

Revival

by John McGregor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of revival, highlighting the spiritual climate that necessitates revival, the indicators of the need for revival, and the steps required for revival to come. It draws insights from the historical account in 2 Chronicles, focusing on the need to do what is right in the sight of the Lord, open the closed doors to God, clear out unclean things, realize our true position as chosen servants of God, and seek personal holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:16, John 15:16, Revelation 2:4, Genesis 26:12, Isaiah 6:8, Revelation 3:20, James 4:8, Psalm 51:10, Acts 3:19, Ephesians 5:8

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

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Transcript

It is a joy indeed to greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and whether you are here in this beautiful sanctuary or joining online or looking at the recording of this message, we want to encourage you just to open your heart to the Lord, to his word, and to the moving of his spirit. We want to think today about revival, and as we come together, we're going to look together in God's word, and if you want to use your own Bible or phone or tablet, I'll be in 2 Chronicles chapter 28 and part of chapter 29 as we look together at the importance of revival and some great truths that God gives to us concerning it. It is true that in our world today, there are many needs.

There are places where if you ask people, they would say the greatest need is for peace, and there are other places if you ask, they would say the greatest need is for help to deal with COVID and all of those issues that are around today. And for others still, they would say what we really need is hope, and others would say, oh I wish I had some resources or employment or any of those kind of things. And you know all of those things are important, but the greatest need of our day by far is for revival, a mighty Holy Spirit-sent revival, and as we think about the subject of revival today, I want to take us to 2 Chronicles chapter 28, and I'm going to begin at verse 22 and read through chapter 29 and verse 11, and we'll look at those verses together because they hold some great truth for us and some wonderful lessons that we can

apply into life as we think about revival.

You know if you look at the history of God's people throughout Scripture, you'll see there are times where things were going well and they were walking close to God, and the presence of God was so strong in their midst. And you'll see there are other times when sin has dragged them away, and there is no sense of closeness with the Lord. What is it that brings us as God's people to that place of being near to Him and dependent upon Him? And I believe we'll find some great answers as we look together in God's Word.

So let me just read these verses as we go along, and then we'll pray and seek Him. Now, in the time of his distress, King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz, for he sacrificed to gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, saying, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me.

But they were a ruin of him and of all Israel. So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God and cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut the doors of the house of the Lord, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers.

Now the rest of the acts and all his ways from first to last, indeed they're written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city in Jerusalem. But they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel.

Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place. Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years old, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, and in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the east square.

And he said to them, Hear me, Levites, now sanctify yourselves. Sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have passed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God.

They have forsaken Him. They have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and turned their backs upon Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, and put out the lamps that have not burned incense, or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

Therefore, the wrath of the Lord fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. For indeed, because of this, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us.

My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him, and burn incense. Now heavenly Father, as we have read from your word, and we see and think upon these truths, may your Holy Spirit give us clarity, and may you grant to us conviction, and turn our hearts toward you. May we be strengthened in the presence of the living God, and may you be glorified in power, that your grace might be manifest again in hearts, and lives, and through your church.

In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen. Well, as you see, as we've read in this historical account, this true account, it begins in a time when the people of God are not close to Him, and because of poor leadership they have been moved away from the Lord God of Israel to worship other gods and so on. So the first thing that I want us to deal with, and to see, and to think about then as we consider revival today, is the spiritual climate that we see that has been created here.

Because I believe we will see similarities to the climate that was created there, and the climate that we are living in today, as we just look at Scripture and see it for what it is. Speaking the reality of what can happen when people drift away from the truth of God and the presence of God. So as we think about the spiritual climate, we see that revival was needed desperately in these days.

Things were going wrong all over the place, and is that not so today as well? And you think about revival being needed, what were some of the indicators that revival was needed in these days? Well, first of all, we read in chapter 28 and verse 24 that the holy things were cut in pieces. And as you think with me about that, the holy things were cut in pieces. There was a sense of the mocking going on that would say, don't bother with God.

He is not important. He's out there somewhere, but he's there to serve us. It's a bit like our society in North America certainly today, where we have a moralistic, therapeutic deism going on that says, well yeah, you know, God is there, but he's there just because he can help us when we need him.

But when we don't need him, it doesn't matter. Therefore, it doesn't matter what we do. That's why we hear so much in these days about, I'm a good person, and I can do things.

And you know, the Bible says so clearly that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All. There is none good.

No, not one, says the psalmist. We start from the wrong premise in our society. We start from the thought that people are basically good, and they're going to get better and better and better as they get more and more educated and smarter.

But oh my dear friends, this is absolutely contrary to the truth of God and to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which teaches us that we are fallen, fallen and sinful and in need of a Savior, and that is why Christ came. The only place where we can find real release and real answers is not in looking to self-improve and to become better, but to be born again of the Spirit of God and to know the glow of God in our hearts that leads us to righteousness and truth, and that leads us to a right relationship with Him. Holy things were cut in pieces.

You think about our media and how anything Christian is just sliced, cut down in every way. You think about the educational institutions who basically say that the Bible is a fairy tale, and there's no God, and there's no need for God. But my dear friends, throughout all of history there have been those who have stood up in their time and in their moments and said, no, the world is going the wrong way.

We need to return to the truth of God and to know Him and to experience His power and His strength. Our whole culture does not recognize sin. We're trying to figure out why is everybody angry with everybody, and why is there so much backstabbing going on, and why is it so hard, so confusing in these days? It's because in our fallenness there is sin, and oh, where there is sin there is a need for revival, to bring salvation, and to bring a return to walking with Christ for His church, His children in this world.

Oh, if you hear me say nothing else in this message today, hear me say we desperately need a burning heart to return to God. Forget the politics. Forget who's in control.

Let the Lord be God of His church, and give Him the right to run it. Holy things were cut in pieces, says verse 24. And then we read in that same verse that access to God was shut up.

The doors of the temple were closed. People could not go in there. And there are so many ways that things try to be closed so that we cannot get to God.

There are all kinds of distractions. Here Ahaz was using false gods, and he set them up all over the place. But you see, that was to distract people.

Instead of looking to the one true God, well, maybe this will work, or maybe that one, or this one seemed to give victory to that, and maybe I should be involved. You see, it's all distraction. It's all confusion, and it's all totally contrary to the plan of the living God.

As you think about the access being shut up, we also would have to think about many countries where it is absolutely illegal to proclaim the gospel of Christ. And here is puny humanity shaking their fist at God and saying, your message is not allowed in here. Ah, but God has His way of getting His message just where it needs to go.

And perhaps today I'm speaking to someone, and you're sitting wondering, where can I find peace and help and strength? You'll find it if you turn to Christ. That is the only place truly that you will find those things. Deep and abide in.

In chapter 29 and verse 7, we know there was a need for revival, because that verse tells us that the light had been extinguished. Oh, Hezekiah has come to the throne, and he wants to do what is right, but the light had been extinguished. Folks, it can't get much worse than when we're fumbling about in the dark, and when the spiritual light, the truth, and the power of the gospel is silenced, people just stumble around.

There is a sense in which when the light is extinguished, things become more hopeless, more empty, more purposeless. If you think about the parable of the sower that Jesus told when the seed was scattered, oh, there's a sense in which the enemy's greatest delight was to immediately take it up and extinguish it so that it could not grow. Here we see that.

We see when the light is extinguished, there's a need for revival. I constantly run into people who say, well, I used to go to church, or I used to do this, or I used to do that, but I don't do it anymore. The light has been extinguished.

Oh, dear friends, when you think about the love of Jesus Christ, and that one who said, I am the light of the world, and he reaches out his hand to you and I today and says, come, come to the light, and darkness will be dispelled. In that same verse, verse seven, we see that prayer has been given up, and so often people will think, oh, I have prayed for so long for something. I'm just going to stop.

Don't do it. When prayer is extinguished, there is a sense that we have moved the wrong direction. In Revelation chapter two, the church at Ephesus is told, you have left your first love.

And when we leave prayer, that's what happens. We're leaving that loving relationship. Now, I know people love to say that we have lost our first love.

No. When you lose something, you don't know where it is. But when you leave something, you know exactly where it is.

And that is what has happened so often to godly people, as they feel pushed and shoved and torn and twisted by the lies of the devil and the things of this world that distract so easily. And so today, my call is simple. Don't be distracted.

Keep it simple. Come right to the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see in that twenty-ninth chapter and verse six that there has been a departure from worship, because Hezekiah is trying to re-establish it, as we'll look at in a few moments.

But dear ones, when we stop worshiping, or when worship just becomes something that we do because it's that day of the week when we should, we have lost the whole intent of allowing the Spirit of God in the heart of every human to respond to Him and the love that He has given to us. When we stop worshiping, there is no reverence for God. Oh, that is part of the indictment today, isn't it? We've lost our fear, our respect for God.

It's sometimes true in nations, but it's often true in hearts. Is it true in your heart today? Is there not a need that we would know Him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and give Him reverence and glory and respect that is due to His name? Secular humanism has taken over in so many ways, and we just do what we think. But dear ones, we need to declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So when we think about the spiritual condition here in 2 Chronicles, we see we're not so much different than that. And so let me move then to the steps that were necessary for revival to come in this context. As we think about that, it's really thinking about what must we do as we seek God for revival.

Well, what did they do? First of all, in chapter 29 and verse 2, it speaks about Hezekiah, and it says, and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. He did what was right. He became concerned with what was right, not what was expedient, not what would please people, not what the politicians would say, not what this or that would drag him off to, but what was right in the sight of the Lord.

And we need to similarly become ruthless in our hearts and lives with sin. When those thoughts come, deal with them ruthlessly. When there is opportunity to do what is wrong, deal with it quickly that it takes no part in your life.

When you think about doing what is right, you're really looking at words like we find in 1 Peter 1 and verse 16. Be ye holy, for I the Lord am holy. And holiness becomes an issue.

It's a few years ago now, but the president of a Bible college close to where I live had called me, and he said, John, there's something going on, and I don't know if it's revival. I want you to come out and look at it and tell me what is going on. And when I went out, it was on a Tuesday morning, and this had started on Sunday night.

The students had met to worship, and they had just continued. Yes, they had periods of rest, but they had continued to confess their sin. They had continued to seek the Lord.

They had a desire in their hearts, in other words, for revival. And that, my friends, is the beginning of revival, when our desire becomes the same as his. And his desire is that we would be a holy people, a royal priesthood set apart unto him, not caught up in the things of the world.

So when we think about this, we see that. That's where Hezekiah started, and where this revival started to take off through just one. Would you be that one? Would you be that one who would say, Lord, I want to be that man.

I want to be that woman. I want to be that young person. I want to be that boy or girl.

D.L. Moody, one of the world's greatest evangelists, stepped out of a Bible study one night where Charles Varley, the man leading it, had said, the world has yet to see what God will do with one individual completely dedicated to Him. And Moody stepped out and said, I'm going to be that man. And without all of our modern technology, he preached to hundreds of thousands of people the glorious gospel of Christ.

Would you be that individual? Would you step out for Him? Secondly, as we look in chapter 29 at verse 3, the closed doors are opened. He opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. Ah, there's room for repair, isn't there? When we think about the things that are broken, sometimes in our relationship with others and sometimes in our relationship with God, those closed doors were opened.

If you look at the seven churches in Revelation, you'll see that there is one that is the evangelistic church, the church at Philadelphia, and it is to that church that the Lord says, I have set before you an open door, and no man can close it. Oh, church, is not this what we need and who we need to be in these days and times? Working not in our strength, but in His. Not for our glory and success, but for His.

Seeing His hand at work in every situation. Glory be to God on high, just as the scriptures say. Oh, quickly for time's sake, we see in verse 5 that the unclean things were cleared out of the temple.

And, you know, an example of this might be in Genesis 26, verses 12 through 15, where we read that the wells that had been dug by Abraham, Isaac had to come along and clean them up to get the fresh water. And so it is for us today, there are things that need to be cleaned out, cleared away, that we may have that fresh flow. Jesus said, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

And so it is. So what are some of these things that need to be cleared out? Anger, bitterness, resentment, apathy, lust, lies, things that stop us from being close to God. And you might say, yes, yes, I hear you, and everybody knows that.

Ah, but sometimes we stop too soon. What about materialism? If only I could get that. And the greed.

Oh, there are sometimes that greed just oozes out of the walls. That's why we see so much poverty and difficulty and problem and strife in the world. The love of money is the root of all evil, says the scriptures.

What about pride? Oh, yes, we need that sense of being proud of who Christ is, but we're oh so proud of what we can do instead of what he has done. And what about things like criticism? There are some people who can't let a day go by without saying, oh, so-and-so, and he's no good, and she's no good, and that's no good, and they're no good, and that'll never be any good. Stop.

Let it go. What about gossip? Did you know? Have you heard? Such-and-such did that. My goodness, what would you expect from a sinner but sin? What about jealousy? Well, yeah, we all have known what it is to wrestle with these things, but when we take that second trip to the cross, that trip that says, Lord, would you let me die so that you can live in my heart and that you can be in control of all things? That's what we need to do.

That's part of the journey to revival. Now, you know, oftentimes Christians pray for revival and talk about it and look for it, but they're really saying, God, won't you just take this mess that we're in and help us get out of it? And God only comes in revival for his own glory, and no one, no one can take that glory in those days. Quickly as we look, we see not only the unclean is cleared out, but there's a realizing of the true position.

In verse 11, look at what Hezekiah says to the servants of God. My sons, do not be negligent, for now the Lord has chosen you to stand before him. Ah, forget the world.

Forget all of its promotion and fame and nonsense. To stand before the Lord, that is our position. To serve him, and that you should minister to him and burn incense.

You see, as revival comes, we begin to understand what it is to stand before the Lord and to be his servant, which is the greatest call of all. So often in these days, we have turned God's kingdom into a business, when what really needs to happen is we need the call of God to lead us and to guide us, and the only way that we'll get it is to be on our faces in prayer before him. These are the steps.

As you look at that, he's really saying, you're chosen of the Lord. That's what John 15 and verse 16 says. Jesus said, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should bring forth fruit, fruit that will remain powerful.

Yes, we must choose Christ, but he has chosen us. To stand before him every day, reverencing the fact that he and he alone is God. Chosen to minister before him, giving all the glory to him.

Chosen to pray, to bring those requests. How often you hear it said, would you pray for so-and-so? They're hurt, and they need, and the answer is, oh yeah, I'll pray. And maybe it happens, and maybe it doesn't, because we don't see prayer as the privilege to bring change into lives.

We've forgotten what it is to come to that throne of the Almighty One with these little requests, and know that to answer every one of them does not diminish his power one iota. Oh, my dear friends, we need personal prayer. Yes, we do.

We need corporate prayer, more desperately than ever, for the church prayer meeting is the least attended of all, and it ought to be the most attended of all. We need repentant prayer, where we're honest with God, that he might be honest with us. And we need sensitive prayer.

No wonder the disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray. They wanted not to pray their own will, but to be sensitive to what God wanted them to do. So let me conclude as we think about revival today.

It's time, is it not, to begin. It is time for us to look for personal holiness. If you study the life of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, they were called Methodists because they begin to develop a method to seek the holiness of God in their lives.

And God radically changed two continents because of it. Oh, it's time for us to turn to God with that intent, and it's time that we recognized it is clean vessels that God uses most. Jesus, when he made the water into wine, he told them to take those clean vessels.

And similarly, if you and I would pour out the love of God, oh, it'll come from a clean heart. It's time for us to stop functioning in the weakness of humanity and in the weakness of what we think, and instead learn

to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, may God breathe upon us and burn away the dross that we might truly follow him.

Bringing others through those open doors, is it not time that instead of serving ourselves, we say, oh God, let me serve you. Teach me how to be a servant. Now, Heavenly Father, as we conclude these thoughts on revival, you have stirred our hearts through the scriptures.

We have seen the condition of things so terrible, distracted and bad, all turned around through your work in the life of one individual. Father, may we ourselves individually make those choices today and come before you and say, Lord, here am I. Forgive me. Fill me.

Send me. Use me for your glory. When this physical life is burned up, may I know the glorious presence of my Savior in heaven.

And perhaps someone is watching and listening in today, and you say, oh, I don't have that kind of passion. I don't have that kind of understanding, that kind of faith. Would you take a moment? God in his love is reaching his hand out to you.

Would you take his hand today and just come and from your heart say, oh God, be merciful to me. I'm a sinner. I've done and said and thought so many things wrong.

Forgive me. Save me. Fill me with your Spirit.

Lead me on into the fellowship of your church. Help me to serve you. My God, may you be glorified in our decisions today.

We'll give you the thanks and the praise. In Jesus' name, God bless you.

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