

# Church History of Revival

by Richard Siple

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*Richard Siple's sermon explores the profound impact of revival throughout church history and its relevance for today.*

**Duration:** 1:00:41

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 10:1

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the life of a young man named Francis Bernardon, who lived a life of sin and vice. As a result, he became physically sick and depressed. However, his life took a dramatic turn when he encountered the preaching of George Whitfield, a powerful and dramatic preacher of the word of God. Whitfield's preaching led to the salvation of thousands of people, and his ability to captivate his audience was evident in an incident where Lord Chesterfield was so moved by his sermon that he shouted out in response. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and learning from scriptural and church history as a foundation for believing in revival.

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## Transcript

So I'm going to give you a scripture to get started with here, 1 Corinthians 10. I'm going to read the first few verses and then jump down and read verse 11. For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them.

Their bodies were scattered over the desert. And then in verse 11, these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. Here God is making clear that divine history at least, scriptural history is there for us to help us to see how God works and what happens and to deal with it.

This morning we want to just deal with the foundation of church history and try quickly to bring us right up to the present. We're talking about believing in revival and we're talking about a foundation for that faith. And we looked at the foundation of scripture and the foundation of doctrine and theology and the foundation of Old Testament history and New Testament history and saw that all of history gives us a clear

foundation to believe in revival as the way that God works and to believe that God would do it again today.

The final chapter in that whole approach, of course, is church history to bring us now from scriptural history up into church history, into our time. So that's what we want to do this morning. When we turn from the history of revival in the Bible to the history of revival in church history, we run into some difficulty because the history of revival is the history of the church and the history of the church is the history of revival.

By that I mean that every major advance in church history was precipitated by revival. And I think, as far as I can tell, that goes without exception. Church historians have, for the most part, made no distinction in these matters and I think it's because they were not thinking in terms of revival.

They were churchmen, they were historians, they were scholars. They were not thinking in terms of the explosive power of spiritual revival. And so they did not tag these explosive movements of God as revivals, but they were.

And as soon as you read them, you say, Huh, why didn't they call that a revival? If they'd have been writing about Whitefield's time, they would have called it a revival. So why didn't they back there? I don't know. They just didn't.

And so I remember when I first started really researching this, I had a terrible time because when I tried to look up the word revival, I couldn't find it. But as soon as I started reading the history, there was just everywhere the tremendous outpouring of God's Spirit. In fact, way back about 85 A.D., and when I say A.D., I mean A.D. means after the birth of Christ.

So anytime I say, you know, 85 A.D. or any other number A.D., I mean it's that many years after the birth of Christ, so we're down to the church age. There was a revival in Europe in just a small area that just covered an area of two or three cities, and in three weeks there were 80,000 conversions. Would you call that a revival? But church history just tells it and doesn't act like there's anything special about it.

It's very, very special. If it happened anywhere today, you'd think it was special. It just turned the world of that area upside down.

The revival that began with John the Baptist continued with Jesus and exploded at Pentecost, continued until 300 A.D. when Constantine made Christianity the state religion. And that began the decline of the spiritual life of the church in general, and brought that revival to an end. From that point on, the church moved into what has been called by church historians the Dark Ages.

And they were Dark Ages. It's not an exaggeration to call them that. But now I want to go back and pick up very quickly, and I'm going to do it quickly because I just want to paint a picture of what has happened down through the history of the church.

Within 60 years, think of it now, within 60 years after the death of the apostles, after the last, as far as we can tell, the last apostle was dead, within 60 years a powerful revival was led by Justin Martyr. And I'm just going to mention three men who are called church fathers because they were great men in the early history of the church, right after the apostles. There was a powerful revival led by Justin Martyr.

I'm going to just give you one statement from him about what happened in his time so you get a picture of the tremendous explosion of revival. He said, There is not one single race of men, whether barbarian or

Greeks, or whether they may be called nomads or vagrants or herdsmen dwelling in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus. Does that strike you as something tremendous? I think sometimes we have the picture that the world has never been evangelized.

But that's not true. Because through the revivals that have taken place often, the world has been basically evangelized. So at that time, that's a tremendous statement.

It is so tremendous I'm going to read it again because you might not have really heard it. He said, and this is about 60 years after the death of the last apostle, There is not one single race of men, whether barbarian or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen dwelling in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus. And I tell you, such a revival matches that of the Apostle Paul when all of Asia heard the word of God in two years.

I mean, that is a tremendous, explosive revival. Between 185 and 254 A.D., that was after the birth of Christ, after the apostles, there was such a powerful revival that Origen, here's another church father, that Origen states, and here's another tremendous statement, The gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached in all creation under heaven. To Greeks and barbarians, to wise and foolish, it is impossible to see any race of men which has avoided accepting the teaching of Jesus.

The divine goodness of our Lord and Savior is equally diffused among the Britons, the Africans, and other nations of the world. The preaching of the gospel through the whole inhabited earth shows that the church is receiving divine support. He goes on to say, however, the gospel has not yet been preached to all nations since it has not reached the Chinese or the Ethiopians beyond the river, and only small parts of the more remote and barbarous tribes.

But what a statement! And this again now, you're down 254 years after the birth of Christ, and there has been such an explosive revival that basically, Origen is saying that almost all the civilized nations of the world have heard the gospel. It has absolutely exploded over the world. I mean, if that happened in our day, if somebody could honestly say in our day, such a thing, wouldn't we be in the midst of a huge revival? I think we would.

Because what is it, 2,000 languages of the word of the gospel has never been preached yet? I mean, these were tremendous explosions of the power of God. Now, go to 378 A.D., and Jerome, here's another church father, and I'm just going to again quote a statement from this church father. He says, From India to Britain, all nations resound with the death and resurrection of Christ.

This is in spite of the fact that about 2 million Christians had been martyred for Christ since 33 A.D. out of a possible 120 million believers. He also documented miracles, healings, exorcisms. In fact, every one of these men, and I haven't read their statements to you because there isn't time this morning, but every one of these men in telling about these great revivals says that in these tremendous explosions of the gospel there are miracles, miracles, miracles.

And people say that miracles ended with the apostles and they were just there to help us get to scriptures are way out in left field. They just aren't studying history. Because down through all those years, every great explosion of the power of God, every great revival was accompanied by every kind of miracle.

Healing, casting out of demons, everything that had been done by the apostles is again repeated in revival. From around 510 to 900, now we're getting close to the year 1000, so we're moving down from the life of Christ. Christ's life ended about 33 and a half A.D. after his birth.

And so now we're getting down almost a thousand years from the birth of Christ. A great revival spread across Europe led by wandering Irish evangelists and preachers. Hard to believe when you look at Ireland today, but there was a tremendous revival in Ireland back then.

And Irish evangelists and preachers spread all across Europe. This revival proceeded to the Alps, Germany, Danube, Italy, Orkneys, Faroes, Iceland, converting much of Europe in one of the greatest Christian movements of all time. I'm just telling you that history says that there have been revivals, revivals, revivals, revivals.

These few may suffice to make it clear that great revivals continued for the first 1,000 years after the apostles. A detailed study of those early years of Christianity will show many powerful revival movements that fired the church of that day and advanced the kingdom of God on earth. All right, now I've just given you a little capture.

In fact, when I researched this, I just got absolutely overcome and weary and said, I can't put all this stuff. I mean, it was just revival after revival after revival and the movements and whole cities coming to Christ and miracles and martyrs, and it was overwhelming. And I just, so I've just included three of the church fathers here this morning in just a little about what happened up to about 1100.

And then I want to deal with some of the major revivals that took place from that time on. I'm just going to touch on some of the major ones. That's all.

First of all, what is called the Franciscan revival because it was led by Francis of Assisi. I call this a return to simplicity. There is a statement in Ecclesiastes 7:29, if you want to write that down, that is translated in the living Bible with these words.

I like this. God made us plain and simple, but we have made ourselves very complicated. That is really true.

And I'll tell you, every revival that I've ever seen returns us to simplicity, to the simple, basic things of the Christian faith. It seems to me then that a return to God will include a return to simplicity. God's call to revival is constantly called a return.

Isaiah 55, 7 we read, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return, let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon him. Jeremiah 3, 22 says, Return, faithless people, I will cure your backsliding. Yes, we will come to you, for you are the Lord our God.

Jeremiah 24, 7 says, I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. Hosea says in 14, 1 and 2, Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God.

Your sins have been your downfall. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him, forgive all our sins and receive us graciously that we may offer the fruit of our lips.

Complication of our lives is because we get too involved with the world. Every true call to revival has been a call to turn away from the complication of living like the world around us and to come back to the simplicity of following Jesus Christ. And one of the great examples of this kind of revival was the revival in the 12th century.

So let me give you some facts quickly now. I couldn't possibly give you the history of that revival. Study it some time.

You'll just be blessed out of your socks about this revival. Now, if you say, Francis of Assisi, wasn't he the weird Catholic monk that talked to the birds and stuff? No. That's just a lot of nonsense.

None of that's true. And there's nothing weird about Francis. And he did not sit around talking to the birds.

I'll give you a few facts about him. He preached the gospel with a flaming tongue. In 1182, all of Europe was filled with unrest and that's a history in itself.

I can't give you, but it was full of war. It was in such a terrible state, politically, socially, financially, every way that the people were depressed, they were despondent, and for safety, they began to form what we have come to know as the feudal system where they gathered together in cities and they built high walls around those cities and castles within them and tried to protect themselves from the marauding bands of soldiers from other places and robbers that pillaged the cities and raped the women and killed the people and stole their goods and burned their homes with fire. Europe was a disaster.

It was a worse disaster than it is now with all the blood that's being spilled there now. Now does not compare with what it was then. It was in a terrible, terrible state.

The awful state that was there, the church was worse. It was worse than the rest of it. As bad as other things were, the church was worse.

These were the Middle Ages when the Pope of Rome held absolute sway over the nations and rulers of Western Europe. To say that the Roman church was corrupt is a gross understatement. The princes of the Roman church lived in kingly luxury and immorality and were totally given to intrigue and violence.

The priesthood, for the most part, was ignorant and lived in open vice of every kind. Most priests had housekeepers in their homes from whom they had a house full of children. It was totally degenerate.

The common people knew that. Nothing they could do about it. Naturally, the common people had no instruction and lived in sin and superstition with Christ as a dim, distant figure on a cross who could not be reached except through priests who were often more debased than those who came to them.

In these conditions, the general population was given over entirely to sensuality, materialism, and violence. And I haven't even begun to paint the picture of Europe at that time. Now, if you could get a good picture of that and then you realize the revival that took place and then you ask yourself, is it too wicked to have a revival today? Immediately you'd say, are you kidding? Our society is like a Sunday school picnic in comparison with the absolute ignorance and evil and debased situation of the population.

And into that situation came a young man named Francis Bernardone. His father was a wealthy merchant and traveled constantly, paid no attention to his son, provided him all the money his heart could wish, and young Francis lived like a king. He dressed like a prince and lived like a prince and gave himself to every

sin and vice that is imaginable.

In fact, he threw himself so totally into sin and vice that he finally became sick physically because the physical body simply couldn't handle the wickedness of his life. And as he became sick physically, he became very depressed. And his story is an interesting story.

He went off to war. He came back, I think, two days later having lost his sword and his armor and everything else and was wondering if he was going to lose his life and went right back, plunged right back into sin and for a while was so sick that he was hovering between life and death. He became deeply depressed and in darkness.

At this time, Francis had no thought of God, a deep self-disdain, a restlessness, great unhappiness of mind filled him. He is now 25 years old. Now, I want to give you what happened to him.

One day, as Francis knelt in prayer in a wayside chapel, his heart was full of agony. He cried out, Great and glorious God and thou Lord Jesus, I pray thee, shed abroad your light in the darkness of my mind. As he looked up, he seemed to see the eyes of Christ fixed upon him in tender love.

Immediately, his spirit leaped to embrace the Savior and from that hour, his heart was transfixed by the love of Christ. From that moment, a converted, transformed young man saved by the grace of God and a heart that was just passionately in love with Jesus Christ. His whole life full of love to the Savior.

Immediately, all his young friends in sin left him. It had nothing to do now with this young man who was ablaze with the love of Jesus. And his own father, who simply did not care about him ruining his life in sin and gave him all the money and freedom he wanted, now would have none of his Christianity.

And though, of course, his father was a Catholic and claimed to be a Christian, he was not. He would have nothing to do with this. He flogged his son.

He threatened his life. He did everything he knew how to do. And finally, Francis said, all right, that's an end.

And so, he got all of the things his father had given him and all his wealthy clothes and everything else and he brought it into the town square where he lived and he piled it all there. This is what he said. Listen, all of you, and understand it well.

Until this time, I have called Peter Bernadone my father, but now I wish to obey God. I return him the money about which he is so anxious and all my garments and all he has ever given me From this moment, I will say nothing but our Father in Heaven. And Francis then left his home never to return.

One day, it was February 24, 1209, Francis knelt in prayer at the altar of a church. Listening to words of scriptures, they were read. The gospel for the day was the 10th chapter of Matthew.

He heard the words of Jesus. As you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.

Freely you have received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff, for the labor is worthy of his food. These words burst upon Francis as if spoken to him by God himself.

And to Francis, this was his calling. He went out from that place, preaching the simple gospel of Jesus Christ, and others began to follow him. And there's a long history which I will not give you.

But I will just give you the end of that that shows the great revival that took place. As usual, there were reports of widespread healing, signs, and miracles. By 1270 A.D., there were Franciscan missionaries in almost every part of the known world.

By 1400 A.D., this movement had spread from Lapland to Congo, from the Azores to China, boasting 60,000 Franciscan preachers. 60,000! In spite of the fact that the Roman Church was still corrupt, the world of that day had been touched and changed by a revival. And that is the great revival of the 11th and 12th century led by Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Order.

Now, later, the Franciscan Order just drifted into what all the rest of them have drifted into. But at that time, in spite of all the corruption of the Catholic Church, there were 60,000 missionaries spread across Europe preaching the simple gospel of Jesus who died for your sins, repent and believe in Christ and be saved. And it literally changed the whole face of Europe.

All the social order, everything was changed. Now, my friends, in all of everything I've studied about modern times, I haven't ever come anywhere near anything like that. The Christian Missionary Alliance has something over 2,000 missionaries in 57 countries of the world, and we think that's pretty good.

2,000. There were 60,000. Can you imagine what it would be if we could send out 60,000 spirit-filled, on-fire young men across North America preaching the gospel? You'd have a revival.

And this was a great revival, all right? And I'm telling you about it this morning because we have got to believe Satan has filled our minds with unbelief, and even preachers of the gospel who love the Lord and mean to be doing the right thing have discouraged their people about revival in our day. And I'm telling you, it's always happened, and it can happen now. So there it is.

Now, the Reformation revival, what will I say about the Reformation? People say, that's not revival. That was the Great Reformation. Well, all right, give it that name.

And when you've given it that name, then go back and look at it and see if it was a revival. It is one of the most powerful revivals ever come on the earth. And I call this the return to scripture because that's what it was.

John Wycliffe lived about 1330 to 1384 A.D. That was in the 1300s. He was a philosopher, a theologian, and a reformer, and he's called the morning star of the Reformation. The Franciscan revival could be called a return to simplicity.

The Reformation revival could be called a return to scripture. And, of course, he was the first one to really try to put the word of God into the language of the common people. And it had always just been in Latin, and the only people who could read it were people who could read Latin.

And now Wycliffe is putting the word of God into the language of the people. They translated it into English, of course, and then he began to send out disciples called poor preachers. Sounds like Francis, and sounds like when my father was a preacher, and when I started out.

Poor preachers. As they traveled across England, people responded to their simple gospel in large numbers, and the revival was on. Wycliffe died in 1384, but his English Bible was published in 1388, along with many of his other writings.

John Huss and Martin Luther were both influenced by Wycliffe. 1408, now we're down to the 1400s. We have John Huss, a lecturer in theology at the University of Prague.

He went on the translation of scripture, the preaching of the simple gospel. He was charged with heresy and burned at the stake. I'm not going to try to take time to go over all these.

If you want to see something fascinating, there's a video out on John Huss. Watch it, and let it touch your heart. A man who gave his life in revival for the cause of Christ.

Then Savonarola was, in 1482, probably one of the most powerful preachers of the early days of the Reformation. His preaching was so powerful that when the nobility of Florence, the city where he was preaching, came to his meetings, they were overwhelmed with conviction. He cried out and said, the city would be destroyed by God unless they repented.

And there was huge repentance. Thousands of people turned to Christ. It was a great revival and another great step in the Reformation.

I want to read you, I'm going to talk about Martin Luther in just a moment, but I want to read you a statement from a book called *Revivals, Their Laws and Their Leaders* by James Burns. I just want to read you a short paragraph about the Reformation. He says, The Reformation may be regarded from two aspects.

First, it must be viewed from its intellectual side as the dawn of a new period in history, marking the emancipation of the human mind and the first great step in the march of freedom. On the other hand, it may be regarded from the religious side as a revival of spiritual life after a long period of darkness, as a return to biblical Christianity in opposition to the sacerdotal system which had grown around it. It is with the latter, the Reformation, as a revival of spiritual religion that we have to do.

And whatever further steps the movement once initiated was forced to take, it is well to remember that the Reformers had this at first solely in view. The supreme fact with which we are concerned is that the Reformation was supremely a revival. So it's not originated with me.

That it marked for a vast multitude the recovery of faith, that it was a rebirth in the world of primitive and evangelical Christianity and lighted myriads of human hearts with a flame of spiritual joy. And in such a movement, many remarkable men and women were involved. One of those was Martin Luther.

I won't even begin to try to give you his life. Sometime you ought to read the life of Martin Luther. You will be absolutely amazed.

I still remember my first real study of this. My father was a pastor. When he died, he... I guess I was about 31 at the time.

When he died, he left me his library. And in that library, I found five volumes about that thick on the Reformation. A little fine print.

And I read through it. Oh, my. I tell you, I'd get so excited, I didn't want to do anything else.

I'd go back and say, Oh, I've got to get back and read some more of this. Because I was just reading these tremendous revivals, these tremendous outpourings of the Spirit of God. One man after the other.

First it's Luther, and then it's Zwingli, and then it's Calvin. And on it goes, you know. Man after man.

Who were priests and monks in the Catholic Church. And God got a hold of their hearts. And Martin Luther, of course, was a teacher of theology and a lecturer at a university.

And a preacher at a local church. And he decided to go to Rome. And when he got in Rome, he saw the awful corruption of the papacy.

And everything that was there in the Roman church. And he was made sick to his stomach. And then, of course, as he was going up the steps, God spoke to him and said, The just shall live by faith.

And he had been studying the book of Romans. And he went back to study it deeper. And was wonderfully converted.

And became the leader, really the leader, of the Reformation. Though there were some others, as we've said, that helped lead into it. And Martin Luther, of course, then translated the scriptures into German.

The printing press came into existence. And Bibles were then printed by the hundreds and thousands and made available to the common people. Martin Luther, of course, was opposed to the Catholic Church.

There was a man named John Tetzel. And the Pope at that time wanted to build this huge and magnificent church to his own glory and fame. Because that's all they thought about.

And so he had to get some money. So he sent John Tetzel out to sell indulgences. Now you say, what's an indulgence? Well, an indulgence was something you could buy before you sinned.

So that you were forgiven ahead of time. You didn't have to worry about it. Like, if you wanted to commit adultery, you went and got an indulgence.

Especially if you got it from John Tetzel. And you were forgiven. And then you could go ahead and commit adultery without bothering your conscience.

Because God had already taken care of it. John Tetzel was a monster of lies and iniquity. But he was a dramatic speaker.

And he traveled all around. And he would have a big box sitting out there for people to put their gold in. And he would say, do you have a father or mother who is in purgatory? The moment that your gold drops into this chest, their soul will fly out of purgatory.

And the flames of hell into the presence of Jesus Christ, etc., etc. He was awful. And unfortunately, for the Roman papacy, he happened to come to the area where Martin Luther was preaching.

And when Martin Luther saw him and his iniquity, he attacked him totally, publicly. And the papacy and everything else that had to do with it. And he wrote his 95 thesis and nailed them to the door of the Wittenberg church for everybody to read.

And from that time on, he was in trouble with the Roman church. When the Pope heard about Martin Luther, he just laughed. He said, a drunken German wrote to him.

When he slept off his wine, he'll be of another mind. But that is what happened. And so, of course, the thing reached proportions where they had to try to do away with Martin Luther.

They brought him in for trial. And they had all these learned doctors. And he demolished them.

And so finally, they sent the Pope's representatives and they brought him to what is called the Diet of Worms, where they intended to charge him with heresy. And they had promised him safe conduct if he would come. What's interesting is, he was in Germany and some of the great princes of Germany had become converted through his preaching.

And they were protecting him with their armies. And so the Pope couldn't get at him. So they said, if you'll come to this trial, we'll give you safe conduct.

Of course, they're liars. And that's not what they intended. He came again, he demolished all their arguments.

He said, I'm going to stand for the truth. I can do no other, so help me God. And he took a stand.

And they intended to capture him on the way home and kill him. Some of his friends found it out as he was going through the woods. Suddenly, horsemen swept down on him and grabbed him and ran off into the forest and took him to Castle Horkberg.

And they were his friends and they hid him there for a while from the Pope. And while he was in that castle, he translated the entire Bible into German. And the Reformation continued and continued.

The Reformation was so great that there were actually wars fought. And that was certainly not of God. But the problem was that the Roman Pope and the Roman Emperor were determined to stop the Reformation.

And so they formed armies and marched against those parts of Europe that had accepted the gospel. And they were forced to defend themselves. But the outcome was freedom.

And Europe was set free from the power of the Roman Papacy and the Roman Emperor and was free to preach the gospel. Zwingli in Switzerland was one of those men. John Calvin in France.

Calvin was 27 years old when he wrote his Institutes. Scotland was one of the darkest places in all of Europe at that time. People held in terrible feudal bondage, awful poverty, total ignorance.

Very few Scots people could even read unless they were of the nobility. And they were totally held by superstition and paganism, though it was a Catholic state. John Knox was a man that God raised up.

And many of you have heard the great cry of John Knox. He said, give me Scotland or I die. And his heart was aflame with a passion to turn Scotland to Christ.

Mary Queen of Scots tried to put him to death. The only thing that ever made Mary Queen of Scots tremble was when she heard that John Knox had landed in Scotland. He had had to flee for his life.

And then through many prayers, she came back to Scotland. When she heard that his feet had landed on Scots soil, she trembled with fear. God moved in great power and set Scotland free from all of its feudalism.

Basically, the whole nation of Scotland became Christian. Now, I'm sure everybody was not saved, but everything about Scotland became Christian. The laws were Christian.

The standards of education were Christian. The society basically lived by Christian standards and laws. The churches all over Scotland were filled with preachers of the gospel, preachers of the word of God.

And that entire nation was changed by revival. Do you believe what I'm telling you this morning? I mean, this is just history. I didn't make this up.

This is just history. I'm talking about revival in church history. The reason you're sitting here this morning, the reason that Arlington Beach is here is Christian, the reason there is a free Methodist denomination or any other evangelical denomination, and the reason I'm standing here in freedom and preaching the word of God is simply because of the revivals that have gone before that have again and again and again rescued us from total extermination and brought back the faith of Jesus Christ into prominence so it's affected our society so we can live in freedom.

And it's revival that has done it. And brothers and sisters, never has there been a quiet, slow, plodding movement of Christianity that has accomplished it. Never.

And we'd like to have it that way. We wish it could be that way. It never has and it never will.

It means blood, sweat and tears. It means total sacrifice. It means to give our lives and to pray and to get right with God and believe him until the revival comes.

And that's the only thing that will bring the power of God back into our society. Well, we go all through those revivals and then we come to the evangelical revival that has not been all that long ago. The Reformation in England was not as powerful as some other places and so the point came where England was in terrible spiritual condition.

Bishop Butler who lived at that time wrote, this is in England, Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. Men treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point among all people of discernment and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule. And that was the state of Christianity in England when Whitefield and the Westleys came on the scene.

And that was the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. And one of the greatest revival movements of all time took place then. France, that never was touched deeply by the Europe revivals, sunk lower and lower and lower into the bondage of Catholicism and feudalism.

The lower classes were treated so terribly by the nobility. There was such oppression that eventually you have the French Revolution, which brought one of the worst bloodbaths that has ever taken place in the world as hundreds of thousands of innocent people were slaughtered and were guillotined. It was a terrible, terrible time.

But just across the channel was England. And England was just as wicked and depraved except that England had been touched by the reformers. There had been a translation of scriptures into English.

There had been some movement of God there. Into that situation, though, which would have become exactly the same thing as France, and there would have been the same kind of bloodbath, but into that

situation came George Whitefield and John Charles Wesley. Now, what's interesting about them, and if you study it you have to accept this because it's true, Whitefield was a Calvinist.

And John Wesley was more Armenian, though not exactly Armenian. In fact, people who think he was Armenian haven't studied either Arminius or John Wesley. In some ways he was in a hair of being Calvinist, but he was not.

And what is amazing to me is in the midst of this great revival to see these two men who both are flaming evangelists in the midst of this revival, and who were friends, and who had these different theological viewpoints. Fascinating, and I've read their writings both ways, and it's very interesting. And I have to say, we need to have strong Christian doctrine, but we need to be careful about fighting over the things out here that are peripheral, huh? Don't you think? And just get really serious about seeking the face of God.

George Whitefield realized he was a high churchman of the Church of England, which was the church was dead. And people only went to the churches for baptisms, weddings, and funerals, basically, and maybe a Christmas and Easter. And other than that, it was gone.

It was dead. And both Whitefield and Wesley were high churchmen. They were young men just coming into their ordination, and just becoming high churchmen of England.

By high church, I mean very ritualistic church. But Whitefield's heart was hungry because he knew that he didn't know God, and he knew he didn't have peace, and he didn't have any conviction that his sins were forgiven. And so he began to seek God, and that's a long story in itself.

But eventually George Whitefield was born again. And as soon as he was born again, he started preaching the gospel in the churches. And they were huge churches, but they were empty.

And they just filled up, like 1,600 people in a Sunday service, just like that. And the men who were the pastors of those churches were, at first, astounded, and then angered. Because they were jealous.

And as soon as the 1,600 got out, another 1,600 came in. And he would preach one service after the other on the Lord's Day, and they couldn't find buildings big enough to hold the people. And then the Church of England rose up and said, No way, out you go.

And Whitefield had to get out of those churches. So he said, Okay. And he went out and started preaching in the field.

Well, now instead of preaching to 1,600, he was preaching to 10,000 and 20,000, and then 30,000 in the open air. You say, Wait a minute, how could he do that? They didn't have a PA system. I don't know, God gave him the voice.

God gave Whitefield this bell-like voice that just carried and carried and carried. And he would stand out there and preach to thousands of people out in the open air. And they could hear him.

And people were saved by the thousands. The poor people came and heard him gladly. Sometimes Whitefield would preach for three hours straight.

See how blessed you are? The tears would stream down his face as he preached. He was a tremendously colorful and dramatic preacher of the Word, which was something totally new in that day, because he read the sermons in a monotone. But not Whitefield.

He stood up there playing with the Word of God and proclaimed it with great power. I just want to give you one little tidbit to show you how powerful his preaching was. He was preaching one day, and he was illustrating the terrible lost condition of a sinner by describing a blind beggar led by a dog.

The dog had left him, and he was forced to grope his way along with only the help of his blind man's cane. Here's the quote right from his sermon. Unconsciously, he wanders to the edge of a precipice.

His staff drops from his hand down the abyss, too far to send back an echo. He reaches forward cautiously to recover it. For a moment, he poises on vacancy.

And Lord Chesterfield was there listening to him. And he got to that point. Lord Chesterfield, he was not a Christian.

He was so totally drawn to his sermon. He got to that point. Good God, shouted Chesterfield as he sprang from his seat to avert the catastrophe.

He's gone! Here's an educated, proud, noble man, a wicked man, and he's so caught in the power of this, he leaps from his seat in the sermon and cries out. And that's the kind of preacher Whitefield was. People sat for hours listening to him and wept, and thousands were converted.

Now, he was trying to get Wesley to do this. Whitefield and John Charles Wesley were in a group of young men called the Holy Club. And John had already gone to the United States to preach to the Indians, and he wasn't even saved yet.

He knew the word of God, but he wasn't converted. And he went over there, and naturally it was a disaster. And he came back discouraged and disappointed.

Then, as he was in a meeting of Moravians, and that's another part of the revival I haven't even mentioned. By the way, the Moravians had a 100-year prayer meeting. You say, what do you mean? I mean, they started a prayer meeting that went 24 hours a day and lasted 100 years.

That's why they sent out missionaries all over the world. We think we have prayer meetings. They're a farce.

Well, anyway, that's another story. Get back here to Whitefield and Wesley. So Wesley, now, was in this meeting and they were reading Martin Luther's commentary on the book of Romans and justification by faith.

And in that meeting, God touched John's heart and he was wonderfully converted. So now, Whitefield says to him, now, John, you've got to come out and do as I do. Oh, no.

Oh, that's a disgrace. It's an abomination. It's blasphemous for you to go out and preach in an open field.

A high churchman of England, you should just be preaching in the church. He said, but they threw me out. You've got to come.

No, he said, I'm not coming. And so finally, he almost dragged him bodily. He got ahold of his arm one day and he said, you are coming.

And he almost dragged him physically out on the hillside. And Wesley stood and listened to Whitefield preach to the thousands. God got his heart.

Totally got his heart. And he went back and he wrote in his diary, tomorrow I will be more vile than Whitefield. And he meant it.

And by the next day, he was out preaching in the open air, being as they thought, vile. And proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. John Wesley was a different kind of preacher.

He was a careful theological preacher. Whose logical presentation of the truth of God brought deep conviction of sin and broken-hearted surrender to Christ. John was also an administrator who was able to organize the work of God among the masses for long-lasting effect.

Charles was a warm-hearted preacher, but mainly known not only for his preaching, but writing of many gospel songs and hymns. This revival, as it gained momentum, brought multiplied thousands to Christ. You talk about the impact.

Benjamin Franklin was a friend of Whitefield's. And as far as we know, he was never converted, but admired Whitefield greatly. They went over to the colonies and preached.

One day, Whitefield was preaching in Philadelphia, the city of Philadelphia, in an open square. And there were thousands of people standing in the open square. And Benjamin Franklin was standing near the little raised platform where he was preaching.

And he thought, I wonder how many people are here. And he was a mathematician. So he left the platform and he walked straight out to the edge of the crowd and tried to measure the distance by how many steps it took him.

Then when he put that down, then he walked around the edge of the crowd and tried to measure the circumference. He tried to figure how many square feet it would take for each person. And he figured there were between 50 and 60,000 people.

See, we say, man, there's never been a time in the world when people gathered like they have for Billy Graham. No, you're wrong. There have been.

And as much as I admire and love Billy Graham and his ministry, it has never had the revival impact yet that the Whitefields and the Westleys had. They literally shook the world and changed the face of England. They changed government, society, laws, everything by their preaching.

They came to the colonies, changed the colonies, and that's why we have North America as it is today. Well, how in the world in six minutes can I give you the Great Awakening, the prayer meeting revival, the Welch revival, and all these things that I would like to share with you. The Great Awakening and the Great Awakening, the two men who were probably the most prominent were Jonathan Edwards and Charles Fenning.

Revivals under both these men were very intense. Thousands were converted, especially up in the New England area of the United States and North America. But that revival did spread all across both Canada and the United States.

And that's just too big of a story to tell. Charles Fenning was a lawyer, an attorney. He had no education in spiritual things whatsoever to begin with.

They were having a prayer meeting in the local place where he lived and were praying for his conversion. And he went to the prayer meeting. That didn't matter.

They still prayed for him by name. You know, that's not a bad idea. And so one night he got up in the prayer meeting and he said, I don't know why you're having this prayer meeting and I don't know why you're praying for me.

He said, since I've been in this town, you have prayed and prayed and prayed for revival and nothing has happened. And he said, either your prayers aren't worth anything or God isn't listening. He said, I don't get it.

You know, I don't see why you're doing this. And he just mocked them. But shortly thereafter, God got him.

And he didn't want to come to the Lord openly because of his pride. So he went out into the woods and he got down on his knees and tried to get saved. He couldn't get saved because of his pride.

And so he said, well, he would kneel down. So he knelt down. He still couldn't get saved.

He said, well, he would pray out loud, but he still couldn't get saved. And finally, he was hollering to the top of his lunge so that anybody could hear him clear back in town. Because he had to give up his pride.

And finally, God met his heart and he was wonderfully converted. He went back to the law office where he was working. And he went in there and he locked the place up.

And his mind was full of this recent conversion. And he turned around and as far as he could ever tell, there was Christ standing before him. And he fell down at the feet of Christ and held him by the feet and wept and wept and wept and wept until he was exhausted.

He looked up and he was no longer there. He stirred up the fire and turned around to go into the back room and received what he calls mighty baptisms of the Holy Spirit. He said he had never heard of any such thing in his life.

And the Holy Spirit came on him and went through him. He said it was like giant wings fanning him. And he said the Holy Spirit went through him and through him and through him until he cried out and said, Oh God, if you don't stop, I'll die.

He came out of that mighty infilling of the Holy Spirit. And the very first person he spoke to was converted just like that. The power of God was so in that man's life that he walked into a factory.

And there were some girls working at some machines. And they looked at him as he came in and they started to point to him and giggle and talk about him. And he didn't say a word, just stood there.

And suddenly they both broke down in tears and began to weep. And conviction spread all over the factory. And the man that owned the factory had to shut it down because nobody could work.

And he said, well, you might as well preach. And this went on until there were cities where he preached that almost every adult in the city was saved. I know some of you sit there and look at me and say, I don't

believe it, but I tell you it's true.

And my own parents got married in such a city in rural New York where 80% of the adults were converted. And that's revival. Then there was a prayer meeting revival.

And that was in 1857. And they began a noontime prayer meeting in the Dutch Reformed Church. And then they decided to have it every day.

And then it began to grow and more and more people came to it. Pretty soon that church was full at noon every day. Then another church was full at noon.

Then another church. And it spread. And this is in New York City in Manhattan.

Until every church and every hall and every auditorium in Manhattan were full at noontime from 12 to 1 with people praying. Newspaper reporter galloped around with his horse and buggy and counted 6,000 minute prayer and only touched a few of the prayer meetings. Then a landslide of prayer began in which people came to pray at 6 in the morning and 12 noon and 6 at night.

And the revival began and people were being saved in New York City, 10,000 a week. There was no preaching much. It was just a prayer meeting revival.

There it was. Great revival. The revival in Wales, which I haven't time to tell you about, but don't get excited.

I've got two minutes. The Welsh revival was in 1904 to 1905. Basically covered one year and went around the world.

It went all the way across Canada and the United States. And changed the face and history of both countries. That revival was so intense, so intense, that in some cities the city council had meetings to decide what to do with the police now that they were unemployed.

That's true. That's not fiction. There were special public gatherings in which they presented judges with white gloves because they had no more cases to try.

Is that great? There was an epidemic of bankruptcies. Taverns. Places of sin.

It collapsed. Down in the mines they had a terrible time for a while because so many miners came to Christ that the mules did not understand their language. That's right.

And they couldn't get them to work until the mules learned the language of Canaan. It's wonderful. A newspaper reporter traveled from another part of Europe to see what was going on.

And he got off the boat and he got on the train and he went toward where he thought the revival was. He got off the train and he walked up to a policeman and he said, where is the revival? And the policeman said, right here. Oh, it was great.

There was a miner coming home from a night shift. And it was about three in the morning and he noticed a chapel open, lit up, full of people. He thought, what in the world? He's a wicked man.

He went up and he got in the door of the chapel which was standing wide open. And God got him right there. And he could not go in and he couldn't go out.

And he fell right on the floor and was converted right in the entrance to the chapel. The power of God was so great. The ships sailing into harbors where the revival was on.

People were convicted of sin before they got off the boat. And sometimes every person on the boat was converted before they got to shore. That isn't fiction.

That's not very long ago. Of course, nobody but me was alive then. See, we weren't there.

1904. So it's hard for us to believe. That's not very long ago.

And about every 50 to 100 years, God of mercy brings a great revival. Brother, sister, God is looking right now. And I'll tell you what, I've been thrilled the last few nights to see some of our young men at this altar.

I'll tell you what. God is looking for some young men. Some middle-aged men.

Some men that have some years of strength ahead of them. Who will get this fire in their heart. That will say to God, it can happen now.

By God's grace, it's going to happen now. And I'm going to give my life to prayer and proclamation of the gospel of Christ. And I don't care what it costs me.

I'm going to see revival in my time like we have seen all through history. And when that happens, we're going to see it. I just have one prayer, oh God, let me be alive when it comes.

Will you young guys please hurry up? I mean, I'm 73, if you don't get at it, I'm going to be calm before you. It comes! Some people say to me, you know, you're crazy. Why would you go off to Arlington Beach and preach twice a day and wear yourself all out? You don't need the money.

No, I don't. You don't need the name. No, I don't.

See, well, you're retired. Why in the world, why don't you just go take it easy by some lake? Yeah, then I'll get to heaven. And the Lord will say, well, you did pretty good except for the last 15 or 20 years.

But what did you do then? I'll say, Lord, I played shuffleboard. I think you'll be really interested, don't you? No, no. No, brother, sister, I gave my life to Christ when I was 16, and I'm not going to take it back until I can't say another word or stand on my feet or do one thing for God.

Amen.

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