

Revive Us Again

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[0:00] Amen. Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

! Amen. Amen. So, on the 4th of July, our family decided we were going to have a little bit of fun in the sun.

Now, Elaine decided to purchase a slip-and-slide for our amusement. Everyone know what a slip-and-slide is? Yeah? Well, after watching Elaine and Mia having so much fun with this thing, you already know where this is going, don't you?

I make the poor decision to try it for myself. So I sprint, I take a flying leap, and I promptly hit the ground like a ton of bricks. Yeah.

Instead of sliding, I remained firmly planted where I landed. So I guess that you can say that I slipped, but I did not slide.

[1:15] As it turns out, slip-and-slides are dangerous for people over 120 pounds. Who knew? I'm a bit over the weight limit, unfortunately. Good intentions.

We don't know what we're seeking. Don't turn out the way that we expect. We pray that we might see gospel renewal and revival, but if that is what we are seeking, and it should be, we need to be aware of what true revival looks like.

Why? Because some of the things that have been done in the name of revival haven't really exalted Jesus Christ.

They've been about emotional manipulation, or boosting the reputation of the preacher, or telling people to be nice and respectable and religious, and sending them on their way.

Now, thank God, true revival is not like that. We have countless examples of true revival in history.

[2:24] I want us to consider this morning, what is revival? What are we asking for when we pray for it? What are we seeking when we seek it, and why do we need it? Now, as on many topics, I find Tim Keller helpful on this point.

Keller writes this about revival. Revivals and renewals are necessary because the default mode of the human heart is works righteousness. We do not ordinarily live as if the gospel is true.

Christians often believe in their heads that Jesus accepts me, therefore I will live a good life. But their hearts and actions are functioning practically on the principle, I live a good life, therefore Jesus accepts me.

The results of this inversion are smug self-satisfaction, if we feel that we're living up to the standards, or insecurity, anxiety, and self-hatred, if we feel we are failing to live up.

In either case, the results are defensiveness, a critical spirit, racial or cultural ethnocentricity to bolster a sense of righteousness, an allergy to change, and other forms of spiritual deadness, both individual and corporate.

[3:46] In sharp contrast, the gospel of sheer grace offered to hopeless sinners will humble and comfort all at once. The results are joy, a willingness to admit faults, graciousness with all, and a lack of self-absorption.

Why do we need individual renewal and corporate revival? What is Keller saying here? He identifies the problem as this. We have such a hard time resisting works righteousness.

So what happens? We approach Christianity simply as a moral code that teaches us to be respectable. It's how the world looks at and thinks about Christianity often.

But my brothers and my sisters, if Christianity is just a respectable moral code, code, then we are in trouble and we're still in our sins. Every person in this room this morning, every person in this church is pulled to works righteousness by default.

In practice, at least, this idea that we need to be good to prove our worth. So we try to convince others that we're good people, usually, or ourselves even, and we usually do that by thinking that we're better than others, right?

[5:22] Or, on the flip side, we fall into despair and we hate ourselves. That just doesn't work. It doesn't work at all.

And renewal and revival is a reversal of that attitude. You would open up your Bibles with me this morning and look at Psalm 85, where we see the psalmist's cry for revival echoing our own.

So verse 1, Lord, you were favorable to your land.

You restored the fortunes of Zion. You forgave the iniquity of your people. You covered all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath. You turned from your hot anger.

Now, to understand what's going on in these verses, we have to understand a little bit about the history of Israel in the Old Testament. Now, this could be talking about all kinds of things in the history of Israel.

[6:29] And perhaps it could be the return of God's people from exile. But do you want to know what the history of God's covenant people to Israel looks like in the Old Testament? Well, I've got to be honest with you.

It looks like failure after failure. Man, they just keep messing up. They disobey God's covenant with them. They chase after and they worship false gods.

They worship idols. And occasionally, some reform happens that causes a temporary degree of faithfulness. And they say, okay, this time we're going to be faithful to the covenant.

People pledged themselves to obey God's law. They tried their best to be good. And they always failed.

They disobeyed God's law. They disobeyed God's covenant with them. They chased after and they worshiped false gods. They worshiped idols. And what happened?

[7:29] Eventually, God's people got carted out of their homeland, sent into exile and captivity because of their disobedience.

Unless we be tempted to be too hard on them for their failure to obey God's law, I have to admit that I've done the same thing and I have to tell you that you have too.

What did God do for His people again and again despite their unfaithfulness? The psalm says He was favorable to them. He showed them mercy.

He forgave their sins. He covered their sins. He who was justly and righteously angry with them. He turned from His anger and was compassionate.

The psalmist looks back to that and cries out to God to forgive His people once again. To restore them. To revive them. Picking back up in our psalm.

[8:31] Restore us again, O God of our salvation and put away Your indignation toward us. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your steadfast love, O Lord and grant us Your salvation. The psalmist has confidence that God will restore His people.

Why is that? Because God has done it before. Because God is a compassionate God who forgives sin.

Because God in the past certainly didn't stay angry with His people forever. The psalmist is confident that God will revive His people. That God will give His people new life.

That they will rejoice in Him. That they might rejoice in their God and in His salvation. The psalmist cries out to God to show His steadfast love to grant His people salvation.

[9:39] And again the psalmist appears to do so with confidence. Now presumably the context for this psalm is pretty bad.

The situation is probably not so great. So why is the psalmist so confident?

I think the answer is simple. And it's this. God doesn't change and no matter how bad the situation might look it doesn't matter.

Because God doesn't change. He is merciful. He is loving. He is compassionate to all who call on His name. And notice something here. The psalmist's hope for restoration and forgiveness.

The psalmist's hope for revival for God's people. has absolutely nothing to do with claims that hey we're doing better lately. You don't see a trace of that in the psalm do you?

[10:48] What we see on the other hand is that God has a track record of being compassionate of being merciful of restoring of reviving and that is the psalmist's hope.

And you know what? It's ours too. Our hope for gospel renewal in our lives our hope for revival in our church our hope for God to be at work in our midst has absolutely nothing to do with our accomplishments and has everything to do with who he is.

Revival doesn't come by working up our resolve to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Revival comes when God's people admit that they have sinned and that they have no hope but the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

How can that be? I mean we are wired of course to think that God helps those who help themselves. And that's not in the Bible in case you were wondering.

The truth is that it doesn't work that way. In fact God it's not that God helps those who help themselves. God helps those who by his grace admit that they cannot help themselves.

[12:18] Who admit that they have failed. Who admit that they have absolutely no hope in anything but in God's love and mercy. Who are honest about the fact that they are sinners who need a Savior.

As the great Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones once said revival above everything else is a glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God.

It is the restoration of him to the center of the life of the church. is the restoration of that gospel message of Christ's perfect righteousness and his death for sinners.

A restoration of the message that Jesus has taken our sin and has given us his righteousness so that all who put their trust in him are free and forgiven and have the promise of eternal life.

true revival which is nothing more nor less than the spirit-empowered flourishing of the biblical gospel really does humble and comfort us.

[13:32] where are you this morning? Are you proud? Do you believe that you're better than others? Are you critical?

Or are you smug? Well guess what? Believing the gospel will take care of that. It will show you that all of the righteousness that you think you have is nothing but filthy rags.

No matter how good you think you are, here's the honest truth, you have sinned and deserve God's condemnation. And the call is to repent and believe the gospel and throw away all of your claims to moral goodness or being better than others.

But on the other hand, what if you're anxious? What if you hate yourself? What if you feel completely unlovable? Well, the gospel doesn't just humble, it also comforts.

And the answer is still the same. Repent and believe the gospel. Receive forgiveness and experience the greatest love you have ever known. The love of a God who loves you so much more than you could ever imagine.

[14:49] So much so that he gave his only son to make you his beloved child forever. See, for there to be revival, regular Christians need to cast aside their works righteousness.

To stop living as if God accepts us because we're good and nice. Instead of living by the power of the Holy Spirit, a life that is pleasing to God because we are already loved and accepted in Christ Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon once said that a genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers or dawn without light.

In other words, ain't gonna happen. How does the Spirit work to bring revival? By convicting us of our sins, by showing us that even our best efforts aren't cutting it, by driving us to repentance at the foot of the cross, and then filling us with the joy that comes from knowing that we have a loving Father, that we have a Savior who bled and who died to secure our redemption, and that we have new life in the Holy Spirit.

And that this new life isn't about trying to earn God's love, we're trying to demonstrate that we're better than that other guy, better than our neighbor, better than whoever. It is about the joy that comes with being forgiven, of being loved, with being loved, and that is the kind of joy that changes your whole life.

[16:32] It changes churches, it can change communities, it can change whole nations. how does revival start? It does indeed start with renewal in the lives of regular Christians like you and me.

When the Spirit empowers us to cast aside our pride and to rest in Jesus Christ. when the Spirit fills our hearts and our churches with joy, a joy that is contagious, joy that the Spirit uses to draw unbelievers into a saving relationship with the living God.

life. This morning, my brothers and my sisters, let us cry out to God that He would revive us, that He would renew us.

Let the prayer of each one of us be in the words, song we're going to sing at the operator, Holy Spirit, live in breath of God, breathe new life into my willing soul.

Bring the presence of the risen Lord to renew my heart and make me whole. To go back to Tim Keller for a second, he goes on to say this, revival is not a historical curiosity.

[17 : 52] It is a consistent pattern of how the Holy Spirit works in a community to arrest and to counteract the default mode of the human heart.

It is a consistent pattern. It has happened before, it can happen again, even here and even now. The psalmist was able to say, will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? Notice that word, again, even in the psalmist's day. It's something that had happened more than once. Again, and again, and in the new covenant era, it has happened in the church again and again.

It is a consistent pattern of how the Holy Spirit works. So let's pray this morning that he would do it yet again in our midst, that Jesus Christ might be glorified.

So we cry out, Lord our God, will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[19 : 13] Amen.