

Revived Prayer

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, amen. Well now, if you don't mind standing for the reading of the word of the Lord, I'll try to remember to hold this thing right. Uh-oh, just lost my page already.

We're returning once again, as you know, to Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, and we're starting another theme in this passage. And our goal is to finish it through one, but we'll see how it goes.

We may have to wait until after vacation to finish this up, but we'll see. Father, thank you. You are faithful. And your word is part of that proof that you are faithful.

You have not left us in the dark. You sent your son, the great light of the world, to deliver us, but then you gave us this word, this book, so that throughout the ages, we might know your will and be empowered by your spirit to live it.

That we might know you in your word. You reveal yourself and help us, Lord, to hear your voice, to see your glory. Be amazed once again at Jesus to cry out for the work of your spirit.

[1 : 2 2] So, Father, speak to us as we open this book now. As we always seek to do, to exalt Jesus and to see your people.

Know him and be strengthened in him. Make us faithful witnesses. Teach us to pray. Use your servant now in Christ's name.

Amen. Acts chapter 2. And they devoted themselves. Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[2 : 4 0] And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved. Yeah. That is the word of the Lord.

Thank you, God. Please be seated. Brian Edwards in his book, *Can We Pray for Revival?*

He describes it this way. Revival is a sovereign work of God's Holy Spirit that produces an unusual awakening of spiritual life among God's people, resulting in an awesome awareness of God, a sincere repentance for sin, a deep longing for God and holiness, an effective passion to reach the unsaved.

It is generally accompanied by a significant number of the lost coming to true faith in Christ. That's a beautiful description.

A revival. When God comes among his people in a powerful way. There was one such years ago, back in when I was young, 1857, it was a Wednesday, noonday prayer meeting.

[4 : 11] Took place in New York City at Fulton and William Street. The notice said it was for businessmen. And the notice said, come for 5, 10, 20 minutes or the whole hour to come and pray.

Six men came the first meeting. And they came after 1230. So the pastor was discouraged. It wasn't an extraordinary meeting.

It was just, you know, just a prayer meeting. The following week, 20 men came. The following week, 40 men came.

And then the stock market crashed that same week when 40 came. In a short time, they were praying throughout the whole church with a group of more than 3,000.

Prayer meetings spread across the city of New York. Within six months, it spread across places of this country.

[5 : 13] 10,000 businessmen were praying at lunchtime every Wednesday throughout that city. It was called the second great awakening. It wasn't perfect.

I look at that awakening. I say it was flawed, yes, but God was at work. It was flawed because it didn't touch the racism in this country. Very flawed.

But yet the accounts say 300,000 people were converted in one year of that revival. These are not exaggerations.

Some believe the numbers are actually higher. A friend of mine, John Smed, likes to say prayer is revival. Prayer is revival. Can God do this in our day?

I mean, come on. I read things like that. I read a lot about revival over the years. And I read about that and I go, what makes them so special? Are we facing hard times?

[6 : 14] They went through the stock market crash. Are we facing hard times today? I mean, come on. COVID. COVID. Every time I turn around, it's got a new iteration.

A daughter of COVID. Son of COVID. Cousin of COVID. I don't know. Political fights. Right now, we're in a tizzy politically in this country.

Racial issues continue. African Americans are still at risk far too often around police. Let's be honest about that. I'm one of them.

My other minorities are being targeted in mass shootings. This is America. Gang violence in our city. Displacement of the poor in our city. Abortion rights activists are amassing.

There's all kinds of, even Christians are debating back and forth about that issue of abortion and this turmoil in our country around it. Christian faith is now suspect in this country.

[7 : 23] It used to be beloved. Then it became indifferent. Now, we're the enemy. Churches are still hurting after the aftermath of COVID and tempers and feelings are running high.

Church scandals. People are finding out that people have been abused for years and it's been hidden. We thought the Roman Catholics had that problem.

Fool us. Pastors seem to be leaving the ministry at an even higher rate out of frustration.

Family, we need God to saturate us with his presence. And surely, this is worth praying for with seriousness, conviction, tenacity, humility, and faith.

We got to get serious about this. We need revived prayer. So I guess when I ask you, with all that's happening, Jesus is still Lord.

[8 : 37] So will you join us in calling upon our glorious Savior to send the fire? send the fire of his presence.

The fire. Acts 1, Acts 2, the fire of the Spirit. We're asking for God to do it. He responds to his people's prayers.

Otherwise, why would you pray? Pray. So one of the great priorities, remember, we're looking at a Spirit-filled church. This is what's happening in Acts chapter 2.

The Spirit has come with power. This is what a Spirit-filled, revived church looks like. We've been looking at the four great priorities. Here's priority number four. One of the great priorities of a Spirit-filled church is the gift of prayer.

To be saturated with God is to communicate with God. By simple definition, prayer is talking with God.

[9 : 45] Let's just toss out the obvious simple definition of prayer. It's talking with God. Communicating with the Almighty.

Enjoying that fellowship that only those who know Jesus can have with God. Now, our Westminster larger catechism, we are a Presbyterian church.

We love the Westminster Confession and its catechisms. Amen? It has a more formal definition. Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ by the help of His Spirit with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.

I love the phrase offering up our desires. In other words, we don't demand from God. Not even what He says in His Word He will do.

We don't demand it. We still come humbly to Him because of who He is and we express our desires.

[10 : 52] We desire, Lord, that you keep this Word you said. We ask Him to keep it and this means deep humility and great respect to the one we are approaching.

Prayer takes many forms. Whether we're making requests or confessing our sins or just thanking Him, we are praying. And I would add something that I've said before.

Many times, even our singing becomes a type of praying when we really begin to sing to Him. Not just about Him.

When we begin to sing to Him, our singing rises to the level of prayer as it is also praise.

This is why I think often throughout the history of the church, even in the Jewish Old Testament, that people throughout their ages have prayed through the Psalms.

[11 : 56] The Psalms is the hymn book of the church. They're inspired songs and they're meant to be sung. They express our emotions and our thoughts to God in such a way that they make excellent prayers.

Have you ever prayed the Psalms? I've been doing that a lot lately. They're God-soaked. Let me give you a few. When you feel attacked by people, Psalm 3, O Lord, how many are my foes?

Many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for Him in God, but you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head.

That's good. When you feel rebuked by the Lord for your sin, here's a couple of them. That's a good one. Psalm 6, 1 to 3, O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing. Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. My soul is greatly troubled. How long, O Lord? How about Psalm 51 when you're feeling your sins weighing on you?

[13 : 06] Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy. Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

That's repentance, y'all. How about when you feel depressed? What about Psalm 42? Why are you cast down on my soul?

Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation, and my God. We're just by general times of trouble in your life.

Trouble. Psalm 46. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear while the earth gives way, though the mountains be removed, moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

All of those psalms and more point to God as our source and our help. So prayer becomes, is extremely important because it brings us into intimate fellowship with God.

[14 : 22] And as the catechism suggested, it's Trinitarian. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is God's gift.

Prayer is God's gift to us. We approach Him as our Father who art in heaven. We approach Him as children.

We approach Him as those whom Jesus has given the right to become children of God through faith in Jesus. Jesus said in John 1, we are His children.

Can I ask you a question? How do children approach their daddies and their mommies? You ever think about that? When a child wants something, how do they approach a good mother and father?

Amen. Let's be clear about that. We have to, right? A healthy mother and father. Do they approach Him saying, Oh great thou.

[15 : 34] awesome daddy. Mama, mother who art the giver of life from the womb. He just said, Mom, Dad, can I?

May I? If they're really being polite. Or, gimme. Gimme. And, and, and, and, and, and, and, and as a parent, you, you, you, you deal with that.

Your heart goes out to your children. You don't ask them to impress you with their verbiage. You're just glad that they're coming because they could be going somewhere else especially as they get older.

And you receive them. God welcomes His children into the prayer room. Into the prayer living room.

He welcomes you into the prayer throne room because He's King. But it becomes like a living room because it's intimate. Because you're a child.

[16 : 45] You're not just a penitent. You're not just a subject. You are a child. You are His child. His son, His daughter. Jesus made it so. And you need to bank on that.

And so you go with knowing the way has been prepared for you. You go with confidence like that. But you go humbly.

Prayer is probably the most dependent thing we do as Christians. It is really where we show that we can do nothing without God and without Jesus His Son.

Because when we pray we are doing battle against our flesh. That's our fallen humanity. Because fallen humanity simply says I can live without God.

Churches say we can live without God. and we say that when we're not devoted to prayer.

[17 : 53] It has to be more than just an add-on at the end of the service or add-on at the end of the meal or an add-on because we're supposed to do this before we start small group.

It has to be more than just how we begin the service briefly. it has to be more. We demonstrate that we believe that Jesus is Lord and Master of the universe and all things dwell under His sovereign control and we and that we are His people.

We are His brothers and sisters. Jesus is our elder brother and we have the same Father God the Father. We demonstrate that we really believe these things and that we know we are weak.

We are very weak when we as disciples and as churches gather in prayer.

A prayerless church like a prayerless Christian cannot become God's agents of grace justice and mercy on the long haul.

[19 : 14] We need we need Him we need Him and He is so willing to bless you and to bless us together.

Now when the Spirit comes in power therefore He causes God's people not just to pray but to pray with each other. Corporate prayer.

You see that's what's happening here in Acts 2. We're back to our context. It says the prayers they were devoted to the prayers it's plural and the the there suggests that this is significant.

These are special times. Remember they were Jews they gathered for prayer as there was their tradition 9 a.m. 3 p.m. 6 p.m. there were times of prayer at the temple or the synagogue or wherever they were or sometimes where they were in the street in the case of the Pharisees but they prayed three times a day and these followers of Jesus who were living in Jerusalem would go up to the temple day by day for these three times of the prayers.

They were devoted to this meaning they persevered in this practice even though it wasn't easy. It's corporate prayer the entire church coming to pray at a particular time.

[20 : 35] That's what happens when the spirit comes upon God's people they become devoted to it but I want to also point this to you that before the spirit comes in power he begins to move his people to gather to pray.

I read to you one revival that's common in this history and study of revival and so in the book of you see in the book of Acts you'll see several prayer meetings noted.

When persecuted in chapter 4 they prayed when Peter was arrested they prayed for his release in chapter 13 when he began the great missionary movement they prayed and worshipped and fasted together.

It was common common for the church to gather to prayer because they recognized that the mission given to them by Jesus was too great for them so they prayed.

Do you understand the great commission? Do you understand what happened in Matthew 28 when Jesus says go and make disciples of all the nations? Do you understand how crazy that was?

[21 : 40] He said that to a group of Jews who were living as an occupied people in the Roman Empire they were powerless people and he tells them from the very go you're going to do cross-cultural ministry.

Jews going to Gentiles Jews going to Samaritans they must have been terrified are you crazy Lord? You mean those people made disciples of all the ethnic that's the Greek word the ethnic groups the nations wow we we get we get scared of that right now in America today we get nervous about talking to people in our own neighborhoods who don't look like us and Jesus told those disciples you're going to turn the world upside down you're going to make disciples of all the nations because why the last thing he said to them lo I'm with you always even into the end of the age ah there it go I'm going to be with you I'm not sending you out there by yourself and so in Acts they started praying he said wait in

Jerusalem they said we better get praying so they prayed together and the New Testament church is birthed in prayer it's birthed in prayer the church experienced God's presence power and provision as they prayed so guess what they kept praying you do what works y'all it said this thing God shows up when we pray so y'all let's keep praying we'll talk more about that when I get back from vacation but isn't it interesting today that the church puts the emphasis on personal devotional prayer and has almost ceased to emphasize church wide prayer meetings now we I pray I know I know our small groups pray amen and I hope you're praying continue to pray go ahead and pray call out to God in prayer but something's happened to the church in this country where the church wide prayer meeting it's it's like it's like the dodo bird the dinosaur and yet that's what God taught us to do when Jesus taught us the Lord's prayer he didn't teach it as an individual prayer now we can do that but that's not what he taught what did he say to us he told the disciples pray this way our father who art in heaven give us this day our daily bread forgive us our debts deliver us from evil he's saying listen when you guys gather to pray

I want you to this is how I want you to pray he meant for us to spend a lot of time praying don't mean you don't pray alone please don't hear me saying that but they're both important maybe even equally important we are called to be a corporate praying body don't Whitney in his books spiritual disciplines of the Christian church he says there are many who are quick to ask for prayer from people in church who will not even pray for others in return but who will not connect themselves to pray with these same brothers and sisters this is neither normal nor healthy Christianity beware of the spiritual independence of a completely privatized prayer life that almost sounds hermetical today because we don't recognize the calling of God for his people to set aside time together to say this is important they were devoted they say listen we're gonna leave our homes we're gonna okay we're gonna put that aside playtime dinner whatever it is we're gonna put that aside for a little bit because we are gonna say we're gonna get together with our brothers and sisters and get on our face before the living God and cry out for fire cry out for his presence that's what corporate prayer does it says together we believe this is so important we're gonna set aside time for it we believe that God and his kingdom and his work and his will are so important that we will leave what we're doing and come aside just to pray you know what happens in prayer meeting if you're not connected to the church it becomes a way you get connected love happens you see prayer meeting is different from small group prayer because small group prayer tends to be people just like you or have your same ideas or your same maybe sometimes even work we gather small groups can be infinite affinity groups we live in the same area you know but when you come to church by prayer meeting what happens is now you're praying with people who are not like you now you're praying people who are truly a bunch of people who are just not like you and you and you get to hear people's hearts is nothing like hearing someone call out to God or have your own name called out to God by a group of people who don't look like you don't think like you don't vote like you

I mean my goodness but they're calling out your name because they know you are a child of God there's nothing like it it causes you to come listen and I'm you don't have to impress see people people will say I don't like I don't like praying in public I really don't like praying in public and I'm even afraid to pray in public here's the problem I feel you because I hate public speaking I'm amazed that God made me a preacher I almost failed public speaking at Temple University I'm just but here's the thing we're thinking about prayer wrongly see if you think of prayer like public speaking what are you doing in public speaking what makes you so afraid of public speaking because you're trying to impress people you don't want to sound stupid come on somebody let's be honest the reason most Americans hate public speaking is because we don't want to sound stupid we want to sound like we got it together and we're afraid that people will judge us for how we sound and we get all tied up in impressing people and then we but then we transfer it to prayer to group prayer and now we're doing the same thing but here's the problem

[29 : 04] God ain't impressed with you he knows too much about you he just loves you and he doesn't care that you stammer and stutter he doesn't care that you don't say thee and thou when you pray he doesn't care that you can't run five scriptures off at one time in prayer he doesn't care that you're not eloquent and smooth like pastor Kevin he doesn't care we're thinking about prayer wrong prayer is talking to father it's talking to Jesus it's calling upon the spirit of God to give wings to my prayer matter of fact in Romans 8 we're told that we don't even know what to pray for so the spirit of God gets up under us so I so I can so you don't have to impress if you're thinking about impressing people you're thinking about the wrong person and if people are judging your prayer they may not even be saved it's just we gotta think about prayer differently and the truth of the matter is that's how you learn to pray in public is by listening to your brothers and sisters pray that's the way you learn to pray in public it's okay

I don't I don't have a scorecard to grade you on and your heavenly father already graded you if you're in Jesus A plus baby come on somebody if you're in Jesus your prayers are A plus plain and simple and there is no extra credit because you don't need it last thing I want to say last thing when the spirit comes in power remember we're praying together now pray when the spirit comes in power the fellowship prays listen when under attack otherwise we complain and attack each other how do I know this it's what happened in the Old Testament if you look at the Israelites in the wilderness under Moses when the people faced hardship what did they do they attacked

Moses and Aaron for leading them into the desert they complained they didn't have water they complained they didn't have meat they complained about what God supplied with ticket this manna and they longed to go back to Egypt where they believed it was more comfortable you know I'm telling the truth that's what I'm telling that's the Bible here's the thing what didn't they do they didn't pray they did go back and read it read Exodus if you want read read numbers I mean I mean I mean they didn't pray they complained and fought each other but they didn't pray and that generation died in the wilderness by the way they died all God said I'm sick of y'all y'all y'all don't believe me they didn't pray and therefore they couldn't see what God was doing right there in their midst they couldn't trust him it was hard it was painful yes they were going through tough times yes the desert was hot yes there were times where there was no water yes there were times they didn't have meat they had manna but God was providing and he did provide he was with them in the midst of the hardships but they didn't pray they had other things on their minds there are times when they got it right though in the Old

Testament there are times you'll see that in second chronicles I don't have time to point it all out to you but second chronicles 20 if you turn get a chance Ezra 8 second kings 19 you'll notice there are examples where the kings even led them to pray together the whole nation would come together in prayer when they were attacked and God moved in the book of Acts there are examples there I want to show you those in the book of Acts when the apostles were beaten in chapter 4 verse 23 and 24 when they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priest and the elders had said to them when they heard it they lifted their voices together to God and said sovereign Lord and they prayed in Acts chapter 12 when James has been killed remember James and John James they killed him they murdered him with a sword and then they arrested Peter and they were going to kill him too in Acts chapter 12 verse 5 so Peter was kept in prison but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church prayer together causes us to overcome suffering and pain together if you're hurting if you're going through a rough time right now grab some saints to pray with you we pray for healing that's great and we're going to keep doing it but brothers and sisters you ain't got to wait for Sunday grab some saints together around you and pray don't pray for yourself amen but grab the people of God listen here's here's what we seek and this is not on the screen so forgive me

I don't think it is here's what we seek together I want you to hear this this is what happened second chronicle 7 1 listen to this this is Solomon as soon as Solomon finished his prayer fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the temple that was the dedication of the temple but you catch it he prayed and fire came down consumed the offerings listen to this let's take this into the new covenant because Christ was sacrificed for us the ultimate sacrifice we are now the offerings he is the ultimate sacrifice now we become little offerings little sacrifices we begin to live Romans 12 1 we present our bodies as living sacrifices because of the mercy of the ultimate sacrifice

[35 : 46] I now in humble dependence and reliance upon him and in gratitude and faith in him I say Lord I'll follow you wherever and I present myself my body as a sacrifice but more than that there's more there's more Hebrews 13 15 and 16 talks about our sacrifices watch this through him that's Jesus let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name then he says do not neglect to do good and to share what you have listen for such sacrifice are pleasing to God so here's the thing we respond to the ultimate sacrifice by offering ourselves to God right Lord I'm yours do what you want with me then and in doing that we bring the sacrifice of praise continually by confessing his name not just he's not talking about singing he's talking about confessing his name to the world by saying

I belong to Jesus Jesus is Lord by testify and acknowledging the goodness and the mercy and the grace and the power of Jesus to those around us you are offering praise a sacrifice of praise and lastly do good doing good to those around you your neighbors is a sacrifice of praise it is a sacrifice because sometimes it costs you to bless somebody else if it doesn't cost you it's not a sacrifice that hit me this week we bring oh Lord help us we become when we pray together we are offering to God ourselves and then we're asking for the fire of God to fall on us and consume us consume us for his glory consume us saturate us with your presence consume us in Jesus name well there's more

I wanted to say but I'm not I think that's a good place to stop just the clock says it's 10 oh Lord family we've been called to prayer together it is a privilege it is God's gift to us it is where we find empowerment together and where we find healing together hope together discipleship and encouragement together father and father longs to meet us together in the prayer meetings whether you come first first Sunday prayer or midweek Wednesday zoom prayer at noon around noon those are church wide prayer times but then there are prayer times in your small groups hope you're praying there just get together and pray have dinner with folks hey let's pray before let's have some time of prayer pray because we are weak and we are outgunned the enemy is not playing fair and he don't care that your mama was an evangelist or your father was a pastor he don't care he coming after you he's coming after new city he's coming after any faithful church that proclaims the word of

God that proclaims the gospel of Jesus he's coming after us that seeks to do ministry in Jesus name we have a target on the back of our heads and the back of this church we gotta pray together so please I encourage you I'm begging you let's make let's become devoted to prayer because the one who gave us prayer is devoted to us father in Jesus name help us help us to pray help us to pray about our praying help us to pray while we're praying help us to pray before we pray oh make us a church that really recognizes we are weak and can do nothing without you in Jesus name amen resources and the inn for to follow they're there would follow him on together there