

**Revive us, Oh Lord:
Through Radical Prayer
2 Chronicles 7:12-22**

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Text Introduction: I am trying to help us to think about revival. We are praying for revival. I have asked you to pray about two things this year—revival and our impact on the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. As we pray for revival, I am preaching this month on the theme of revival.

When I use the word revival, I want you to think this way with me:

A revival is a spiritual awakening in the lives of believers that results in spiritual conversion of unbelievers so large in scope that the results can only be explained as a work of God.

We said last Sunday that revival is initiated by a radical dependence upon God. If that is true, then secondly, we ought to realize that revival is initiated by radical prayer.

I want us to look at an oft-used passage of Scripture on praying for revival. There is probably nothing I can say about this passage that you have not heard before now. However, it is such an important passage that it seems impossible not to turn to it today.

Text: Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him:

I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a temple of sacrifice.¹³ If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the grasshopper to consume the land, or if I send pestilence on My people,¹⁴ and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.¹⁵ My eyes will now be open and My ears attentive to prayer from this place.¹⁶ And I have now chosen and consecrated this temple so that My name may be there forever; My eyes and My heart will be there at all times.

¹⁷ As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, doing everything I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and ordinances,¹⁸ I will establish your royal throne, as I promised your father David: You will never fail to have a man ruling in Israel.

¹⁹ However, if you turn away and abandon My statutes and My commands that I have set before you and if you go and serve other gods and worship them,²⁰ then I will uproot Israel from the soil that I gave them, and this temple that I have sanctified for My name I will banish from My presence; I will make it an object of scorn and ridicule among all the peoples.²¹ As for this temple, which was exalted, everyone who passes by will be appalled and will say: Why did the LORD do this to this land and this temple?²² Then they will say: Because they abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They clung to other gods and worshiped and served them. Because of this, He brought all this ruin on them.

Introduction: : In his book, *Your God is Too Safe*, Mark Buchanan talks about going to a dinner party where his hosts do not know that he is a minister. Upon learning that he is a minister, his hostess says,

"That's nice. I think that the church serves an important role in our society. Everyone needs a safe haven—a place to escape reality." Buchanan writes that he could not resist, so he said, "You know, somehow I missed that about the church the last time I read the book of Acts."

Buchanan went on to write about a lady who approached him after a funeral. "Thank you," she said, "What you said was so nice. You know, I'm quite religious myself. My family always asks me to pray for good weather when we have a golf game."

Now, we might chuckle at such a low thinking mindset about prayer, but I promise you that is how most folks think about prayer. For way too many, prayer is our means of asking God for good weather and what we want. That is not how the Bible describes prayer.

Now, let me state something of the obvious this morning. Our country is in crisis. Now, hang on with me just a moment. Our country's crisis is not primarily political, economic, or military, but rather the overriding crisis of our country is spiritual and moral. For that reason, a particular President will not lead us out of crisis. The power of a particular political party will not lead us out of crisis. A change on the Supreme Court will not lead us out of this crisis. Only a spiritual awakening will allow us to be out of this kind of crisis.

For that reason, it is my conviction that our greatest hope is not in politics, but in prayer—the kind of prayer that we read about in 2 Chronicles.

This passage before us is often mistakenly taken for a prayer or at least a pattern for prayer. Actually, this passage is God's answer to a prayer of Solomon prayed on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple. The prayer actually begins back in 2 Chronicles 6:12. Here is how God responds to the prayer. God's response does help us to think about radical praying.

Radical prayer implies radical inspection.

God's response is carried by a series of prerequisites expressed often in translations with the word "if." There are 4 prerequisites or areas of inspection given in this text!

1. Revival will be initiated by the Church. Revival is going to begin in the church.
2. Revival will be initiated by humility. Humility might be the one thing most missing in our churches.
3. Revival will be initiated by prayer. "Pray" and "seek my face" seem to go together in this text. What a great definition of prayer—to seek God's face!

The invitation from an Almighty God to pray has two surprises.

- (1) The fact that God listens!
- (2) The fact of how seldom we pray!

We see an amazing example of prayer in Jesus' life. Perhaps, someone will raise the question, "If Jesus was God, why did He even need to pray? Why did He need to seek the will of God? Why did He need to pray for strength?" Jesus lived His life on earth as an example for us. But, I have to pause and comment, "If Jesus needed to seek the will of the Father, how much more do we? We discover that Jesus prayed..."

- For refreshment (Luke 5:16)—He withdrew to the mountain to pray.
- In times of momentous decision (Luke 6:12)—Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before He would select the disciples.
- In times of distress—In garden and on the cross
- For the faith of the disciples (Luke 22:32)

We talk a lot about a prayer, but like Jesus' original 12 disciples, there is much we still are yet to learn about praying.

4. Revival will be initiated by repentance.

You will find it very difficult to pray without purity.

Radical prayer implies radical expectation.

There are 3 in this passage.

- Hear
- Forgive
- Heal

I am calling this radical expectation because we must be asking ourselves whether we believe revival can come. James said that we must ask in faith—that the person doubting should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. (James 1:6-7)

And then, notice the position of God in verse 15. He is watching and listening.

Radical prayer implies a radical question.

"If revival in America depended on your prayer life, would there be a revival?"
-Henry Blackaby

Imagine this scene with me. Suppose I could tell you that tonight, I had made arrangements for the President of the United States to be with us. He had agreed to come, and we could address any issue with him that we desired—taxes, health care, war on terror, immigration, gun control, abortion, definition of marriage, or anything else. And, he was going to listen and do whatever we suggested. I dare say that you would move heaven and earth to get here tonight.

As wonderful as that sounds, I have a better offer for you. The Lord, Himself, maker of all the earth, Sovereign, the One who was, and is, and is to come says, “and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.” And we don’t do that. For some the only time you pray in a given day is before a meal. What’s wrong with us?

Some might say, “Do our prayers really matter?” A rather theologically liberal pastor travelled to Russia in the 1970’s to assess for his organization the state of the church in what was those days the USSR. His report was something to the effect of “All I saw was little old ladies praying.” He made the remark with mockery. In light of the fall of the Soviet Union, again to quote Mark Buchanan, who wrote, “Beware of little old ladies praying. Secretly they are revolutionaries who make Bolsheviks look like kindergartners. They comprise a veritable bomb-making factory.”¹

¹ Both illustrations from Buchanan were taken from an audio sermon by Pastor John Sartelle, Tates Creek Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY, from February 13, 2005.