

Revival in the Church

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[0:00] Isaiah 64, verses 1-3 Isaiah 64, verses 1-3 Isaiah 64, verses 1-3
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Isaiah 64, verses 1-3 God's gathering of people together in the present day. And so this should be where God's life is. One of the revivalists of old said, revival is a renewed conviction of sin and repentance.

A renewed conviction of sin and repentance. Followed by an intense desire to live in obedience to God.

It is giving up one's will to God in deep humility. Revival. It should be the normal state of a Christian. The normal state of his church.

[3:40] The norm to live in a state of revival. That should be the case. Not that it has to be some conjured up event or something because we've got the label revival on it.

That this should be where it happens because we've engineered it that way or contrived it or made it happen by our own doing.

But it should be God's natural state for his people to be in that state of life. Life more abundant. And our text tells us, as Isaiah prayed, that thou wouldst rend, tear apart the heavens.

Tear them apart. Break open the heavens, Lord, was the prayer. That thou mightest visit with us. And it's when man gets that burden, that brokenness, that longing, that urgency, that urging, that empowerment happens, that refuelling happens, that a new fire comes.

And not a strange fire, as was earlier referred to, but the real thing. Amen. The fire of the Holy Spirit. The real fire. The new devotion, which is really the old devotion rekindled.

[4:56] And it was said that a preacher went to a church once where it had a fancy banner on the wall. They said, Come Holy Spirit. Hallelujah. It was a red and orange banner that looked like fire.

It looked like flames on the wall. A very brilliant, inspiring thought. Come Holy Spirit. Revive us. Hallelujah. The fire of God, as we see here in our text.

Underneath the banner was another sign that the preacher noticed. It said, Fire extinguisher. Fire extinguisher.

And the question for us is, Which do we do? Which do we have? Are we ablaze? Wanting the fire? Wanting that intensity, that burning devotion?

That light the flame for him? Or will we be as the fire extinguisher? Extinguishing the fire? God forbid. Another article I read lately was titled, What sports fans can teach Christians?

[6:02] It was thought provoking. What sports fans can teach Christians? Sports fans, They've got enthusiasm. They've got devotion. There's a commitment there.

They're sold out, some of these people. You know, it's all they sleep, eat, drink and breathe. They wear it. And blazing on their jackets or scars or caps or beanies or whatever they want to do.

They want to be identified with their team. They just love whatever their game or sport or team is. They just can't get enough of it. And they will support their team.

They will support their team. They'll go to the ends of the nation. Even overseas. To support, to barrack, to stand for their game, for their team.

They'll spend for games, for tickets, for travel. Nothing is too much to expand their life, their devotion.

[7:10] They're loyal, they're passionate. Passionate. And they don't care how crazy they look. Have you seen some of these sports fans with their faces covered with paint and all their, you know, the rattles and scarves and cheering?

They're crazy. They don't care how crazy they look or how crazy they act. All they want is for others to know that they love their team.

It matters to them. Why don't we see that passion for spiritual things? Why don't we see that church of God? Saints of God.

Why don't we see that passion? That love? That devotion? You see these fans at the games and sometimes they're weeping.

Tears of joy. Or tears of grief. Of almost bereavement that their team has failed.

[8:11] That it's lost. There's a weeping. There's a joyfulness. There's a passion there. What the church of God could learn from sports fans.

Not that our devotion should be really compared with that because there's no comparison, we know. But it makes one wonder, doesn't it? And when we see, I know there's men and women of God who are out and out, witnesses for Christ in the public space.

Open air preaching. And what mockery, what scorn is heaped upon them. But they don't care how crazy they look. Amen? As the world would consider crazy.

But really, it's the norm. It's the norm for God's people. Oh, that thou wouldst run the heavens.

That thou wouldst come down. Verse 3.

There's a desperation here. There's a desperation as the prophet cried out. Oh, that thou wouldst run the heavens. Let thou wouldst come down.

[9:15] He was crying out in desperation. A preacher said, Revival comes only to a desperate church. It is my conviction that we are never going to have a revival until God has brought the church of Jesus Christ to the point of desperation.

To the point of desperation. These are desperate days. As our previous preacher referred to, the world we're living in. It's lost its moral compass.

It's lost the whatever scarce of Christian values and truth, civilization, that once our, at least apparently Christian nation had at the beginning, we have scarce of it now.

And it's lost its moral compass. How we need God to come down to visit, to get to that point of desperation, to see if it were possible that God would visit with us again, as in former times, in other centuries, God did visit his church, and that's not negating that he cannot do it now.

We should believe God, that God can do it in the now. And it's a getting back to how God wants us to be living, a restoring, a restoration, as we take the word and live it.

[10:42] In James 1.22, But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only.

It's telling us to be a doer, an active Christian. An active Christian. Fact is, as a recent Gallup poll found, very little difference exists between the unchurched and their behaviour, the unchurched and the church.

And of course, really, we know, the reality is that many in the church are not saved either. It's not saying that being in a church makes you a Christian. But you would think there would be some difference there, but there's little difference in a range of items such as cheating, stealing.

The poll found that most people's religion is secondary. And I believe that can be true for us, as God's people, as has been referred to in previous messages, that sometimes it's just going to week on a Sunday, it's just that one appearance, and there's nothing more to show for it.

It's like it's a Christianity, it's Sundays only. Friends, this should not be so. We all should be encouraged to live the life to be a full-time Christian.

[12:06] That's how, an old-time preacher said, we have too many noun Christians and not enough adjective Christians. So noun as in a name of something, naming Christian only, or Christian as in lived out, active, a verb, a doing thing, an active thing, being doers of the word, not hearers only.

Don't just have the label Christian and do nothing with it. Let it be a life. Live. When Christ was on the scene, through the word of God, you can check a concordance and see how many times it says, they were all amazed.

They were all amazed. The church of God, the disciples, the people, when Christ was present, when Christ was on the scene, they were all amazed and marvelled.

In our churches now, it's as if everybody wants to be amused rather than amazed. It's about being amused. It's about being entertained.

It's having ears tickled. It's about having your feathers brushed down rather than ruffled.

[13:19] But yet, we should be amazed. We should come to church to be amazed. Be amazed at the wonder of salvation, the wonder of Calvary, the wonder of His mercy and grace given so freely, so undeservedly.

Amazed. Not amused. The community had a fear and respect of the church. And yet, I know we said earlier that it's like we're falling over ourselves to get respectability, to get some kind of friendship with the world.

And yet, we know we should be really at enmity with the world. The world looks at the church today and the church is not regarded, it's not held in respect because the church is so much like the world.

There's no difference. There's nothing to show. We shouldn't want the world's respect. The church should be and when I say the church, I mean God's people as a force should be a force to be reckoned with.

We should be salt and light. We should be evident and different, set apart. Something that's distinct, that distinguishes these people.

[14:41] Another quote here, revival awakens in our hearts, an increased awareness of the presence of God, an increased awareness of His presence, a new love for God, a new hatred for sin and a hunger for His Word.

Do we have that? Do we have those signs of life? I got up this morning and it was scarcely a sign of life. I know Rachel and Matthew were there in the kitchen.

They got up with the birds to get the early birds to get the worm to get the breakfast but they were scarcely a sign of life. Had to listen very carefully. It was not a stirring.

It's not that in the church sometimes. The signs of life, we check for the pulse. We check for the heartbeat. Where is it? Where is that life? Where is that heartbeat of Christ?

He had compassion on the multitudes. I've said before, I believe Christ's heartbeat is souls, souls, souls. It's where souls are lost.

[15:44] Souls are dying, perishing without a saviour. And if Christ's heartbeat is yours, you'll have that same compassion. You'll have that same intention.

Vance Havner again says, Revival is the church falling in love with Jesus all over again. I love that quote. It's true, isn't it? Do we really have that intimacy, that falling in love with our saviour?

To think of Him, that passion for Him, that longing for Him, for His glory, that longing, that loving, to want to talk over and long for the things of God.

Titus 2.1, But speak thou the things that become sound doctrine. We want to speak those things that are sound, that are wholesome, that are healthy, that are going to help us to grow.

The things that will become sound doctrine. Doctrine is important. The foundations of the faith, what we believe, the Word of God.

[16:48] And fundamentally, it's a returning to the Biblical model, the Biblical model, the Biblical pattern, the Biblical dynamic. We've lost that as a church, nationwide, worldwide, even as our own church.

I could say, even me, all of us, there's a longing, there's a needing to be refired, to be refreshed, to be refueled. I know I need that. And I seek that.

I ask that we would all seek that corporately, in our different churches and backgrounds. That we seek the Lord. Seek Him. Seek Him what we can. And one of the things about the early church was said of them, the hand of the Lord was with them.

The hand of the Lord. How we long for the hand of the Lord. His active, intervening person and power. How we long for that new love, for the Word of God, the sufficiency of it, the comprehensiveness of it, the wholesomeness of it.

Instead of the scraps, that the world was thrown of truth, to have the whole Word of God in our hand and a new love for it. To have that God-sized vision of what He wants for His church.

[18:05] To have that equipping of the saints that He wants for us. To return to that biblical normality, the biblical norm that we can be the church of God.

You know, it's been said, the book of Acts doesn't finish. It's really still happening. The Acts of the Apostles or as it's also been referred to of old, the Acts of the Holy Spirit. And we're in Acts 29 or beyond, aren't we really? We should be. We should still see God working actively in us and through us, about us, around us, and return to that biblical normal, that new joy in Christ, that new spirit of prayer, that seeking to work, to go work for lost souls. The biblical normal. It's still normal for us to have a passion. It's still normal for you as God's man, God's woman, to have a love for the Word, to speak the things that become sound doctrine, to hunger for Christ to be formed in you, for to long, to be used by him, for him. To one of the churches in Revelation, the church of Sardis in Revelation 3.2, he says, Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

[19:37] Be watchful and strengthen those things which remain. What condition are you in today? People of God, saints of God, be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.

What condition are you in? Dead or alive? We can all get stagnant and stale. God wants us to be refired.

He wants us to check our pulse and check for the signs of life. Are you dead or ready to die? Let God breathe his life into you.

Let us seek him corporately that we might know that reviving of service, that reviving of Bible study, that reviving of prayer, of secret prayer, of soul winning, of stewardship, of steadfastness to strengthen the things that remain.

and it means a price has to be paid to strengthen those things that remain. A price has to be paid. Are we willing? Paul said, to the weak, I became as weak, that I might gain the weak I am made to all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

[20:59] What a longing he had, what a desperation he had, that I might by all means save some. Do we have that longing to save? That God by his mercy might use you as his instrument?

Not that you save someone, but that God saves through that vessel, through the testimony, through the words, through your witness that by his mercy he might use you.

That can be so. And revival starts with the church, it impacts the world. But it starts with the church and that's why we think of our church as our gathering together even in this very church now.

Not the church, the building, but the assembly is what it means. In this church that we are corporately right now, as much as we might belong to other respective churches as such.

We are an assembly of God's people here this morning and God wants us individually and corporately each one of us to be touched by his word, to be moved by his spirit.

[22:08] Evan Roberts, a revivalist of Wales said in 1904, my mission is first to the churches. When the churches are aroused to their duty, men of the world will be swept into the kingdom, a whole church on its knees is irresistible.

When the church is aroused to its duty, there's a duty we have. It's as if sometimes we take the word of God piecemeal and we decide which bits apply to me and which bits don't, or which bits God speaks to me about, which bits don't.

We're all called to the work of witness. we're all called to that place of testimony. We're all called to pray, to seek his face, to be refined.

Spurgeon said, oh, the coming together of the saints is the first part of Pentecost, and the ingathering of sinners is the second.

It began with only a prayer meeting. Now we referred to that, of prayer, praying together, of seeking God's face, of seeking heaven's grace.

[23:23] People today, if we can just hunger and long for it, and despair for it, like the prophet said, oh, that thou wouldst ran the heavens, that thou wouldst come down.

Jonathan Goforth, another man of God, has said, if revival has been withheld from us, it is because some idol remains still enthroned.

It is because some idol still remains enthroned. Because we still insist on placing our reliance on human schemes, because we still refuse to face the unchangeable truth that it is not by my might,

but by my spirit.

It is not by might, but by my spirit. And lastly, to quote again, revival is a renewed conviction of sin and repentance, followed by an intense desire to live in obedience to God.

It is giving up one's will to God in deep humility. And friends, today, we've been challenged through these messages, that God would rend the heavens, that we would cry out with despair, that we'd get excited about the kingdom of God, that we can't keep it to ourselves, that we'd be passionate, even more passionate than the fans of certain teams or sports, that we'd be passionate about the truth, that we wouldn't extinguish the fire, but we'd fan it into flame, as when the melting fire burneth, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.

[25:15] Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. Let us pray. Dear Lord, we ask you to tear those heavens apart, Lord, that Lord, if we can beseech you humbly that you would do so, that you would visit your church, that you would visit each saint, each man of God, each woman of God, that you would visit each heart, each home, each life, each family, dear Lord, each church, as there's different churches represented here today, Lord, that you would visit your people, your family, Lord, these brothers and sisters of mine, that each one of us might know what it is to have that fire refired, refueled, Lord, that we might know that passion renewed, that we might be engaged in the service that you've called us to, not some, but all of us to, that you refresh that heartbeat of souls, souls, souls, that we would care not for how crazy we might look, but that we care for your truth enough to declare it.

Help us to have that boldness, Lord, we pray. For your glory we ask it. In Jesus' name, Amen. Thank you.