining God, it's describing God - it doesn't mean that we bow down and worship love, like many people do in our world today, but it means the God who made us, the God whom we seek to know, the God whom we love and seek to serve: He is, in His epitome and essence, a God who expresses love toward His creation. There is no greater demonstration of this than the fact that the God of heaven sent His only beloved Son into the world, and Romans 5 and verse 8 says that: 'God' manifested, demonstrated, 'commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners', while we were still knee deep, elbow deep in our filth and our rebellious sin against God, God sent His Son to die for us. Sure, there's no greater verse to describe it than John 3:16: 'For God so', that must be one of the smallest words in the English language, but with the greatest meaning in that context: 'so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever', and whosoever means you, my friend, 'whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'.

This is a world in which we live that is dying for a lack of love. Children aren't experiencing it in the home, parents aren't experiencing it from their children, wives aren't experiencing it from their husbands, husbands from their wives. We're not experiencing love in our families, we're not experiencing true love among our friends - we are experiencing something called 'conditional love': 'I love you if you do this, if you do that, if you give me this, if you provide that'. But here is a love that, even when we are in the midst of rebellion and our back is toward God, loved us with a dying love, and yet an undying love. Do you know that love tonight? You have to go to God for it, you'll not find it in romance, you'll not find it with your nose in Mills and Boon or the People's Friend. You'll not find it on the TV screen, or the Hollywood culture that bombards us every day, or the ladies magazines - you'll not find it in there. You'll not find it anywhere, you'll not even find it in the love of your kith and kin - because you'll find out very quickly, if you haven't already, that they can hurt you with deep piercings in your heart. They can desert you, they can dishonour you and disrespect you - and what are you left with?

You must go to God. Poor women are deserted by their husbands; and men, it happens to them too - the love of their life, and their hearts are broken, and they don't know what love is any more. They think they'll never experience it: you need to go to God, my friend, if that's you tonight - go to God, get to Calvary, God is love, and Jesus died for love of you! Does it mean anything to you tonight? I remember meditating one day, just with a Bible and pen and bit of paper, and I just thought of the love of Christ and how so many dear sinful people turn their back on Him. I wrote down this wee verse:

'Nothing to me, love so painful,
Nothing to me that I see,
He the wrath of God Almighty
Drained of all its threat to me.

Can I spurn a love so costly?
Can I turn from Christ who died?
So I come for a full salvation
In the Saviour's bleeding side'.

Have you been there? Oh, you need to get there tonight. But you need to understand as well - all of us, whether we're saved or not - God had a plan in salvation, and it wasn't just to save our souls from hell. He wants us to enjoy Him, He wants us to experience His love. Now we see it at conversion at Calvary, and it ought to overwhelm us as we fall broken at the foot of the cross at such wonderful love. But He wants to take us on, He wants to actually impart into our lives His divine love shed abroad in our hearts. Now the reason for that is that we might enjoy Him in His fullness of love, but there's also a secondary reason, and that is that that imparted love should be expressed and outflow from us to a world of dying sinful people that need to know the love of God themselves.

Now, I don't know about you, but if we're honest I think we'd have to say that in our human flesh, just on our own, it's very hard to love some people in this world. In fact, I would go as far as to say that it's impossible to love some people - just in the flesh, in the natural realm, people that seem unlovable, and we just grate when we even think of trying to love them. This is where we have to stop, right away, believer in particular. I remind you of some of the things I said on Sunday morning - get the recording - one of the biggest obstacles for Christians knowing revival in the fullness of the Christian experience is that they are trying, trying in their own flesh to live the Christian life. Now listen: you cannot sanctify the flesh! The only thing the flesh is good for is crucifying, and it was crucified with the Lord Jesus - but we have to reckon it dead. You've got to understand that you can't work up some kind of love in your heart for people that are unlovable, and even for people that are likeable. You can't do it in and of yourself.

The goal of the gospel message is that God sent His Son to die for us, that we might be made like His Son. Do you know that now? It wasn't just to cleanse us from sin, but it was to conform us to the image of Christ. He wants to manifest His own life and love to others through us. He wants to replace the sin and the self in us with Jesus Himself. So don't you think this is some kind of religious charity or something we're talking about tonight, when we are speaking of love. We are talking about the very love of God that was expressed in Jesus Christ. In Galatians 5 we read of the fruit of the Spirit, now they are the opposite of the works of the flesh that we read there - but we'll not dwell on that - but the fruit of the Spirit starts with love. You find that love undergirds all that fruit of the Spirit - it's not fruits, it's fruit of the Spirit - and it's all really the fruit of love. What we're seeing there is that the fruit of the Spirit is actually the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what God wants to do with us. Imagine, sinner in the meeting tonight, you're not saved, you're unregenerate, you're not born again, you're on the broad road to hell - and yet God tonight, you know what you've done, you know where you've been, but God wants to make you like Jesus!

Boy, that's mighty! He can, because He is God, and His Son bled to purchase it. Don't you doubt He can do it, He can turn your life around in a way that you have never imagined. This is God we're talking about tonight, He is the God of all flesh, and He has said: 'Is anything too hard for me?'. You're not too hard for Him, I can tell you - but you've got to understand that the reason for saving us is that we should be changed into the same image of the Lord, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Let me show you this please, I want to take time over this. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13

please, 1 Corinthians 13 - now you probably had this read at your marriage, you maybe need to read it again. This is the great purple passage on love. A man was reading it at a marriage recently, I think it was Henry Berry of CEF - it just came to mind - and a very educated fellow who was at the wedding came over to him and said: 'You must be a great philosopher or something like that, what were those words that you were reading about love? They were wonderful, could you get me a copy of them?'. He says: 'It's the word of God!'. This is where we are now today, educated people don't even know this brilliant passage on what love is. Now 'charity' here could be replaced by 'love'. Verse 4: 'Charity' or love, 'suffers long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth'.

Now let's do something here, go back to verse 4 and replace the word 'charity' with 'Jesus': 'Jesus suffereth long, and is kind; Jesus envies not; Jesus vaunteth not itself, is not' proud or 'puffed up. Jesus does not behave himself unseemly, does not seek his own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; Rejoices not in iniquity, but Jesus rejoices in the truth. Jesus beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Jesus never fails'. Do you understand? It's the same thing, it's the life of Christ in us!

Right, now go back to verse 4 again: 'David suffereth long..', you put your name in there, 'David is kind...' - I can't go any further, I have to stop at the first one. But keep going: 'David is not proud, not puffed up, does not behave unseemly, does not seek his own, is not easily provoked, David doesn't think any evil. David does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. David bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endured all things. David never fails'. Does that make sense? No, it does not! It's making a lie out of God's word, and yet it ought to be what we long for, because it ought to be our right - it is our blood right in Christ to know the life of Christ in us! Now we will never know that perfection until we see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him - wonder of wonders - but you know the Holy Ghost is meant to be in us, if we're Christians, and this is what the Holy Spirit wants to make me. He wants to produce the love of Christ in the life of Christ in me. So we're not talking about great gifts here, we're not even talking about great service, what we're talking about is character, the character of Jesus in the life of the child of God. Oh, dear child of God tonight:

'If of Jesus Christ their only view,
May be what they see of Him in you,
My soul, what do they see?'

What do they see? Robert C. Chapman was an early pioneer missionary, and he had one great aim and goal in life, he said: 'Seeing so many preach Christ, and so few live Christ, I aim to live Christ'. Later John Nelson Darby said of Chapman: 'He lives what I teach'. What about that? We talk about Christ, and we talk about love, and we talk about compassion - but are we living it? We can't work it up, we must know it by a Holy Ghost manifestation of supernatural agape love, the love of God - nothing else will do! Our paltry pathetic love could never come close to God's love. But you see what we're talking about here tonight is Christ, Christ-likeness. It was said, and this staggers me, of Robert Murray M'Cheyne - and he died younger than I am now - it's said one man remarked of him, having witnessed his character, 'Oh, that is the most Jesus-like man I ever saw'. What a statement!

Ephesians 5:1 says that we are to be imitators of God, we are to copy God. Now we can't do it through the way we copy in pattern, like a son copies a father, this is a supernatural thing -

but we can know this. Richard Sibbes, the puritan, said: 'We are as we love, not as we know'. On Tuesday night we saw M'Cheyne saying: 'A man is what he is on his knees, and no more', and the great puritan is saying, 'We are as we love, not as we know'. It's not how much knowledge you've got in your head, in fact in 1 Corinthians 13 doesn't it say that we can have all knowledge, all service dedicated to the Lord, we can even have all zeal and go, and let our body be burned and martyred for the cause - but it will all be nothing because we've no love. Now that's serious stuff, isn't it?

It's right, you know, when people say - though it's a cliché - 'People don't care how much you know, till they know how much you care'. But Christian, you better believe that's the case out there in the world - they don't care how much of this book you know, unless you're a walking epistle. There is - we have to concur, we can't do anything else - a lack of love among believers, among themselves; and there's a lack of love from believers to the lost. I touched on this on the Missionary Weekend, and I'm not going to cover it again, but this is a great obstacle to revival, and it's a great obstacle to the salvation of lost souls - because people out there, they might be unregenerate, but they're not stupid! They know when you love them, and when you really care.

Now I want to speak of four loves tonight that are enjoined in the Scripture for the believer. First of all we saw tonight in Matthew 22, Jesus said 'Love your neighbour', love your neighbour - we've got to love our neighbours. Now in Luke chapter 10 another lawyer, one of these religious clever-clogs, came to the Lord Jesus and thought they would pin Him down: 'Who is my neighbour?', he asked. Who is my neighbour then? Then we get the great parable of the Good Samaritan, now you know that, I'm sure - even if you're not a Christian tonight. The story went that the Good Samaritan, though he was an enemy by nationality and creed, he loved that poor man who was mugged along the way on the road to Jericho. He loved him more than his acquaintances in his religious system, he loved him more than his kinsmen of nationality, he loved over all those prejudices and barriers. He loved his neighbour.

Now Moses - this isn't something new, the Lord said - Moses, when he was given the Old Testament law way back in the book of Deuteronomy, said that the Jews were to love the stranger or the alien in the land: 'For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt'. Believer, how do we react toward immigrants? How do we react to people of different nationalities, different religions, different cultures than us? We are to love them, we are to love them! Oswald Chambers said: 'If my heart is right with God, every human being is my neighbour'. Who's your neighbour? Everybody, everybody you brush shoulders with, you bump into day by day - and the command is: 'Love your neighbour as yourself!' Boy oh boy, that's dynamite - as yourself! That's the standard you've to love them by, as you love yourself. Now I'm preaching into my own heart, because we all know what it's like at times to have neighbours that are not too neighbourly. The easiest thing that we do, and I have done it, is just to avoid them, give them a wide berth because it's more hassle than it's worth, it seems. Yet here in God's word, what we are seeing is that since we are basically selfish beings, Jesus is wanting us to look at our selfishness and use that as a degree of concern for our neighbour, use it as a measure of love for others.

Didn't Paul say in Ephesians 5 concerning husbands and wives: 'No man yet hated his own flesh'. We all look after ourselves, and you only have to watch the advertisements now to see that men are even putting moisturiser on their face nowadays - it's ridiculous. This is what it says: we take good care of our bodies, don't we? Pristine care, more than ever these days, and that selfishness that we lavish on ourselves, we are to display toward others. The golden rule - now it'll not get you into heaven - but what a rule it is, and you'll not find it anywhere

else in any other religion, faith, or cult, or system: 'Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you'.

Now, that is love that goes beyond safety, it goes outside the comfort zone. We often hear when we lay loved ones to rest that pain is the price of love, isn't it? You loved them, and so when you part from them there is pain - but that is across the board, that's a general principle. Anything that was ever worth anything cost something! How much is our love for our neighbour costing us? How do you love your neighbour, dear Christian friend? How do you love your lost neighbour?

Let me turn the tables around here a wee bit, because I know there's people here that maybe aren't Christians. This is something that is supremely relevant to you, because as I go around preaching and talking to people about their salvation, I have realised very very quickly a long time ago that one of the greatest barriers to people coming to Jesus Christ in our province is hypocrites that call themselves Christians. People that don't love the way they should. Now I'm not saying they are not Christians, God knows those that are His, but there's one thing that is absolutely sure: people who are unloving towards non-Christians, and call themselves Christians, are one of the greatest hurdles to people coming to Christ in our province. There are folk I love very dearly, and have been praying for for years, and I believe this is the reason why they are not coming to Christ - bad Christians.

William MacDonald tells a story, and you might think its coarse, but I have to tell you it because it's true - about a boss, and he was a big preacher fellow, a big businessman. He had a great staff around him, and he was trying to get his secretary along to the meeting on a Sunday night, when he was preaching the gospel. He genuinely wanted to see the girl getting saved - but she couldn't come. She went in on Monday morning to work as usual, and for some reason he got out of the wrong side of the bed, and he snapped erratically at her when she said something. She stormed out of the office, and closed the door behind her, and she was heard to say: 'Aye, that's it, isn't it? Come to heaven on Sunday night, and go to hell on Monday morning!'.

Now that's the way it is, that's the way it is, friends, with many a person. That's the way many feel: that people don't care. Now you might be offended at what I said, but let me tell you: that's the way they feel - that we don't care that they're on the road to hell, and that's not cursing, that's reality! People are lost if we believe this book, and if we are unloving towards them, that's the only thing that is being communicated: 'You can go to hell, I don't care!'. It's serious, but here's the problem unsaved soul: you need to beware, because if this is your hurdle to coming to Christ - we have a saying, you know it, 'You need to be careful you don't cut off your nose to spite your face', or another one, 'Shoot yourself in the foot'. What am I talking about? Well, you're missing the seriousness of the position you are in now before a holy God as a sinner.

What do I mean? Well, you need to realise that the Bible teaches that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. So, you see that boy that's a big hypocrite that's stopping you coming to Christ: he is going to stand before God, and it'll not be eyeball-to-eyeball, his head will be bowed, maybe his face will be prostrate on the ground, and he'll have to answer for what he did. So don't you worry about it, there will be justice one day - but what you need to focus on is: you are guilty of the same sins and greater than the one you're pointing the finger at. 'Oh', you say, 'You're wrong there now'. Paul said in Romans 2 verse 1: 'For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things' - this happens all the time.

Now I know Christians claim to have a greater life than you, and they should live up to it - I'm not excusing what bad Christians do - but you're as big a hypocrite, if you're pointing the finger at them and you're doing the same things. Do you think God is going to ignore that? Dear friend, you've got to understand that there is a principle in God's word, and that is this: the judgement you judge others with, is the judgement that you will be judged with. Aye, but you're guilty perhaps of the same things that they are doing - 'Oh aye, but I don't claim to be a Christian' - listen: you're guilty of worse. 'What do you mean worse?', you've rejected the Christ of God. If there was ever an unpardonable sin, that's it! To turn your back on the bleeding Lamb who came all the way from the splendour of heaven, and went to the rugged cross, and poured out His soul, and went through your hell that you may be saved - and you point the finger at a Christian for taking into you one day? For doing you out of a bit of money? Well, that's serious stuff, and they shouldn't do it, in fact they should be on their face before the cross in repentance, and God will deal with them for that - don't you worry about that - but what you're doing is worse! Trampling underfoot the blood of Christ!

So, you see where I'm coming from now, do you? There's a legend, and it is only a legend, about a Hindu god in India who enchanted an arrow to fly around killing people, and it killed everyone and left no victims. Do you know what happened after that? It then chased him, it tried to destroy him! He spent the rest of his life running from the arrow that he had sent against others. That could happen to you if you're using other Christians as a reason for not coming to Christ, it'll come back to bite you one day, you can be sure of it.

Not only are we enjoined to love our neighbour, but secondly we are commanded to love our brother. I'm not talking about brothers in the flesh, though we're meant to do that - but Galatians 6 verse 10 exhorts believers to do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household faith. Jesus gave what was called a new command, that believers were to love one another as He had loved them. He said: 'If you do that, love each other as I have loved you, by this shall men know that ye are my disciples'. Now you know from what I've already said that to love one another was not a new command, but this was the new aspect to it: that we are to love one another as Christ loved us. That was different.

We are to love our neighbour as ourselves, but this is telling us we are to love our brother as Christ loves us. In 1 John, John again elaborated this love, and he said: 'One who doesn't love his brother, cannot love God'. Now get that into your mind tonight: that epistle is all about fellowship and communion with God, and you can't say 'Oh, I'm full of the love of God', and you have venom against your brother - because you're a liar. Your love for your brother displays your love for God. Your love for your brother or sister in Christ was a dominant theme in the early church, and it was meant to be evidence to the world that they were truly the disciples of Christ. If you like, it was the badge that said on them: 'We are Christians' - they didn't need a 'Jesus Saves' badge, or some fish on their lapel, the love that they had showed what they were.

Describing first century Christians to the Roman emperor, Hadrian, Aristides said: 'They love one another, they never fail to help widows, they save orphans from those who will hurt them. If they have something, they give freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, they take him home and are happy as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers and sisters in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit of God'. How do we measure up to that early Christianity? Vance Havner said: 'Tertullian writes that it was said of early Christians, 'How those Christians love one another!', today the world might sometimes be more inclined to say, 'How those Christians hate each

other!". Is that true? Is that true?

I said to you on Sunday morning, in Genesis 3 communion and fellowship broke down between God and man, and in Genesis 4 communion and fellowship broke down between man and his brother and there was the first murder. It has always been the same, and the only reason for trouble and strife, and personality clashes, and splits and schisms in churches these days - I don't care where it is or what denominational name it is - the only reason for it is the flesh and sin, pride and a lack of fellowship with God. Unity comes in revival, and one of the greatest tests of love to our brother is how we behave toward them, even though perhaps we disagree with them, even though they maybe don't measure up to our standards. This comes home to me, I'm telling you. Someone said: 'Perfect love is slow to suspect' - is that what we are? - 'Quick to trust. Slow to condemn, quick to justify. Slow to offend, quick to defend. Slow to expose, quick to shield. Slow to reprimand, quick to forbear. Slow to demand, quick to give. Slow to provoke, quick to conciliate. Slow to hinder, quick to help. Slow to resent, quick to forgive'. That's the way we should be.

Amy Carmichael, that famous missionary, in her poem 'If' wrote these words:

'If I belittle those whom I am called to serve, talk of their weak points in contrast perhaps with what I think of as my strong points; if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting 'Who made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received?' then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I take offense easily, if I am content to continue in a cool unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I feel bitterly toward those who condemn me, as it seems to me, unjustly, forgetting that if they knew me as I know myself they would condemn me much more, then I know nothing of Calvary love'.

Do we seek to minimise the faults of others? 'Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins'. Could it be that there is a backslider in our meeting tonight, or there is some Christian that has grown cold in their faith - and the reason for it is because bitterness has taken root in your heart, something has been done on you by another brother in Christ - or a Christian, for that matter, maybe you're not saved - and it's your bitterness that's eating you up. It's your bitterness that's crowding out God's love that He wants to pour into your heart. Can I give you a wee lesson that I learned not so long ago, and it helped me immensely: if you look at yourself you're going to despair, that's why you should never look to yourself for salvation or love; if you look to others you'll be disappointed, and I don't care who they are, they will disappoint you one day; but if you look to Christ, you'll be delivered and you'll be delighted - for:

'He is not a disappointment.
 Jesus is far more to me
 Than in all my glowing daydreams
 I had fancied He could be.
 And the more I get to know Him
 So the more I find Him true
 And the more I long that others
 Would come to know Him too'.

He's not a disappointment. Will you look to Him tonight? Don't look to me, whatever you do, don't you look to me - because after a couple of hours looking to me, boy, you'll see something you don't like; you will! Don't look to any man, look to the Son of Man, the Son of God - and I'll tell you: Pilate could find no fault in Him; these Jewish boys that wanted to get Him to death, they got all the trumped up charges they could imagine, but none of the mud stuck because He was blameless, and everybody knew He was blameless. He will not disappoint you, my friend. Are you looking to Christ?

Thirdly: love your family. Love your neighbour, love your brother, love your family. In this book, husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church - what a love! But what might surprise you is that only once - now wives, don't you run away here and say 'David Legge gave me a pretext to not love my husband' - but only once are wives commanded to love their husbands. Further to that: wives are spoken more as to be needing to obey their husbands than love them. That's what God's Word says - you might think: 'Well, that's very strange', well what it is saying is: submission between a husband and a wife, on the side of the wife, is evidence of her love for her husband. Do you understand that? Wait till I tell you ladies: if your husband loves you like Christ loved the church, there will be no trouble submitting.

Then we find that there is a command only once for parents to love children, only once in Titus 2 - isn't that remarkable? But there are several illustrations of that throughout the Scripture: Abraham loved Isaac, Isaac loved Esau, Rebekah loved Jacob, Jacob loved Joseph - and so it's seen more personified in action, and that is the message. What's more important than saying 'I love you', and being told to love, is to show it, to manifest it, to submit and obey and do it! You see, there's a pattern here, and it's interesting again to see that there is no command or injunction given to children to love their parents - it's not there. What children are told, oft repeated, commanded to honour and obey their parents - why? Because that would be the evidence that they loved their parents. So what's the message here? It's not that you don't love, it says there that we should be loving everybody - but what it's getting across is: love is service rather than sentiment.

The best thing I could do for you is to point you to the Master. Just before He was going to die for His disciples and the rest of us, in an Upper Room He took off His outer garment, He girded himself with a towel, He took a basin of water and He washed the dirty stinking feet of those twelve sinful men. He says: 'As I have done to you, so do ye to one another' - service. Do you think that was an easy job, doing that? Do you think loving unlovable people at times is easy? You see, you're understanding now what this biblical love is: it's more volitional than emotional. It's not just having this bubbly feeling in our heart, and then we go out and throw our arms around everybody, and hug them and kiss them, that's not this love: it's more to do with actions than feelings. I tell you: actions are more powerful than feelings, and the feelings will come after the actions - they will come, but the actions have to come first.

You see, this is what Paul meant in Philippians chapter 2, he said: 'Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' - then he goes on to talk about how He left heaven, and became a man, and went to the cross, and bled and died, and took our sin. That's what we're meant to do: it's a choice that we make, even in family, when we deny ourselves and put the family first.

But here's the last love: love your enemy. Love your neighbour, love your brother, love your family, and love your enemy. Loving one another, family and neighbours, is not necessarily of the Spirit of God - did you hear that? Loving your neighbour, your brother, and your family is not necessarily of the Spirit of God - what do I mean? Well, in Matthew 5 the Lord Jesus said: 'If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?'. So if you love your neighbour, and you love your brother, and you love your family, you'd make a good publican - that's a tax collector, they were the despised of the despised in Jesus' day. That's powerful, isn't it? What the Lord is saying here is: 'Look, you can love people that have things in common with you, it's easy to love people in your own denomination, or in your own church'. It's easy to love people who support Manchester United if you support Manchester United. It's easy for people in the world to love folk who go to their bingo hall, because they go to their bingo hall; or go to their local pub, because they go to their local pub - that's something that's right throughout humanity, that's a natural love to love those who love you and like you. But this supernatural love we're talking about tonight goes beyond divisions, it goes beyond tastes, it goes beyond hate, it's the hardest love of all: 'Love your enemies', Jesus said!

He said it will be demonstrated when you bless those who curse you, when you pray for those who mistreat you, when you give generously to those that hate you. You see, love is more than friendship based on mutual admiration, it's more than that. It's loving people that don't like you, and maybe you even feel are hard to like yourself. Do you know something? This is what is tragic, believers: this is the very thing that was meant to mark out the child of God as distinctive, different than anybody else, different than the publicans, different than the sinners - love for their enemies! Now here we are on very touchy ground: we have come through 30 or 40 years of troubles in this land, and many a believer needs to repent that they never loved their enemies. We are in trouble if that's the way we are: how do we stand? This is God's grace personified: 'While we were still sinners', while we were cursing Him, while we were condemning Him, while we were abusing Him, while we were blaspheming Him, God lavished His grace. It was unconditional. A W. Tozer said: 'Perfect love knows no "because" - 'I love you because of this, that and the other'.

Christ loved His enemies when they had no intention of returning it, and we are called upon to do the same. Now answer me a question: why is it that believers are among some of the most begrudging and vengeful people on the face of the earth? Why is that? You answer it for me. Don't tell me they're not, I've come up against them time and time again. You know, if God would deal with us the way we deal with other people, where would we be? The only aggressiveness that the child of God should show is aggressive love, and the punch line of this message would well be the punch line of the Good Samaritan parable: Jesus said, 'Go thou and do likewise'.

Charles Price tells a story of being invited to speak at a conference in Boston several years ago when other speakers were there. Juan Carlos Ortiz was there, and his church is in Buenos Aires, and it started at 300 people and within three to five years there were 3000. It was known as the fastest growing church in Buenos Aires. One day driving past a local cemetery he saw that the cemetery was growing too. Then he realised that they weren't growing, they were just getting fat. He realised that 'We had', he said, '300 largely average unloving Christians, and now we had grown to 3000 largely average unloving Christians - that isn't growth, that's just getting fat'. He was so concerned that he decided to preach a series on love. He went to church for the first Sunday, for the first message, and he was going to look at the different Greek words for love. During the worship service the Lord said to him, 'Don't

preach your sermon'. The worship finished, and he said: 'Brothers and sisters, my text this morning is, 'Love one another'', and then he sat down for two minutes.

The worship leader said: 'Are we supposed to sing another song?'. Then he got up again and he said: 'Brothers and sisters, love one another'. His wife in the balcony thought he'd flipped his lid, and the people obviously were uncomfortable with this. He got up again, and a fourth time said: 'Love one another'. As he went back to his seat, someone on the far side of the church turned to the next person and said: 'Is there any way I could love you?'. Then another did it, and then another, until the whole church erupted. He said that they had 28 unemployed people in the church that Sunday, and every one of them went home with a job. There were single mums, and every one was adopted by a family who said: 'You come and have dinner with us twice a week, and we will look after you'. Many others' needs were met, and he said: 'If I had preached my message on love, at the end people would have come saying, 'Thank you for the way that you preached, I now know the distinction between agape love and filio love' - but 28 people would have went home unemployed, and probably most of the church couldn't have cared less'.

Next week he had the same text, and the same thing happened again. For three months he preached on the same text - do you know what happened? 300 people left the church, they came to the elders: 'We employed this man to feed us, anyone can stand up there and say 'Love one another''. The pastor said: 'The problem is, I've been preaching to you for years and you don't do anything'. At the end of three months, he got up and he said: 'I've a new text today', and they all clapped! 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. People left, got into their cars, drove home, went to their neighbour: 'I am a Christian', they said, 'Is there anything I can do to help you, or pray for?'. There were needs that they couldn't imagine, and do you know what happened? The church office was bombarded with phone calls of unconverted people ringing up and saying: 'Is that the church that's willing to help me, because I've got problems?'.

Do you know the love of God? Has the love of God been imparted to your soul? Are you expressing the love of God to other souls?

Let us pray. Is God speaking to you tonight, unsaved person? Well, all you must do is say: 'Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me. Save me now, I come to You, I accept Your love, I accept Your grace, by faith I just take it'. Just do that, my friend, and that's you, that's you in, that's it - simple faith. Believer, it's no different for you: this isn't to be worked up, this isn't to be a job of going home and starting to do a love workout in your heart, and trying to pluck up the courage to love that unlovable person. You have to get to the foot of the cross, like any sinner, and just be broken and accept it, and let Him live through you. Do it tonight, and God will get the glory - and my, you will get the joy to His glory. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 7

"A Revival In The Holy Spirit"

Copyright 2009
by Pastor David Legge

I believe I've a message that the devil doesn't want me to preach, and we're going to preach it - we pray - in the power of the Spirit. Hopefully it will be a message that will change your life, as a Christian and as a non-Christian - because we're looking tonight at the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We've looked at 'What Is Revival?', we need 'A Revival in Christ-Centred Gospel Preaching', we need 'A Revival in the Bible', we need 'A Revival in Prayer', we need 'A Revival in Holiness', we need a revival, last night we saw, in love - but tonight we're going to see that we need 'A Revival in the Holy Spirit'.

We're going to read from Ephesians chapter 5 please, well-known verses of Scripture - verse 14 through, please, to verse 19 of Ephesians chapter 5. Verse 14 then: *"Wherefore God says, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"*. Maybe you're here tonight, and you're sleeping, you could be sleeping in your sin, you could be dead in trespasses and in sins, as Ephesians chapter 2 speaks. Well, listen, you need to waken up, and you can waken up in the presence of God and realise that Christ has power to deliver you and give you life more abundant and free. Yet this verse, I think, is speaking to believers. Did you ever think of believers as being dead? Paul thought it so.

He says: *"Awake from your sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise"*. Walking circumspectly, I remember a man once saying that it's like cat - if you're from East Belfast you would know this, maybe you cultured folk down here in civilisation wouldn't realise - in the wee streets down Templemore Avenue where our church was, they used to have the entries running up between the houses and the yard, and the toilet was often in the yard. On the walls around the yard there was broken glass, and that was to keep the bad boys out, and maybe to keep the children in - I don't know. But if you had seen a cat walking around the wall of the yard, that's what it is to walk circumspectly: walking carefully around the glass that was implanted there.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is". Isn't it good to know you can know what God's will is? *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"*.

In John chapter 3 a religious man, under the cover of the darkness of night, came to have an interview with the Lord Jesus Christ - and I think some people have been experiencing that this week. It didn't matter that this man came seemingly ashamed of what his friends would think, all that mattered was that he came to Jesus. That's all that matters, friend, tonight: that you come to Christ. You don't have to put your hand up, you don't have to walk down an aisle, you don't even have to speak to the preacher - all you have to do is talk to the Lord, confess your sin, and ask Him to save you. But you know, the Lord Jesus spoke to this religious man about something that was foreign to him, He said: 'Ye must be born again'. You must be born of the Spirit of God.

You see, you can't be saved without knowing something of God's Spirit. We saw last night a little bit about what God's plan is in saving men: Jesus, the Son of God, came incarnate in human flesh to this earth, in order to die the death of every man, to take the sins of every man, to be buried, in three days rise again - and the plan of God has always been incarnation. You need to understand that: He incarnated His own Son in flesh, but what He wants to do is incarnate His own life in our flesh. That's God's endgame: manifesting the very life of Christ in our lives. Do you know anything of that, believer?

You know, to hear some people, you would think being saved was all that mattered. Now it matters a great deal whether you go to hell or go to heaven, sure that's a given, isn't it? But you know conversion, getting saved, being born again, is only the beginning - it is only the threshold experience with the Spirit that introduces us to a lifetime of adventure, of many spiritual experiences and encounters. F. W. Faber, the poet, put it like this:

'Tis not enough to save our souls,
To shun the eternal fires;
The thought of God will rouse the heart
To more sublime desires'.

Now if you're not saved tonight, you need to be saved, you need to be born again: except a man or a woman, boy or girl, is born again, they cannot see - cannot see and will not see - the kingdom of God. But you know, there is an experience taught in the Bible that can be simultaneous with conversion, or can be subsequent to conversion, and it is the fullness, the blessed fullness, of the Holy Spirit. It's mentioned 14 times in the New Testament, 4 times in Luke's gospel - of John the Baptist, of Elizabeth, Zachariah, and of the Lord Jesus Himself. Those are the only occasions that it's mentioned prior to Pentecost. But things changed after Pentecost in a remarkable way. You see the Lord Jesus, before He went to Calvary, before He rose again, before He ascended, said to the disciples in John 14:16-17: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you', He dwelt with the disciples, but after Pentecost Jesus was prophesying and promising, 'He shall be in you'.

Now that was something different than the world had ever seen, and even God's people in history. God's Spirit, the prophet said, would be poured out on all flesh. Anyone who met God on His own terms could be filled by the Spirit. The same is the case with salvation: you've got to meet God on His terms. If you took a vox-pox of people on the street in any given city of our world, and asked them: 'How do you think people can get to heaven, if you believe in heaven?'; if you asked a hundred people, you could come back with a hundred different answers - and that would mean a hundred different religions. Sinatra sang: 'My way', and that's the way people live, isn't it?

An undertaker - I've been having a lot of conversations with them lately - one of them at a funeral was sharing with me about a burial he did recently. He saw an epitaph on a gravestone: 'I did it my way'. This undertaker was a believer, and he just was reminded of that verse: 'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ways thereof are the ways of death'. My friend, you've got to come to God on God's terms, you've got to come to God His way, you've got to put your good works behind you, you've got to forget about any righteousness or indeed any sin that you think might disqualify you. Indeed, your sin is the only thing that qualifies you to come to the Saviour of sinners, the Lord Jesus who died.

But it's the same for the Christian - you see, I don't know whether you've seen this trend going through everything I've been saying these nights: but the thing that gets you saved in the beginning is the thing that keeps you going to the end! You see there is nothing changes, or no new formulas or secrets: the cross of Christ that redeemed you is the very thing that will do everything for you right throughout your whole Christian experience. So God's terms are what have to be met, and they were met in the truest sense in Acts chapter 2 where - I would have to say - the disciples became complete Christians, on the birthday of the church when they became the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and God's Spirit came to dwell and reside in them. From Pentecost on in the New Testament, ten times you find the fullness of the Spirit mentioned, nine times in the book of the Acts, and once in this verse that we read together in Ephesians.

Now we're going to look tonight, and we're going to take time to do it, because I think this is a very important subject - and it's one that pulpits are afraid of these days. We're going to deal with, first of all, what the fullness of the Spirit is not; then secondly we're going to look at what the fullness of the Spirit is. First of all: the fullness of the Spirit is not only for Christian workers. Now, in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 the Lord said to the disciples: 'Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth'. We know from Acts 4 that when Peter began to preach, he preached full of the Holy Spirit and boldness, and it was something that did characterise the service of the apostles and the early Christian evangelists. But don't you think for one moment - whilst the fullness of the Holy Spirit entails an equipping, an unction, an enduement for service, it's not just for those who are involved publicly in ministry, it's for all! In chapter 5 of Ephesians where we were, Paul was exhorting all the believers in Ephesus to 'walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise...and be filled with the Holy Spirit'. So this is not for Christian workers only.

Secondly: this is not the gift of the Holy Spirit, as is spoken of in the New Testament. Romans 8 and chapter 9 tells us: 'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his'. You see the Spirit of Christ is what births you, regenerates you - and when you see it, you get God's Holy Spirit, God comes to live within you. So don't think that until you're filled with the Spirit, even if you're saved, you don't have the Spirit - that is unbiblical. Don't think of the fullness of the Spirit as getting more of the Holy Spirit. Now, I know the illustration Paul uses in verse 18 of chapter 5 of Ephesians seems to illustrate that the Holy Spirit would be like a liquid. He uses this comparison to drink - but we must not think of the Holy Spirit like a liquid, or like a force - that's the way the cults believe He is, that He's not personal, He does not have a personhood. You can't have part of a person, that's obvious. What you can have is less of a person's trust, less of a person's influence in your life - so don't think of it so much as 'I need more of the Holy Spirit', yet I understand why people think that way and talk that way, but it's not so much how much of the Holy Spirit you have, as how much of you He has.

Do you see the difference? D. L. Moody was being considered for an evangelistic campaign in England, and one of the organisers asked somewhat sarcastically: 'Does D. L. Moody have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit that we're just thinking about him and nobody else?'. The answer came back very quickly: 'No, D. L. Moody does not have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of D. L. Moody'. That's what we're talking about: the Holy Spirit controlling your whole person. Dr J. Wilber Chapman asked William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, 'Tell me the secret of your great life for God and man', and Booth humbly replied: 'Since the first day God put the poor of London on my heart, He has had all there was of William Booth'. That's what we're talking about: not so much having more of the Spirit, but the Spirit who has been implanted in you at conversion having more of you!

So this is not for Christian workers only, it's not the gift of the Holy Spirit as such, it's not more of the Holy Spirit, and it's not the baptism of the Holy Spirit - though there is contention over this, and I wouldn't fall out with folk too much about it - but 1 Corinthians 12:13 says: 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit'. Now that's clearly referring to our salvation experience, being placed into the body of Christ. Neither is the fullness of the Spirit total sanctification. First John chapter 1 and verse 8 teaches us clearly: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'. Paul teaches clearly in Galatians 5:17 the two natures: 'For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh', and it's only the child of God who has the Spirit, 'and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would'. We saw the importance on our Wednesday evening of feeding the divine nature in us, rather than the fallen nature.

So, when you're filled with the Spirit, that doesn't mean you'll never sin any more, it doesn't mean you're perfect. Neither is the fullness of the Spirit a once and for all filling. Literally the word used here in verse 18 is 'be being filled', 'be being filled', present continuous tense - 'be continually filled', if you like, 'with the Holy Spirit'. Now notice that it doesn't say that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, but 'be full' - it's that perpetual thing. It may begin by a crisis experience in your life as a Christian, but it must become a consistent characteristic of your life. In Acts chapter 6 and verse 3 the apostles declared: 'Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom' - not 'who have been filled with the Holy Ghost and wisdom', but who were presently full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, 'whom we may appoint over this business'.

You see, you could be filled yesterday and empty today. You could be filled by the Holy Spirit of God tonight, and grieve the Spirit of the Living God tomorrow morning. It was Moody who said: 'We have buckets that leak. God fills us, but so often by our waywardness, and our carnality, and our blatant sinfulness the Holy Spirit is grieved in our lives'. You've got to understand: what we're talking about tonight is not a once and for all filling - though there may be crisis experiences - but this is something that must be going on every day. We've been here, haven't we, night after night: we've got to get to Calvary every day, every day, to be broken, to be cleansed, to be filled!

Dr Douglas Brown preached on the fullness of the Spirit in Wales, and God did a mighty thing. One young man followed him into his room, and cried: 'Sir, it's all right telling me to be filled, but I'm full of' - and he pointed over to a wastepaper basket in the corner of the room that was full of cracks. Dr Brown replied: 'What if you are full of cracks? If your basket was lowered into the sea, it will be filled, and it will remain full - if it abides in the ocean it cannot be emptied. The basket will only lose its contents if it's removed from the sea. Young man, cracks or no cracks, if you abide in Christ you will always be filled by the Spirit' - that's it! That's it.

What the fullness of the Spirit is not: not just for Christian workers, not the gift of the Holy Spirit, not more of the Holy Spirit, not necessarily the baptism of the Holy Spirit - though a baptism of the Holy Spirit would be good for all of us in the true sense of the word, being immersed. It's not total sanctification, it's not a once and for all filling - so what is it then? Well, we need to find out from Ephesians 5 and verse 18, here is a command, now, it's a command - that means, not to be filled by the Holy Spirit is to be disobedient!

Now, what Paul does here is something that I would never have done: he uses alcohol as an

illustration, but he does it because it is so powerful. He's basically saying: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess' - whatever drink does in the negative, he's saying the Spirit of God does in the positive. Now, what does drink do negatively? Well, it dominates a man or a woman's personality, and it also determines their behaviour. So it changes who they are and what they do. You know a man is drunk by many indications, but three are: the way he walks, the way he talks, and the way he smells - isn't that right? The evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit are the same, but in the positive regard. When we are filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit the way an alcoholic is controlled with drink negatively, we are positively affected in our walk.

Galatians 5:16 tells us: 'This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh'. Ephesians 4 verse 1 tells us to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. First John 1 verse 7 tells us to walk in the light, as He is in the light. What this is talking about in our walk is to hide nothing from God, to walk in the light. Are you hiding nothing from God tonight? Maybe you're hiding something from the nearest and dearest to you. Maybe you're hiding something from the taxman. Maybe you're hiding something from the boss. You can't be filled with the Holy Ghost if you're hiding anything.

The walk is affected, just like the drunkard. The talk is affected. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. You know what it's like with drunkards: they are grumpy, grouchy men, and when they get a few pints into them they're all happy. The opposite happens the opposite characteristic, and the talk is affected, the personality is affected when you're filled with the Holy Spirit. How we talk to people changes, and how we talk about people changes! You see it in the Acts of the Apostles, when people were filled with the Spirit something happened to their mouth, something happened to their tongues - isn't that right? Peter said that the Apostles preached boldly, Paul says in verse 19 of our chapter: 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord'.

It affects what we say with our mouths, it affects our talk, it affects our walk, it affects our smell. Second Corinthians 2 and verses 14 to 16 says that we as believers are meant to be a savour of Christ to those that believe and those who do not believe. We're meant to smell of Jesus Christ. 'Howbeit', the Lord Jesus says, 'when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you'. The Holy Spirit wants to make you like Jesus so that others may smell Him off you.

Now we encounter a problem, the problem being that this is far from the present personal experience of most professing believing Christians today. Now John Owen was a puritan, and he lived a long time ago, and he said that his church was stuck somewhere between the cross and Pentecost. I doubt the church is no different tonight! It's as if the Comforter has never come, though we sing 'The Comforter has come!' Whether you go to the charismatic end of Christendom that's frying in emotionalism - don't misunderstand that as the Spirit of God - or whether you go into the tight conservative wing that is dying in intellectualism, there is a severe and distinct absence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit in lives and in churches.

I want to ask you tonight: this is something that has been bought for you, believer, by the precious blood of Christ - are you realising the blessings of the fullness of the Spirit? You see, we, particularly in the sort of churches we circulate in, we believe the Bible - praise God for that - but we can fall into the trap of believing that if the Bible says something, that we've got

that thing. Do you see what I'm saying? We have the Bible for a thing, so we think we have the thing the Bible is talking about. We dwell on our positions according to what the Bible says, and yet we're not really living in the reality of possession - experientially knowing what the Bible teaches!

Now maybe I'm confusing some of you, but I think what I'm trying to say is that: we're like the bus conductor that has called out the destination so many times, that he thinks he has been there himself. We read, and we pray, and we sing, and we shout and preach about the Holy Spirit and His fullness, but have we experienced this in our lives? It's like someone dying, and the will being opened, and the son is left everything, and the son becomes satisfied with the written text of the will - but he doesn't want the inheritance! It would be ridiculous! God says we have the Spirit, and can know the Spirit, and can be filled with the Spirit - but because God says that that is our possession doesn't mean it's our experience.

Watchman Nee illustrated it very well like this: if you think of what the blood of Christ purchased for you as a man walking into a book store and purchasing two books. The bookstore owner wraps them both in brown paper, leaves them on the counter - they have been paid for, they've been purchased, but the man walks out with only one book. Now you need the book of forgiveness, you need to be forgiven, friend tonight, you need to be cleansed, you need to be born again - but believer, Christ has bought, with His precious blood, the fullness of the Holy Spirit for you, and many of us are leaving it on the counter!

Now there are two commands in verse 18: the first is don't get drunk - and that's a command Christians need to hear today. Social drinking is excelling among Christians, particularly middle-class Christians I have to say, that have never grown up in working class homes and seen what drink actually does - but there's going to be a rude awakening one of these days, if it's not already happening: a reaping of the consequences of this. You know, what is drunkenness? Some will tell you that you only need to take a glass of wine to realise that your perception is decreasing. I'm not going into that tonight, that's not my subject - but Paul says here: 'Don't get drunk', and the best thing you can do is stay away from drink. 'But be filled with the Spirit', now that is in the imperative mood - that's meaning this is not an option, to ignore it is at your peril. It's in the plural, it applies to all the Christians, not a select few. The verb is in the present tense, that means it's to be a constant experience - not on special occasions. The verb is also in the passive voice - do you know what that means? You do not fill yourself, you need to get to a place where the Spirit fills you.

Now let me put all those things and make sense of them in a translation that bears all that out: 'Let the Spirit constantly fill you' - is He? 'How do you let the Spirit fill you?', you say. Oh:

'The old, old story, it is ever new;
The old, old story, it is ever true:
That Jesus died for me as well as you'.

Get beneath the cross of Jesus - broken beneath the cross of the Lamb of God, that's the only way to get saved my friend! Not by works of righteousness that we have done, not by your church affiliation, not by religion, not by ritual - it's the cross. But dear Christian, you've got to realise that being broken before the cross is where you'll be filled, and realising by faith that it's what Christ purchased for you by His precious blood. Some of you might remember the late Rex Mathie. I had the privilege of entertaining him one Sunday when he was preaching in our church. I asked him: 'There are so many views on what the fullness of the

Holy Spirit is, what are your thoughts on the fullness of the Spirit?'. He had thought much, he said, and considered it in his lifetime - all the views he surveyed. He said this: 'David, I think I've come to the conclusion it's the opposite side of the coin to the Lordship of Christ. When you and Jesus aren't arguing about anything, you'll be filled with the Spirit'. I thought that was profound - because you see chapter 4 of Ephesians and verse 30 says we can grieve the Holy Spirit. The Bible says we can quench the Holy Spirit. You see when we hurt Him, when we cause Him pain, He is dovelike in His personality - He is easily grieved and flies away. But the desire of God is that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith - when Jesus and you aren't arguing about anything - are you arguing about something with the Lord tonight? There is something in your life that you won't let go of, there's something you won't confess, there's something you won't put beneath the blood - you'll never be filled, my friend.

Does Jesus feel at home in your heart? Oh, all our hearts are filthy and wretched, the heart is deceitful above all things, our minds are defiled - that's why we need to continually come to the cross of Calvary to get that cleansing. That's what we need: the fullness of the Spirit. E. M. Bounds said: 'No erudition, nor purity of diction, nor width of mental outlook, no flowers of elegance, no grace of person can atone for lack of fire. Prayer ascends by fire, flame gives prayer access as well as wings, acceptance as well as energy. There is no incense without fire, no prayer without flame'. Believer, if you're having a Christian experience like the grand old Duke of York - when you're up, you're up; and when you're down, you're down; and half times you're only halfway, neither up nor down - you're like a roller coaster, you need the fullness of the Spirit! It doesn't mean you'll never have any problems, your problems might only start - but my dear friend, you can never have a victorious Christian life if you're arguing in your mind and heart with Christ about some issue! That's what we're talking about.

Now, historically the church in its most blessed times, particularly in revival, has always emphasised this truth. Many well-known and mightily used servants of God have testified to being filled or anointed with the Spirit in a very dramatic way, it has to be said. D. L. Moody said, I quote him: 'The blessing came upon me suddenly like a flash of lightning. For months I had been hungering and thirsting for power in service, I had come to that point where I think I would have died if I had not got it. I remember I was walking the streets of New York, and I had no more heart in the business I was about than if I had not been in this world at all. Well, one day, O what a day, I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it, it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Right there in the streets the power of God seemed to come upon me so wonderfully that I had to ask God to stay His hand. I was filled with a sense of God's goodness, and I felt as though I could take the whole world to my heart. I took the old sermons I had preached before without any power, and it was the same old truth, but there was a new power. Many were impressed and converted, and this happened years after I was converted myself. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world. It would be as small dust in the balance'.

Other mighty men of God, and they weren't charismatic now, they weren't even Pentecostals, they had this experience - and sometimes it was very dramatic. However, other men, equally used of God, had no such great manifestation - nothing dramatic at all, and yet were equally as filled with the Spirit. Some people just testify to have, having surrendered all to the Lord, experienced such an overwhelming sense of God. Have you ever experienced an overwhelming sense of God? Some others have said that they felt they were going to burst with joy in the Lord - we could all do with a dose of that!

Brainerd said: 'My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God that I was even swallowed up in Him'. It mightn't

have been so dramatic, it was just something in his mind and heart where he got a capacity to appreciate God! It's mighty, isn't it? R. A. Torrey was Moody's helper, his predecessor, and he didn't experience anything dramatic at all. He just said he asked God for it, because it was promised in the word, and he just believed God that he had got it by faith, and that was it - that was it. Spurgeon was the same, Billy Sunday the same - they testified to this great power, but didn't have the same experiences.

So I want to say to you carefully tonight: we should not gain our understanding of the fullness of the Spirit, this biblical truth, by the experiences that are told in biographies of men and women of bygone eras - because there is a great variety, God moves differently in all our lives. So we must beware of hankering after experiences, this is the great danger, this is where the devil can come in with a man, or a woman, or a young person, who is really following hard after God. They realise there is something more of spiritual experience, and the devil takes them on a detour to look for an experience rather than seeking God! 'My goal is God Himself' - you see, sometimes we can be seeking feelings. You know, feelings are a great obstacle in comprehending spiritual things. If you're not saved tonight, you might be one of those people I often hear saying: 'I don't feel the time is right to get saved' - that's a lot of nonsense! 'Now is the accepted time', the Bible says, 'Now is the day of salvation'. There's no other time to get saved but now. Then some say: 'Oh, I don't feel I'm saved. I asked the Lord to save me, but I don't feel it' - you've got to understand: salvation, from start to finish, is not about feelings, it's about faith! It's faith based on fact, the fact of God's word, taking it up and accepting it.

I often explain it like a train: the engine is fact, God's word, what Christ has done, what He has promised. The first carriage, it is faith, we are meant to be connected with the fact of God's word. The second carriage is feelings, and the feelings will come after the faith and the facts - they will, eventually. But we must not have our carriages linked to feelings, because feelings is only a carriage and it will not pull one carriage and an engine behind it - no way.

'Feelings come, and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving.
My warrant is the word of God, none else is worth believing'.

To be saved is to be saved by faith alone, not feelings - and to live by faith is by faith alone, you can't rely on your feelings now. There was a dear lady in the congregation we were in previously, and I've heard that she had to have her leg amputated. She expressed the torment of feeling that her foot was still there, and yet when she looked down it wasn't. Her nervous system was telling her that she was still having a pain in her foot that had been taken off - surely that tells us by nature that you can't rely on feelings!

Old W.P. Nicholson was sick on one occasion, and he went privately to an expert on his conditions. This expert put electrodes on his chest, and then the doctor, he went off and sat down and read the paper with a cup of coffee. If you know anything about Nicholson, you'll realise he started to get worked up - this man sitting reading his paper and drinking coffee, and he was sitting there with the electrodes on. He burst out, and he said: 'I'm a busy man, I haven't come over here to watch you while you're going to drink coffee and read the paper - when are you going to start my treatment?'. The doctor said: 'Mr Nicholson, there's enough electricity running through your body now to push a train up a hill'. Nicholson said: 'Well, something must be wrong, because I don't feel a thing, I don't feel a thing'. The doctor had a wee adapter that he attached somehow - don't ask me how it was done - to the electrodes, to put a lightbulb on it; and when he did it the lightbulb lit up! Nicholson said that he realised how the Spirit might be flowing through you, and you not even realise it until a need arose -

until a need arose.

Now listen, we have touched on a whole lot of areas here that can confuse people, and my desire is not to confuse you further. My desire is for you to just come to the cross in brokenness and faith, and repent of sin, and ask the Lord for this blessing. Ask, and believe, and you will have - the Bible promises it: 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them'. Have you prayed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Jesus said: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'. I agree with Billy Graham on this much anyway, he says: 'I don't care what you call it, just get it!' - just get it.

Do you have it? Do you have Him completely pervading the whole of your life, all that you are? Unsaved friend, the only thing that will break the shackles of your sin is the power of God's Spirit - nothing else! You need Him tonight, you need to come humbly to the cross. But believer: do you not need the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Paul Rader, with this I finish, wrote some beautiful hymns - one of which was 'Fear not little flock, whatever your lot', I don't know whether you know it or not. He preached a powerful sermon on one occasion on the theme: 'Out of a man's innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'. Later on that evening two men who had heard the sermon asked Mr Rader to meet with them for a meal, and for a discussion. One man began by saying - we've all heard this - 'Mr Rader, you preached a good sermon, but you are wrong dispensationally'. Then the other said: 'Mr Rader, you're a good preacher and a good brother, the problem is that you have the wrong interpretation'. Gracious man that he was, Mr Rader did not answer, and then he bowed his head with the rest of them to pray before eating their meal. When Mr Rader finally looked across the table at the first brother, he saw that something had happened: tears were streaming down the man's face, and his shoulders shook with emotion. Finally he was able to say these words: 'Brother Rader, we have the interpretation, but you have the rivers of blessing'.

Do we have the mighty fullness of the blessed Holy Ghost? Let us pray. Now, as our heads are bowed, I know that you might not agree with everything I've said - but I'm not really worried about that too much. I'll agree to disagree with you, but what you have to agree with me is that all of us need more, and a deeper experience of, our Christian lives - and the only way we can have it is through God, and it's His Spirit; He is His Vicar, the Vicar of Christ on the earth today. He is the one who administers His will, and you need Him in your life. He is to be your constant companion, He is the Paraclete, He is the strengthener, He is the one who will not leave you an orphan. He will bring the presence of Christ to you and in you - do you know Him?

Why not say tonight, if you're not saved: 'Lord, cleanse me at Calvary, and fill me with the Holy Spirit. Save me from my sins now and forever'. Dear Christian, you can do no better than repeat those words - even though you are saved for time and eternity. Oh, we might have the right interpretations, but oh for the rivers of living water. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

The Revival We Need - Chapter 8

"A Call To Arms"

Copyright 2009
by David Legge

Well, good evening to you all. It's a privilege once again to be with you here in Lurgan. Thank you to your pastor for inviting me this Tuesday night, it's a delight to be here. I must begin by a half apology - if there is such a thing - the reason for it is that I'm not speaking on the subject that was announced, if it was announced. If it wasn't, well, then we don't need to worry about it! I retract the half apology! The reason why it's a half apology is that I believe the Lord has redirected me due to the circumstances that have taken place over the weekend and in your own Craigavon area last night. I felt last evening at about half twelve, one o'clock, that I just couldn't preach on what had been already arranged. More so this morning when I woke, and even lying in bed I felt the Lord impressing upon me to bring something else to you. So I believe I have the message of the Lord tonight.

I want you to turn to two texts, the first is a very well-known one - 2 Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 14 please. Second Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 14, and if you care to turn to the second, it's found in Romans chapter 13 and verse 12. So 2 Chronicles 7:14, and Romans 13 verse 12, and the title that I'm taking for what is not a Bible study really but an exhortation, is 'A Call To Arms'. Verse 14 then of 2 Chronicles 7 - now this is God speaking, of course it's all God's word, the Bible, we know that - but these are the very spoken words of God recorded: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"*. Now, I know there can be great dispensational confusion concerning a verse like this, but I feel at times that we relegate this verse to insignificance as New Testament believers because of that, wrongly so.

Turning then, please, to Romans chapter 13 verse 12 - if you didn't understand what I just said there a moment or two ago, don't worry, it doesn't matter too much. You're probably better not knowing anyway! Romans 13 verse 12: *"The night is far spent", or almost gone, "the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light"*.

Let us pray: Father, we are here tonight around Your word, and we do give You thanks for Your holy word. Lord, we are conscious that we have, at least some of us I'm sure, a desire deep within our souls to do more than study the word. We long, O Almighty Living God, to meet with You. We long for a divine encounter, we long to know that God is here, and that we are meeting - we feel like the Psalmist who said: 'As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before the Living God?'. Lord, we want to appear before the Living God, we want to meet with You. Lord, we know that every day, if we read our Bibles - sometimes we can read our Bibles, say our prayers, and we can miss God - Lord, we don't want that to happen in this place tonight. We want to go out of this place with more than a mere increased intellectual knowledge of the Bible. O God, we want to go out different, changed, transformed, renewed, revived! So Lord, let us not waste our time, nor Yours. We pray for the enablement of the Holy Spirit of the Living God. O, we pray for an outpouring of the same Spirit upon us as a gathering of Your people, those You have called by Your name. So Lord, hear us and meet us in our need in this hour, for Christ's sake, Amen.

On Saturday night, two soldiers murdered. Last evening here in Craigavon, a police officer murdered. I'm sure, like myself, you have been following the progress of the reporting on these two tragic incidents. We have had, all day and all weekend, political reaction, we've had military reaction, religious reaction, and police reaction - but the question that is burning upon my heart tonight is: what is the reaction of the Christian? What should be the reaction of the child of God? I do hope that we haven't, in some way, just said: 'Oh, here, it's all happening again', and stick our head in the sand and hope that it will go away. I hope that we are human enough, with hearts of flesh enough, to be able to interact; and to ask ourselves the question: what have we to say? What can we do in the light of the seeming resurgence of violence which we have known for so long in our province? After all, the Lord Jesus Christ, did He not call us salt? Salt is meant to make a difference, it's meant to preserve raw meat, and we are meant to have a preserving influence on society. Salt makes you thirsty, you want a drink when you've ate something salty - and we are meant to make people thirst after God, after the Lord Jesus Christ. We're meant to be light in a dark place, a light set on a hill so that we stand out as different, shining forth in such a dark world.

So, what ought our reaction to be? Well, can I be personal? My immediate reaction last night, personally speaking, when I heard this latest news of this murder of a police officer, was twofold. First of all I had a deep sense that I, and we as God's people, must urgently seek God for revival. Now, I don't know whether any of you experienced that or not - but almost simultaneously to that thought, I was struck with a sense of my own sinfulness - I'll not go into the details of that, but I sin - and a great sense of my own unworthiness and impotence in this hour of need to be anything of any worth, or to make any difference. Now, I don't know whether you have ever felt those two things together. They're a strange mix, I know. But they are, I think, in microcosm where we are as the church of Jesus Christ. I think you would have to be spiritually deadened not to think or desire that we need a revival. You only need to look at the moral scene, the social, political, financial, religious, spiritual climate of our province, our island, our island nation, our continent to realise that, humanly speaking, if the church of Jesus Christ does not experience a spiritual revival, she is certainly on the way down, if not on the way out.

Now, revival history shows that genuine revival among God's people greatly affects a nation. So something happens among God's people, the church - and we ought to keep these definitions biblical, I feel - revival, you cannot revive something that wasn't already alive. The church of Jesus Christ is the only body that can be revived - but that often, and should always, have a knock-on effect to the community around, what we might call 'awakening', whereby unconverted friends, loved ones, neighbours and the community in general are ignited by this great flame of Holy Spirit fire going through the church. There is a community affect.

Edwin Orr, one of the greatest authorities on the history of revival, claims that the evangelical awakening in the 18th century - and two characters that you will know very well who were used by God in that were George Whitefield and John Wesley - Edwin Orr believes that great evangelical awakening saved Britain from the revolutionary experience that ravaged the continent of Europe at that particular time. Indeed, Wesley, the English evangelist, defeated Voltaire the French philosopher and deist. It was equally true that on the American continent, around the same period of time from approximately 1800 on, that revival spawned by God's Spirit in that nation saved the nation from the same godless French philosophy that had influenced, I believe, almost every intellectual college by the close of the 18th century.

Now, an example of how bad things were: at Princeton University a Dr Green said during this period of time that he knew of only two professing Christians among all the students of the University College. The College of William and Mary in Virginia was, and I'm quoting now, 'A hotbed of French politics and religion'. Almost certainly the period of revival that swept across America during that similar period of great awakening saved America from the tragedy of the worst elements of the French Revolution.

So revival saved the United Kingdom, revival saved the United States, but coming a little closer to home: in the 1920s here in Northern Ireland there was, politically and socially, a state of chaos. Fear and uncertainty filled the minds of the people, and the politicians - as is often the case - were at their wits end of what to do. Murder and mayhem seemed to rule Ulster, but it was the Christian church - small it may have been in the remnant that were exercised to go this way - they believed that, even amidst the hopeless darkness of the political and social scene, that there was hope in God. They sought God, and God sent a man - W.P. Nicholson. He was used to preach Christ and His cross, and thousands of people were ushered into the kingdom of Jesus Christ - and many believe that a civil war, a potential civil war in our land, was turned into a mighty spiritual revival!

Now God has done that! The great issue that faces us tonight, and in this present age as the church, is: do we believe that God can do it again? I'm not sure we do. Of course, this year, if you haven't already heard it, is the 150th anniversary of the 1859 revival. What you may not be aware of is that, as a result of that revival, there was a dramatic reduction in the crime rate in our province. The following statistics I'm going to give to you are from Dr William Gibson's history of the 1859 revival published, it's called 'The Year of Grace'. He indicates the impact and the effect that the revival had on public morals. I'm quoting now, he says: 'The number of prisoners for trial in the Quarter Sessions for County Antrim in October, 1859' - six months after the commencement of the revival - 'was exactly one half of that the previous year. At the Ballymena Quarter Sessions held in April, 1860' - after the revival had been in existence for over a year in that locality - 'there was not one single criminal case on the records' - that's staggering!

Indeed, a Coleraine magistrate declared, again I quote: 'When I look into the calendar for the last three months, I find but one new case - which is, in some respects, very unimportant - I am greatly struck at the appearance of this, so small is the number of cases. I formerly had calendars filled with charges for different nefarious practices - pocket picking and larcenies of various sorts - how is such a gratifying state of things accounted for?'. Now, listen to what he says: 'It must be from the improved state of morality of the people. I believe I am fully warranted now to say, that, to nothing else than the moral and religious movement, which commenced early last summer, can the changes be attributed'. Revival!

A prominent Roman Catholic magistrate in County Down affirmed that the wholesome moral results produced throughout the community were due to the religious movement, and expressed his wish - these are his words - 'that it would extend over the whole country, and influence society to its lowest depths'. That is what revival does! Isaiah could say: 'Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence'. He's picturing almost that the heavens are severed and riven, and it's as if God steps out of heaven and puts His divine footprint on earth!

Robert Murray M'Cheyne reported of Dundee in 1839 that the revival 'spread a sweet influence over the place'. Another could say when revival hit a vicinity that 'God was everywhere'. Now friends, I ask you this evening: is that not what we need? Is that not what

you desire and long for? Now we must thank God tonight for the 1859 revival, but can I say to you sincerely from the depths of my heart: that a new revival in our province would be different, markedly different from the 1859 revival. Sometimes I fear that when we reminisce, whether it's 1859 or the 1920s that I mentioned with Nicholson, or in more recent years when we have known times of blessing, it is a mistake to expect God to repeat Himself. Indeed, I think it's wrong to want God to repeat Himself - God is not going to reverse time and put us into the past to revive us, He doesn't have to do that. It may well be that God, as He is wont to do, will do a new thing for a new generation.

I wonder have you considered that? You need to. Here is the reason why - and I need to as well - because revival often upsets some in the church, because it's new. In fact, I don't think there has ever been a revival in biblical history, nor church history, that has not been opposed - and often it is opposed by those who feel they are most biblically literate. We need to be sure that we do not fight against God, whatever God is doing at present, or whatever God will do - but one thing is certain, and I hope you agree with me, we need God to do something! Do we not? But if we want Him to do something, we also have to face the fact that there's something for us to do. Judgement must begin at the house of God, and therefore we are responsible to look into ourselves. Now, of course, there's an element of God's sovereignty in giving revival and breathing the breath of His Spirit upon us - but I'm a firm believer that we are meant to set our sails and wait for the breath of the Spirit. It is personal revival, individually, that any of us can have at any time at the foot of the cross, that will effect corporate revival, ultimately, in the future.

Now please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying this evening that the conditions of this world are the church's fault - that clearly cannot be the case. You look at Scripture, the church went through dastardly, diabolical persecutions in their freshest age in the Acts of the Apostles. It wasn't the church's fault that the Roman emperors were so pagan and godless, and hated Christianity so much. Equally, I'm not saying tonight that the problems we've known in our troubles in Ireland and Northern Ireland are the church's fault - but what I am saying, as I've said from my very introduction, is that we need to wake up to the fact as a church that we do have an influence! We should have an influence for good and for God! So I'm asking: what influence have we had in the past - let's leave it there, whatever conclusions we come to - but what influence do we have now?

I want to suggest to you that the events of the past weekend, and I do hope that you always look at things through spiritual glasses, is a wake-up call to the church. Some politicians have said we are staring into the abyss, we're on a knife edge, this is a watershed in Irish politics etc, etc. That could be blown out of proportion, and I don't want to do that tonight - but what I am saying is: are you concerned, believer? Do you have a prophet's heart? Do you know the prophet, he had a heart pulled in two directions: one was toward God, the other was toward the people - that's why he was so often in a dilemma. What I want to bring to you this evening is a call to arms, spiritual arms. You see, the word of God says that we are soldiers, spiritual soldiers.

Turn with me, please, to 1 Timothy 1 verse 18: 'This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare' - a spiritual soldier! Then chapter 6 of the same book, verse 12, Timothy is exhorted by Paul: 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses'. We are meant to be spiritual soldiers! Now, yes, we're not fighting for a victory - as it so often is said, and rightly so - we are fighting from the victory and in the victory, but we are fighting nonetheless! Does

that reflect our experience as Christians? Are you in a fight, a spiritual fight now? We are meant to be spiritual soldiers, we are in - the New Testament says - a spiritual battle.

Turn with me to Ephesians 6, please, and verse 12: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood', this is not a physical battle, a national battle, it's not a political, nor a cultural, nor religious battle, 'but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places'. We are wrestling, or at least meant to be, with the demonic diabolical forces that are behind the scenes of all that we see on the political and historical stage. We are meant to be engaged in a spiritual battle and, as Peter said, therefore we are to 'Be sober, be vigilant; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour'.

Believer, are you a spiritual soldier in a spiritual battle? Come with me again, we are to use spiritual weapons - 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 4. Paul says in parenthesis: '(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal', they are not fleshly, they are not physical, that's what that means, 'but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;')'. Spiritual weapons are the weapons that we are to wield as spiritual soldiers in spiritual battles. Now, I know what I'm about to say is controversial, but I have to say it: our Lord Jesus Christ did not engage in politics. Now, I know He spoke to political issues, and we ought to as well from a Biblical standpoint, but He did clearly reiterate: 'My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from here'.

The disciples did not engage in politics. That's interesting, isn't it? Did they miss a trick? There was a political scene in their day. Paul the apostle didn't use politics either, he said his citizenship was a heavenly citizenship. Peter himself also said that he was a pilgrim and a stranger in this earth. None of the apostles nor the disciples put their tent pegs too deep in this earth. Now, of course, I know the New Testament teaches that we are responsible to obey the government, and we have a right to use the judicial process, as Paul the apostle even did himself. But the Bible does not say that the answer to this society's problems is in becoming part of the system and fighting the same way as everyone else fights! No, no, no.

We are not to own this system that the Bible calls 'the world', which John says 'lies in the lap of the wicked one'. So politics, whilst it might have measured success for a period, and democracy might be the best of a bad bunch as far as human beings are concerned, politics will always only be a Band-Aid covering a cancer. Politics does not get to the core of the problem, the only thing that can get to the core of man's problems anywhere is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation - to the Jew and to the Greek.

So, the weapons of our warfare are not political, but they are spiritual. We are exhorted by our Lord to seek first the kingdom of God. Spiritual soldiers, in a spiritual battle, with spiritual weapons - but come with me to Ephesians 6 please, because God has given to us a spiritual armour. Now I'm not going to read this whole passage, but verse 10 is very important: 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might' - our strength comes from the Lord, this armoury comes from the Lord. There's that verse 12 that we read, what we wrestle against, and in verse 11 we are exhorted to: 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles', that word means 'schemes' or 'trickery', 'of the evil one'.

Now, from these pieces of armour, we can glean quite important information. You see that we are exhorted in verse 17 to put on a helmet of salvation. Now right away God's word is telling us that the battle we are engaged in is a battle for the mind, that is the field on which the

devil wants to gain a victory - and if he can gain a victory in our minds, he will get the whole man. So we are to put on what we are in Christ on our heads, the helmet of salvation. We're also told to put on a breastplate of righteousness, verse 14. If the helmet is to protect in the battle for the mind, the breastplate is the battle for the heart, to keep the fiery darts away from the internal organs - the seat of man's affections. We so often can be mentally attacked by the devil, and emotionally - it often starts in the mind and then travels down to the emotions, and it's not long before it actually manifests itself, then, in the will. It affects what we do, what we say.

The helmet for the mind, a breastplate for the heart, and then there is a belt of truth. A belt of truth around the waist, verse 14 - girt about the waist. Now that belt is holding everything together, and it is truth. It is girding the whole man and the whole armour. There is not only a battle for the mind, a battle for the emotions, today there is a battle for the truth - truth that will possess men and women. Also we see that the Christian soldier is exhorted in verse 15 to put on his feet gospel shoes of peace, prepared to preach the Gospel and take the good news wherever God sends. So there's a battle for men's minds, for men's hearts, for the truth that will bind men, and there is a battle for the souls of men and women - are you in that battle, believer?

That is what the battle is for, but the other items of armour give us an indication as to how the battle is fought. It is fought by faith. We are told: 'Above all', verse 16, to take 'the shield of faith'. Now that could mean covering all the rest of the armour, but it seems to be also an indication of the importance: we must have faith in God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. We cited at the beginning of our meditation the fact that sometimes we don't believe that God can do this again! It is the shield of faith that will quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. Have faith in God.

It's not only a battle fought by faith, but it's a battle fought by the Bible - for we are to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. You can see it there in verse 17. Now please notice that in the original Greek rendering here, the word that is used for 'word of God' is not 'logos' from John 1 verse 1 and following, but it is the Greek word 'rema', which means 'the spoken word of God', 'the uttered word of God'. We are meant to be speaking, proclaiming, testifying God's word. Now we're not to do it arrogantly, as often we do. We shouldn't be doing it angrily, as sometimes it comes across - but nevertheless: have we backed into our corner, and shut our mouths? In the face of moral, liberal, theological, political persecution, we have silenced!

It's a battle that is fought by faith, fought by the Bible, and last but definitely not least: fought by prayer. Verse 18: 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints'. Now please note that this is the seventh piece of armour - yes, it's a piece of armour. John Bunyan called it 'All-Prayer'. Number 7 being the number of completeness and perfection in the word of God - and what this is showing us is that we could go arrayed in all the panoply of God into the battle, but if we do not have prayer we are powerless! We're impotent! For prayer is the soldier's communication with HQ, prayer is what effectively brings God onto the battlefield!

That is why Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Timothy 2 verses 1 and 2: 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority' - why? - 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty'. Believer, do these pieces of armour, do they reflect our lives presently? How we live? How we engage? How we exist as soldiers, spiritual soldiers of Christ, in a spiritual battle, using spiritual weapons, with spiritual armour on? I fear, and I'm

speaking to my own heart, that I as a spiritual soldier I am not fully realising the power of prayer. Are you? A friend of mine, Trevor Knight, wrote - I suppose it's a poem in a way, but it doesn't rhyme - about prayer. It goes like this:

'Abraham prayed and Lot was spared;
 Isaac prayed and Rebekah conceived;
 Jacob prayed and Esau was pacified;
 Job prayed and trials were ended;
 Moses prayed and Amalek was defeated;
 Joshua prayed and sin was found out;
 Samson prayed and strength was regained;
 Hannah prayed and Samuel was born;
 David prayed and sin was cleansed;
 Solomon prayed and wisdom was given;
 Elijah prayed and fire descended;
 He prayed again and showers fell;
 Hezekiah prayed and invaders withdrew;
 Jonah prayed and was given another chance;
 Daniel prayed and lions were muzzled;
 Nehemiah prayed and a king listened;
 Peter prayed and was saved from drowning;
 A publican prayed and went home justified;
 A thief prayed and went to Paradise;
 Paul prayed and sight was restored;
 Stephen prayed and saw the Lord;
 Cornelius prayed and was told what to do;
 John prayed and gained a vision of the future'.

My friend continues going through all of church history, and it's too long to recite to you tonight, about men of God like Whitefield and Wesley and Luther, who prayed. He ends the whole poem with these words: 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of'. Yet people say: 'Well, it's a terrible situation at the moment in my life', or, 'in the province. Well, all we can do is pray' - no! Everything we can do is pray!

Have we given up on prayer? Och, I know you pray. Montgomery, I think it is, puts it: 'I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray?'. Romans 13 and verse 12 says we must dress for battle - you can turn to it if you wish. We turned to it at the beginning, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light'. We must dress for battle, put on the Lord Jesus Christ - I believe if you study all the items in the armour of God, you will find out that each of them actually represents the word of God itself and, of course, the word of God is the manifestation of the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus. We are to put Him on by faith!

To be a Christian soldier demands entire consecration. Second Timothy chapter 2 verse 4: 'No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier'. Now, you know what happens: in times of prosperity, apparent peace, it's easy for the soldier to let his guard down, to go off the offensive, to even retract on the defensive. Now I'm talking of the spiritual battle now: 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace - there will never be peace for us down here on earth in the spiritual realm. Our rest is not yet, we have not reached our heavenly home. We can see it time without number in illustration for us in the Old Testament, that when Israel prospered - you know what happened, don't you? They forgot God! You only need to go to the period of the Judges when there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes. We see this cycle of the Judges period - the people when they were in their ease, wealth and economy

was good, the crops were bumper, and they forgot God. God sent a chastisement upon them, and then they cried out to God and God sent a deliverer, and they delivered them. There was an apparent repentance, and then they went back to their sin when things got good again.

Ruth is a great illustration of that, the book, during that Judges period. A little family, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion - and they go to Moab, and they disobey God! What do you mean? They were told, we read it at the beginning of our meeting, 2 Chronicles 7:14 - 'If there's a famine in the land it's a sign of My displeasure, My chastisement. If my people, which are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I heal their land'. He didn't tell them to go and find another land! He told them to fall at His feet, and to cry out: 'Lord, what's wrong? What's happening?'. They were told to stay where they were, and ask: 'Lord, what are You saying?' - do you do that? 'Lord, what are You saying? Lord, what are You doing?'. You see, this was a wake-up call!

Are you living as a soldier? Or are you AWOL, 'Absent WithOut Leave'? There are plenty of wounded soldiers - they need a whole different ministry altogether, but it's there for them. I haven't got time to go into this, but there are wonderful promises of ultimate triumph over the wicked forces of darkness. Luke 10 and verse 19: 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you'. There are promises over the severest afflictions: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us'. There is the assurance of victory over worldly attractions: 'For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith'. There is ultimate victory promised over the satanic powers: 'They overcame him', Satan, 'by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony'. The victory is secure, it's promised!

How have you received the call to arms? Recently I think the whole world has been reminded of Martin Luther King Jr at the inauguration of President Obama. Of course he was charged as being an extremist in the civil rights movement. Irrespective of what you think about him, or what his beliefs were, or some of his actions, he said an awful lot of very true statements. When accused of being an extremist, this was his reply: 'Was not Jesus an extremist for love - 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you'. Was not Amos an extremist for justice - 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream'. Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel - 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus'. Was not Martin Luther an extremist - 'Here I stand; I can do none other so help me God'. And John Bunyan - 'I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience'. And Abraham Lincoln - 'This nation cannot survive half slave and half free'.

Listen to what he says: 'The question is not whether we will be extremists but what kind of extremist we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?'. Then he delivered a powerful call to the church which rings as true today as it did 40 years ago, and he said: 'There was a time when the church was very powerful - in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was', listen carefully, 'not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society'. Let me repeat that: 'The church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society'. 'But the judgment of God is upon the church', he said of his day, 'as never before. If today's church does not recapture

the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century'.

On 20 August 1963 King stood before the Lincoln Memorial and give his most memorable speech - you know it - he said: 'I have a dream that one day the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. Now listen, whether you agree with his politics or religious convictions, he had a great dream - did he not? Whether we agree with the ecumenical movement, and clearly we do not, their dream is sincere: they desire to unite a divided humanity - but the greatest tragedy of all is, they don't know how to do it! The greater tragedy is: we do! But are we doing it?

Go home and read Ephesians chapter 2 to see what God's dream is. Paul says it is: 'One new man', a new people of God free from enmity, united in Christ. Listen: that is the only answer for Ulster! It is the only answer for Ireland! It is the only answer for the world! But we all need to ask of ourselves:

'Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?'

This is God's message: a call to spiritual arms, to spiritual soldiers, in a spiritual battle, with spiritual weapons, wearing spiritual armoury - with assured victory and triumph in Christ - and with the only answer this world needs and can get in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

Father, what can we say? We receive with our ears what You have said but, O, that all of us might embrace it with our hearts - whatever that means to each of us. Lord, help us not to ape the world socially, politically, even religiously - but help us to follow Your agenda. We remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He watched what the Father was doing, and He did it. Lord, help us to see what You are doing, help us to do Your will and not lean on our own understanding. But O God, we cry for a mighty revival here in our province; O God, that people would be united in Christ, not under the banner of denominations and religious systems, but under the name of Christ Jesus and Him crucified. O Father, this is what we need - some think it's romantic, some think it's idealistic - Lord, it is what You have shown us in Your word can be done: the Jew and the Greek, most vehemently opposed, were united in Christ! Lord, do it in our land, do it in this island, do something in our hearts - for, O God, we need it!

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - December 2008
www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com

Don't miss other booklets of sermons preached by Pastor David Legge, all available free of charge from



*www.preachtheword.com
info@preachtheword.com*