

How Revival Comes: The Power of the Spirit

by Ronald Glass

Ronald Glass explores the nature of revival, emphasizing the essential role of the Holy Spirit and the need for a unified church in prayer.

Duration: 55:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 20:22, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:14-36, Acts 2:44-45

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the power of revival and its impact on the church and society. He shares an example from the birth of the United States, where a powerful revival was happening in Virginia around the time of the Declaration of Independence. The preacher recounts a specific incident at Boiseau's Chapel, where during a sermon, the presence of God was so strong that hundreds of people fell to the ground and the chapel seemed to shake. The preacher emphasizes the need for revival in the church today, as it leads to a passionate desire to share the gospel and a powerful impact on the community.

Transcript

By the way, that's a good hymn sometimes, just to take and use as a prayer in your devotional time. Just pray those words. It's a great hymn for that.

I invite you now to the second chapter of Acts, once again. Acts chapter 2. We're not going to be going verse by verse through every verse. Obviously, it's a long chapter, but we're going to be looking at some broader principles of revival through this chapter.

We've already read it. Acts chapter 2. Whenever things start to fall apart, we tend to go back to the beginning. Some of you dads have probably had the experience, right? You brought home a bicycle for your kids, and you opened up the box, and you grabbed the screwdriver and the pliers and whatever else, and you started putting it together, and a couple of hours, three hours, four hours later, you're in all kinds of trouble.

Nothing's working like it's supposed to work, and so finally, you decide, I've got to take it all apart again and start over, and as your wife would say to you, read the directions this time, right? How many coaches, for example, in a football team, high school, college, even the pros, when their team is suffering a string of defeats, says to the team, all right, guys, we're going back to the beginning. We're going back to the

basics. We're going to learn how to do this right, right from the bottom up again and see if we can't win.

A few decades ago, the failures of our educational system in America gave rise to the back to basics movement. Many of you may remember that. Let's get back to teaching kids how to read and write and do mathematics and so on.

You see, when we see our institutions fail, we instinctively return to the fundamental principles out of which they were born, and the history of religious revivals throughout the church age certainly proves that this has been true during this time as well. Now, throughout this series, we have been talking about the nature of revival. Let me review for just a moment.

Ask the question again, what is revival? Well, we have defined it a number of ways, but a revival is, according to scripture and as we have seen it in the history of God's word and throughout the history of the church, it is an intervention of God into the affairs of his people. It is God making bare his holy arm in behalf of his people. It is God, through his spirit, breathing new life into his church and giving them new power for their service for him.

Today, my central premise is this. If revival is, as we have said, the giving of new life to the church, then we can expect that in its main outlines, it will resemble the first giving of that life. That's why I believe that we cannot fully understand revival without understanding Pentecost.

There is a sense in which every revival throughout Christian history has been a repetition of what happened on that very special day. Now, of course, we must remember that in some very significant ways, Pentecost was absolutely unique. By that, I mean that it is not something that we would expect to be repeated in certain respects.

First, it was the birth of the church, which previously did not exist. So once it is born, it's never going to be born again. So the church was born on the day of Pentecost.

Secondly, on the day of Pentecost, the great moving of the spirit of God was accompanied by certain temporary phenomena, specifically related to the appearance of the church. And I'm, of course, referring to what we often call the sign gifts, the speaking in tongues, miracles, healings, and so on. Now, that's a subject for a whole different study, but suffice it for me to say here that those were things that were required in the first generation of the church, and after that first generation passed away, and after the church had become established, they were no longer needed.

And so we don't look for those gifts to appear again in the church throughout this age. But thirdly, it involved the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit, which also at the same time included his powerful work of filling. Subsequently, we do not expect the entire church to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Every believer is baptized with the Spirit at the point of conversion. However, subsequently to the day of Pentecost, we do see individual believers and the church as a whole at various points experiencing repeated fillings of the Spirit, or in some respects what we call the anointing of the Spirit. What therefore is revival? Well, let me put it this way.

It is a new anointing of the Holy Spirit, a powerful new Spirit filling in the lives of many believers at the same time. We can experience individual awakening and revival, but when God the Spirit moves upon his entire church at the same time, then we have a great revival. Now, God's people always need this filling.

What do I mean? Well, the natural tendency of human beings, and that includes born-again Christians and evangelical churches, is to do the work of God in the power of our own flesh. And what happens is, of course, that we see that that doesn't work. We get discouraged when we see the lack of power.

I remember as we've read Zechariah, the book of Zechariah, and Zerubbabel went back there to Jerusalem to build the temple, and he encountered all kinds of trouble, and then when the temple was built, it was not anything in comparison to Solomon's great temple. Remember that God came to Zerubbabel and said, look, who has despised the day of small things? Sometimes we get upset with ourselves because things don't seem to go along very well or very fast. Sometimes we get discouraged over the apparent smallness of the work of God.

And God said to Zerubbabel, who has despised the day of small things? Listen, it is not by might, human strength, or power, but by my spirit, says the Lord God. That's Old Testament. The principle is there.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, puts it this way, verse 4, my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power. We live in a generation where in many evangelical circles today, there's an attempt to promote the work of God through wisdom, through intellectual means. Well, that is a mistake.

Paul said it's not a matter of words of wisdom, human words of wisdom, but the demonstration of the spirit and of power. And that's why Paul told the Ephesian church to be not filled with wine. That is debauchery, that's excess, that's a degenerated way of living, rather than being controlled by wine.

He says the church ought to be controlled, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now the Apostle Peter, when he appeared before the church at Antioch to explain himself as to what went on in Caesarea when he opened the Gospel up to Cornelius there in his home, the Apostle Peter said this, it's recorded in Acts, chapter 11, verse 15, as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as he did upon us at the beginning. The demonstration of the power of the spirit in the household of Cornelius reflected the coming of the spirit on the day of Pentecost.

And I believe this is the testimony of the church at any period of revival. The spirit of God fell upon us just as he did at the beginning. So the question is, what was it like at the beginning? You grasp that and you will have gone a long way toward understanding revival in this church age.

The broad picture that we discover here in Acts 2 has been repeated with startling consistency in virtually every single historical revival in the past 2,000 years. Now we've been asking the question as to how revival comes. We've seen that revival comes at the pleasure of God, that the secret is the sovereignty of God.

Last week we saw that revival comes when God's people get desperate. It comes through the desperation of the saints. Now today we're going to see that one indispensable ingredient as to how revival comes is the power of the spirit.

Now we need to know these things, for as the great British expositor G. Campbell Morgan once said, we cannot organize revival, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon his people once again. That's my heart's burden for this church, is that we may set our sails and when God chooses in response to our prayers and sovereignly by his grace to blow upon us with the winds of revival, that we will be able to take advantage of that. Let me describe for you the awakening of

the church in three ways based upon the original, the first giving of the spirit to the church on the day of Pentecost.

Here is the first way in which the church is awakened. First, there is a remarkable awareness of God's presence and spiritual power. Here in Acts 2, I'm looking at the first 13 verses in this regard.

Now this awareness is initially experienced by the believing church. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Where was that? Well, you go back to chapter 1 and you find that they were in the upper room, probably the same upper room where the Lord Jesus had celebrated the Passover dinner just before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane that night.

They were back there in that upper room meeting together. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting and there appeared to them tongues of fire distributing themselves as they rested on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages as the Spirit was giving them utterance. This awareness of the Spirit of God, of God's presence among his people and the power that attends it initially is experienced by the believing church.

You see, before the anointing of the Spirit comes, there is a unified purpose among the brethren. They were all together in one place. Go back to the previous chapter, verse 14, and here's what we read.

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer along with the women and Mary and the mother of Jesus and his brothers, with one mind devoting themselves to prayer. They were all waiting for the same thing. What was it? Well, they didn't know exactly, but the Lord Jesus had left them with this instruction in Luke's Gospel.

It's virtually the last thing Jesus says to his disciples. He tells them in the 49th verse of Luke 24, Behold, I'm sending forth the promise of my Father upon you. I'm not sure they were totally clear as to what that would be.

However, you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. Whatever it was he was sending was going to result in power. And so they were waiting for this promised spiritual blessing.

What were they doing? Well, there were two things that distinguished this group of people who are mentioned in chapter 1 of Acts, verse 14, again in chapter 2, verse 1, and it is this. They were unified, they were together in purpose, and they were in prayer. And I want to say to you that that seems to be, throughout the history of revival, two of the dynamics that appear among the people of God before God gives revival.

It is an indispensable quality that church has got to be together. They've got to be unified. They were together, single-heartedly united around a common purpose.

All with one mind. Sometimes what God has to do in order to bring a church to a place where they are unified, where they are together, is God has to do a purging work. And that sometimes is painful, but that's what God does.

And brings together a group of people who have a heart that is united, united for the purposes that God has established. I don't think they understood entirely what that was going to be. But they were together, they were united, and they were in prayer.

They were a praying people, devoting themselves to prayer. Now you put that combination together, a people who are united around the purpose of serving God according to His will, whatever that is, and the people who are praying together, and you have a combination that very often God has used to revive His people. Sort of a prelude to revival.

Now when the anointing of the Spirit comes, there is an unusual power among the brethren. That was true here. Power was this.

There was a sudden sound of a violent, rushing wind. You can think of that. If you've ever been in a really severe thunderstorm, if you've ever experienced a hurricane or a tornado, and you know what that loud sound of a high wind is, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

It was not just heard in the house, it was heard all over the city of Jerusalem. And then there were these little tongues of fire, a symbol that the Spirit of God had come. And that little flame has often ever since then been a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

It was, it bathed them in the power of the Holy Spirit. He anointed them. Now this has varied from place to place and time to time, but not, it's not been unusual to see the same kind of anointing, the same evidences of anointing throughout the history of the Church.

For example, let me just give you a couple or so of them. At a place called Malingua, which was in what then was called the Belgian Congo in 1953, one of the missionaries there, during a time of revival, said, this is what happened, I'm quoting, the meeting was thrown open for prayer. Suddenly, like a great clap of thunder or a sudden rush of a mighty wind in the forest of tall trees, the whole congregation stood as one man, weeping and crying out to God for mercy.

Why would that happen so suddenly? There's no explanation for that in human terms. It is the Spirit of God who just suddenly comes in and takes control of a congregation and breaks their hearts over sin and they weep and they cry out to God for mercy. Let me take you back a couple of centuries ago.

One little fact that is very often ignored, generally unknown, is that when our nation, the United States of America, was born on the 4th of July, 1776, in several places throughout the state of Virginia, there was a mighty work of God going on. There was a powerful revival happening. Let me give you an example.

This is from a man named Thomas Raskin. He was a Methodist preacher in a place called White Oak Creek, Virginia. This took place at a place called Boise Chapel on Sunday, the 30th of June, 1776, less than a week before the Declaration of Independence.

Here's what happened in this place in Virginia. At four in the afternoon, I preached again, he writes, from I set before thee an open door and none can shut it, Revelation 2. And I had gone through about two-thirds of my discourse and was bringing the words home to the present. Now when such power descended, hundreds fell to the ground and the house seemed to shake with the presence of God.

The chapel was full of white and black and many were without that could not get in. Look wherever we would, we saw nothing but streaming eyes and faces bathed in tears and heard nothing but groans and strong cries after God and the Lord Jesus Christ. My voice was drowned out amidst the groans and prayers of the congregation.

I then sat down in the pulpit and both Mr. Shadford and I were so filled with the divine presence that we could only say, this is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. Now sometimes it's not quite as demonstrative as you may realize.

There was a great moving of the spirit of God that is often called the second great awakening here in the United States, very early in its history. One of the leading revival preachers of that time, an evangelist who was mightily used of God, was a man you probably have not heard of. He should be better known.

His name was Asahel Nettleton. Asahel Nettleton wrote in 1815, the work of God advanced silently and powerfully. Then he writes again, seven years ago, this is 1815 so he's looking back to 1808, seven years ago about 2,000 souls were hopefully born into the kingdom in this vicinity, specific place he mentions, with comparative stillness.

So there wasn't all of the weeping or the carrying on that sometimes was apparent, but it was all done very quietly, but God was still moving. Now regardless of the particular circumstances, I think we can say this. There is always a sense of God's presence and a sense of God's power.

God ceases to be merely a belief and he becomes a reality. We can ascribe to a set of doctrinal standards, whether it's our statement of faith or whether as in some churches it's a historic creed. We can say we believe this and this and this and this, but be totally without that sense of the presence of God and that personal relationship with him.

What happens when God revives his church is our faith jumps off the page and becomes a living reality in our lives. Sometimes the Holy Spirit takes charge of his church once again. Now at times there are services where there may be no set order, but this is true.

There is orderliness. The Spirit of God is a God of order. Now some describe the Welsh Revival as, quote, orderly disorder, unquote.

One London newspaper writer said that the spiritual enthusiasm in Wales was seen in congregations which were, and I'm quoting now, as soberly sane, as orderly, and at least as reverent as any congregation I ever saw beneath the dome of St. Paul's, but it was aflame with a passionate enthusiasm such as I have never seen in St. Paul's, unquote. So here is one key to identifying real revival, and by the way I'm going to talk about it later on in this series about the whole issue of counterfeit revival. Here is one key to identifying counterfeit revivals.

Will there be enthusiasm? Yes, there is enthusiasm, but wherever you see disorder, that is not of God. That's a fake. That's a fraud.

That's deception. That's Satan. He does try to counterfeit, to imitate real revival in order to dampen its effectiveness, to destroy it.

So one key is order. Now this awareness is subsequently experienced by the unbelieving world, initially experienced by the believers, but then subsequently experienced by the unbelieving world. When you read chapter 2 here in Acts, verses 5 to 13, you find that the Jews who were there in Jerusalem, many of them for the sacrifices, the festivals, the holy days, and they had come from all over.

We have a whole list here of places they had come from. They ran out into the streets when they heard the sound of the mighty rushing wind, and they came out, and they began to listen. What's going on?

Something's happening.

And when they got out into the streets, already the disciples, the apostles now, were already scattered throughout the city, and they were speaking in different languages, so much so that it shocked them, oh, are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? How is it we hear them in our own language? Well, of course, that was a gift from the Spirit of God to meet the need of that hour, which was to communicate the gospel to people from many different language groups. And so this awareness is subsequently experienced by a lot of unbelievers, in this case mainly Jews, but then there were also Gentiles as well, I'm sure. There's a confused curiosity on the part of some.

They're amazed. They come to find out what is happening. They can't understand what's going on.

That's always the way it is with revival. Those on the outside don't get it. Those on the outside don't understand what's going on.

God's people understand, but they don't get it on the outside. So there's a confused curiosity on the part of some. But on the part of others, there's critical contempt.

We see that in verse 13. Others were mocking and saying they are full of sweet wine. They're drunk, something that Peter refutes in the following verses.

Verse 15. These men are not drunk. It's only the third hour.

It's only nine o'clock in the morning. By this time, by nine o'clock in the morning, this wind had already come. They had already gone out into the streets.

They were already preaching. This must have happened in the very early hours of the morning. Peter says they're not bound to be drunk.

It's only nine o'clock in the morning. Nobody gets drunk at that time of the day. But these men were skeptical, and they mocked the spirit-filled Christians just as in every time God gives revival.

There are those who mock. There are those who just pour contempt on the work of God, who want nothing to do with it, who criticize it, who would do anything they could to tear it down. So in times of revival, both curiosity and controversy have been powerful influences.

What does it do? Well, when there is curiosity and when there is controversy or contempt, both of these have a tendency to draw crowds. And people come from all directions, and they come to see what is going on. And so the first thing we see about revival here, this first way that we see it manifested, is a remarkable awareness of God's presence and spiritual power, both among God's people and by the people on the outside.

They understand God is here, and he is here in power. Secondly, there is a remarkable assurance of God's truth and spiritual reality. Looking in verses 14 through 39, revival leads to assurance in the communication of the Christian faith.

In verses 14 to 21, you have a remarkable boldness on the part of the apostle Peter. Peter speaks under the conscious awareness of the Spirit's power. Did you notice that as he quotes from Joel, I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind, verse 17.

Verse 18, I will in those days pour forth of my spirit. He says it later on again as he talks about the coming of the Spirit of God. He's aware that this is something unusual, something supernatural, something sovereign and powerful.

Remember, it wasn't that long before that Peter had denied the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of a servant girl. Now he openly proclaims in the presence of the authorities there in Jerusalem. When the Lord gives revival, the church's witness is revitalized.

Peter is invested with a boldness where he can point the finger at his hearers and say, you have crucified this man. You have put him to death. You hung him on a cross, verse 36, as we see it here in our text.

When the Lord gives revival, the church's witness is revitalized. No one needs to coerce awakened Christians to evangelize. This is one of the frustrations of church leaders today.

It has been ever since I can remember. And as I read, it's been way before me. It's always been a source of frustration.

How do we get God's people to share the gospel? Well, the most effective answer to that question is for the Lord to revive his church. Because when you come over to Acts chapter 4, verse 20, here's Peter under the threat of imprisonment saying, we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard. You get a revived church, and that's the attitude of all the Christians.

We can't stop speaking. You couldn't shut us up if you tried. That's one of the reasons we need revival in our nation today and one of the reasons we need revival in Wading River, Eastern Long Island, in order that God would be able to speak with power to our community through us, that we would have such an attitude that we cannot stop speaking.

We cannot do anything but share what God is doing. One of the things you also see is that preaching changes. I mean, Peter, who had very little understanding of the word of God before that day in the upper room on the night of the resurrection where Jesus breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

We see it in Acts chapter 1. He's quoting scripture as he's advocating the replacement of Judas. And now on the day of Pentecost, Peter launches into a marvelous sermon in which he brings to bear the Old Testament prophetic scriptures to make his point. Preaching changes.

D.L. Moody, after some time of preaching, experienced the anointing of the Spirit of God upon his ministry. And here's what he said about his preaching. He said, I went on preaching the same old sermons as I had been preaching before, but they were absolutely different.

Why were they different? Because God, the Holy Spirit, had anointed him. And that makes all the difference in the world. Once again today, preachers are trying to figure out how to be effective.

And there are a lot of resources, a lot of tools out there for us preachers to try to make us better, to make us better communicators of the Word of God. When revival comes, that's not a problem. The Spirit of God anoints our preaching, and he can take our weak and faltering words and absolutely drive them into the hearts of sinners.

That's the way it happens when God revives. There is an assurance in the communication of the Christian faith. Secondly, revival leads to assurance in the content of the Christian faith, verses 22 through 36.

And that content, and listen to me carefully here, that content is boldly Christ-centered. Doctrinal uncertainty and a low view of scripture disappear under the influence of the Spirit's anointing. I can tell you this right now.

No liberal church ever gets revived and stays liberal. Revival purges the church of rationalism, of skepticism, of mysticism, and all other forms of error. Because once again, Jesus Christ and his work become the center of our preaching again.

That's why churches have become liberal over the last several centuries. That's why they have lost their way. That's why they're declining.

It is because the message has been lost. The centrality of the message of the Christian church is Jesus Christ and him crucified. One Welsh pastor reflecting on the recently completed revival, writing in the year 1909, wrote this, quote, the chief value of the revival was its attitude toward Christ.

Its thoughts were of him. Its songs were centered in his person. Not in doctrines about him, but in him himself as the supreme motive to faith and the supreme object of love.

This was the one clear, definite note of the revival, the ascendancy of Christ that Christ exercised over the people. So Christ is restored to his proper place in the teaching and preaching of the gospel as Christ-centered. And biblical truth is restored, said one observer of the Welsh revival, quote, Orthodox theology has always been the hidden source of true revival.

You go back to the greatest revival in church history, which was the Reformation, and that was indeed the case. It was when Luther went back to Scripture and when Calvin went back to Scripture and the other reformers went back to the word of God and began preaching expositively the word of God that the people were awakened. Orthodox theology was re-established, and the errors of the church at that time were exposed.

Let me just suggest to you that here's another way to identify counterfeit revival, and that is that a neglect, a depreciation, or a misrepresentation of biblical truth is never the evidence of the Holy Spirit's work. When the Holy Spirit is at work, he is at work in the realm of truth, always truth. Let me leave you with another insight here, and that is that revival leads to assurance in the call of the Christian faith.

And for this, I'm looking at verses 37 through 39, where Peter now is finished with this great exposition in which he has highlighted the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you notice how he did that? Verse 22, men of Israel, listen to these words. Jesus, the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know.

This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death. He emphasizes the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he moves, in verse 24, to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God raised him up again. He quotes from the 16th Psalm. David says of him, and then he quotes this prophetic passage, which obviously points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, verse 29, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch, David, that he's both died and buried and his tomb is with us. But he looked ahead, verse 31, and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, of the Messiah, that he was neither abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh suffer decay. So look at this

Jesus.

Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. We've seen it. He's been raised.

And not only that, we were with him when he ascended into heaven. He has been exalted to the right hand of God, being received from the Father and the promise of the Holy Spirit. What a powerful, Christ-centered message.

Now, how did the people react? Before Peter finishes, there is deep conviction. There is immediate decision. Could they cry out, brethren, what shall we do? There's not an evangelical Bible-preaching preacher that doesn't long for that to be the response to his sermon when people come and say, what shall we do? We are so convinced of the truth of what you have said.

We are so convinced of our sins and our offenses against God and the imminence of judgment. What shall we do to save ourselves? And Peter's instructions are clear. He says, repent and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here's what he says. He says, the first thing you have to do is repent. Turn from your sins.

Show sorrow and remorse over your sins and say that you want to be released from those sins. You're tired of the sin life. You want to turn your back on it.

Then you by faith have to take Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. How do you know that? You testify to that through baptism. Baptism doesn't save you.

Baptism doesn't forgive your sins. That's not what this verse is saying. Peter is saying, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with respect to the forgiveness of your sins as a testimony to the fact that you have your sins forgiven.

And then you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit upon your life. There is no psychological manipulation here. Peter just gives them the gospel and tells them what they need to do.

And with that bold assurance, he calls men to faith in Christ. And they come. They respond.

And so we read in these verses, many as those who had received his word were baptized. And that day, they were added about 3,000 souls. 120 people had been praying in that room.

That first day, that church mushroomed into 3,000 in one day, which brings me then to the third way revival comes. And that is there is a remarkable attention to Christ's church and spiritual fellowship. We see this in verses 40 to 47.

Let me just give you quickly four evidences of this. Number one, where there is revival, there is an enthusiastic association between individual believers. Verse 41, so then those who had received his word were baptized, and that day were added about 3,000 souls.

The local church becomes vitally important. The church is born. Now the church becomes a center of God's plan.

Listen, there is no such thing as churchless Christianity. There are a lot of people out there today who want to advocate that, and some people have just done so by default. In other words, they said, I've been to this church, and I've been to that church, and then I was to this church over there.

And then I went to that church out there, and every one of them is miserable. I don't get anything out of any of them. The preaching's terrible.

I don't like the way they worship. The people aren't friendly. I don't like any of them.

I'm going to stay home and have a home church. I've met people like that, and that is sad. It's sad if the churches are that bad, but I also think there's an attitude problem there.

People need to realize that when Christianity, when you step into the realm of Christianity, when you receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are entering into the body of Christ, and the church is at the center of what God is doing. And when God revives and God begins saving people in revival, there is no need to persuade converts to attend. You don't need to persuade converts to be baptized or join the church.

They're crying out, what shall we do? And as fast as you can get them into the waters of baptism, they're being baptized and joining with the body and becoming a part of the church, which is God's vehicle for doing his work in this age. Where there is a revival, there is an enthusiastic association between individual believers. Secondly, where there's revival, there's an enthusiastic assimilation of biblical truth.

Notice verse 42. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. Revived Christians can't get enough of God's word.

Today, you have to try to jam it down the throats of God's people. And most of God's people don't pay much attention to God's word during the week. But here, they met daily.

They met daily. During the revival in the Outer Hebrides Islands, the one that was distinguished by the work of Duncan Campbell, 1949 to 1953, one pastor wrote, quote, we are having wonderful times. I pronounce the benediction, but the congregation refuses to leave.

We just begin again. Sermons are eagerly assimilated. Prayer meetings are crowded.

The Lord's table is cherished. And once again, there is no need for worldly methods to attract the people. Where there is revival, there's an enthusiastic assimilation of biblical truth.

People are hungry for the word. They're hungry to know God. They're hungry to know God's truth.

You can't stop them. They devour the word of God. Thirdly, where there is revival, there is an enthusiastic appreciation of Christian love.

We see that in verses 44 and 45. All those who believed were together. They had all things in common.

They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need. God's people freely minister to each other's needs. Read the history of the revivals, and one of the things that you will see is that revival has always been marked by a proliferation of charitable efforts, not only in the church, but also in the wider culture.

You go back and read about the great evangelical awakening in England in the 1740s, and then the great awakening in the colonies of the United States at that same time. One of the things that you find are a whole multiplication of social efforts at improving society. They were born right out of the revival.

Everything from the abolition movement to get rid of slavery, first in England and then here in the United States, and then from that down to things like temperance work, getting rid of alcohol and drinking problems, to even the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which was formed out of those revivals. It's interesting to see how much of that takes place. There is a ripple effect.

Revival just doesn't stay in the hearts of men, individual men and women. Revival isn't just within the four walls of churches. It impacts society, and it's not just an impact that's evangelistic.

It also has an impact in improving the lives of society. Fourthly, where there is revival, there is an enthusiastic articulation of spiritual joy. Notice the last two verses of our chapter.

Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, having favor with all the people, and the Lord was adding to their number, day by day, those who were being saved. The church abounds with worship and praise and thanksgiving. You know, one of the things that we often see is that the revivals leave a rich legacy of humility.

Of the Welsh revival, singing, the singing that was so characteristic, one wrote that it was, quote, a vast, solemn, deliberate torrent of majestic melody, unquote. We see here conversions continue daily. Christians are not self-conscious about showing their joyful feelings, and they, furthermore, its renewed character here raises the church's estimation in the eyes of the world around it.

All of the people there in Jerusalem looked at these people who are being converted, this church now that is thriving. They're praising God, and the result is they're having favor with all the people. The revived church makes a positive impression on society.

Oh, there's opposition, but overall, society says something's going on. These people are different, they're changed. Society is being impacted for good by a church that's revived.

So what do we see here? We see that revival looks a lot like Pentecost. It's not identical, because Pentecost was unique in certain ways, but when God has given revival throughout the past 2,000 years, it has been strikingly similar to the day of Pentecost. The way in which the church started is the way that the church has survived for 2,000 years.

And this is where, for several decades now, evangelicalism has made a serious mistake. We have substituted evangelistic crusades, conferences, consultations, seminars, and books, and magazines, and CDs, and DVDs for the power of the spirit. We're trying to use our resources to do what we cannot do, which is bring awakening to the church of Jesus Christ.

Churches, even whole denominations, are looking for something, you may have heard this term often, something that they call renewal. See, they don't use the term revival. Here's why.

Renewal means you get more people coming to the church. Renewal means you get bigger offerings. Renewal means that the church's reputation in the community increases.

Those are the distinctive remarks of renewal. And even liberal churches want renewal, but they don't really want revival. Because with revival comes enormous conviction of sin.

With revival comes repentance and confession of sin. With revival comes a renewed centrality on the message of Jesus Christ and him crucified. With revival, there comes a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and no church, no church leader, no denomination can bring the spirit of God upon a church.

It's for the same reason that we have seen the rise of the seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven methods. It is because, you see, the very dynamic that we have seen here is not taking place. We have to go out and find some way to appeal to people on the outside to get them into the church.

Listen, a revived church doesn't have that problem. People flock. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

And it's for the same reason that we are now seeing a migration to contemplative mysticism. As people sense that the churches so often aren't real, that there's a missing element, and that missing element is a genuine relationship with God. They do not sense the presence of God among churches.

And so they want to go try to find the presence of God by resorting to mystical techniques. When, in fact, the church is revived, the people know that God is present with his people. So all these human techniques are miserable failures.

Why? Well, Paul gives us insight in 2 Timothy 3.5 where he says that they have the semblance, the outward manifestations of the working of the Spirit. They have the trappings, but they deny the power. As he puts it, they have a form of godliness while denying the power thereof.

Make no mistake, I'm not saying that what we see here in Acts 2 is the way that we should be. I'm telling you that when revival comes, it is the way we will be. Acts 2 does not give us a template that we can impose on the church by our own ingenuity and strength.

That's what we've been trying to do for the last, well, in one way or another, for the last 2,000 years. The flesh cannot produce revival. True spiritual awakening is always a work of the sovereignty of the Spirit of the living God.

A sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, ladies and gentlemen. Now, some of us are afraid of revival, I think. I know in some quarters, especially in the fundamentalist churches and conservative evangelical churches, ones I grew up in, we've become so guarded against the Pentecostal movement that we have neglected the Pentecostal power.

That shouldn't be. So let's begin at the beginning, where the disciples began. Let's be like Dad and the bicycle.

What we're doing is not working. Let's start over again. Let's be like the coach who looks at the failure of his team and says, team, we gotta go back to basics.

Let's begin at the beginning, where the disciples began. Where was that? Huddled together, obscurely, in an upper room in the city of Jerusalem, seeking God in His word and praying together, waiting to be clothed with power from on high. And it is there that the Lord will break the bondage of our apathy.

It is in prayer together that He will destroy our spiritual impotence and bless us with a fresh anointing of His Holy Spirit, a new demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Let's pray, and the words of that hymn

writer, we'll sing them in just a moment. 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, till I am wholly Thine, until this earthly part of me glows with Thy fire. Let's make that our prayer, shall we? Pray together with me now.

Father, those words that I have just said and which we will sing in just a moment, those words say it all. That's what we're praying. We're praying for a new breath of God upon our church.

We're praying for new life. We are praying that we will love what You love and do what You want us to do, that You will so breathe upon us with the power of the Spirit that we will totally be Yours, and that the very earthly part of us, our very flesh will glow with fire divine, that others may look upon us, while they may not see a tunnel of fire over our heads, they will see hearts that are aglow with the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we are not afraid to admit to You, and we are not too proud to admit to You, though we are somewhat embarrassed to admit to You, that we don't have that power.

We lack that Pentecostal power, the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And Father, we would also not be too selfish to say that we realize that that lack of power distinguishes virtually every other church in our area. We all need it.

We all need Your reviving grace. We need a new touch from the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, Father, that revival comes through the sovereignty of God, and revival comes when God's people are desperate.

But we see so clearly that God's, that revival comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we appeal to that power in this church, this day in July of 2009. We are asking You to do what You did 2,000 years ago.

Revive us and pour out upon us the power of the Holy Spirit and the power that You gave to Your church when it was born on Pentecost. Give us that power that has been witnessed over and over again throughout the history of the church as You have revived Your people. Lord, we wait before You and ask You to do it.

We can't. We're powerless. You are powerful.

And we wait for Your Spirit to demonstrate that power once again in Your church in these days. We pray in Jesus' name. Our closing hymn today is hymn number 259, number 259, Breathe on Me, Breath of God.

Let's stand together and make this, again, a prayer of our hearts, not just a closing song. But a prayer that sort of puts it all together for us. Would you stand with me as we sing reverently?

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