

# Why We Need Revival (Part 1)

by Michael L. Brown

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*Michael L. Brown's sermon highlights the urgent need for revival in the church and individual lives, emphasizing a deeper commitment to God.*

**Duration:** 1:02:52

**Scripture:** Malachi 1:6

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "Repentance Needed"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the urgent need for revival in the church. He highlights the relentless efforts of Satan to destroy and defile, calling on believers to not sit idly by but to actively fight against the enemy. The speaker shares his personal experience of feeling content and blessed by God, only to be suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of need and urgency. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing and repenting of our sins as individuals and as a nation, and calls for a breaking up of the fallow ground in our lives to allow the flow of the Holy Spirit. The speaker also warns against complacency and the tendency to judge others while repeating the same patterns ourselves.

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## Transcript

Praise God. Let's pray together. Thank you, Lord.

Fathers, you've received our worship, received our offering, received our lives. I pray that you would open our hearts and minds to hear from heaven. Lord, some of us have been together in meetings hundreds and hundreds of times.

We've heard so many messages, but we pray again that you would speak to us through your word. That your word would come with power and conviction. That it would burn like fire in our hearts, that it would be a tree of life as we take hold of it.

Give us ears to hear what your Spirit is saying, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's turn to Psalm 85.

A few weeks ago, God really grabbed hold of my heart in a very intense way and began to speak to me about my own life and about our community here. I knew this was the day to bring the message. I've been asking Him through this day that He would cause it to grip me again afresh and grip all of us.

Psalm 85, I want to speak to you today about why we need revival here in our midst at fire. Psalm 85, this is one of the great psalms of revival. From Israel's history.

You showed favor to your land, O Lord, you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. Selah.

You say, what does selah mean? No one is exactly sure. Perhaps it is a pause. Let's continue.

You set aside all your wrath and turn from your fierce anger. Restore us again, O God, our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

I will listen to what God the Lord will say. He promises peace to his people, his saints, but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together. Righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps. I just want to give you some background as to how I came to be preaching this message here today.

We've been really experiencing some wonderful things from the Lord here in recent months, and we have every reason to be encouraged. A lot of wonderful things happened in May. We had our Not Ashamed Charlotte rally that displaced the gay pride event in Marshall Park.

Less than a week after that, I was sitting with over 200 city leaders from the greater Charlotte region, pastors and leaders that had come together for a Charlotte Awake Banquet, sitting at a table with the mayor of Charlotte who's telling me, listen, you guys have to give us our marching orders, and telling the pastors there, it's up to the church, you guys have to do it and change the city. Then hearing from Henry Blackaby, one of the most respected authorities on revival in the nation, in the world, this old man of God who in his semi-retirement is still getting 1,500 invitations to speak every year, and he asked the question, why then with all these invitations, he's speaking at this banquet, why then is he here in Charlotte? And he said for years, when people have asked him, is there any one city in particular in America that you believe is targeted for revival, or has signs of revival, he's answered for years, yes, the number one city is Charlotte, and that's why I'm here. Those things are encouraging when God has called so many of us into this area to share in what he's been doing through the years.

Every week we hear encouraging reports, those of our folks who help and stand with those working in the area in pro-life work, almost every week we hear testimonies of lives of babies saved, as our workers join with other ministries and stand in the city. Almost every week we hear testimonies from our students of people being saved on the streets and coming to the Lord. I mean, there are good things happening.

There are more and more neat testimonies of supernatural manifestation, of the gifts of the Spirit, and words of knowledge, and people being touched, and God's power really moving. I mean, good things happening. I had some of my dear friends recently with us at FIRE, and they were just encouraged by what's happening in our midst.

There are a lot of good things going on. Our finances in the body here are strong and stable, stronger and more stable than they've ever been. There's a lot of good that's going on, and we could just be rejoicing at his goodness.

Then suddenly, I mean suddenly, kind of out of the blue without anything to precipitate it, any outward crisis, any terrible need, anything going sour or bad, suddenly God started dealing with me about our lack. Suddenly, I was arrested by heaven in my own life, and for us as a community, about the depth of our needs. There were several things that began to stir me.

God spoke to Israel in Deuteronomy 1, when they were in the wilderness, and told them, you've been at this mountain too long. And then they got moving, and they went forward, and they were active. And that's in the first chapter of Deuteronomy.

The second chapter, he says, you've been going around this mountain, this country, too long. And I was suddenly struck with this picture of us just going around in small circles, and maybe having some blessing, and maybe having some growth, and maybe having some increase, but in terms of the calling, and purpose, and destiny of God, just going around in small circles. I was struck by the fact that our dear friend Yeshupotam had come, our friend from India, one of my closest friends and co-workers.

He had been with us a year earlier, and really felt impressed of the Lord to bring a message to us of faith, and challenge us to buy the field, in terms of land, or property, or where we're supposed to be situated. And it just struck me that one year later, we still didn't even have a word as to where we were supposed to be. Just, boom, it just hit me.

Someone recently donated funds to us to republish my book, From Holy Laughter to Holy Fire. It had been in print about 10 years, and had gone out of print. We received some funds to put it back in print.

So I just began to flip through some of the pages of the book. And I went to one of the chapters, God Wants All of Me. It was written in, I believe, May of 1996.

And at the beginning of the chapter, there's a hymn from William Cowper. Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His Word? What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet their memories still, but they have left an aching void the world can never fill. Return, O holy dove, return, sweet messenger of rest.

I hate the sins that made thee mourn, and drove thee from my breast. The dearest idol I have known, whatever that idol be, help me to tear it from its throne and worship only thee. These are words in Old English, and you could just kind of breeze through them.

But suddenly, I was just personally drilled by them. Prayer from Leonard Ravenhill, written when he was 86 years old. 2.30 in the morning, February 12th, 1994.

Look at the hunger that's in his heart as an old man. Lord, engage my heart today with zeal that will not pass away. Now torch it with thy holy fire, that nevermore shall time's desire invade or quench the heaven-born power.

I would be trapped within thy holy will, thine every holy purpose to fulfill, that every effort of my life shall bring rapturous praise to my eternal king. I pledge from this day to the grave to be thine own unquestioning slave. I read these things, and suddenly I was getting drilled in my own heart with a call to go deeper.

Just a couple weeks before that, I was on a plane flying back from New York City, just feeling the grace of the Lord on my life, feeling the favor of heaven. I had my headphones on, was listening to some worship

music, and I was just so overcome with God's goodness in His love and the sense of being in His will. I was just sitting there on the plane with tears of joy streaming down my cheeks, just enjoying the Lord and the sense of all is well with my soul.

And now, just a couple weeks later, I'm undone with a sense of need, with a sense of urgency, with a sense of something missing. And I'll apply this to fire to all of us in a moment. I had written this in that chapter, God wants all of me.

Revival is all about the claims of love. Husbands, how strong is your love for your wives? Wives, how deep is your love for your husbands? Parents, how intense is your love for your children? God's love for you is infinitely stronger, deeper, and more intense. He aches for you.

He longs for you. How do you feel towards Him? Is the cry of your heart the same as David's, where he said in Psalm 63, O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Is that earnest seeking of God, that desperate thirst and driving hunger, that is what is so characteristic of revival. It leads to an encounter that is so dramatic, we can only say, your love is better than life. What more can we want than Him? What more does He want than you and me? And then these words of Duncan Campbell, convicted me afresh.

He said, is my sense of need and your sense of need the very ground on which God can work? Let me read that again. Is my sense of need and your sense of need the very ground on which God can work? Oh, how true it is that hunger, real hunger, creates a capacity for God. And the reason why we are not filled is simply because we are not hungering after God.

Campbell said, the crisis of conversion is ever to be regarded as a conviction of guilt, but the crisis of sanctification is a conviction of want. In other words, when we get to that place of radical, deep breakthrough in our own lives and to a new point of sanctification and devotion and fellowship to God, it comes out of a conviction of want. He said, you have it expressed in the words of the hymn, Oh, when shall my soul find her rest, my strugglings and wrestlings be over, my heart by my Savior be possessed, be fear and sinning no more.

There you have the cry of want. There you have hunger expressing itself. There you have a true longing after God.

There you have a vessel into which God wills to pour himself. Suddenly I was struck. This had been growing in me, but just looking around, watching the atmosphere sometimes of our services, be it in our corporate church gatherings, be it in our school setting, of just a casual atmosphere, of just a lack of real hunger.

People couldn't come in and say, boy, you guys seem desperate for breakthrough. I'm not talking about putting on some show. I'm not talking about the louder we cry out, the greater sign of hunger it is.

I'm talking about something that's reflected and strolling into services 15, 20 minutes, a half hour late for something reflected in the worship team getting grieved because as they look up worshiping, they see conversations going on through the building. Some of us by the very leaders, oh, because we just have to stop and talk to somebody about something. Suddenly I was just struck by the fact that five more years could go by and we could still be small in size and small in impact, which if it was our destiny and calling in

God we'd embrace, but it's not.

You have to understand there's something in many of us that have been together for some years now that remember what it was like to literally be training 10 times as many people every week as we are now and seeing 10 times as many laborers going out in the harvest field to make a difference. We thank God for everybody that is here with us. We thank God for the family community we have.

We know that the kingdom of God is not about numbers, but when you're praying and yearning and longing for God to raise up laborers for the harvest, these things matter to you. I want to say something as plainly as I can say it. I'm speaking for myself, but all of us in leadership, really we could be anywhere else.

All of you that are part of this congregation, you could be anywhere else. No one's forcing anybody to be here. We're all here by choice and a sense of the plan and purpose of God.

And if I had my choice, if God just said to me, okay, you could go anywhere in the world, you could work with any group of people, you could make any place your home, you choose it. You choose the congregation. You choose the leadership team that's out there.

You choose the school. Choose the church. Wherever you want to go, I'll bless it.

I would choose to be here. There's no group of people I'd rather be with. There's no group of leaders I'd rather work with.

There's no group of students, grads. There's no congregation I'd rather be pouring into. I mean that with all my heart.

But I'm saying that something has to reawaken in us because we are hardly fire anymore. Listen, just to remind you, we're talking about calling. We're talking about destiny.

We're talking about what God has fashioned us to be in His will, His plan. This is not about our ambition. This is not about our desire.

This is not about us thinking a certain way of ourselves. This is simply a matter of wanting to run the race God's given us to race to run and be the people He's called us to be. That's all that matters.

It doesn't matter what other people think. It doesn't matter if someone likes us or dislikes us. It doesn't matter what our reputation is.

The only thing that matters is what does our Father think? What's He saying? What's His plan? What's His desire? So just to remind you, our name is not CCC as in Casual Christian Community. If that's what we were called to be, then we'd go for it with all of our hearts and we'd strive to be casual. We are not CFF, Congregation of Fellowship and Fun.

Oh, there should be fun in our lives and we should have fellowship. Coming together is one, and the Lord is important. But God has given us a calling and destiny and it's not lukewarm and it's not ice, it's fire.

And passion for God and purity and things like revival and revolution are part of our DNA. I'm telling you, one day I'm enjoying the favor of God and sensing His blessing and sensing that sense of purpose in being in His will, and the next day I was struck by a tremendous sense of ordinariness, of just being

personally and corporately tame and stale and very little of a threat to hell. I was looking for some things on my computer and happened to stumble upon one document which got me reading something else and something else and something else which took me back to a lot of the events that took place five, six years back in Pensacola when at great price to many of the people here there was a separation from where we had been and a moving on from the Lord.

And then about 300 people were part of a large relocation here a few years back. The first fruits of them coming right about three years ago now. And I was reminded by the Lord in that sense we paid a great price for our freedom.

In other words, we could be whatever God wants us to be. There's nobody stopping us. Listen to me.

There's nobody stopping us from going forth. There's nobody over us except for the Lord. We have our own leadership team, accountability this way and in other ways as well.

We have our own sending organization. We're a movement in ourselves in that sense part of many, many, many, many things God's doing throughout the body. But it's not like we have to go and get somebody's permission to go after God.

We have to go and get somebody's permission to be radical for Jesus. We have to go and get the proof somewhere to change the order of what we're doing to break through. And I just suddenly hit as if the Lord was saying, well, what are you waiting for? If you recognize there's more, if you recognize you're supposed to break through, what are you waiting for? What holds you back? What hinders you? And I took it again.

Everyone that's close to me knows that what strikes some as bad news can often strike me as something to be encouraged by. That within moments of hearing something that's truly disastrous, I somehow am very encouraged. But I was encouraged because I felt God was taking the initiative to draw near.

God was knocking at the door. God was giving a fresh invitation. God was saying, I'm ready to do something.

I'm ready to break out. I'm ready to move. I'm ready to pour out my spirit.

I'm ready to do something different. And it wasn't about awakening in the region. It wasn't about fulfilling of larger prophetic promises.

It was just about us. It was not to have what happened in Brownsville again or what happened in this place again or that place. It was about God drawing near and torching our own hearts again.

It was in that Ravenhill prayer. And I've been praying those words again and again. God, torch my own heart.

The key to our destiny is a fresh visitation from heaven that becomes an ongoing habitation. Listen, it is just the way God has made us, and it is just part of our heritage, and it is just part of our calling. Everything that we want to see happen, from evangelism to missions to community impact to healthy family life to revolutionary living to manifestation of the kingdom and power, everything that we want to see happen will only happen to the degree that we are freshly plugged into God, that the fire of God is burning in our midst, that we are not living compromised worldly lives.

In short, there can be no fire as in fire church, fire school of ministry, fire international, and whatever else we do. There can be no fire without the fire. It's often been asked, this question has been asked many years, why is it we don't have revival? And the standard answer is, this is just throughout the body, worldwide, why is it we don't have revival, why don't we see revival? The standard answer is, because we are willing to live without it.

So the next question is, why are we willing to live without it? And the answer is, because we don't realize we need it. So let me give you ten reasons why we must have revival. Ten reasons why we must have revival.

If you're visiting, let God speak to you as He speaks, let Him speak and move on you as He does. But I'm speaking this in particular to our community here. And I believe we all have these ten.

There we go. Ten reasons why we must have revival. Number one, there are many things promised in the Word that we have not yet seen or experienced.

And if we continue on our present path, we have no assurance we will ever see the promises realized. Come on, we read the Scriptures. This is not a book of myth and fiction.

This is not given to us just as a tease of some kind. These are words of truth spoken by a God who's drawing us deeper for His glory. You say, aren't you encouraged by the exciting things happening? I see exciting things happen, and I've seen the same exciting things happening for years, and they keep hitting the ceiling, in my own life and in the body worldwide.

There are many things promised in the Word that we have not yet seen or experienced, and if we continue on our present path, we have no assurance we'll ever see the promises realized. You say, brother, these things take time. Correct, I understand it.

But I've been going after some of them for 35 years now, and the clock is ticking. We were praying as leaders the other morning, just in the room we were praying when we were quiet, you can just hear the clock ticking. And on the one hand, we're resting in the Lord and enjoying the Lord and trusting His goodness and trusting His timing.

On the other hand, there's that consciousness, the clock is ticking, the clock is ticking. Just sitting around doesn't make things change. Time in itself does not make promises come to pass.

We need a fresh breakthrough because there are things promised in the Word we've not yet seen or experienced, and we have no guarantee we ever will. Number two, there are many things in the Word that God describes as normal, not even talking about promises, not even talking about things He says to seek or pursue, but just when you read the Scriptures, when you read the New Testament, these things are simply described as normal. There are many things in the Word that God describes as normal, yet we have rarely seen or touched them.

How can we live the rest of our lives without taking hold of God's reality? Come on, at a certain point, most of us get this holy desperation. We've got to break through. We've got to do things differently.

Fast, prayer, whatever we have to do. We're going to get hold. We're going to see the change come.

And then when you don't see it happen after a certain point, you just kind of settle in where you are and get used to it and think this is the norm. And you have relative hunger and relative thirst and relative desire as long as it doesn't rock the boat of your overall life because we get settled in. We just get into a pattern, a habit.

At a certain point we ask the question, how can I live the rest of my life without finding out what it would really be like to break through? How can I live the rest of my life without finding out what would happen if I really went after God in this way and fasting or prayer or seeking His face? How can I afford to do that? And then we just get used to life. I don't know if you've ever watched a game on television. Maybe you're a baseball fan or something and you're watching a game and there's a guy pitching and the pitches don't look that fast or that hard to hit and nobody's hitting him and you think, man, if I had any skill I could be up there and hit him.

There's a reason nobody's hitting the guy. It's harder than it looks. There's a reason that a lot of people sit in churches and church meetings and think, man, if I was in leadership I'd do things differently.

And then they get in leadership and they do it just the same. There's a reason we sit back sometimes and judge others for what they haven't done and then we live out the rest of our lives repeating the exact same patterns. There's a reason.

Life has a certain momentum. Hard to get out of ruts. Hard to recognize we're in certain ruts.

There are many things in the Word God describes as normal yet we've rarely seen or touched them. How can we live the rest of our lives without taking hold of God's reality? Number three, why we must have revival. Many of us have dreams and visions that we believe God has promised to us personally.

I'm not talking about things that are written in Scripture that are general for the body or maybe a promise for a particular nation. I'm talking about things in your own life, things that, man, you wrote down in your journal or tapes of a prophetic word you know are true, you play and replay, or things just as long as you've been saved you've known you were destined for this or made for this or you're going to see certain things happen. Many of us have dreams and visions that we believe God has promised to us personally yet the clock is ticking and we're no closer to seeing these dreams and visions come to pass than we were ten or twenty years ago.

In fact, we're beginning to talk about what God wants to do through our children and grandchildren. What about the purposes of God for this present generation? What about His plans for our lives now? Can you just fast forward it? Those of you with kids, fast forward it to 30, 40 years down the line when your kids are talking about how God's going to fulfill those promises through their kids. And you're thinking, no, no, no, it was supposed to be through you.

And then your spiritual parents are thinking, no, no, it was supposed to be through you. And their spiritual parents are saying, no, it was supposed to be through them. It's so easy to put it off for tomorrow.

It's so easy to believe it's going to happen in the next generation. What about right here and now? I still remember hanging out with Leonard Ravenhill and him saying to me, just so broken up one day, he said, Mike, I don't care what's going to happen in the year 2010. We were very close the last five years of his life, from 89 to 94.

So he was 82 when we met. I remember him saying that one day. He said, Mike, I hear all these reports of what God's going to do in 2020, 2010.

He said, I don't care, I'm not going to be there. What about here and now? What about the burden of the Lord here and now? What about the jealousy of God here and now? What about what he wants to do here and now? I've shared this many times, but it's a useful illustration. When we lived in Pensacola, Nancy and I were talking one day, and she said, you know, I think you put on a little weight.

And I said, I have, but I have a plan. She said, oh, good. I mean, she's just concerned basically for my overall health and witnessing God, just my overall health more than anything.

So I don't know how long went by, six months, maybe a little longer, and she said, you know, I don't think you've lost any weight. I said, no, I haven't, but I have a plan. I really did.

Six months or a year go by, and she said, you know, I actually think you've gained a little weight. And I said, yeah, but I have a plan. She said, your plan is not working.

Some of us need the Lord to look at us and say, your plan is not working. You've been going around the same mountain too long. You've been waiting for the breakthrough tomorrow too long.

Your plan is not working. What about what God wants to do in your life in the here and now? What about this present generation that has spiritual responsibility? What makes us think that things are going to be fulfilled in the future? You know, many times commitments that we make to God for tomorrow are excuses for our disobedience today. Come on, how many fasts have you started tomorrow? How many vows have you made for tomorrow? How many major commitments have you made for tomorrow? In fact, sometimes we're making our fasting commitment over a big meal while we're full to the max.

What about what God wants to do today? If we keep going the way we're going, the one thing we're sure of, we'll never see it fulfilled. That much we can be fairly confident of. Number four, why we must have revival.

To the extent we know the Lord, to that extent we want to know Him more. To the extent He's touched us, to that extent we want to be touched again. I mean, as we draw close to Him, doesn't that create a greater desire to be with Him more? As He begins to reveal Himself, doesn't that create a passion? God, I want to really know You.

We can relate to Moses being on Mount Sinai in Exodus 33 and having this extraordinary encounter with God, and in the midst of it, what does he say? Now show me Your glory. It's like, Moses, you've seen enough. Moses, you've experienced enough.

Moses, you've gone deep enough. No, this just whet my appetite. There should be something in us in our walks with God, a holy, insatiable hunger.

God satisfies us with an unsatisfying satisfaction. I remember a preacher saying that 30-something years ago, but it's true. That's why there's so much blessing that's pronounced on those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and seek His face.

Number five, we are jealous for the reputation of Jesus. The Father desires to highly exalt Him and to demonstrate by the Spirit that He is risen from the dead and that He's Lord. Yet so much of our witness

and lifestyle brings Him reproach, not honor.

While the world continues to mock Him, having never encountered Him in power. This should provoke us to hunger and thirst and prayer and contrition. God, the name of Jesus is mocked.

People still don't take Him seriously. Really, ask yourself a question. Most people here are Americans or at least living here in America.

How much worse do things have to get before we get desperate? I mean, isn't it true that the worse they get, the more dull we become? Isn't it true the more society mocks Jesus, the more we become accustomed to it? It's just like if you work around people that use profanity, you hear it all the time, you get used to it. You work around people that are smoking cigarettes all the time, you get used to it. And then you're away from it for a little while, you get back to it, and you realize, wow, this smells or this sounds terrible.

We've just gotten so used to the way things are that there's very little in us that burns with shame that the name of Jesus is so mocked. Come on, just think of the reputation of Jesus through His church in American society. Think of the conclusions that Americans draw about Jesus based on the behavior of so many leaders, based on the message that's so widely distributed, TV and book form, based on so much superficiality and compromise that's out there, and here living in the Bible Belt.

I was talking to a local homosexual leader a few weeks ago, a few months back now, and he said to me that he himself is agnostic, atheistic. He said when he lived in other parts of America, most of the homosexual men and women that he met themselves were atheistic or agnostic. He said, but it's different here in Charlotte.

He said to me, every African American gay and lesbian person I know in this city is a Christian. Of course, professing Christian, we wouldn't define it the same way, but that's just how he's saying it. He said, and many of the white gays and lesbians, these are his words, they're Christians.

Doesn't something in us burn for the reputation of Jesus and for the truth of the Gospel? What's going to bring about change? Are we just supposed to accept the way everything is in our own lives and in our society, and that's just the way it is? Or is there something in us that's supposed to take hold of heaven and say, God, glorify Jesus. Glorify Jesus in the eyes of your bride, in the eyes of the church, in the eyes of this world. Number six, the bride has still not made herself ready, and there is a passion in the Lord's heart for a fully devoted, totally loyal, holy, holy people.

What is hindering in holding us back from full surrender? What is stopping us from taking the plunge? And how does the Lord feel when, spiritually speaking, we're so busy building our own houses while His house remains in ruins? In other words, how much does He have the priority? How much are we concerned to have our lives, the consuming passion in us, if you cut us, the blood that comes out is blood of holy desire to please the Lord and to be a people that are right in His sight. Haggai, the first chapter, God rebuked the Jewish people for being busy after getting resettled and building their own homes while His lay in ruins. We need to ask the Lord, spiritually, does that apply to us on any level? Number seven, the needs around us continue to be staggering.

Multitudes have lost, sick, hurting, dying people who need the gospel. So many who've never even heard the gospel. Even if we're seeing success, the harvest is still so plentiful, the labor is still so few.

Can we let people perish when we have in our hands the key to their salvation and deliverance and freedom? When I went to India the first time, I was so staggered by the needs. We were at a train station, and homeless people around us, and crippled people, and the needs were so staggering, I didn't really know how to respond to it. And over a period of time, just getting to go there each year and minister, you kind of compartmentalize things.

Okay, I can do something about this. I can't do something about this. So I'm just not going to let my heart be torn as much because I can't fix this and do something about this.

So I'll minister here where I can. And you kind of unconsciously get used to everything else. So we often feel the same way.

Okay, the needs are staggering. Look, if we just stopped and focused on the needs, we'd lose our minds. If we just stopped and focused on the suffering, we'd explode from the emotional pain.

And we're going to be focused on the Lord and rejoicing in Him and enjoying His peace and His grace. But have we on any level insulated ourselves? Have we on any level just put up certain walls so that the needs of this world don't burden us anymore, don't pull at us, don't break our hearts? Maybe it's too painful. You say, oh, but who can live like that all the time? Nobody's supposed to live like that all the time.

But there's a time to mourn and there's a time to rejoice. And perhaps because we've forgotten the one, we've lost part of the other. Perhaps because there's not greater brokenness than carrying a burden and not more tears out of broken hearts for a dying world.

There is not as much joy and celebration. Number eight, for those of you trying to write down all of this, it may be slightly challenging. You can always get the tape and listen back to it.

Satan is on the move with all his unholy aggression, working tirelessly and with fiendish creativity to defile, devastate, and destroy. Can we sit idly by and pursue our own interests when the enemy of our souls rapes and pillages and ravages and pollutes? Our present pace is not fast enough. Our present result is not effective enough.

And despite all our boasts and big talk, when I say our, I mean the Church of America, more of the same will only produce more of the same. So what am I saying? Work harder? Fight even more? Get less sleep? Push even harder? No, I'm saying we need a fresh wave from heaven. We need revival.

We need outpouring. Now, there's someone who takes a message to heart. You talk on the need for tears and they start to cry.

Praise the Lord for some forerunners in our midst. I'm not saying that we beat ourselves. I'm not saying that we whip ourselves into a frenzy.

I'm saying we need a greater outpouring of God's Spirit and power so that the things that we are doing will have more effect, so that the prayers we are praying will bring about more breakthroughs, so that the lives will be multiplied at a more effective pace. Listen, we are not in some kind of competition where somebody is tracking things. We don't have some time frame.

Okay, we have our goals. We are supposed to hit this number in the church at this point. And this number of souls saved at this point.

And this budget at this point. And we are behind that. There is no such time table.

We don't think like that. But this much we do think. The devil is on the move destroying lives and we know God wants to do more about it than we've seen.

And we know He wants to use us more effectively than we've been used. It's not a matter of putting more on yourselves. It's a matter of a changed heart, a changed attitude where it needs to be changed.

Number nine, many of us are acutely aware of backsliding or weariness or lack in our own personal lives. And this is really the whole issue. It really boils down to each of us individually.

It boils down to my life and your life before God. What has happened to our first love? What has happened to our fire and passion? What has happened to our childlike fearless faith? Look, it's no coincidence that words came earlier about returning to a childlike mentality and a call to rejoice in the Lord. The very Psalm that we spoke of.

We read at the outset Psalm 85 speaks of God reviving us that we can rejoice fully in Him again. What has happened to our burden and vision? What has happened to our victory and authority? What has happened to our hunger and thirst? Could it be that we need a fresh touch from Him? Forget the world, forget the Church of America, forget the Church of the Greater Charlotte Region, forget everybody outside of these doors right now. What about us? The best thing, listen to me, the best thing that any of you could tell me, I mean this with all my heart, the best thing that any of you could tell me is I am absolutely ablaze for God.

I know there's relevance to this, but man, my life is everything you're preaching, I'm just enjoying the Lord, His presence is at work in my life, I'm intimate with Him, I'm bearing fruit. That's the best thing you could tell me, that this does not apply to you. If it doesn't apply to you, don't get mad at me, I'm rejoicing, I'm blessed, I'm thrilled.

I'm not trying to fit everybody into the same mold. I'm not trying to say if you think you're doing well, well, you're not. You think you're sacrificing, well, God spits on it.

No! I just know God, I know His Word, I know His Spirit at least to a degree, I know what He's speaking to me about, and I know what He's speaking to many here about. We got into a conversation with our first and second year class on Wednesday about revival, and things that hindered past moves that we were involved in. And then one of our students asked me the question, in my capacity and leadership here, did I feel that if God sent a fresh wave of revival to fire, to our church, to our school, to our community, that we would be ready for it? And I said, no.

And I said, I don't believe I personally am. And then we got into a discussion with the class. At the end, I asked the student body, representing the first and second year within our school, how many of you feel that we need a fresh wave of revival right here within fire? And almost all the hands went up.

Then I asked the next question, how many of you feel you need it in your personal lives? And almost all the hands went up. We can either get very defensive, which makes me wonder if we really would welcome God's fire coming. When I said to Nancy, you know, I don't think I'm personally ready for revival to come right now.

And she said, why not? I said, I think the heat is just hotter than I remember. You know, suddenly you think of the depth of repentance God brings you through. Suddenly you think one day everything seems great and fine, and the next day you're in agony of conviction, and God's drawing you in.

I mean, it's kind of like you had that surgery before, and you know it's for your good, but you remember what the therapy was like. I wonder with our schedules and time frames and so many other interesting things going on in our lives, if God really started moving, would we welcome Him? Would we find room? I have no desire. I speak for the leadership team.

We have no desire to just have long services to have long services, or think that the more meetings we have, the more spiritual we are. We'd rather spend time with our families and spend time alone with God and spend time reaching the lost than just have meetings. But I wonder if God started to interrupt our schedules.

I wonder if He said, instead of hanging out with each other, hang out with me. I wonder if the fire began to burn and some of our little petty interests got burned up with it. I wonder if we'd respond and say, more Lord.

Or be like so many others through the years that have just said, you know, this is a bit more than we asked for. Could it be that we need a fresh touch from heaven? Could it be that we need to be revived? Could it be that our hearts need to be reignited? Could it be that we have become mingled with the world? The word came earlier about thorns also. The thorns that choke the word make it unfruitful.

Could it be that we've become mingled with the world or entertained by the world or at home with the world or put to sleep by the world or polluted by the world? In other words, is there more of the world in us than we would care to realize? When it comes to souls, we are to go into the world. When it comes to sin, we are to come out of the world. I wonder to what extent that's being lived in our lives.

Number 10, we have become casual with the sacred. We have become casual with the sacred. In many ways, especially in our corporate gatherings, we're bringing the Lord our leftovers, not our spiritual first fruits or our very best.

Let me just stop there for a minute. You go to Malachi, the first chapter. God rebukes His people there, His Jewish people, for dishonoring Him.

And when they said, how have we dishonored you? One of the things He said was, look, you bring some animal for sacrifice that's unfit. You bring some blemished or lame animal for sacrifice. You don't give that as a gift to your governor, to your earth leader, and he wouldn't receive it.

But for God, it's okay. The casualness with which we can approach meeting together. Look, the purpose of meeting together is to go after God.

We have times to hang out. We have times to be in one another's homes. Sometimes we just have to race our way through service so we can just all hang out after.

There's a purpose in coming together. We want to go after God. We want Him to speak to us.

We want to be changed so we can go out and change the world. And yet there's so little fear of God in our midst. Okay, I won't talk to anybody else.

I'll talk about me. There is a genuine lack of the fear of God in me. There's a genuine lack of a depth of hatred for sin.

I'm talking about me. I'm not preaching to anybody here. If this applies to you, fine.

There's a list I made out for my own life the other day during one of our services. Here it is. Lack of first love.

Lack of love for the Word. Lack of love for prayer. You say, well, what are you comparing? Listen, this is between me and God, but I'm sharing it with you in case it applies to anybody else.

And to humble myself as well. Are you not praying? Are you not in the Word? No, that's not the issue. That's not what I was convicted of.

Lack of first love. Lack of love for the Word. Lack of love for prayer.

Lack of private worship. Lack of best friend intimacy with Jesus. Lack of desperation for revival.

Lack of burden for the lost. Lack of tears. Lack of fasting.

Lack of God consciousness. Lack of fear of the Lord. Lack of depth of hatred and conviction over sin.

Does that mean you're playing games? No, it doesn't mean I'm playing games. Does that mean I'm not hungry? No, it doesn't mean I'm not hungry. It means just that.

Boom! Just hit me between the eyes and the invitation from the Lord. Come in deeper. Come in deeper.

You do that with joy, but you do it with some level of trepidation. Because He's holy. Look, we can keep on the way we are and bear a certain amount of fruit and have a certain level of spiritual success and be blessed by the good things that are happening and God still tell us we're backsliding and God still tell us we need revival.

But I have good news. I have good news. The way God has constituted us, He won't even let us do that.

He may let others do it. I don't mean He loves us more, thinks we're special. Everybody has their calling.

Each congregation, church, fellowship here, house group that loves the Lord. You're as precious to Him as fire is. He's got no favorites in that sense.

But just the way He constituted us, if we don't keep stoking the holy fire, we will not exist. I'm totally serious. You can get all worked up into a works righteousness thing and a performance thing, but God hates pride more than anything.

I'm just talking about spiritual reality. It's now or never to go after Him. You say, why the urgency? I don't know.

But I'm encouraged because that means He's ready to do something. And all this stuff, boom, getting hit with it out of the blue in this month of June only to realize that some of our midst for some time have been speaking words about something God was going to do in June. I just spot an email from one of the local leaders about how God spoke to His wife last year about that He was going to pour out His Spirit right here, relevant to fire as well, in June.

There's a number of things on the horizon even as we're praying much about the school. We feel God giving us vision to sharpen what we're doing, to more equip those that He calls us to go out and do an effective work. There's a lot that's ready to burst.

I believe there are some keys to the fulfillment of the vision that He's given us right at the door. And that's why He's saying, go after Me. That's why He's saying, you cannot continue the way you've been going.

Go after Me. We have time for other pursuits and interests, time for other people and activities, time to make a living, raise a family, enjoy life. As I note here, those things, making a living, raising a family, enjoying life, that's part of your sacred calling.

These are not outside things that need to be abandoned. Part of your sacred calling to be a provider, part of your sacred calling to raise a family, part of a sacred calling to enjoy life. But we have time for that and for lots of other things.

How much time, focused time and energy does God receive from us? Can we really say that He comes first? Are we really pursuing Him and His kingdom and His righteousness? Let me just take a couple more minutes and then give you an opportunity to respond. I've had on my heart the young people here. It's so neat to hear the good things happening with our young people.

I'm also reminded of the fact that these are the years, the easiest years when you have, and I just want to say this to the teenagers that are here. These are the easiest years you will ever have in terms of freedom to go after God. It is before lots of other responsibilities come your way.

Look, I just use some frequent flyer miles to fly down and hang out with grandkids in Texas. A couple weeks before that, Nancy and I were up with another grandchild and with our kids in both places, in Maryland and Texas. And you know, when you hang out with your grandkids, you just have fun.

You just get silly and play and get wild and there's no responsibility with it. It's amazing. And, you know, it struck me just being around our two grandsons who are about six weeks apart, around two and a half now, all you who are parents of little kids, this was no revelation to you, but I was just reminded of it, that, you know, they have endless energy for no seeming good purpose.

You know what I'm saying? It's just zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, endless energy. All I want to do is play, play, play, play, play, and just continue. And, you know, even the fun times and things you do together, you think of it as they get older.

You know, when they're two years old, they're not even going to remember those times consciously. I mean, I'm sure they make some deposit in the life. But it struck me the more wisdom you have, the more you have to offer, the more productive you can be.

As you get older, the less energy you have. Think of what we can do for the Lord if we had the energy of two-year-olds. And think, parents, of what you could do for the Lord if your two-year-old had your energy.

Just swapped it. Perhaps that's divine protection. Perhaps as we got older, if we had that much more energy, we'd destroy everything.

Perhaps we wouldn't hear the quiet, still voice of the Lord calling us to pray because, shoo, shoo, we'd be whizzing around, changing the world, sitting in our hotel room with our kids and grandkids in Texas and

five-year-old granddaughter and two-and-a-half-year-old grandson. They're just playing at the desk there, you know, on the phone and, you know, taking notes, just playing. And Andrew, our two-and-a-half-year-old little guy, he's just scribbling there, just got his paper, and he's just writing, just scribbling.

So Megan, our daughter, asked him, Andrew, what are you writing down? He goes, my ideas. Just scribbling down. That's probably where we'd be if we had that energy in our 40s or 50s or 60s or whatever.

Shoo, Lord, I'm writing new chapters in the Bible. It's like, okay, slow down a little. But, you know, the same way those kids, they've just got that unbounded energy, and I guess it's just time to play and grow and have fun.

As much pressure as you might feel emotionally, as many pulls and challenges as you go through in your teen years, I'm telling you, this is the time of freedom. This is the time of freedom. This is where you lay the foundations for the rest of your spiritual lives.

You know, Scott called yesterday. He says, hey, quick Bible question for you, and he asked me a certain, he just needed a reference for a certain reason, and I just told him where it was. It was correct reference, yes? So he said, where's that verse for God so loved the world? No, I'm kidding.

It was something that might have been slightly obscure, but I knew where it was immediately. Why did I know where it was immediately? Because when I was 17, 18 years old, I was spending six hours alone with God every day because my schedule permitted it. I was in high school.

I wasn't working a job yet. My schedule permitted it. I was in five services a week, night services, and then Sunday morning was a busy religious schedule.

I mean, going to services and then outreach and stuff like that, but I had time if I wanted to use it diligently and spent at least six hours alone with God every day without fail for months and months, at least three hours in prayer every day, always, at least, at least two hours reading through the Scriptures, often on my knees, at least one hour a day memorizing Scripture. I used to memorize 20 verses a day. There was just grace on me.

Here I had fried my brain with drugs and all this other junk, and now in the Lord my head's clear and I'm going after Him. And then when I got out of high school, then I had to work a full-time job for the first time, and then right after working a full-time job, then went to college with more demands on study, and then while in college, Nancy and I got married, then before I even graduated college, had our first kid, and there was work on top of it. That's just the way it is for many other lives.

The question should not be how can I be entertained or what movie's acceptable to see or not or the latest thing coming out. It should be, I've got to go after God. I've got a great opportunity.

You have fun and enjoy life, and no one's watching you. Thankfully, we do not have a congregation where people sit around and judge each other. Thankfully, it's just not one of the problems in our midst where everybody's trying to analyze it.

We don't sit around as leaders and talk about who's not doing what and this one and that one. We're blessed by what we have. We are constantly boasting to others about the good things God's doing in our midst.

We're thrilled. We are thrilled with what He's doing in families. We are thrilled with the quality of life that moms and dads are putting into their kids.

I'm saying that with all my heart. I'm also saying there's an invitation to go deeper. And young people, I'm just telling you, you've got a unique, carefree opportunity to go after God and lay foundations in your life that you'll never get back.

So many that are older wish they could go back and use those years better to fill their hearts and their heads where you'd be more retentive. And how much more even to the children with a heart for God. Boy, if there's something just that pulls it, you go with it.

Even if it's just a special week or a special month where you just have to be with Jesus more, go with it. He may tell you secrets that you'll remember for the rest of your life. I'm almost done.

Ravenhill wrote, if we're really going to get a concept of revival, we have to get a vision of God's sorrow over sin. We have to get a concept of how day by day we offend God. As a nation, we offend God in millions of ways.

And he talks about the amount of sin and pollution that goes before the throne of God as compared to the small amount of praise and prayer and comparison. And the call in Joel to mourn and weep before the altar. And he says this.

How do you get to that state? There's no way you can jump to that level in 10 minutes. It's an operation. It's a process.

It's a preparation. There has to be an individual breaking up of fallow ground in me. What is there in my individual life that obstructs the flow of the Spirit? What God wants is not to fill up empty pews.

He's not concerned about filling empty churches. He's concerned about filling empty hearts and empty lives and empty eyes that have no vision, empty hearts that have no passion, and empty wills that have no purpose. We all know the story of the disciples after the resurrection.

There's an amazing account at the end of John's Gospel where they said, let's go fishing. Now there's nothing wrong with going fishing. And they're still earning a livelihood, but you get this idea of having absolutely nothing to do.

Think of it. Jesus has died and risen, but they're still in this kind of transition phase before they've gotten the final equipping and pushing out and been filled with the Spirit. And let's go fishing.

And that's just some of us are living our lives kind of in between. We felt a calling, and now it hasn't been realized we're kind of in between. Or there are things we once experienced that's not happening now, so we're kind of in between.

So let's go fishing. Or whatever the let's go is. And God's saying, come after me.

Come after me, I'll meet you. Listen, there's nothing in my head saying that we're suddenly going to start having meetings every night and people are going to come flocking from around the world and there's going to be this famous revival. There's nothing in me saying this is the key for the region.

No, I'm not even thinking that. All I'm saying is that God wants to ignite fresh fire in you and me. If it happens in our homes, if it happens in small prayer meetings, if it happens in other ways, if we start adding extra services, however, whatever form it takes, no one's trying to manufacture everything or put on any kind of expectation.

There is simply a call to join the earth. And if the shoe doesn't fit, don't worry about it. I remember seeing at an old globe missions conference, there was footage from this cowboy preacher with PhD, actually, cowboy preacher in England, and he's preaching on the resurrection.

And there's this one guy screaming and yelling, furious, Jesus didn't rise from the dead! He's furious. And this guy says to him, then why are you so angry? What's the big deal then? If this doesn't apply to you, don't worry about it. Some people need this.

God sent me with the message, rejoice that some will get it and be changed. But if you're really disturbed by it, maybe the Lord's after something. Maybe there's a wall up.

And I tell you again, I'm not judging anybody here. In fact, when I look at each life, I think they're right with God, they're on fire. You know what I'm saying? That's the way I think of people.

Those close to me will tell you that my tendency is to think the best and believe the best and even to come up with excuses for people rather than be quick to condemn. But I'm telling you, there's backsliding and compromise and worldliness in many hearts. There's lack of desire for God in many hearts.

There's lack of burden. There's lack of vision. And God wants to ignite fresh fire.

So I'm going to close here and give an invitation. It's a little before 20 to 7. Let me just say this. We're going to give an invitation to respond.

We want you to be free to respond before the Lord. And I want to strongly urge those that want to talk to just find another place in the building to do so. If you've got kids, you look at your watch and it gets to be around 7, then be sure you go out and get your kids and then deal with it accordingly or someone can help you.

If you need to pray more, that's fine. But we're going to respond. I just want to read this to you in closing.

Andrew Murray, speaking of holiness, wrote this. Our work in becoming holy is the bringing of our whole life and every part of it into subjection to the rule of this holy God, putting every member and every power upon His altar. Holiness is what there is of God in us.

Holiness is the losing of self and being clothed with the spirit and likeness of Jesus. That's what he wants to do. Edwin Hatch, who is a biblical scholar and a hymn writer, wrote these words.

Breathe on me, breath of God. Fill me with life anew that I may love what Thou dost love and do what Thou wouldst do. Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with Thee I have one will to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly Thine, until this earthly part of me glows with Thy fire divine. Some of you had something very precious with the Lord that you've lost. Some of you live with a burden, a vision, an expectation, a hunger, a passion, a thirst, an intimacy that you've lost.

God's not here to condemn you today. God's here to say if you'll humble yourself, make no excuses, don't point a finger at anyone, humble yourself and confess to God. Or just say, God, I'm weary.

Or, God, I'm disappointed. Or, God, I'm hurt. Just be honest with Him where you are.

And if there's sin, be quick to repent of it. I tell you, He'll begin a fresh work. And if you'll just go after Him, if you'll seek Him, if you'll obey His prompting, if you'll take the time that He gives you, if you'll make determination to seek His face, you will find Him in fresh new ways and fire as a whole, and we individually will be ablaze with the power of God.

Let's stand to our feet together. I'm going to pray, and if this is for you, I invite you to come and kneel here before the Lord, and we will seek His face for breakthroughs. We're not going to have people come and pray for you.

We're not going to counsel. Right now, this is just a time for us to go to God. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

If suddenly God has brought something to your attention in your life, hey, He saw it there all along. He's been fully aware that it's been there. He's loved you just the same.

Now He's saying, deal with it, and we'll start something fresh. Father, in Jesus' name, cause Your Word to hit home in every life. We rebuke every distraction and hindrance in Jesus' name, and pray that You'll meet us and set our hearts ablaze.

By Your Spirit we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. If that's you, come on up and let's begin to seek the Lord.

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