

Evaluation of the Present Day Renewal

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon evaluates the present day renewal in the church, highlighting the movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals and the establishment of the Gospel Tabernacle Church on the fourfold gospel.

Duration: 31:25

Scripture: Matthew 5:6, Matthew 23:13, Luke 4:18, John 7:37-38, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:14, Revelation 2:5

Topics: "Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the awakening interest in the Holy Spirit among different denominational groups. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the day of God's visitation and the hour of His turning. The preacher encourages the congregation to be stirred from lethargy and apathy and to return to the first works of the faith. He also highlights the significance of the class meeting as an invention of God that saved the nation from destruction. Overall, the sermon calls for a return to the heritage, privileges, prophecies, and promises of the Christian and missionary alliance.

Transcript

Back to the second chapter, I read just a few verses, beginning with the 14th verse. Our theme this evening, an evaluation of the awakening interest in the Holy Spirit among denominational groups. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy.

And I will show wonders in the heaven above, signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord shall come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

You understand that the book of Acts sets forth the presence of Christ in the midst of his church in glory and in power. You realize that during the first two decades of the church it spread from Jerusalem by

means of the multitude that were there on the day of Pentecost and the faithful ministry of those that followed until the subcontinent of India was visited by the apostle Thomas. And there was established there in that southern part of that land the work that is still known, where our brothers Thomas have come, the church of Martoma.

Others went until finally it could be said that the world as it was known had been visited just after two generations. But as Satan sought to destroy the church by persecution and failed, he sought to infiltrate it and was more successful. So that during the centuries that followed there was a gradual erosion of truth, a burial of the truth, simple as it is, under the rubbish of ceremonialism and tradition.

And there was an invading of the church by the cults, by those heretics whose pagan philosophies had been rejected by the Jews under Judaism. And yet they somehow were able to subtly accommodate their heresy to the terminology of the New Testament. And so we find a gradual infiltration of the church in those early centuries.

About the beginning of the fourth century you find that the organized church is driven into hiding people known as the Montanists, these who had the presence of Christ in their midst and the glory of Christ upon them, because they wouldn't submit to papal authority. They were branded as heretics, hunted, hounded, hurt, bruised, and abused. They nonetheless continued.

And so parallel to the church established, the church in power, the church in control, was the church hidden and the church abused and beaten. There's never been a time when God has not had his people. You must recognize this.

You must realize that the writings of the church fathers under Romanism concerning the Montanists were slanted, twisted, and warped, and presented only a portion in that incomplete distortion. And so we find that the very things for which they were assassinated, even killed by more cruel means than clear assassination, were the truths that characterized the early church, truths which had been lost for the most part during the passage of the centuries. How our hearts thrill at the testimony of those who across those dark years, called the dark ages, found and knew the Lord.

You can't read of Francis of Assisi without stopping to praise God for a man in simplicity and childlike faith, knew the Lord and walked with him until the stigmata was a fact in his life and his hands actually shared the testimony of the crucifixion of Christ. St. Francis of Assisi knew and loved our Lord. You come to John of Roysbrook, this man that I've mentioned so many times, one whose little booklet, *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, is one of the most exquisite testimonies to the sweetness of Christ that's ever been put into the English language and that by translation from the French.

You find Meister Eckert and Towler and Julian of Norwich. And down across these years were those who even in the midst of Romanism nonetheless knew and loved our Lord Jesus and lived in beautiful fellowship with him. Not the least among these and to be mentioned in such category is Archbishop Fenelon and one of the disciples whom he tutored in the things of the Lord.

This woman that had such tremendous such tremendous testimony of born into royalty and yet Madame Guion was able to endure all that the Lord brought into her life through suffering and when she was spat upon by members of her family she could kiss the spittle that fell upon her body and thank God that he had been given her the privilege of suffering for him. We realize therefore that even in the midst of gross darkness God still found those who loved him. We rejoice also as we contemplate history that there came

a time, an hour, when Martin Luther dared to brook the anger and the wrath of the church in power and started the Protestant Reformation.

We are grateful that a hundred years afterwards a group which had gone into decay and a spiritual powerlessness, those who were the descendants of Huss, the Hussites, now driven from their native land of Czechoslovakia, finding succor and provision and place in the estate of Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut, were prepared and able to seek the Lord until he should come and bless them. So I would say that in church history the first blessing of God with New Testament power, of which we have record, was the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the Moravian brethren there at Herrnhut in Germany. This was the first time that God was able to encompass an entire group of people with blessings similar in some degree, at least, and in some kind as well to that which took place at Pentecost.

And from that group the wholesomeness of his presence caused that in just about 40 years 1,500 were to go forth as missionaries of the cross invading almost every area where the gospel hadn't come. We recall also that the writings that they gave and the ministry that they presented started a true apostolic succession of blessing. It's not strange, therefore, that when John Wesley was on his way to Savannah, Georgia, that there should be on that same ship a company of Moravian missionaries.

And while Wesley and his companions crouched in terror in the inner cabin trying to close their eyes to the storm that was driving the masts and the spires and the sails from their little ship, the Moravians were out on deck with their rain in their faces and looking out into the raging sea realizing that it could be in the providence of God that within just hours, by means of a watery grave, they should be in the presence of the Lord they love. And having seen the glow of heaven upon the face of these Moravians as against the cries of terror of his own company, John Wesley knew that there was something more to religion than that which had been exported with him when he had been sent as a missionary to Georgia. So it isn't surprising either that after two years there, in futile attempt to serve, he should write back to the bishop that had posted him saying, I came to convert the Indians, but alas, who will convert me? Returning from Georgia to England, he went back to Oxford.

There he found that a company, including his brother and George Whitefield and others, had begun becoming greatly concerned about the things of God. They had begun to meet in a class for the single purpose of studying God's word, claiming its promises in mutual faith, and receiving from God all that he was prepared to give. He attended with them for several months, and thus it was one night at Aldersgate Street that he was listening to Pastor Burkhardt, a Moravian, reading Luther's introduction to the Book of Romans, that he saw that justification is by grace through faith and not of baptism or ceremonial works.

And he said his heart was strangely warm as the truth illuminated his sin-darkened heart, and he knew that the shackles and chains of sin had fallen away. But this he understood to be regeneration, and it was shortly thereafter that he saw that in addition to being pardoned of past sins and being born of the Spirit, it was necessary for him to be filled with the Spirit. And he bears testimony to a subsequent meeting with the Lord in which his life became filled with the fullness of God.

This was both a satisfaction to his own heart relationship with Christ, but also an anointing for ministry and an unfolding of God's plan. And so we find that God's movement continued with Wesley as he, for twenty years and even more, confined himself to the starting of class meetings. He would go into a community, preach, gather those that responded together in groups of twelve, one being appointed as a leader.

It was the multiplication of class meetings that gave the cell movement, that was able to hold the truth, to nurture it, to sustain it, and to propagate it intelligently and effectively. It was this cell movement, this institution of the class meeting, that the English historian Macaulay said was the invention that was of God given to the nation to save it from the abyss and destruction into which France fell. We understand that at the end of this twenty-two years or twenty-three years of faithful work, God began to open the ministry into new dimensions.

And it was the last twenty-five years of his forty-five year ministry that was marked by such glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God, where tens of thousands would gather in the open air and listen to him preach, with anointing upon his preaching so that hundreds would drop as though shot through the heart by the arrows of the revelation of God's holiness and his righteousness. And so it was that there was now added to the Moravian movement the Wesleyan movement. We find that this was carried from around the world into this land.

We find that the influence of it was instrumental in bringing into New Haven the ministry of John Wesley Redfield, of which I spoke some days past, saying that the same phenomena attended his ministry as had attended that of John Wesley in England, namely that as he preached, exalting the holiness and majesty of God, men hearing him fell as though shot through the heart and would lie unconscious sometimes for hours, but upon their recovery would be praising God for sins forgiven and new life in Christ. We also remember that in our land there was the Great Awakening under Jonathan Edwards, where God began to move in Massachusetts. And so the earliest days of our land were marked by invasion by God.

In the last, the middle of the 19th century, beginning with 1831, God used his honored servant Charles G. Finney for revival ministry. And we find that here again the same phenomena attended the preaching of the word as had characterized the Moravian and the Wesleyan movement, namely that everyone in the geographical area was aware of the presence of God, just as those who were near the place where the Spirit of God was poured out on Pentecost were aware of his presence and came seeking the phenomena. During this time you have already seen that we have the growth of denominations, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Baptist, for I have referred to them through their roots in the Albigenses and the Montanans.

And so you see in this the rise of the denominations, at least these four major groups. About the early part, at the same time that God was raising up Finney in America, he was raising up a man in England that you must understand if you are to see what's taking place today. This man's name was George Mueller.

George Mueller was a German that early migrated to England, was trained there, and opened the Word of God, studied it, was gloriously converted, took it as his rule of faith and practice, and established at Bristol, England, a fellowship along simple, primitive New Testament lines. In this fellowship were all of the gifts of the Spirit. There was the recognition of the baptizing, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

There was freedom of worship and of fellowship. God was in the midst of this company. But we find at the same time that there was this movement.

It was taken down to Plymouth. There a group of intellectual young men were greatly influenced by certain of Mueller's teachings, but they were a little bit disturbed by the emphasis on the supernatural. And so, through a gradual process of teaching, they were able to establish to their satisfaction a doctrine that all of the supernatural ceased at the conclusion of God's witness to Israel at 70 AD.

And ultra-dispensationalism had its birth there at Plymouth in England at that time. But while there was at this time a movement that was set in motion, as it were, to check the rise of the supernatural, the movement under George Mueller continued. He found hearts hungry in such individuals as J. Hudson Taylor.

And through his influence, Andrew Murray came into an experience of the fullness of Christ. And through the influence of Hudson Taylor and Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer came into the experience of the life of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the anointed life. And thus God was moving, greatly moving.

Just at somewhat the same time, he touched one through the testimony of two simple godly women there in Chicago who saw in this young shoe salesman great potential for God. And after the meetings, when he would be praying with those that had come for forgiveness, they would disturb him greatly by saying, Mr. Moody, we're praying for you that you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. After his work was burned in the Chicago fire and he was in New York raising funds with which to rebuild, he had to give up his solicitation because every time his carriage went over the cobbles of New York Street, all he could hear was the refrain, we're praying for you, we're praying for you, that you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit.

So alone in a friend's room, as he shut the door and stayed there for some 30 hours seeking God until he could come to the end of himself and know the fullness of Christ, there was joined to him shortly one by the name of Ruben A. Torrey, whose little booklet entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit* is a classic and ought to be received and read and understood by all. And whenever Torrey would go out in meetings, Moody would say to him, oh, Torrey, give them one of two sermons, the one on the Bible or the one on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And thus at the close of the 19th century, there were men of God who stood like giants in the land, whose hearts were united, not least among these, and sharing in the blessing, was one who as a Presbyterian pastor, great dignity and intelligence attending his ministry, had nonetheless broken down under the weight of service.

Physically exhausted at the end of himself, through the testimony of George Pentecost and Major W.D. Whittle, the son-in-law of Moody, he was brought to the realization that Jesus Christ is able to touch mortal flesh and heal the body. Through the testimony of Ruben Torrey, he was brought to the place where he realized that in addition to being born of the Spirit, God had intended his children to be filled with the Spirit. And so in his need and his exhaustion, in his heartbroken defeat, he opened his heart to the fullness of Christ, and Albert Benjamin Simpson was wonderfully healed of physical weakness and sickness and was filled with the Spirit.

With this filling of the Spirit came new liberty in preaching and a new burden for the lost. Seeking to implement his vision through the 13th Presbyterian Church where he was pastor, he found he was thwarted on every side, for the people there had their traditions and their programs, and they weren't the least concerned about the burdens that motivated the heart of this young man, this pastor, who'd seen something they hadn't seen and had been where they hadn't been. And so it was with mutual satisfaction that he left to begin the Gospel Tabernacle Church, which has in just two weeks its 80th annual meeting.

And this then was the first church of which we have knowledge on the American continent, other than those of the denominations, which was formed with its foundation as what we call the fourfold gospel--that is, Christ our Savior, our sanctifier, our healer, and our coming King. But his vision was not just churches, for he saw that this that God had done for him was for all. And so those earliest meetings were on Sunday afternoon, so that folks could come from their own churches and wouldn't have their loyalty affected, nor

their attendance disturbed, but could meet together in fellowship that they might be fed and filled to return to their own people.

They met in the middle of the week, sensing that they needed more than just the Sunday afternoon, but they met on Thursday so that there would be no interference with their Wednesday attendance. And in the first ten years of ministry, over a thousand groups were formed across this land. He was the first one to establish it, I say, as a testimony upon which a church, a local church, a local company of believers would be begun.

But you have to understand that when the missionary program was associated with the testimony of the fellowship, and the movement thus became a mission, those who had been open to the message now were closed to the ministry. And so there grew up an opposition to Dr. Simpson, not because of doctrine primarily, but because of the missionary enterprise that was upon his heart, challenging the giving of the people that had been coming. And so there was then set in motion waves of opposition to the message.

But we discover that about 1906, there was another introduction here. We find that at Nyack, there was a glorious pouring forth of the Spirit of God, and some of my close friends were in attendance then, and testified to the heavenly visitation that occurred. All of the gifts of the Spirit were seen.

God was gloriously upon those annual councils that met there at the hillside. But out of this there grew up one who established for the first time in history the doctrine which had never been heard before, that the only evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the gift or the speaking in tongues. And Dr. Simpson and his colleagues examined this teaching and said they could not find it in the Word of God, and that they were unable to accept it, that they accepted the genuineness of the gift but they couldn't see it as an evidence.

And so some 400 churches seceded from the alliance and formed the Assemblies of God with their headquarters at Springfield. And out of that grew the Assemblies of God. Soon there was another split, and the four-square church occurred in California.

There was another split, and the Pentecostal Holiness churches were formed. There was still another split in the Church of God. Until today there are from that some 100 groups, some larger, some smaller, that have split off from that original group that was here.

And so these truths have been submerged. The alliances continued to hold the testimony, but some that love it most and feel it closest have rather felt that, intimidated by excesses that they may have seen or supposed or probably were very much aware of, they have withdrawn somewhere from the center of the road of testimony that marked the earliest days of fellowship. But while this may have happened or may not, may it be understood to you that God has not been confined.

So we have found that for some years dispensationalism in its ultra-aspects had been in great ascendancy and influence and power. But there was a phenomenon that took place after the war. I do not know just exactly with whom it began or where it began, but there was certainly a revival in evangelism, mass evangelism, that began first in Philadelphia with Mervyn Rosell in the next year, or two years later with Hyman Appelmann, and then sometime later with Dr. Billy Graham.

But at the same time there was a renewed emphasis on healing and the gifts of the Spirit. You have had your own opinions of these movements. I personally have felt that God never intended healing to be

exploited for any purpose whatsoever.

But at the same time that you have had your reaction and I have had mine, be it understood that there have been those living in denominational sterility and emptiness who have nonetheless been tuned to God in hunger. And so for the last ten years we have seen a strange thing happening. I stand before you as one who is of some degree a product of that strange thing, not moved by contact with any group, only with my own failure and hunger and with reading such men as Myers and Murray and Mueller and Moody.

I had to come to the place that the teachings with which I'd been indoctrinated, namely that the supernatural ceased at the conclusion of the witness to Israel were not scriptural and were not to be held any longer. So there came a time when I was a candidate for the fullness of Christ. I saw first the glorious teaching of union with Christ in death, and oh the liberty and the deliverance that it comes when you experience union and identification with him and escape the tyranny of personality and trait and self.

But then after some two years of joyous delight in this, I began to realize that though I'd been born of the Spirit, I had not been born filled with the Spirit. And so there began a pilgrimage in the Word to find out the scriptural foundation, and in February 9th of 1953, God in his sweet grace brought me into the experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Since that time I have been observing God's working.

I've seen him move because of contact with some across the land. And I would tell you tonight that there is a greatly accelerating movement. I'm not happy with all the aspects of this movement, because I believe that there are certain areas in it that do not exegetically meet the Word.

I'm troubled about that. But I would have you know that tonight there are many in the Baptist persuasion that are deeply hungry for God and are, as this one, have seeking God, entered into the glorious reality of his presence and the fullness of the Spirit. It's certainly not denominationally wide, but I find that such a man as Francis Whiting, editor of the Adult Sunday School Quarterly for the American Baptist, wrote an article published in the Alliance Witness a year or so ago, a baccalaureate address delivered at Northern Baptist Seminary, in which he set forth the truth that we've been proclaiming here for all these many years.

Out in Minnesota and in the Midwest there's a large company of Lutheran young people that, seeking God and his Word, have come to a position almost identical in every position, in every particular, with that of Dr. Simpson. We discover, for instance, that among the Presbyterians today there is a desperate hunger for God. They've tried liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, organization and promotion, everything that man can do.

And in, I say, the sterility and the deadness of it, their hearts have been stirred with a deep hunger for the fullness of the Holy Ghost. And we find also among the Episcopalians a movement which is of such proportions now that it can no longer be viewed with amusement, but it must be recognized that God is invading that fellowship. For over at St. Bartholomew's here in our city, through the good ministry of his servant Dr. Findley that he brought from England by way of Canada to this city, we find that those that have been attending for years are discovering they've never been born of God, and those that have been born of God are discovering that God is willing to heal their bodies and fill them with the Holy Spirit.

I am sure that there's no one here that will accuse the Episcopalians of being fanatic or going to excess or wildfire. If they've had any charge leveled against them during decades or the centuries of their ministry, it might be that of ritual coldness. But we discover now that here in the beginning of this sixth decade and ninth in this nineteenth century that God is visiting the denominations.

Now my time is gone and more, and I am simply saying to you that this is the day of God's visitation. Not everything is good, and I'm not delighted with all I see or learn, but I am delighted with the fact that wherever God finds hungry hearts in whatever context he finds them, he is prepared to meet them and to satisfy them with his fullness. This is the day of God's moving and the day of God's blessing.

I do not feel it's necessary for you to go to any one of these groups by any means, for it all in one sense began here eighty years ago as far as church life in this land was concerned. But I believe in this seventy-fifth anniversary year of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, God is issuing to us, and especially of the Gospel Tabernacle Church, a clarion call to return to our heritage, to return to the privileges that we've had and to the prophecies that we've declared and to the promises we've promulgated. I believe that the Holy Ghost is calling us to experience and thus to evidence the genuine truth of that which we have held to be biblical truth.

And so the cry of my heart tonight is this, O God, while on others thou art calling, do not pass us by. And may somehow the mercy drops falling upon the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Lutheran, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians so excite your heart and stir your thirst that you will read again the foundations of the fellowship of which you are part here and wait before God until God can reveal himself to you in the fullness of his blessing. And that which we've held to be tradition and true shall now become gloriously, dynamically revealed and released in our hearts and in our lives.

I submit to you this, dear friends, unless we do, God will pass us by and take our candlestick from us. This is the day of God's visitation, the hour of his turning, and the hour of great opportunity. Oh, may God stir us from all lethargy and apathy and indifference and realize that whereas he is working here and there and hither and yon, his great desire, I believe, is to return where first the testimony was heard and do again the first works that blessing may flow and measured unlimited.

Shall we bow and pray? Our father, we thank and praise thee that thou by thy spirit hath bid us come. Thou has said, let him that is a thirst come and take of the water of life freely. And thou has said, blessed is he they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

Oh God, teach us, join us, try us, and then fill us with thyself.

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