

Welcome: Good morning... for those who may be new or visiting; my name is Chad and I'm one of the pastor/elders here at Reality Ventura.

We just finished up Chapter 4 of Ephesians last Sunday... So, today we are going to take a break from our study in Ephesians; before starting our Advent series.

In taking a break from our study in Ephesians and knowing for the past month or so, I was given a 'Freebie Sunday' to preach on whatever I wanted... I began praying about what the Lord would have me preach on.

And in doing so... my heart was being stirred and my thoughts directed (and I believe the Holy Spirit was confirming); that I should preach on the need for REVIVAL... *for the times in which we are living today.*

Sermon Title: 'The Revival We Need'

Open in prayer: *"Would you join me in prayer..."*

In setting the table this morning... it's *important* for us to understand what I mean by '**The Revival We Need**'. As I have been praying and thinking about the times in which we are living in today... *I have been troubled in spirit (grieved).*

Why? *Because the times in which we are living today...*

We are living in uncertain times... (Globally)

We are living in polarizing times... (Nationally)

We are living in spiritually & morally declining times... (In & outside the church)

We are living in times '*When evil is called good and good evil.*'

We are living in times '*When the love of many has grown cold.*'

We are living in times '*When many are turning away from the faith.*'

We are living in the end times.... *And I believe very close to the return of Christ!*

In reading scripture, as it pertains to the end times... there are so many instances in the Bible where it says that '*in those days*' there will be more flagrant sins (even within the church)... and a lot of deceptive teaching... and people walking away from the faith.

You may remember when the disciples asked Jesus in **Matthew 24**... *What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?*" Jesus said, **At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold.** Matthew 24:10-12 (NIV)

We read in **1 Thessalonians 5:2-4** concerning the end times and the return of Christ, **² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.** 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 (ESV)

And although **verse 4** says, that this day should NOT surprise us like a **thief in the night**... I fear that some of us and many in the church today will be **surprised**... due to our love for Jesus growing cold... and also, because the church is asleep... **asleep in the light!**

This is what was said when Jesus taught 'The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares' in **Matthew 13:25**, **"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way."** Matthew 13:25 (NKJV)

Jesus said in **Revelation 3:1-3**, **"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.** Revelation 3:1-3 (NIV)

Ephesians 5 says to the people of our day: **"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."** Eph. 5:14 (NIV)

We need an awakening!!! And I believe there is only one answer for the times in which we are living. The only hope of a lasting solution is... historic, God-centered **REVIVAL**.

But, should we really be expecting revival? And where did that notion come from? Or should we be expecting the number of believers to dwindle until the coming of Christ?

The gospel has advanced in the last two thousand years in history mainly by great awakenings and great declines. There will be seasons of remarkable awakening... and there will be seasons of sad decline.

The Bible teaches and church history confirms there will never be a time when the church is completely cold and ineffective. She rises with faith and passion and mission; and she declines in church history... but there's never a time when there are not people who are red-hot for God and pursuing His mission.

So, what's coming to America? Can we anticipate widespread spiritual revival? Or should we expect a deepening social degeneracy? Should we be expecting an awakening (i.e., a lot of nonbelievers repenting and coming back to God)?

History shows us that there is no exact prescription for revival. It is an act of the sovereign God, and we can't dictate what He should do and when He should do it. But we should be praying and asking that the Lord would send His showers of blessing upon our nation through revival.

I believe the climate and culture in which we are living today... is much like climates of past when God moved in a **BIG WAY** bringing about a spiritual awakening that caused widespread revivals. I believe the time in which we are living... ***is ripe for a powerful move of God and fresh outpouring of God's Spirit!!!***

Personally, I'm sensing and believing God is about to do something BIG... ***for such a time as this!*** I believe right now God is raising up people (ordinary and also influential people of our time); to serve as a providential catalyst in spreading the gospel... *that I believe could be seeds for revival.*

Yet, in believing this... there is also the sober reality of the state of things in the world today and the spiritual climate of our nation inside and outside of the church... *which brings me to the conclusion there has to be REVIVAL!*

But, many of you are probably wondering and asking yourselves... **'What Is Revival?'**

Brian Edwards, in his book '**Revival**', gives a good description of revival.

'A true Holy Spirit revival is a remarkable increase in the spiritual life of a large number of God's people, accompanied by an awesome awareness of the presence of sin with a passionate longing for holiness and unusual effectiveness in evangelism, leading to the salvation of many unbelievers'. Brian Edwards

This is what we so desperately need in the church and in the world today. This is what we should desire... this is what we should long for... this is what we should be praying for... **wouldn't you agree?**

If you have any sense of awareness as a Christian at all... you will know that we need a revival. **We need a revival!** Individually, corporately as a church, and right across our land nationally... *we need to see a revival!*

We ought to feel this dissatisfaction with the way things are in our homes, with the way things are in our hearts, with the way things are in the house of God, with the way things are in the nation.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Does it grieve you my friends, that the name of God is being taken in vain and desecrated? Does it grieve you that we are living in a godless age...? But, we are living in such an age and the main reason we should be praying about revival is that we are anxious to see God's name vindicated and His glory manifested. We should be anxious to see something happening that will arrest the nations, all the peoples, and cause them to STOP and to THINK AGAIN." Martyn Lloyd-Jones

When revival happens, it is visible. It is not just a quiet subjective experience in the church. Things happen that make the world sit up and take notice. This is what was so important to Lloyd-Jones. He felt almost overwhelmed by the corruption of the world and the weakness of the church. And believed that the only hope was something stunning.

Now in trying to describe revival, I'm merely scratching the surface... we want this morning to get beyond descriptions to try and define what revival is in essence.

But in saying this... it's also important to try to give some biblical and historical basis for it... and then bring it closer to home with what revival means for us personally.

There are three ways that I want to answer the question... **'What is Revival?'**

First... **What is Revival Biblically?**

The idea of revival originates in the reality that, on the one hand, God is the decisive giver of all spiritual life and, on the other hand, humans, even those who are born again and part of God's covenant family, from time to time drift into a kind of lifelessness and lethargy and backsliding and indifference and weakness.

And when you put those two together... God as the giver of life and man as ever drifting towards lifelessness... what you get is the need for the hope of reviving... *coming back to life*... a fresh outpouring of God's live-giving Spirit on His people... *that is what revival is*.

For example:

- "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" Psalm 86:6
- "O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy." Habakkuk 3:2
- "Give us life, and we will call upon your name!" Psalm 80:18

And alongside those passages about reviving, you read the history of Israel... and it's just one 'up-and-down' after the other. One king is wicked and God withholds his blessing or sends judgment. Another king recovers godliness and there is a reviving and an awakening of true worship for a season... and 'up and down' it goes.

And when you turn to the New Testament, even though the period of time is really short between Jesus's resurrection and the close of the New Testament... maybe forty years or so... we do get glimpses already of churches that were in need of reviving.

I think the book of Hebrews was written to a church like that... Such as:

- "Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God." Hebrews 5:12
- "Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint." Hebrews 12:12

So, this is a church that is already **drooping**. It is already **dragging**. It has gotten tired already and needs reviving... and this is what God does and has done historically... **He revives His church!!!**

Which brings us to the second question... **What is Revival Historically?**

In the history of the church, the term **revival** in its most biblical sense has meant a sovereign work of God in which the whole region of many churches... many Christians... has been lifted out of spiritual indifference and worldliness into conviction of sin... earnest desires for more of Christ and his word... boldness in witness... purity of life... lots of conversions... joyful worship... renewed commitment to missions... **You feel God has moved here.**

I want to share just a few stories in which **God has moved historically...**

The first revival of historic significance in America was called... **The First Great Awakening**, that broke out in Northampton, Massachusetts from 1734-1743...where a young **Jonathan Edwards** was pastor. After months of fruitless labor, eventually three hundred souls were converted in six months... *in a town of only 1,100 people!* The news spread like wildfire, and similar revivals broke out in over 100 towns starting in Philadelphia in 1739... which ushered in the British evangelist **George Whitefield** whose dramatic preaching was like striking a match to the already-underway awakening. An estimated 80 percent of America's 900,000 Colonists personally heard Whitfield preach and many came to faith.

It was the **Welsh Revival of 1905** that touched all classes and ages. Newspapers kept tally as the churches swelled with new converts—over 100,000 in one six-month period. In Cardiff police reported a 60% decrease in drunkenness and 40% fewer people in jail at the New Year of 1905. Stocks of Welsh Bibles were sold out. Profanity was so diminished in the coalmines that the pit ponies dragging the coal carts in the tunnels did not understand their commands any more and stood still, confused. Even children held their meetings in homes and barns.

Evan Roberts a young man influenced by these stories gathered a group of young people after coming home from seminary to seek God... sensing that he had lost his fire. Roberts started a prayer group that grew and grew and became a nationwide movement, resulting in about 100,000 people being converted... *this triggered revivals in several other countries including America.*

A few other faith-stirring stories of revival... Five university students in 1806 devoted themselves to prayer twice a week by the Hoosack River pleading with God for an awakening of foreign missions that gave birth to the first foreign missionary leaving the shores of America... *and many followed thereafter.*

It was in the Hebrides Islands of Scotland... that two single, housebound ladies in their eighties prayed earnestly for revival. At the same time, in another part of their island, seven young men met regularly to prevail in prayer until revival broke. Between 1949 and 1952 a wide spread revival swept through these islands in answer to the prayers of God's people.

It was in the late 1960's when Chuck Smith and his wife Kay were moved to pray for the hippies in Newport Beach... when Lonnie Frisbee came to faith and was instrumental as an evangelist in many, many thousands coming to faith... eventually becoming known as **The Jesus Movement** spreading primarily throughout North America, Europe, and Central America.

The Jesus Movement was the last powerful move of God in America... and that's was over 40 years ago! This should move us as God's people all the more to be praying for revival and an outpouring of God's Spirit!

In looking at what revival is biblically and historically... we now and most importantly need to get beyond mere descriptions, definitions and even historical evidence... and ask ourselves the question...

What is Revival Personally?

Lets read **Isaiah 57** verse **15**, and let's read it slowly and let it sink in: "Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" Isaiah 57:15 (ESV)

First of all, personal revival is a 'reaching high'... a 'reaching high'. Lets read the first part of the verse: 'Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell in the high and holy place'. Isa. 57:15a

Revival is a 'reaching high'. Now, if you know anything about personal revival, you will know that revival often begins with an awesome sense of dissatisfaction with yourself. It's only right... that should be our starting place... *a desire to have a higher experience of the Christian life.*

Personal revival happens when we see God majestic in holiness... and at the same time we see ourselves as disobedient dust... and in brokenness, repentance, and unspeakable joy of forgiveness... we are given a "taste for the magnificence of God..." a hunger for His holiness... a desire to see it more

and to live it more... *that's personal revival. And it comes from seeing God high and lifted up!* (In the same way Isaiah saw the Lord 'high and lifted up' in Isa. 6)

But before we can desire to have a higher experience of the Christian life... We must first, as has often been preached down through the years... *break up the fallow ground.*

What it is to break up the fallow ground? In agriculture terms this is the ground that has become hardened, it has become calloused and coarse through lack of rainfall and lack of farming over the years. It's like concrete, it's rock hard! If there's ever going to be any fruit that comes from it, that ground first of all needs to be broken up. So, whether the farmer uses a pick or a plough or some other instrument, it has to be broken up. It's a very painstaking exercise, there's a lot of sweat, but it has to be done!

Breaking up the fallow ground simply means **brokenness**. If we are to experience revival in our lives, then the first thing we must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will. To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humbling... but it is the only way.

Jesus cannot live in us fully and reveal Himself through us until the proud self within us is **broken**. This simply means that the hard unyielding self, which justifies itself, wants its own way, stands up for its rights, and seeks its own glory... at last bows its head to God's will, admits its wrong, gives up its own way to Jesus, surrenders its rights and discards its own glory... *that the Lord Jesus might have all and be all.*

In other words it is dying to self and self-attitudes... that is the beginning of this '**reaching high**' that Hosea speaks of in **the breaking up of fallow ground**...

'Sow for yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he comes and rains righteousness upon you'. Hosea 10:12 (NKJV)

From **the breaking up of fallow ground** to this '**reaching high**'... though it is a given that we must be looking for something better in our Christian experience... we also must have a dissatisfaction with the status quo as it is now; which begins by *the breaking up of fallow ground* through brokenness.

This 'reaching high' that I believe God wants us to have is more than a 'reaching high' for something better in our Christian experience... there must be a 'reaching high' for God... **a desire for Him!** You see, our desire for revival should ultimately be a desire for God... *a greater knowledge of God!*

Personal revival comes when Christians are longing for God... and let me add... **God alone!** You see, revival is a desire for and the realization of the divine presence... a 'reaching high' for the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. Isaiah actually displayed this when he cried out in his powerful revival prayer in **Isaiah 64**, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!"

Isaiah 64:1-2 (ESV)

What was Isaiah doing? He was 'reaching high' for God alone... **God Himself!**

What is personal revival? It is a 'reaching high' ... not just for a greater experience of our Christian life, or for more blessing... **but for God Himself!**

Now that's what personal revival is... if ever there was a definition: a 'reaching high' for nothing but God... **and Christ alone!**

Is that what we're looking for? Do you have a desire for God above all things? For God Himself?

But there is a second thing that personal revival is: It's not just a 'reaching high'... it's a **bowing low**. Let's read **Isaiah 57** verse **15** again: 'Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place'. 'with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.' Isaiah 57:15b (ESV)

What is personal revival? A 'reaching high'... that is only attained by the **bending low**. A walking in humility... before God and before man.

There must be a 'reaching high' to the high and lofty One... but there must also be a **bending low**. Here's what God did in my mind and heart... He connected those two things... and this is the message: the 'reaching high' can only be attained by the **bending low**.

In the same way, John the Baptist prayed, "He must increase; I must decrease."

Let me close by saying... personal revival must precede widespread revival. This 'reaching high' for a greater experience... this 'reaching high' for God in greater knowledge... this 'reaching high' for God Himself... can only be attained by a **bending low** as we read in **Isaiah 57:15**.

Revival... awakening... begins first in the personal experience of individual Christians who have their hearts revived!

Simply said... **Revival is first a lifestyle... before it's an event.**

Jesus said, "The Spirit blows where he wills." So, let us press in and **bend low** in prayer... not only asking for widespread revival and awakening in our nation... but also personal awakening and revival in our lives.

I would like us to close with Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church. Lets make this our prayer this morning... There are few prayers in the Bible that will have a reviving, challenging, awakening, renewing effect on us like **Ephesians 3**, where Paul prays like this: **¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.** Ephesians 3:16-19 (NLT)

Close in prayer...

Right now we have time to respond to the Lord in *worship... communion... and prayer*. **Carpets, Communion Elements, Prayer Team**

*Resources:

1. Revival / Awakening | Desiring God
2. What is Revival? | Preach The Word
3. Brokenness – The Beginning of Revival | Roy Hession
4. A Brief History of Spiritual Revival and Awakening in America | CHURCHLEADERS