

Text: Rom. 10:13-17

Title: "The means of revival"

Time: 3/14/2021 am; 5/2/2022 pm; 9/11/2022 am

Place: Hill Village Bible Church; Bible Baptist Church, New Hartford, NY; NBBC.

Introduction: When I was originally asked to preach on revival for a series of meetings, the host pastor shared with me his desire for them: "God's at work, and we're wanting to make sure we are doing our part in continuing His work!" This brother put an exclamation point at the end of that sentence.

With the hope that we all share this desire, we are going to focus during this session and the next on doing our part. First, we want to understand the means that the Lord has chosen by which we can do our part, and then in the next service we will look more specifically at the difference each of us can make in this regard as individual believers.

Scotland experienced revival around the time the Second Great Awakening came to our nation. In 1840 the Presbytery of Aberdeen desired to gain a better understanding of this work of the Lord among their churches. To do so, they sent out a questionnaire that inquired about each church's experience with revival. The inquiry included 15 questions, and the last one asked about the means of revival: "What special circumstances in the preaching or ministrations of the instruments appear to have produced the results in each particular case which may have come under your notice?"

Robert Murray McCheyne, who was able to report that in his parish in Dundee 600 to 700 people had contacted pastors the previous fall about the needs of their souls, gave a simple answer to the question about the means of that revival. He said: "I do not know of anything in the ministrations of those who have occupied my pulpit that may with propriety be called peculiar, or that is different from what I conceive ought to

characterize the services of all true ministers of Christ. They have preached, so far as I can judge, nothing but the pure gospel of the grace of God. They have done this fully, clearly, solemnly; with discrimination, urgency, and affection. None of them read their sermons [Edwards did read his, by the way].

“They all, I think, seek the immediate conversion of the people, and they believe that, under a living gospel ministry, success is more or less the rule, and want of success the exception. They are, I believe, in general, peculiarly given to secret prayer; and they have also been accustomed to have much united prayer when together, and especially before and after engaging in public worship. Some of them have been peculiarly aided in declaring the terrors of the Lord, and others in setting forth the fullness and freeness of Christ as the Savior of sinners; and the same persons have been, at different times, remarkably assisted in both these ways. So far as I am aware, no unscriptural doctrines have been taught, nor has there been a keeping back of any part of ‘the whole counsel of God.’”

According to McCheyne, the means of revival are very simple - preaching the gospel and the whole counsel of God and praying. The apostle Paul mentions these in our passage. We will take them one at a time.

I. Revival’s preaching (Rom. 10:13-17).

Illustration: David Martin Lloyd-Jones pastored Westminster Chapel in London for almost 30 years. He was a medical doctor whom God called to preach, and so he gave up a lucrative and well-respected career to give his life to the work of preaching. He wrote an influential book on preaching called *Preaching & Preachers*, and his first chapter is titled “The Primacy of Preaching.” Lloyd-Jones thought to start there because he felt that preaching had been devalued in his day. He wrote the book in 1971, three years after his retirement from preaching. The attitude he saw in the Great Britain of the

1970s toward preaching has only worsened in our day. Listen to this preacher's concern:

"Here is the great question therefore: Can we justify preaching? Is there need of preaching at all in the modern world? This, as you know, is part of a larger question. We are living in an age when not only preaching but the very Church herself is being questioned. You are familiar with the talk of 'religionless Christianity', with the idea that many have that the Church herself is perhaps the greatest hindrance to the Christian faith."

Application: The Apostle Paul was never tempted by the idea that God's plan for preaching in the local church was a hindrance to the Christian faith. No, for Paul it was quite the opposite. His formula is very simple. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. You must believe before you can call on the name of the Lord for salvation, and you must hear before you can believe. Faith comes by hearing.

But did you notice where hearing comes from? Hearing comes by a source that has two labels in this passage – *preaching* and *the Word of God*. In verse 14 hearing comes from preaching, and in verse 17 hearing comes from the Word of God. Faithful preaching, therefore, is the declaration of the Word of God, which is living and powerful.

Peter put it this way, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; . . . that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11). Paul emphasizes that it is through the preaching of the message, something the world sees as foolish, that it pleases God to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21). What is your attitude toward the preaching of God's Word in the local church? I think the conclusion is inescapable that our churches will lack the means of revival to the degree we undervalue preaching.

Lloyd-Jones points out that when the enemies of the gospel tried to stop the apostolic revival in the book of Acts, they did not tell them to stop doing miracles. They did not tell them to stop befriending unbelievers. They told them to stop teaching and preaching in Jesus's name.

In our day, Satan has not had to use the threat of persecution to get many Christians to stop believing in preaching. We speak a lot about the importance of redemptive relationships to our gospel witness, the idea that each of us needs to know unbelievers well enough to be able to influence them for the gospel. That is an important responsibility.

But how strongly do we feel the need for redemptive preaching today? It seems to me that it is far easier to find that emphasis in the New Testament than it is to find the apostles trying to befriend unbelievers in redemptive relationships. I am not trying to argue against those relationships, but rather to argue for desiring that those whom we befriend in this way would hear the gospel proclaimed to them through preaching. Preaching is a God-appointed means of revival.

II. Revival's praying (Rom. 10:15, Matt. 9:36-38, Acts 13:3).

Application: Perhaps you are saying, "Brother, I can see preaching in this passage, but where does Paul mention praying?" That is a great question. I am going to answer by saying that when Paul mentions *sending*, he would say that he is necessarily including praying.

Clearly, Paul's instruction tells us that sending is a part of God's appointed means to the salvation of souls. So, the question immediately arises, "Who are these senders and how do they send?"

Scripture mentions two senders of gospel preachers in the New Testament. The first is the Lord of the Harvest (Matt. 9:36

-38). So in what way does the Lord of the Harvest become a sender of preachers into fields white unto harvest? God's people pray that He would, and He answers those prayers.

The second sender mentioned in the New Testament is the local church (Acts 13:1-3). Did you notice that praying and sending are connected in verse 3? So it is revival's prayer that is especially effective when it comes to sending.

Remember what McCheyne said about prayer in the Scotland revival: "They are, I believe, in general, peculiarly given to secret prayer; and they have also been accustomed to have much united prayer when together, and especially before and after engaging in public worship."

Let's just think about that last phrase. How prayerful are we before and after public worship? Have you ever noticed the way our enemy likes to ruin our lives just before church starts? I often get the sense that we are starting worship in a bit of a spiritual hole. It is as though we are coming to bat with two strikes already against us, because our hearts have not been prepared prayerfully for worshipping Christ together and hearing His gospel proclaimed.

In his book *Expository Listening*, author Ken Ramey talks about the importance of the local church's prayer preparation for the ministry of the Word each coming Sunday: "You need to pray for the preacher. Pray that the preacher would preach with great liberty and boldness and clarity (Eph. 6:19-20; Col. 4:3-4); that God's Word would run rapidly, transforming people's lives for His glory (2 Thess. 3:1); that God's Spirit would empower the preacher and use him to help you grow in your understanding of God and His Word and accomplish His purposes in your life and the life of your church" (p. 40).

Illustration: J. Edwin Orr was an evangelist and author of the last century who was known as a student of the revivals of

history. In 1989 he wrote a book called *The Event of the Century* about the revival of 1857-1858, which he called "the most wholesome movement ever known in the Christian Church." He and other authors explained that this revival spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico [Ian Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 331-332].

It all began with the financial Panic of 1857, in which it was written that "men went to bed dreaming all night of their vast hoarded treasures, and woke up in the morning hopeless bankrupts" [Humphrey quoted in Murray, 342].

Just prior to this financial chaos and ruin, Jeremiah Lanphier met with five other men for prayer at noon in the lecture room of the North Reformed Dutch Church in Lower Manhattan. Week by week, their numbers doubled. When the financial crisis came, the weekly meeting became daily. More rooms became necessary as numbers grew, and then other locations sprung up. By February of the following year, the *New York Daily Tribune* was calling noon-time the city's "Hour of Prayer." Revival's prayer is one of its means.

III. Revival's love (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Illustration: *Revival* means *live again*, and *symbiosis* means *live together*. In revival, living again is something believers do symbiotically. They live again together.

Symbiotic relationships in nature are amazing. I read about an experiment once done on a mature tree, in which they injected the tree with radioactive C14 gas, which enabled scientists to see what the tree would do with it. They found that the tree had, through their complex underground root system, fed the benefit they received from their photosynthesis to younger trees on the forest floor that were not as accessible to necessary light.

The same article talked about how giant Redwoods need the little mushrooms that grow around them to survive, and how the mushrooms need the Redwoods.

Application: Our Creator made an interconnected creation whose symbiosis illustrates the love that exists in His nature as the Trinity. This, of course, is the opposite of evolution's survival-of-the-fittest theory. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul addresses one of the most beautiful displays of interconnected life the Lord ever placed on earth – the local church. It is the love of Christ and the love of the body of Christ that connects us in this very practical way.

Paul says much about this love, but I would only note that revival's preaching and revival's prayer profit nothing without it (vv. 1-3). Our commitment to preaching must be a commitment to preaching in love. Our commitment to the faith of prayer must be a commitment to it in love. Without love, the means of revival simply do not work.

The Psalmist put it this way: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

Conclusion: At NBBC we have had to do without many things that other churches enjoy. But we need not do without revival's preaching, revival's praying, or revival's love. The means of revival are always available to every local church.

The question is not whether they are effective enough for God's work of revival, but rather are they attractive enough to interest us? Are our expectations for our local church that we would be a gathering of saints, who appreciate preaching,

who pray fervently together, and who do both in great love for one another? These are the means of revival, and with these commitments together, the revival our nation needs can begin right here.

What can you and I do to embrace the importance of preaching, the necessity of prayer, and the love needed by both in a greater way? To what degree must we humbly confess to the Lord that we have lacked appreciation for and commitment to these means of revival?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching