

Sunday #1 Introduction to Revival

by J. Edwin Orr

Revival is the work of God, a general awakening of or in religion, that results from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people.

Duration: 27:44

Scripture: Isaiah 43:19, Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 36:26, Joel 2:28, Matthew 6:33, John 14:16, Acts 2:39

Topics: "Revival Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of evangelism and its importance in spreading the word of God. He defines evangelism as presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, leading people to trust in Him as Savior and serve Him as Lord. The speaker emphasizes the need to evangelize inquirers and teach disciples, as well as engage in the reforming of society. He also highlights the significance of prayer and unity among believers in experiencing revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The sermon references the example of Peter at Pentecost and the impact of intense prayer in past revivals.

Transcript

I saw a sign outside a church in the San Fernando Valley which said revival every Monday. What they do during the rest of the week one can only conjecture. Five miles away in Burbank I saw a sign that said revival every night except Monday.

I wondered if some evangelist was moonlighting. I was lecturing at Baylor University when a Baptist pastor and waker said to me, brother, oh we had a revival here last fall and nobody got revived. I said run that past me again.

He said we had a revival here last fall and nobody got revived. I said then you didn't have a revival. Oh yes we did.

He told me the name of the evangelist, the name of the song leader. He told me how much money they put out in publicity, but said we never got off the ground. This must be the only country in the world where a non-event can be an event, provided you mean well.

I was lecturing at Asbury College, a Methodist college in Kentucky, and an old professor said, brother, oh you warm my heart. He said I have seen three revivals here. I said tell me, were they organized? Oh no.

He said matter of fact the last one, 1970, the president had left town. The president was a good friend of mine so I said maybe he ought to leave town oftener. But he said well the students had just held their revival and nothing happened.

And they were so disappointed they started praying half the night and then the Lord sent revival. I said you better say that again. You say they had just held their revival and nothing happened and then the Lord sent revival? He said I see what you mean.

In this country the word revival is misused. A Pentecostal evangelist whom I have not met sends me his literature from Texas, and recently I got a letter which said that Brother Grant, I think was his name, had gone to San Antonio to hold a revival. And to everyone's surprise a real revival broke out.

Now what did he mean? I'm afraid we can blame this confusion somewhat on a very godly man, Charles Finney. Finney said revival is nothing more than the right use of the appropriate means. Now this was in contrast to Jonathan Edwards, who said revival is a work of God.

But the result was a lot of men without the power that Finney had in his ministry have used the word cheaply for any kind of effort. And we need to straighten out definitions first of all. That's what I propose to do so that during the week when I talk to you about the great awakenings, the mighty revivals that have come from God, you'll understand what we're talking about.

Now as far as revival is concerned, it must have a biblical basis for us to understand. The Apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost, this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. It shall come to pass afterwards, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

And the quotation ended with the words, they that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The Apostle Peter applied these words to the events of Pentecost. Think of what happened.

A hundred and twenty believers who had been scared for their own lives became bold, and overnight became three thousand one hundred and twenty. That's what Dr. Donald McGavin calls very satisfactory church growth. Now what was the secret? The Apostle Peter said this is what was predicted by the prophet Joel.

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Now when Peter said at Pentecost the promise is to you and to your children, to them that are far off, to as many as the Lord our God shall call, was he referring to the promise of a Savior? No. The promise of the Messiah runs throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

He was referring to the promise of the Holy Spirit. You'll find throughout the Old Testament promises of a new day. You see before these events of Pentecost the Holy Spirit had come only upon individuals.

We call them prophets. The Hebrew word for prophet is the word nabi. It means an effervescent one, one who overflows, one who simply must speak.

But they were individuals. And Joel said the time is coming when God will pour out his spirit upon all sorts of people. And the Apostle Peter applied this to what was happening at Pentecost.

Now you may object and you may say, but it was Peter who did the preaching. True, what you read is what Peter said, but it doesn't mean he was the only actor in this great drama. If Peter said this is that

which was spoken of by the Prophet Joel, I will pour out my spirit upon your sons and your daughters, that must have been happening.

In other words, all 120 must have been busy in the work. Because these outpourings of the Holy Spirit are always marked by generality. I was talking to the president of the graduate school of one of the biggest colleges in the United States by telephone, long distance, the other day.

I mentioned that I was researching the 1858 revival. By the way, during the 1858 revival, the Academy of Music Hall in Washington D.C. was packed every day with 5,000 men at prayer. So my friend, the president of the graduate school, said, who started that? Was that Moody? I said, Moody didn't start any revival.

It was the revival of 1858 that started Moody. It's all the difference in the world. Now there may be controversy as to what we mean by revival.

You know, some people use the word for a week of meetings. Someone said to me today, oh you mean like a week of meetings in August the way they have in Kentucky? That sort of thing. But no, others use the word revival when we talk about the Welsh revival, about the Wesleyan revival, about an Anglican revival, and so on.

The word is used very ambiguously. Not only that, but there's a controversy about the theology. Jonathan Edwards said, revival is the work of God.

Finney said, revival is something for man to do. And there's a difference there. So I think we ought to try and solve the problem and make sure what we're talking about.

And we start with that word, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I asked you a question. Is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the work of God or the work of man? Well the Lord Jesus answers that for us.

The wind blows where it lifts. You can't tell where it's coming from, where it's blowing to. So it is with the Spirit.

There is not any organization under heaven that can organize an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Imagine if World Vision were to announce that on the 15th of November, 1983, they have organized an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now you can organize a crusade, you can organize a picnic, you can organize all sorts of things, but you cannot organize the work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore that is the work of God. Now you cannot see the wind, but you can see what the wind does. And you can always see the effect of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his children.

The first thing is in the reviving of the Church. You say, what do you mean the reviving of the Church? Every great awakening, every great revival has been marked by an intense spirit of prayer. Jonathan Edwards wrote a book, if my memory serves me right, the title was A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Extension of Christ's Kingdom According to Scriptural Promise and Prophecies Concerning the Last Days.

That was just the title, not the book. Now he addressed the very first point about revival, A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer.

What did he mean by that? Do you remember ten years ago, we had an evangelistic program throughout the United States called Key 73? It took its name from the key bridge on the Potomac.

Some godly men said we ought to get together and try and win America for Christ. Who knows, we may have a great awakening. I was asked by friends, what do you think of this? I said, any church that puts anything into it will get something out of it.

But I don't think we get a great awakening that way. However, their attitude was this. We evangelicals don't agree among ourselves.

So, you Southern Baptists, you do your thing. You Missouri Lutherans, you do your thing. You Presbyterians, do your thing.

The Pentecostals will do your thing. But we'll all do it together. And who knows, we may see a great revival.

Well, we saw a great campaign, not a great revival. Why? There was no explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer. A.T. Pearson once said, there has never been a great revival in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.

That doesn't mean that people become disloyal to their own convictions. It doesn't mean that a Presbyterian becomes any less attached to the Westminster Confession, or an Episcopalian to the 39 Articles, or whatever. But it means we're willing to pray together because our need is general.

Have you ever, when you thought of the pornography we face, the immorality, the gross murders? Why, in California, we've just had one man arrested who not only murdered people, but had sex with dead bodies. When you realize the filth we're up against, sometimes you feel you can't do anything, you're helpless. It's too much for any one church or any one denomination.

It's time for God to move. But then it's also time for us to ask God to move. Therefore, all these great movements have begun in prayer.

Now we have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the work of God. But the reviving of the church is also the work of God with the response of his people. They can refuse to be revived.

They can turn their backs upon God. But it is his work. Now why do we have so much controversy over the word revival? The word revive was already in the English Bible when we got our translation.

You know, revive thy work, O Lord, it was there. It's defined as the act of reviving, the state of being revived, restoration to life, strength, consciousness, etc. That's the way the word is used in all senses.

If you talk about a revival of a Shakespearean play, you mean a play that has not been used for some time, you bring to life again. That's as understood. If you find a man's body in the creek and the doctor says he's been dead five days, you can't revive him.

But if he's got a pulse, you use artificial respiration to revive him. That's the meaning of the word revive, to bring to life again. That word revive was in the translation of the scriptures from the beginning, but the word revival came into the English language 1702.

It was defined as a general awakening of or in religion. Evangelical religion was understood because the word was not used by our Roman Catholic friends or Greek Orthodox or Jewish or Muslim. It was definitely an evangelical word.

Of course, it could have been applied to witchcraft. We can talk about a revival of witchcraft. But generally speaking, the word revival is a New Testament word.

You say, is it in the New Testament? Its synonym is there, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The word revivalism made its appearance in 1815, and the word revivalist in 1820. Revivalism means the state or form of religion characteristic of revivals, as previously defined, and a revivalist is one who promotes, produces, or participates in religious revival.

You'll find this is true also in foreign languages. The German word for a revival is *erweckung*, which means awakening. The French word for revival is the word *reveille*, which means to wake up again.

It's the same as the word revival. The Scandinavian word in all three languages is *vekelse*. The Portuguese word down in Brazil is *reavivamento*.

But in every case, it means the coming of life again to people who have already possessed life. Now this is standard in all our dictionaries, in all our encyclopedias. But in American dictionaries since 1930, you get a choice.

A, revival, it means an awakening in or of religion. B, also a week of meetings, especially in the South. Now supposing you live in New Zealand, do you have to go south to get a revival? It's an illogical use, and yet people use it all the time.

Now what about the Bible? The word that's translated revival, there are two words translated revival. One is *tshadash*, the other is *tshaya*. *Tshadash* means to revive, to renew or restore or repair, and *tshaya* means to bring back to life again.

The word has never been used except for people already in relationship to God. Therefore it is not right to use the word revival as far as evangelism is concerned. Evangelism is trying to win outsiders to Christ.

Therefore we see the Holy Spirit is outpoured, that's the work of God. The church is revived, that's the work of God with the response of believers. But we have to go a little bit further than that.

I used to hold the view, revive the church and win the world. There's some truth in that. In 1956-57, I took a team of evangelists to New Zealand and Australia.

We held 105 campaigns. We wanted to reach the people down there, so we had an Episcopal evangelist, he was an evangelist of the Brotherhood of St. Andrews of the Episcopal Church in America. We had a Presbyterian, we had a Methodist, he is now Speaker of the House, he's in the Australian Parliament, he was at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast recently, and I'm a Baptist minister by ordination.

We also had Corrie Ten Boom. I take it you understand her, know who Corrie Ten Boom is? She was my associate for three years. We adopted as our slogan the evangelization of the world through the revival of the church.

There's truth in that. Get a church on fire for God and you'll win somebody to Christ. But is the whole truth there? When the Apostle Peter stood at Pentecost and preached, and 120 believers became 3,120, what

was the secret? You say, well Peter was filled with the Spirit, he preached the word.

Yes, but Stephen the martyr was filled with the Spirit and preached the word. And instead of adding 3,000 they murdered him on the spot. I began to realize from that, I used to think John Wesley was such a genius of an evangelist that when he began to preach, strong men who never darkened the church door would break down and weep.

But the more you read about John Wesley, the more you find he was a rather stuffy high churchman in those days. He became a great evangelist, but he was very stuffy at the beginning. What was the secret? The Holy Spirit who was poured out upon Wesley and Whitfield and the other members of the Holy Club and other Christians in Britain at that time was also poured out upon the people.

That's something we seem to miss entirely these days. Even in the charismatic movement, the concern is not so much for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people as an infilling of the Holy Spirit for each individual Christian. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon the masses.

After all the scripture says when he has come, he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Have you ever tried to convict someone of sin? Stop a man in the streets of Washington and try and convict him of sin. He will tell you where to go very quickly.

How is it then in times of revival people come running to God? It's because the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them and makes them hungry. So I find that not only do we have an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the reviving of the church, but the awakening of the people, the people among whom we labor. Then the revived church engages in evangelism and teaching.

There's the great commission. Whoever will preach the gospel will teach the commandments. The best definition of evangelism that I know was coined by a dear friend of mine who died just two years ago, Canon Max Warren of Westminster Abbey.

To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit that men may come to put their trust in him as Savior and to serve him as Lord in the fellowship of his church and the vocations of the common light. That's to evangelize. We evangelize inquirers, we teach disciples, those who wish to follow.

Then by many or by few we engage in the reforming of society. Every great awakening has been followed by some great social reforms. But notice I said by many or by few.

John Wesley's mother, Susanna, lived at a time when slavery was legal. But so far as I know she never said a word about it. Why? Well, the woman had twenty children.

Twenty! She prayed with each child each day. There was a fire at Epworth Rectory, and as soon as the fire alarm was sounded she lined them all up and counted them, and there were only nineteen. John Wesley was left upstairs there, and they got him down very quickly.

He always called himself a brand from the burning after that. Susanna Wesley had plenty on her hands. I would say if Susanna Wesley did nothing more than give the world John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and Samuel Wesley, that would have been a life work.

But John Wesley was quite different. Long before his time he wrote a pamphlet, Thoughts on Slavery, in which he denounced slavery as a sin against God and a sin against man. But John Wesley had more time.

He had a very unhappy marriage. I remember once speaking at a Methodist conference, and I said, I wish you Methodists had the zeal of your early founder. He used to get up at four o'clock in the morning and travel long distances with the gospel.

And one Methodist minister said, if I had a wife like John Wesley's wife, I'd get up at four o'clock in the morning too, and travel long distances with the gospel. See, God knows to whom he gives the work. There was one little hunchback in Yorkshire, during what we call the Second Awakening, decided to serve God in Parliament.

His name was Wilberforce. He went into Parliament and fought the slave trade until he persuaded the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade and use the Royal Navy to hunt them down. That was just as much a call from God as to become an evangelist like William Carey in India.

Now you might say, is there any priority here? Well, perhaps in one way. We're all called to preach the gospel. I put it this way.

You don't need to be a Christian to engage in social reform. I knew Frank Laubach. He was called Mr. Literacy.

He put out the principle, each one teach one. He taught people to read and write by the thousands and then by the millions. Became a consultant of governments.

Last time I saw him was just before he died. I spoke with him and Stanley Jones at Asbury College. But on the other hand, when I was in the People's Republic of China last year, I had to admit that the Communists have done a good job in teaching the Chinese masses to read and write.

You don't need to be a Christian to teach people to read and write. So while God calls us to social action, inasmuch as you do it unto the least of these my brethren, you do it unto me, visit the prisoners and the sick and so on. While God calls us to do it, it's a commended ministry.

I'll put it this way. If we don't do it, somebody else will. But if we don't preach the gospel and teach the commandments, nobody else will.

Therefore, we should remember our priority. The reason I deal with this subject is, you can't get anywhere today until you understand what you mean when you say you're praying for revival. In Griffin, Georgia, recently I met a man.

I said, you know, the country is such a mess, we ought to pray for revival. Yes, he said, but closer to the time. I said, what do you mean by that? He said, we always hold our revival in August, so why start praying about it until July? You mention a revival to some churchman to think you mean some kind of high-pressure, hot gospel type of rally or something like that.

No, no. What do we mean? We mean an outpouring of the blessed Spirit of God upon his children, regardless of their denomination. And that's happened time and time again in the history of this country.

Now, each evening, I'm going to tell you what God has done for America. I wrote to an outstanding historian, a church historian, not far from here. I said, can you give me any clues on the great revival that swept the United States in 1905? He wrote back and said, I've never heard of such a movement.

I doubt very much that such a movement could occur in the twentieth century. I just went ahead with my research and published my book. Do you know that during 1905, the Minister's Association of Atlantic City reported of a population of 60,000, there were only 50 adults left unconverted.

Do you know that during the 1905 awakening, 200 major stores in Portland, Oregon, closed each day from eleven to two for prayer? Do you know that the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Paducah, Kentucky, an old man, Dr. J. J. Cheek was his name, took in a thousand new members in two months and died of overwork? And the Southern Baptist said, what a glorious way to go. Yet the average American, and I'm going to say this strongly, the average church historian, the average minister of the gospel, never heard of the revival of 1905. So who do you mean Azusa Street? Azusa Street was 1906.

There were 120 people in that little room on Azusa Street. But in 1905, more than two million Americans were revived. And yet people have never heard of the general awakening.

I think conditions are so deplorable that we need to pray that God will visit his people again. Will thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee? Now I want to give a message from the word, but that will come a little bit later.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0157.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-edwin-orr/sunday-1-introduction-to-revival/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net