

II. Revival in Biblical Perspective
Revive Us Again!
“The Prayer of Revival”
Psalm 85
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
January 15, 2017 – Morning sermon

We will be looking at Psalm 85 in this study and Psalm 85:6 is our theme verse for this year. I will start by reading a few verses from Psalm 85 and then we'll look at the remaining verses in that Psalm with a focus on verse 6. Whenever I start a series I like to give good reading suggestions that go along with the series, giving a 101 and a 201 so the 101 suggestion is written by Walt Kaiser titled Revive Us Again: Biblical Principles for Revival Today. The other book is called The Dynamics of the Spiritual Life by Richard Loveless and it is now edited. If it had not been edited then I would have called this a 301 book. This book not only addresses revival corporately but very importantly, Gospel revival personally. Now let's look at our text for this study.

The title of Psalm 85 is 'To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.' Psalm 85:1–3 says [1] *LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.* [2] *You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. Selah* [3] *You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Psalm 85:6 is our theme verse for the year which says [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* Revive means there has been 'vive' in life if you're asking to be revived. Secondly, when it says 'revive us' it means it is something about God's people. Revive us **again** means it's not something God does on a novel basis but it's something that is His pattern of blessing and grace. And why revive us again? Not so that we'll rejoice in revival but that we will rejoice in the Lord.

I'm going to develop that for you but before I do I'm going to give you three observations and convictions pastorally on behalf of our elder as to why we are doing this theme on this verse this year and also some personal convictions. The first one is I believe this nation is in desperate need of a Gospel awakening for a number of reasons. One is that this nation has been blessed in God's providence in extraordinary and exceptional ways.

Someone asked me recently if I believed America was exceptional and I said to them 'no.' I believe God has exceptionally blessed this nation. I believe God has blessed this nation Gospel awakenings and with two primary Gospel awakenings. One was started by that extraordinary sermon by John Winthrop titled 'A City Set on a Hill' and the anticipation of what God would do, divulged and went into a deep decline of depravity. Then God very graciously did a revival in His church that spread into a Gospel awakening under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield and other great preachers. Out of that birthed this nation from 1735 to 1765 and as the birth of this nation was accomplished and in the context of that revival that led to that Gospel awakening that was so profound that Benjamin Franklin would say 'it looks like the whole world is going to church.'

If I had been there I would have taken Mr. Franklin aside and said 'It's not so much that the whole world is going to church but it's that the church started going to the world because

God had come to the church.’ Because God brought life to the church, the church went into the world and that’s why they started coming, not so much to church, but to Jesus. It was not long after that, this country, under the influence from some of the philosophy from France and other places and theological heresy of Unitarian Universalism did a steep decline into depravity. In fact, it was speculated in many well-known writers that America would not ever know the blessings of Christianity again and that Christianity was dead in America.

I won’t go into all the statistics that was going on between 1775 to 1780 but it was extraordinary and then in 1795 God raised up a president at Yale University. God raised up a preacher named Asa Nettleton and God came down in a prayer meeting underneath a haystack. Then another Gospel awakening began to come that went through ebbs and flows that went from 1785 all the way to 1880. I won’t go all that happened there but there was a taste of another awakening in 1905 because of what had happened in Wales, Europe and England that came over here. So we have been blessed by God’s Providence through those awakenings in our nation and they are exceptional blessings but I believe we need a Gospel awakening because we are now under God’s judgment.

I will share with you in the next study five reasons why we are under God’s judgment. Those judgments have rendered us in this place where we who said as a nation that we were under God, now says we have government that can be your god. This is not just simply putting us in a place of judgment that is a judgment of God. Rampant sexual chaos and anarchy, perversion and promiscuity don’t simply put us in a place of judgment for it is the judgment of God. I think something else that puts us under God’s judgment is that we think whatever is wrong with this nation that we can fix it – all we need is another president or another invention or another party to be empowered in the Congress. You all know how engaged I am in matters of public theology but I’m telling you that doesn’t fix it.

That is part of our problem of self-reliance and self-absorption. The reason our founding fathers put in the first amendment of the free practice of religion is they knew government couldn’t fix it and they wanted a free church that was necessary for things to be fixed, but the church can’t fix it and can’t be an instrument of salt and light if it’s indifferent itself and apathetic. So I believe we’re in need of a Gospel awakening. We are in need of God to sweep this nation with Gospel evangelism and discipleship but when God sweeps a nation He does it through His covenant people, His church. One of the reasons we are under judgment is because the church of Jesus Christ has lost its saltiness and does not shine the light.

That is why I have a second conviction and that is we are in need of revival in the church. We are in need of a Gospel awakening but Biblically and historically Gospel awakenings come through the church. And the church has to be revived to be an instrument of Gospel awakening. The culture is in a freefall of depravity because the professing, evangelical church is sinfully apathetic. It is our apathy that has contributed to the condition of this nation. Right now the church does not believe we need revival for we just need a celebrity preacher or the next program or the next amazing novel event. We think we can fix it in our self-reliance and our self-absorptions. So if the church is self-reliant and self-absorbed why wouldn’t the culture be self-reliant and self-absorbed? Without God you cannot do anything and without Him nothing is possible but I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). We won’t get a Gospel awakening without a revived church and therefore we need revival. The church has no voice to this cultural depravity because we have spiritual apathy and we think we can fix the church.

This brings me to a third reason and that is I don't think we understand what revival is. If you don't believe this sometime in the fall ride by churches and look at their signs which say 'Revival week – Monday through Friday.' We do not schedule revival. You can schedule a Spiritual Life Conference or a Revitalization Conference or Evangelistic meetings but you cannot schedule revival. We can't produce it. I also have some good news and that is we can't preclude it, we can't stop it. When God decides to get it done in His sovereign grace, He will, can and does get it done.

Today's church is Biblically illiterate, spiritually impotent and sinfully apathetic. I'm giving you my heart and I don't know what it will cost me. I am talking about the contemporary, evangelical church needing a revival. What about us? Yes. Every year we are put in the top 50 churches in America and I think that is more of a statement than it is about us. I say that having on record how much I have told you how I love you, admire you, and learned from you all and there are so many things I stand in amazement with us but we also are apathetic.

What are those great evidences of revival? There is worship. Worship doesn't cause revival but you know that true worship becomes the heartbeat of a people when they are revived. Revive us again, that we may rejoice in Thee and that we may give glory to Thee in the land. If today is like any other Lord's Day 45 to 55 percent of our membership is not here and on Sunday night 75 to 85 percent of our membership will not be in attendance. I do believe in providential hindrance but just not 50 percent. I do know there are shut-ins for I go visit them but it's not 50 percent. Did you not hear when we sung 'because we believe Him we sing', we worship, we praise Him? Here is a God who has sought us and the only one thing He seeks from us is true worship and yet we work Him into our schedule. I'm just sharing my heart with you and its own apathy and where it is.

So what do I think revival is? I'm going to take the next few studies to define revival principally from God's Word starting with Psalm 85. I want to Biblically define it and historically illustrate revivals. After this, I will take some time to look at five revivals recorded in the Bible that all led to Gospel awakenings surrounding communities. Then we will take a look at what a revived church looks like in a hostile environment and a culture that is opposed to it. I believe that picture is given to us in I Peter where he writes to the exiles and tells them 'they consider you outsiders, know that you are outsiders but don't you dare live as an outsider for you live on the inside for Jesus.' We will look at how you do that.

First we're going to look at the foundation of Psalm 85. With what I plan to cover in the future studies, I will plan to support this definition of revival that I am about to give you. Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. I have chosen my words carefully. Revival is when God comes to bring bones back to life and raise up an army that will do extraordinary things for His glory but the way He does it is through ordinary people just like you and me. He uses the ordinary means of preaching, prayer, worship, fellowship and sacraments for extraordinary effects to position His people to do extraordinary things. He meets with 120 people over ten days and revives them. They walk out and 3,000 come to Christ. It was an awakening out of a revival. It is that movement of God's grace that we look for, long for and that we need in our midst.

So what does it look like, feel like and say? Let's see if we can see it a little bit in Psalm 85. Psalm 85 begins with the recounting of God's revival blessings. The Sons of Korah Psalm says in Psalm 85:1-3 [1] *LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the*

fortunes of Jacob. [2] You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. [3] You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

He identifies five revival blessings from the past of Israel. One is the favor of God. Two is the restoration of God. Three is the redemption of God. This is where He purchases His people and keeps them. Four is the mercy of God (where God withholds His judgment) and five is the patience of God with His unfaithful people. In this Psalm it doesn't say 'we' but it says 'You restored... You redeemed... You showed Your favor...' This is what God did... revival. Note the past tense for this is something God has done on a repeated basis in the life of Israel. The Old Testament records a large number of these revivals where He revived.

When many talk about revival they really mean they are going to do evangelism. Evangelism is a consequence of revival but it's not revival. Revival assumes someone has already been 'vived.' Revive – bring life back to Your people. He has already brought life for we were dead in our trespasses and sins but God being rich in mercy made you alive (Ephesians 2:4). Now with our fickleness we have become apathetic, impotent, illiterate for now we're just bones scattered around.

Who authored Psalm 85? It was the sons of Korah. There's a revival for you. You will see in Number 16 that the sons of Korah were a family of Judases. They were traitors, a family of Benedict Arnolds. God in His anger swallowed 250 members of that family when He opened up the earth in judgment upon them, Dathan and Abiram, but this same family with what was left, later was revived and became the ministers alongside of the Levites in the temple, leading worship and teaching in the temple. They were so revived that God allowed them to author twelve Psalms in your Bible so they became authors of sacred Scripture, because they themselves had been revived and not just Israel.

So now they move from recounting God's past revival blessings to requesting God's present revival blessings. Psalm 85:4–7 says *[4] Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us! [5] Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? [6] Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? [7] Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.*

Here they make five requests. One they pray for the restoration to be restored. Two they pray for mercy to be restored. Three they pray for patience to be restored. Four they pray for redemption to be restored and five they pray for the favor of God to be restored. Why? It is because they have walked away from God and because of that God's anger is upon them.

People are wrong when they try to teach this to people that God never gets angry with them. I am forgiven and God's wrath against my sin has been satisfied in Jesus but I have a personal relationship with Him and if I abuse my wife that does not please God. That brings anger. It is not a judgmental anger but it will be a disciplinary anger. I have a relationship with Him and my sins count against His glory. My hope is not some false view of grace that I don't have a relationship and this is just an accounting thing where all my sins are paid for so I can sin like I want. No, my sins have consequences in this life. Part of the consequences is the intimacy or lack of intimacy of my relationship with God. He doesn't say 'let me fix it' but he says 'God, fix me. Restore me. Come to me. Renew me. Restore this relationship not just personally but intimately in our hearts and in our lives.'

When God does that kind of revival He then gives the results. Psalm 85:8–13 says *[8] Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly. [9] Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him that glory may dwell in our land. [10] Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and*

peace kiss each other. [11] Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. [12] Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. [13] Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.

Here He gives of the blessings of God's revival. One I begin to hear God's Word. There is a nearness of God's presence. There is the salvation of His grace that is not only legal but experiential. There is the relationship I now have with God unbroken because I have confessed my sins and God is at work in my heart and my soul. Now I don't rejoice in me or even in revival but I rejoice in God. Revive us O God that we may rejoice in You. Those are the results of blessings from God's revival.

Did you notice something of the recount of the past revival blessings and when he requested the present revival blessings? It was in the plural. You have restored *us*. This present one is in the singular because God doesn't do group plans of revival. The group revival comes from the personal revivals. The reason there is a church that loves worship, preaching, prayer, fellowship and evangelism is because God does a work in the members of that church. It is not because they have been manipulated by a cool leader or they are being fascinated by a celebrity pastor. It is because God is at work inside each one of them and the land begins to yield blessing. The people want to hear His Word, worship Him, call upon Him and in their life righteousness and peace have kissed.

I did a wedding yesterday and I have two favorite moments in a wedding. One is when the door opens and the bride comes out. I have watched grown men melt at that point. The second one is when the vows are finished, the prayer is given and I say 'you may kiss the bride.' Of course I always remind them this is the last kiss of the courtship and not the first kiss of the honeymoon. We have that little discussion in rehearsal. When I see that happen, what you see in revival is the Father says to His Son, 'You may kiss Your bride' and grace and righteousness meet in Jesus.

People might think that when it says 'the land will yield its increase' that something good may happen around the land where you live. The land in the Old Testament is not pointing to physical land but the land is a symbol of the Old Testament pointing to Jesus. It was the Promised Land where God would bless and support His people. That is pointing to Jesus for Jesus is the land. We then come to the Land. We are in the Land, we are in Christ and Christ is in us. He begins to work His produce for us, in us and through us. That is the result of what the revival brings out.

That is why we say revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people. The sons of Korah were traitors and they get the benefit of it and become an instrument of it. Ordinary people in ordinary places through ordinary means and the extraordinary work of God bringing glory for the purpose of revival is not revival. The purpose of revival is 'vival' that we live. Revival is not the ordinary work but the extraordinary work through ordinary people in ordinary places and ordinary means for an extraordinary consequence which is a faithful people instead of a fickle people, who are walking in and for Christ and in whom Christ is all and in all. Revival is not the objective but the corrective and the objective is the Lord.

Yes revival comes through the preaching of the Word, through fellowship, through prayer, through worship but you need to understand that those things are not just the instruments through which God brings revival but they are the evidences that God has already started revival. Our preaching and prayers do not cause revival. He has already begun the work of revival so that we begin to pray revival prayers, lead with revival leaders, preach with revival preachers.

Have you ever wondered why some of us are praying for revival and we're not seeing it? Maybe it's because we not really doing revival praying and one evidence is that we look with disdain at other people that aren't praying with us. If we were broken we would remember that we are praying for revival for those people. The only reason we're praying is that God has disintegrated us and it's not in us, from us or about us. I believe it is that kind of revival work that brings revival praying, revival preaching, and revival worship for those are the very evidence of revival.

Here is the takeaway. In revival, the people of God who have known the fullness of God are restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing yet they cannot get their fill of God. I know this might not make sense but it's the most sensible thing I can tell you about revival. When God comes in revival the people of God who have known the fullness of God, being revived and restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing yet they can't get enough of Him. They are still like the deer at the brook panting for more so there is no apathy.

Our culture is opposed to God because our churches are indifferent to God. Our culture is a post truth culture because our churches have compromised the truth of God. We should not be amazed at what the world is doing. The world will always do what it is doing if the church isn't the church. Revive Thy church!

Here are three things I want you to take away from this study. One is revival is God's work. It is a Trinitarian work. The Father sends it. The Son secures it and the Spirit brings it. Revival is not the church's work. The church is the blessed one of it. Secondly, revival is God's work of grace. Revival comes down. It is not worked up. It is not programmed in. It is not coerced. It is not brought up or down. It comes down by the sovereign hand of God through instruments that revival actually provides of preaching, prayer and fellowship. Thirdly, revival is God's work of grace on, in and through His church. It takes an indifferent Christian and an indifferent church and makes us desperate for we need our God! We are no longer indifferent, we are desperate. We are no longer apathetic, we worship. We no longer compromise, we evangelize. Cultural depravity begins to be effected by evangelism and discipleship because our apathy is replaced. We are no longer self-reliant but we're God-reliant. We are no longer self-absorbed but God-absorbed.

I want to be clear here. America does not need a revival. America needs a Gospel awakening. The church needs the revival to be the instrument of Gospel awakening. Revivals are the repeated evidence of God's faithfulness again and again and again. It is also the repeated evidence of our fickleness and our unfaithfulness but oh how our God is gracious. I will be quoting this man for this entire series and his name is J. Edwin Orr and I don't know of anyone who knows more about revival than him. He shares about the Welsh revival in 1904 and 1905. Do you know how it started?

It was started in Wales by a seminary student who was called to his home to deliver a seminary student sermon. He prayed earnestly about this and God took hold of him. His sermon had four points. One was that we must confess our sins. Two was that we must repent of our sins. Three was that we must trust Christ alone for our salvation. Four was we must surrender to the Holy Spirit and tell everybody that we know that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and can be theirs. Three months later from the revival that came to that church that Lord's Day one hundred thousand were documented of professions of faith and added to the church in Wales. That happened in three months. That was a Gospel awakening from revival.

Ordinary people in ordinary places in that village in Wales and that Gospel awakening didn't stop there for it went into Britain. There were one million documented in the next year

that confessed Christ and were added to the church in England. It didn't stop there. Somehow it went across the English Channel and the last revival and awakening came to Scandinavia. Millions came to Christ. It came to America and brought its most profound blessings in the state of California in 1906. An ordinary person, with ordinary means, in ordinary places and an extraordinary work of God's grace for He came down.

Oh that He would rend the heavens again and come down because when our God comes down in revival praise and worship will go up. The Gospel will go out and sin will go into oblivion. Oh God, come down, not by might, not by strength but by My Spirit, says the Lord. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit in the quietness of these few moments speak to your heart. God we don't even know the need we need to be filled up much less continue to be filled because we're too full of ourselves. Would You teach us that without Him we can do nothing so that we can know we can do absolutely all things through Christ who strengthens us. Father, by Your Son, send Your Spirit and come down. Revive us again, not that we rejoice in revival but that we rejoice in You. Fill us O God, yet we can't get our fill of You. Come down that worship and prayer would go up and the Gospel would go out and sin would go down for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

An extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

RECOUNTING GOD'S REVIVAL BLESSINGS

- I. Favor of God
- II. Restoration by God
- III. Redemption of God
- IV. Mercy of God
- V. Patience of God

REQUESTING GOD'S REVIVAL BLESSINGS

- I. Restoration Restored
- II. Mercy Restored
- III. Patience Restored
- IV. Redemption Restored
- V. Favor of God Restored

RESULTS OF GOD'S REVIVAL BLESSINGS

- I. Hearing of God's Word
- II. Nearness of God's Presence
- III. Salvation of God's Grace
- IV. Relationship by God's Grace
- V. Rejoicing in the God of Glory

LIFE TAKEAWAY

In revival, the People of God who have known the fullness of God are restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing, yet they cannot get their fill of God.

- Revival is God's work – Trinitarian
- Revival is God's work of Grace
- Revival is God's Work of Grace on, in and through His Church