

First Baptist Church - Part 2

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod's sermon highlights the transformative power of prayer and God's presence in bringing revival to a church and community.

Duration: 35:49

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Isaiah 30:21, Matthew 18:3, Mark 10:14, Acts 2:41, Acts 4:31, James 5:16

Topics: "Revival History"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares powerful testimonies of transformation and revival in their church. They recount how one man, Martin Bucker, experienced a profound change of heart and returned to God after a moment of brokenness. Another testimony involves a young girl who confesses her previous dislike for old people but declares her newfound love for them, leading to a powerful encounter between her and an elderly woman. The speaker emphasizes that these transformations were not the result of counseling, but rather encounters with the living God through prayer and faith. The church experienced a radical transformation through biblical preaching and a focus on inviting children to participate. The speaker also mentions the importance of both preaching and sharing in the meetings, with only two nights dedicated solely to sharing. After each public meeting, smaller afterglow meetings were held for prayer and support for those convicted of sin.

Transcript

It's so good to be with you tonight. In Isaiah, God said, Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with Him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the spirit of the contrite one. In Isaiah also we read this statement, He said, I that speak in righteousness mighty to save.

So God is mighty to save and let me say He's mighty to revive. I moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, a small city, 120,000, to pastor a Baptist church with 175 members, building seating perhaps 350, and mostly young married couples, quite a few university students, and everybody loved missions and evangelism, but nobody did either. And after a while I got a little tired of that kind of, I don't know what to call it, and I asked my deacons, I had ten deacons, and I asked them to start a prayer meeting, a deacon's prayer meeting for revival on a Saturday night.

They thought that was good and so they did. We had to, we tried everything, and people, you know in Zechariah there's a verse that says that God pours on His people a spirit of prayer, a spirit of supplication,

and God gave that to us, I have no doubt. People say things like this, you know pastor, I used to be prayed out in five minutes.

Last night, God waking me through the night hours, I get up, I pray for almost 50 minutes, I could have prayed all night. And then we had a prayer wheel and people could sign their name for a 15 minute slot of time where they would promise to pray for revival in the church, that meant any time of the day or night in our congregation, somebody was praying for revival. And there were other things we did as well to get people involved to pray because I knew from my reading of revivals of the past, they do not come through good singing or good preaching or anything else, but through prayer.

As we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. And we get honest before God. The Bible says in Psalm 90 that God has, He has hidden our secret sins in the light of His countenance.

Hidden our secret sins. They're thrown in the face of God. And so, I didn't know, of course you can't know what's going on in your congregation as far as sin is concerned.

People look so nice, they dress nice, they talk nice, they sing well, and they give and all of this. But they still may be living in deep sin. I had a man in my church, he was the only one in the church that could do any door-to-door calling.

And he come to me with a map and he showed me, he visited every home in a ten block area, he led five people to Christ, and he had invitations to come back from thirty different families. Wonderful, great. During the revival it turned out he had an adulterous relationship with another woman.

I couldn't believe it. I called him to my office and I said, Eddie, the word is you're committing adultery. What's going on? He just dropped on his knees and began to weep.

And here's what he said, I don't want God to throw me on the ash heap. And I said, he won't if you'll repent. And he did repent.

And he was out of that, but I couldn't believe it. The only one I had going door-to-door, committing adultery. And things of this nature, he was not the only one involved in this kind of a sin.

Others were confessing the same thing. And then other things, when God came. Because you know, when God comes, as He comes in a time of revival, everything changes.

We've had people walk into the building. One fellow, he was a backstreet preacher, and he determined he was going to enter one of those meetings and really tell the people off. You know what happened to him? He walked in the door of the church and was so confounded by the presence of God, he ran to get into a room where he could fall on his face and ask God's forgiveness.

He never made it into the congregation. And things like that. And I've often had people come during those days, and they'd fall on their knees and say, Pastor, pray for me, pray for me, pray for me.

And often they couldn't even talk. Many times they couldn't pray. And so, Ralph and Sue Terry came.

They had asked us to do this and that in preparation. And we hadn't done some of those things because we were so positively convinced that prayer was the key. We didn't bother with some other things.

And the moment they saw what God was doing, their way of working changed as well. They'd always had a revival type ministry. They'd emphasize music a great deal.

They were very musical. But you know, after God came on the scene, music did not really become a big part of the revival. Except we'll give you some, an example or two of what did happen in the area of music.

One night, large crowd, and a Mennonite Christian kid about 15, she came up to the platform and asked if she could sing her testimony without accompaniment. Well, we weren't sure she could do that, but, well, go ahead. And this little kid stood there and she sang, Oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, Oh, to be like Thee, pure as Thou art, common Thy richness, common Thy fullness, stamp your own image on my heart.

You know what happened? God came while she was singing. The whole congregation was melted to tears, everybody. And that was five years before the revival.

And then I began to emphasize the Wednesday night prayer meeting. And there was an overwhelming sense of the presence and power of God. I talked to my wife after and I said, Honey, how did you feel when that girl was singing? And she said, Listen, it's the closest I ever expect to get to heaven till I get there.

And everybody felt the same thing. I remember in Edmonton, in Western Canada, in a large Alliance church, and the day before, I talked with another pastor. He was not from that church.

He was deeply involved in pornography. He was so deeply involved, he was positive he had demon problems. And we checked that out.

There were no demons. And I showed him. And James, it says, Every man is tempted when he's drawn away of his own lust.

And he accepted that. And so, there were two of us with him. And he knelt down and began to pray.

He prayed, oh people, I can't describe the intensity with which he prayed. I thought his body would break in two. We just waited and prayed beside him.

And he prayed and prayed for forgiveness and freedom by God's power. He'd tried everything before. And suddenly he laughed.

And you could hear the chains hit the floor almost. He was free and he knew it. What a transformation.

I mean, he was a new person in a few moments, just by the power of God, not by our counseling. That had nothing to do with it. He met with the living God of the universe.

And then, he said, I'd love to give my testimony. Well, I said, you can do that tomorrow night, but don't talk about the pornographic problem. That's not edifying.

Remember, Ephesians said, we're not to talk about certain things that are done in secret by people. And sometimes people give testimonies that are not edifying. No, I said, no problem.

And so, when he came the next night, he said, you know, the Lord has led me. I'm to sing my testimony. Do you know what the problem was? He wasn't a singer.

And he got up again without any accompaniment and began to sing. Oh, happy day that fits my choice on thee, my Savior and my God. Well may this glowing heart rejoice and tell us raptures all abroad.

And he got to this place. Now rest, my long divided heart, fixed on this blissful center of rest, nor ever shall my Lord depart with Him of every good possessed. And God came at that moment.

That whole congregation was melted to tears. Nobody could speak. They were all weeping.

He couldn't sing any longer. He stood there weeping. The pastor of the congregation, the head pastor, said to me afterwards, I've been in the ministry.

I'm 62 years old. I've been in the ministry for years. I have never in my life heard anything like it.

He said, all I can say is this. God came. God came.

And so our church was radically transformed. We had planned in a week and a half of meetings. We started with 150 people on a Wednesday night.

We had to go for 7 weeks with meetings. Every night for 7 weeks. And then, after each of the public meetings, and those meetings would go on for two and a half hours perhaps, when that was ended, we had small meetings called afterglows.

And these afterglows would meet in a small room or wherever, maybe 150 people, sometimes as many as 300 people. And in those smaller meetings, they were very informed. We'd sing a few choruses or whatever, maybe a song or two, have a prayer.

Then it's asked if there was anybody here with whom God was convicting them of sin, and they needed help in prayer. And so we had a chair set out, and people would come, men, women, whatever. I'll just give you a bit out of one of those afterglows one night.

A fellow got up, he was a high school teacher, he said, and he said, you know, I sing, my Jesus I love thee, but he said, I never talk about him, I don't think I really love him. Can you pray for me? So we had a chair set out, and we prayed for him. Then his wife got up and said, well I'm just like my husband, you better pray for me too.

So we prayed for another chair, prayed for her, and they went back to their seats. Then another fellow got up, and he said, I'm just like him, I'm a high school teacher, I sing this song, my Jesus I love thee, but I never talk about him, I don't think I really love him. So I prayed for him.

We had several like this that we prayed for in this afterglow. And there was a Baxton evangelist in the meeting, I'd heard of him at one time, he had a tremendous reputation in western Canada. He'd been Baxton right to the bottom of the pile for twelve years.

He put pressure on the people, praying, of course, for God's blessing. And our prayer meeting began to grow, it went from twenty-five, finally up to about a hundred. He was in the meeting, I didn't know that.

He was sitting here, his wife about five chairs over. Suddenly she got up, and walked and stood in front of her husband. And then, it's just as if the two of them were alone.

And she said something like this to him, she said, you know dear, you Baxton terribly, but God showed me that I was responsible for the whole thing. I never really supported you, I never encouraged you, I used to criticize you all the time, I didn't really love you, I wasn't really a wife to you, can you find it in your heart to forgive me? And Martin Bucker leaped to his feet, he just broke, and he grabbed for the chair, and he fell over the chair, and he wept his heart out, and he came back to God. And he preached the gospel again, after that night, walking with God till he died.

But things like this were going on, and beautiful things, simple things like, one night, the place was packed, and there were so many people, people were standing around the walls, you know. And a girl got up, a lovely looking kid, maybe sixteen or seventeen years, which she said, she said God's been working in my heart. I've always kind of hated old people, I didn't like to be with them, I didn't like listening to them, I just didn't want to be involved with old people, she said, God has changed me.

And she said, all you old people in this place, I love you with all my heart. And you know what happened? There was an old lady, she was standing against the wall, and she said, oh dearie, that's the sweetest thing I've ever heard. It's the first time in my life that anybody ever said that they loved me.

So things like this were happening, a tremendous surge of love, forgiveness, honesty, sharing the gospel. We had two kids in our congregation, they were eighteen, nineteen, whatever, interested deeply in sports, and they were on the telephone one day, one of the mothers was listening in, she shouldn't have been, but she was, and she told us what happened. They were stared at what they saw happening, and so they promised each other, they just promised each other they would never respond.

None of this for us. Now we have to go before Sunday morning to keep our parents happy, but that's it. Okay? Okay.

And the very next meeting, it was a Sunday morning, God got both of them. One fellow became a civil engineer, he's living in the Denver area now, and I checked him out some years back when I was in that area, he was walking with God. The other fellow was really interesting because the deacons, he went to some deacons and they brought him to me, and we knelt together and then all he could say was, no way, no way, no way.

And I said, Phil, no way what? And he didn't hear me, he just kept saying it, no way. Finally he said, no way Can I ever doubt the reality of Jesus Christ again? He tore my heart wide open and revealed himself to me. I can never doubt, I can never doubt his reality again.

Something, of course, God did. What a time we had. Seven weeks, our building within a few days was too small, so we moved to an Anglican church seating 600, and the first night we had 700 in there, so we stayed two nights, and we moved to a building seating 1000, it was too small, and after two nights, then we moved to a building, it was a church building, seating 1700 or more, and the first night we had 1700 in, and hundreds out in the street trying to get in, and the caretaker came to me, he wasn't a Christian, and he got swearing, and he said, listen, you'd better get rid of some of these people, the fire marshal will close this place down.

And he was swearing, you know. But you know what happened? A couple of nights later he got saved. Then what happened? Come on, he said, Bill, get them in here, hang them on the lights.

And of course the night, I asked my congregation leader to go down to an alliance church, and I had a meeting with them there, but you know, when my people left, hundreds came in off the street, they still had the same problem. So we started having double services Sunday nights, and then that got too small, and so finally, we moved to the Centennial Auditorium, it was seating 2200 or so, and that's where we kept on. We had to have double services there.

People came, not only from Saskatoon, but from all over the country. It was October when we normally, we could have two feet of snow, but God gave us what they call revival weather. It was nice and sunny, and no snow the whole seven weeks.

It was something God did for us. And many Christian workers, hearing of what God was doing, came to check it out. Many, many.

It's really interesting, because at the beginning of the revival, and later on through the revival too, but not to the same extent as at the beginning, it was pastors, evangelists, missionaries, Sunday school workers, and these kind of people that were being touched by God. People asked the question, what did it really do? What did it leave behind? They launched a nomination, and 12 months after the revival, they reported a 100% increase in the number of people saved in their churches in Western Canada during that period, after the revival. One Baptist group said, for the first time in their history, they went far over their average budget for the congregation.

The Western Tract Mission, they had 3,000 tract distributors in Canada, and they said that 12 months after the revival, the tract distribution, it tripled what they'd been doing before this. And you know, across the street from our church, there was a high school. And there was probably, there could have been 40 or 50 Christian kids in the high school.

And in Canada, if the teacher will sponsor it, you can have a Bible study in the classroom. 150, and we only had 175 members. I mean, some nights it was probably 170 there.

And the prayer meeting became the most exciting. And they had a Bible study in one of the classrooms, about 5 kids attending. Before the revival was over, they had 5 Bible studies in that school, and one week there were 14 kids saved in the high school.

The Christian kids, they all came out of the woodwork and began witnessing 14 kids saved in the high school in one week. This is what was going on. People were coming out of the woodwork and talking about Jesus.

And that's what revival does. Killarney, Manitoba, not a big place, maybe 2,000 people. They had a high school there.

And they had a drug problem in the high school. And then revival hit the churches. And finally, they had a God problem in the high school.

All the kids came out of the woodwork and started talking about Jesus. And finally it got so bad, we'd say it got so good, that the superintendent, he said, hey, listen, no more witnessing of this stuff about the gospel on this campus. Well, you couldn't shut the kids up.

There was just no way. They had a plan. You know what it was? They'd agree between themselves.

There was one entrance to the school where most kids came and went. And so the Christian kids would all get there early as they could and jam the place up so nobody else could get out. Then there'd be hundreds of kids all behind them, you know, trying to get out.

And then somebody before appointed would preach the gospel. They just found a way to talk about Jesus. It was just, my son was in university at the time, in Saskatoon, and he said, Dad, it's really neat.

He said, two or three of us, we can go anywhere on the campus, find some kids, guys and gals, whatever, and just say sometimes this, could we talk to you about Jesus for 15 minutes? Dad, we never got turned down, ever. There was a spirit of revival. And when we come, you know, when Christians get flamed by the Spirit of God, and others see it, they've never seen this before.

They want to check it out. And God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit and with other people when we live for Christ in an open, unashamed way. You know, God called, I had meetings following Saskatoon, my brother Keith in, well, he was in Winnipeg, and he arranged for me to come down, and he rented a building seating 1200 people.

No churches were interested in cooperating, so he just rented the building. Made a few spot announcements on the radio, and so I came down. No team.

I got there, and here we had this big building, and we had half a dozen men, and we had a prayer meeting before the first meeting, and somebody in the meeting said, you know, we're going to go upstairs and find maybe 20 people sitting there. And we said, well, we're not so sure about that, but we get up, there were 600 people sitting there. Before long, we were packed to the doors.

And you know, Sherwood Ward, who was Billy Graham's right-hand man, he edited the Decision magazine for 25 years. He flew down from Minneapolis to check it out, and God broke his heart. He wrote a book about it, you know.

It's called The Afterglow. He was there that night, and you know, here's what was happening. All the while I was preaching, people were coming forward and kneeling.

So fine, the whole front of this church was covered with people kneeling. So then they came, and we put them in the choir loft, and we filled that, and then we filled the platform, and they were still coming. So then we asked the people in the first rows to just vacate the seats so people could kneel and pray.

And then we had to do the second row of seats, and then we had to do the third row of seats, and that's for sure it worked for sitting. And he came up to me afterwards, and he said, you know, I have been involved in evangelism with Billy Graham in the greatest way for 25 years. I have never seen revival.

I've never seen anything like this, he said. This is revival. And then he said this, you know, my wife really needs revival.

And apparently they live in the same house, and sometimes they never talk for 25 days, you know. Anyway, I just stared at him. He didn't say a word.

And then he said, and I think I need it too. And he met God. And here's what happened.

He went home and told his wife what had happened, and she said, prove it. So a day later he said, I think I'll dry the dishes. And she said, are you feeling sick? No, he said, no.

So then the next day he said, I think I'll take your garbage out. Well, he'd never done that before. And she said, you're feeling sick, aren't you? He didn't say anything.

And this went on for three months. Then one day she met with God. And he phoned me.

I was in a meeting somewhere, and he phoned me and said, our life, our home life is like heaven, he said, since my wife met with God. Well, these are some things that God did. I can't explain.

There's so much we could say. We don't want to take more of your time, but just God came on the scene through prayer and faith, meeting of the week. It wasn't revival, but it was leading in that direction.

And let me say this too. We decided to invite the children to come. And, of course, through biblical preaching.

I mean, that's all involved. It's not done apart from this. There were things circulating, stories, not true, that most of the meetings, there was no preaching, it was all sharing.

In seven weeks, there was only two nights when there was no preaching. There was always preaching, 40 minutes or so. But there was a lot of sharing.

30, 40 people wanting to share the time. And some of the sharing meetings were just, they were so powerful. When they were through, all kinds of people come streaming to the front to meet with God, you know.

And we just watched it. And then teams began going out. We quit counting after 2,000 teams had gone out.

I know one church alone sent 600 teams out. Then small churches, one small church, they only had 20 members. Over a period of time, they had 50 teams go out from their church with a revival message.

We were getting calls from different places, send us a team, send us a team. And finally, everybody that could be involved was involved. We got an invitation from churches in Colorado, or in the area at least.

There were 10 churches, send us a team. And we couldn't, everybody was involved. So we sent two farmers down.

And they had 10 days of meetings. We heard later they had a wonderful revival there. These men, I don't even know who the men were.

They were just sent and they preached the gospel. And they told the story of revival in their own hearts. And God came in and gave a great blessing in that particular area.

So it's called revival. The high and lofty one, he's the one that does it. And it's a marvelous thing.

People, there's an old saying, if you ever go through the fire of a revival, you have the smell of smoke on your clothes until you die. I can never forget what I've seen in the past. The times, just in thinking of it, sometimes sitting somewhere, and I begin thinking and I melt into tears again.

When I think of those testimonies, the glowing faces, and the broken hearts that were healed, and the sinners that were converted, and homes that were restored, and many, many cases of divorced people who were remarried as a result of what God did in their hearts and lives. There was no end to that. And

teens started going overseas.

I've been in many different countries, South America and Europe and so on, in revival crusades. And maybe before I close, I should share one more thing. There was a group of six churches in Argentina, Baptist churches, six different groups, and once a year they got together for a fellowship weekend.

And the last time they did that, when they compared statistical notes, the average church in all those groups was they'd only won two people to Christ in the previous year. And they saw, this is terrible. We need revival, they said.

So they appointed a committee to arrange a weekend for the following year. Now, they didn't know I was coming down. I didn't know a thing about them.

But we have a sovereign God, right? So, I'm down there. I was preaching in the Son of the Baptist seminary in Buenos Aires. And after one of the meetings, a professor came running up and he said, Bill, what are you doing on this weekend? So I got my book on.

I said, that's the only weekend I'm free in the whole series I have. He said, oh man, we need you to come. There's a bunch of churches and they told me all about it.

They wanted someone to speak about revival. God put this thing together. So they were meeting in a city called Rosario, a city of over a million people, I guess.

They had a building seating maybe 1,200 people. It was packed to the doors. And we started on Friday and went over Sunday.

I couldn't give invitations because they're sitting in the aisles. The place was too crowded. We couldn't do that.

So, we just preached the truth. And the last meeting, I said something like this. If God has spoken to your heart, you need to be saved.

Stay behind when the others leave. If you're a Christian, you have the need of a revival in your heart and life. Stay behind.

I suppose there were 700 people. Let's stay behind. What am I going to do with all these people speaking through an interpreter? He was a tremendous interpreter though.

He saw what was going on. Immediately, he got into it and we had a wonderful time. And out of that, there came a pastor.

He was touched by God that night. He had a Baptist church in Buenos Aires. He had 500 members.

A Southern Baptist church it was too. And he went back to his church determined that my congregation must know what I know. They must experience what I've experienced from God.

Do you know what happened? I think he fasted and prayed the whole time. I don't really know. I know he was a tremendous man of faith and prayer even before the revival.

It was only about two weeks when a revival broke in his congregation. Everybody was touched and moved and changed. And in the testimonies, one man confessed he'd been planning to shoot the preacher.

If they hadn't had a revival, they'd have had a dead pastor. So we had a separate, in the same night, in the same building, but a different room, we had a children's prayer meeting. Back in Jonathan Edwards' day, he told... And then here's what happened.

Listen carefully. When the church was clean, God began to save sinners. And 200 sinners were saved in two weeks with no preaching, no meetings at all.

They were coming in the preacher's house. Streams of people wanting to be saved. He had to contact the previous pastor and ask them to come down and help gather in the harvest.

And I was there a couple of weeks later. They'd already baptized 85 of those 200 and had the others in baptismal classes and so on. And so people... When the church is clean, the problem today is, God's problem is, the church is not clean.

What is the point of bringing sinners in and converting them and leaving them among a group of people who are backslidden so finally they'll be backslidden too. There's no point in that. God doesn't work that way.

So, at Pentecost, 3,000 converts. Not long after, 5,000 converts. Then a second Pentecost, Acts chapter 4. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

And with great power, it says, the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. And God just told me this. I mean, I didn't hear a voice.

He just showed me. He laid it on my heart. Listen.

Why don't you pray the prayer? Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me. Try me.

Try me. Search me. Try me.

And see if there be any wicked way in me. And God knows how to do that. He knows how.

The Bible says, Then He shows them their work and their transgressions, if they have exceeded, and He opens their ear to discipline, and He commands that they return from iniquity. God knows how to do that. If you'll humble yourself, listen, if you'll humble yourself, God will show you what the problems and the sins are, and then you have to humble yourself further and ask God's forgiveness.

And He may ask you to make restitution. Do that. You start making restitution, more of the Spirit of God, you'll be blessed more and more the more of this that you do.

And that was a big feature in the revival movement. People were making restitution. Some people should have gone to jail.

None of them. God said, Those that honor me, I will honor. And the chief of police, Mr. Kettles, his name was, in Saskatoon, he issued a statement to the local daily newspaper, and here's what he said, I am not a religious person, but I know the difference between ordinary church work and revival.

And revival has come to our city, I know this, because people are coming to us confessing to crimes. We've never had that happen before. Do you know what? I think I'm through.

You don't have to say amen, unless you like to. Oh, this is so good to be here. Seek God.

Seek first the kingdom of God. Search me, oh God. You say your husband's no good, forget about that.

How about yourself? Ask God to search your heart. Thank you so much. A number of places where very powerful revivals started in children's prayer meetings.

So anyway, we finally had probably 30, 40 children in a separate prayer meeting, and the adults that were with them were told, now you're not to run the meeting, you're to train the children and let them run their own meeting. And the kids loved it. They just loved it.

And so we kept praying and looking to God. Now a prayer meeting, used to be in the prayer meeting before I knew better, I'd preach for 40 minutes, we'd pray for 15 minutes, and then we called it a prayer meeting. When I knew better, I preached maybe 15 minutes, then we prayed for 40 minutes, and it became a prayer meeting.

And in those prayer meetings before the revival, we would ask people, has God answered prayer for you any time in this last week? Please tell us about it. Even if it's something small, let us know what God has been doing for you. And people started to share, and then we'd say things like this, maybe you have a need in your family, or a need in your own life, and you'd like us to pray for you specifically tonight, and hands would be raised, we had a chair or two at the front, people could come and kneel there, we'd kneel with them, pray for them.

This became very important and really powerful, because we're becoming the kind of a church we should have been. Because we're supposed to pray one for another, and esteem each other better than ourselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare. We began to apply these things before revival. And a missionary told me of Ralph and Lucifer, they were Italian born in the States, but they were twins, and they had a revival type ministry.

So I contacted them, they said they couldn't come for, I forget, several years, and so we set up a date, and then we prayed before they came.

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