

We Bend, God Moves

We left Jonah on the Beach. Now he is reluctantly headed to Nineveh. Obedient but not with a happy heart. Still hates the Assyrians. But obedient nonetheless. Obedience can be hard, can't it?

We left Jonah on the Beach. Now he is reluctantly headed to Nineveh. Obedient but not with a happy heart. Still hates the Assyrians. But obedient nonetheless. We are going to see that God is going to bring Revival to one of the most decadent, morally corrupt, despicable, pagan cities in the History of Mankind. Nineveh as the capitol of the Assyrians was as far from God as any city and culture then or since. Yet God decided to bring revival to Nineveh. Revival brings up a lot of memories for me.

Now I don't know what you think about when you think of revival but let me tell you a story from my childhood. When I was young Revival always meant that it was hot, it was August and every night for weeks church was held in a tent **IMAGE 1**next to a perfectly good air conditioned building.

For some reason, you were not allowed to have a Revival service unless you put up a large tent. I honestly thought revival must have been a church word for tent. **IMAGE 2** Sunday School 1968 My Sunday School Story Mr Bridges Tent Revival Assembly of God next door

Jonah 3:3 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you."

The Second Time....God is a God of mulligans. The first time God says that their wickedness has come before me. Now this time God leaves that out. Arise Jonah. Go to Nineveh. Call out against it and I will give you the message.

Jonah 3:3-4 (ESV) 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out,

Jonah goes into the city...to preach the sermon that God is going to give him. This must be some amazing sermon....Surely God gives Jonah the sermon of all sermons. I mean these are some bad people...doing horrible things. It is going to take a fantastic sermon, with great illustrations, and impressive powerpoints. These words will bring conviction, repentance, and motivate life change. Let's listen to the sermon...

Jonah 3:4 (ESV) And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

That's it? No mention of sin? No mention of what they have done wrong? No fire and brimstone? What kind of sermon is this? 40 Days....Nineveh overthrown.

That's never going to work....Jonah you have to have a key point based on Scripture. You have to make it catchy so they will remember it. You need at least two illustrations. Maybe a couple of funny stories to connect with your audience. I think some bad word play is always cool. Maybe throw in some song lyrics from 1st century rock bands. A video could help to break it up a bit let people reset their attention.

You have to have an application point. You have to motivate people to change based on the truth of the text. Jonah I know your heart may not be in this...but this sermon is lame. Jonah if you are going to be a prophet of God....you have to learn how to preach. I can't imagine how badly this sermon bombed. Let's keep reading.

Jonah 3:5 (ESV) 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

Excuse me? They believed God? They repented of their sins? Fasted...wore sackcloth? Ok so a few responded.... From the greatest to the least? Wait a minute...that is everyone!

Rich/Poor. Man/Woman. Owner/Slave. All races. All religious persuasions. Jonah gives a half-hearted reluctant sermon 8 Words leaving out all of the important stuff and everyone responded?

Everyone really? That is an exaggeration right? I mean travelling preachers are always exaggerating their numbers. Surely not everyone

Jonah 3:6 (ESV) 6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

The King stood up....Removed his robe... Covered himself in sackcloth..... Then sat in ashes Then he directs the people...

Jonah 3:7-8 (ESV) 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

The king and his nobles...interesting. The King expands the decree to not only man but every animal. Not only fasting from food....but also water. Not only sackcloth for people but for animals... Call out to God. Then let everyone turn from their wicked ways and the violence in their hands....that is a lot of wickedness and violence

Jonah 3:9 (ESV) 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

They do all of this with no promise that God will change his mind. They clearly believed the word that God brought to them. Why?

Why would the king and nobles and all the people respond in this way. Jonah walks into the city...says a foreign God will destroy them. What would make them respond?

One word? Revival. Jonah took a baby step toward God and God did the rest. We bend....God moves.

So what happened in Nineveh? Why did they respond in that way? These were cruel, mean, violent people. Comparable to Hitler at the peak of the Third Reich. Why were they receptive to this message?

Because while Jonah was fleeing....God was working in Nineveh. The Assyrians were very superstitious people. From Assyrian Omen Texts 4 things forewarn of: Invasion by an enemy, an earthquake, a famine or plague and a total solar eclipse.

The Assyrians were very superstitious people. From Assyrian Omen Texts they had a belief of events that must follow a solar eclipse. These texts give predictions of what sorts of events may be expected to follow a solar eclipse, including: "the King will be deposed and killed and a worthless fellow seize the throne"; "the King will die, rain from heaven will flood the land. There will be famine"; "a deity will strike the King and fire consume the land"; "the city walls will be destroyed" (TynB 30[1979] 46).

We know from comparing the timing of Jonah's contemporary Amos that Jonah likely came to Nineveh during the sailing months (summer) Likely in 763BC.

Knowing the dates of the kings of Israel and Judah puts Amos' ministry from 755 to 763BC.

Amos 1:1 (ESV) 1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

The Great Assyrian earthquake occurred in 755BC, and "two years before the earthquake" [it must have been memorable] makes it 757BC when Amos saw visions.

We know that Nineveh had a plague in 765BC. June 15, 763 BC there was a total solar eclipse over Assyria. **IMAGE 3** And in 757 BC there was the great Earthquake....

Kings of the Assyrians took such omens seriously. They had substantial correspondence with prophets about them

So when Jonah shows up to preach....they had seen three of four omens. Earthquake, Plague, Solar Eclipse and then Jonah warns them of the fourth.

Jonah 3:4 (ESV) 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Ooops there it is. a Foreign invader is coming .

God is so cool.....Their pagan religions made them a superstitious people. So God used their idol worship for His purpose. To prepare their hearts to hear the revival message. Just like the sailors on the boat with Jonah Just like the circumstances God arranged for Jonah And just like the ones in your life too. God arranged everything so that when they heard His Message It brought Revival

Did God's relenting make Jonah a false prophet, when he prophesied Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown? Not at all, for two good reasons.

First, God acted in total consistency with His Word: The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. (Jeremiah 18:7-8)

Jonah's preaching was like all warnings of judgment: it was an invitation to repent and avert the promised judgment. His words had an implied "if you do not repent" in front of them. Remember that we are not told the sum total of Jonah's preaching; though we should assume that the statement in Jonah 3:5 is the central theme of what Jonah said, we should not assume it was all that he said.

Second, God did judge Nineveh (as recorded in the book of Nahum). Nevertheless, in light of their repentance He delayed it another 150 years.

So What is Revival?

Revival is God at work bringing His people back to Spiritual Life

It is not something that we do...it is something that God does. Revival is the return of Life...new life for each of us individually, as a church, a community, a nation and a world. Revival is an outpouring of God in His people when Christians: Repent of sin. Renew their love to God. Recommit themselves to God's purposes. Invest extended time in prayer, communion with God, meditation and Experience blessings in Christian service.

Repentance begins with believing God. As we believe Him and His Word, we have the power to transform our lives as He wills. You can do many other things associated with repentance, but if they do not begin with believing on and trusting God, they are all useless works of the flesh. You can't believe God apart from the Word of God. Therefore, any real revival or repentance will begin with faithful preaching and faithful hearing of God's Word, just as it was in Nineveh.

The people of Nineveh ... proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth: Repentance means doing something. The people of Nineveh fasted, mourned as if for the dead, and they did it from the highest to the lowest (from the greatest to the least of them). i. If repentance is anything, it is not business as usual. When repentance comes, something has to change and something has to be different. In their case, the people of Nineveh took off their normal clothes and put on sackcloth—a thick coarse cloth, normally made from goat's hair. Wearing it displayed the rejection of earthly comforts and pleasures.

Repentance means crying mightily to God. It means coming to God with passion and seriousness about your sin and your need for His mercy and forgiveness.

So much of modern “repentance,” with its claim of excuses and reasons why we sinned, is really not repentance at all. It is only an attempt to justify and excuse our sin. Nevertheless, you sinned or you didn't; if you did, there is no excuse, and if you haven't, there is no need to repent. Repentance and excuses simply don't belong together.

Repentance means to change your mind and turn from your previous sinful actions. In the Christian life, repentance does not describe what you must do to turn to God; it describes the very process of turning to God. When we truly turn to Him, we turn away from the things that displease Him.

Jonah could more effectively preach the message of repentance because he knew his own need to repent. Being a repentant sinner didn't disqualify Jonah from preaching repentance; it made his preaching all the more effective.

Revival is a supernatural response to the Gospel Message brought by the Holy Spirit. It is an unusual responsiveness of people to God that leads to repentance, surrender, and salvation

It is a Gospel Bomb dropped on the people that causes a spiritual resurrection. It is so widespread and engulfing that it can only be of God.

But there have been certain seasons called revivals—when God has “poured His Spirit out on His people.” These times—also called awakenings—occurred when the presence of God is experienced in powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

J. Edwin Orr The whole history of the Christian Church from its foundation until now is the history of revivals. It should always be born in mind that real revival is something infinitely higher than a mere gale of religious excitement sweeping over the Churches. A genuine revival is a manifestation of supernatural and Divine power. Australian Christian World Editorial (1888)

History's Greatest Revival: Turn of the 20th Century

The Great Awakening, 1734-43. In December 1734, the first revival of historic significance broke out in Northampton, Mass., where a young Jonathan Edwards was pastor. **IMAGE 4** After months of fruitless labor, he reported five or six people converted—one a young woman. He wrote, "[She] had been one of the greatest company-keepers in the whole town." He feared her conversion would douse the flame, but quite the opposite took place. Three hundred souls converted in six months—in a town of only 1,100 people!

The news spread like wildfire, and similar revivals broke out in over 100 towns. Starting in Philadelphia in 1739, George Whitfield's **IMAGE 5** dramatic preaching was like striking a match to the already-underway awakening. An estimated 80 percent of America's 900,000 Colonists personally heard Whitfield preach. He became America's first celebrity.

The Second Great Awakening, 1800-1840. In 1800, only one in 15 of America's population of 5,300,000 belonged to an evangelical church. Presbyterian minister James McGready presided over strange spiritual manifestations in Logan County, Ky. The resulting camp meeting revivals drew thousands from as far away as Ohio. Rev. Gardiner Spring reported that for the next 25 years not a single month passed without news of a revival somewhere

In 1824, Charles Finney **IMAGE 6** began a career that would eventually convert 500,000 to Christ. An unparalleled 100,000 were converted in Rochester, N.Y., in 1831 alone—causing the revival to spread to 1,500 towns. By 1850 the nation's population exploded fourfold to 23,000,000 people, but those connected to evangelical churches grew nearly tenfold from 7 percent to 13 percent of the population—from 350,000 to 3,000,000 church members!

The Urban Revivals, 1875-1885. Young businessman Dwight L. Moody **IMAGE 7** participated in the Great Revival of 1857 as it swept Chicago. Moody later conducted revivals throughout the British Isles where he spoke to more than 2,500,000 people. In 1875, Moody returned home and began revivals in America's biggest cities. Hundreds of thousands were converted and millions were inspired by the greatest soul winner of his generation. At this time, the general worldview of Americans was shifting away from a Christian consensus. Darwinism and higher criticism were gaining traction, and Moody became the first evangelist to come under attack—accused of making religion the opiate of the masses.

A worldwide move of God The Welsh Revival The Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles The Korean Pentecost The Manchurian Revival The Mizo Outpouring "The most extensive evangelical outpouring of all time" 5 Million People won to Christ in 2 Years

The Moody Bible Institute and the Keswick Convention in England called their nations to prayer at the end of the 19th Century. Soon Evangelistic campaigns erupted in South Africa, Bermuda, Japan, Australia and New Zealand as well.

But I want to focus on the Awakening in Wales and the US

October 30, 1904 Evan Roberts **IMAGE 8** Believed God had given him a vision for revival in Wales. Started praying with 17 Students at his church. Within a week parents joined to see why their kids had changed so much. They started praying, "God Bend us"

English Paper said this. A remarkable religious revival is now taking place in Loughor. For some days, a young man named Evan Roberts, a native of Loughor, has been causing great surprise at Moriah Chapel. The place has been besieged by dense crowds of people unable to obtain admission.

Such excitement has prevailed that the road on which the chapel is situated has been lined with people from end to end. . . . His statements have had the most stirring effects upon his listeners. Many who have disbelieved Christianity for years are returning to the fold of their younger days.

One night, so great was the enthusiasm invoked by the young revivalist that, after his sermon which lasted two hours, the vast congregation remained praying and singing until two-thirty in the morning.

Shopkeepers are closing early in order to get a place in the chapel, and tin and steel workers throng the place in working clothes.

Paper Nov 12 The meeting at Brynteg congregational church on Thursday night was attended by those remarkable scenes which have made previous meetings memorable in the life history of so many of the inhabitants of the district. The proceedings commenced at seven o'clock and they lasted without a break until 30 o'clock on Friday morning.

During the whole of this time the congregation were under the influence of deep religious fervor and exaltation. There were about 400 people present in the chapel when I took my seat at about nine o'clock.

Mr. Roberts is a young man of rather striking appearance. He is tall and distinguished looking, with an intellectual air about his clean shaven face. His eyes are piercing in their brightness, and the pallor of his countenance seemed to suggest that those nightly vigils are taking their toll on him.

There was however no suggestion of fatigue in his conduct of the meeting. There is nothing theatrical about his preaching. He does not seek to terrify his hearers, and eternal torment finds no place in his theology.

Rather does he reason with the people and show them by persuasion a more excellent way. I had not been many minutes in the building before I felt that this was no ordinary gathering.

The preacher too did not remain in his usual seat. For the most part he walked up and down the aisles, open Bible in hand, exhorting one encouraging another, and kneeling with a third (person) to implore blessing from the throne of grace.

Churches packed out across the nation 100,000 new believers in 2 years Use of ETOH dropped by 50% . Local taverns went bankrupt. Crime reduced so much that judges wore white gloves indicating no crimes of violence that day Police became unemployed...no longer needed

Local mines shut down because..get this.. mules refused to respond to converted miners who began treating the animals with respect and stopped using foul language. This revival swept across Great Britain, Ireland and Scotland.

Then to Sweden, Finland and Denmark Germany, France and all European nations were touched as well. Eventually worldwide. Canada, Africa, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Korea, and Burma

In the United States

Philadelphia: Methodists reported 6101 new converts in membership Atlantic City: Pastors estimated that there were only 50 unconverted adults left in the City New York: On a single Sunday in a church...364 received Christ. Paducah, KY First Baptist Church 1,000 people came to Christ in a few months

Southern Baptist Convention reported baptisms increased 25% in a single year Burlington, Iowa:
Every store and factory closed to allow employees to attend prayer meetings.

Denver Almost every place of business closed at 11:30 am As 12,000 gathered for prayer meetings in downtown theatres and halls. Every school in town and the Colorado State Legislature closed for a day of prayer.

Portland Virtually the entire city shut down from 11am - 2:30 pm for noon prayer meetings.

Los Angeles

United meetings attracted 180,000 people 1907 Small Church in Los Angeles Crowds grew so fast that the church actually collapsed. They moved into a vacated Methodist Church on Asuza Street. The Asuza Street church became a revival center and the American Pentecostal Movement as it became the largest growing Protestant movement of the century.

Midnight Grand Opera House in LA full of prostitutes and alcoholics seeking salvation
The wave of revival in the US led to the 18th Amendment prohibiting the sale of Alcoholic Beverages.

Ten Characteristics of Spiritual Revival

- 1) TIMING: Revivals emerge during times of spiritual and moral decline, which leads to intense prayer.⁴⁰
- 2) PRAYER: God puts a longing into the hearts of many to pray for revival
- 3) THE WORD: The preaching or reading of God's Word brings deep conviction and desire for Christ.
- 4) THE HOLY SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit takes people to a spiritual depth they could not achieve on their own.
- 5) CONVICTION: Affected sinners are inconsolable except in Christ.
- 6) GLORY FOR GOD: God receives praise, honor and glory for bringing revival.
- 7) REFORMATION AND RENEWAL: Revival produces lasting fruit. New ministries are founded and society experiences a reform of morals as more and more people convert.
- 8) MANIFESTATIONS: Manifestations like fainting, groaning prayer and miracles vary by culture and denomination.
- 9) MESSY: Revivals are messy—controversies swirl about miracles, abuses, excesses, suspicions and theological disputes
- 10) CYCLICAL: Revivals inevitably crest and decline.

Revival in America Today

A majority of Americans believe our country is going downhill. Yet church attendance as a percent of population has held steady since 1990, and probably since 1940. America added 50,000 new churches in the last 20 years of the 20th century to total 350,000. The number of born-again Christians has grown steadily to 46 percent of adults today. Given the state of moral and spiritual decay, how is that possible?

The answer is simple. Today, Christianity is prevalent but not powerful. The solution is spiritual revival and awakening.

We've not had an awakening in America of historic proportion for a long time. With such a great tradition of revival and awakening, a great base from which to start, and a great need to counteract the increasing moral and spiritual decline, our nation appears ripe for a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit.

But history tells us that national revivals and awakenings cannot be manufactured. They are sovereign acts of mercy and grace by God Himself, when He supernaturally achieves in a short span what seems otherwise impossible. However, God loves to respond to the prayers of His people (e.g., 2 Chronicles 7:14).

That is Revival..... We have not seen a worldwide revival in our life time. Yet God's Word is clear

2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV) 14 If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Psalms 85:6-7 (ESV) 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.

While the decision belongs to God alone, He gives us the privilege of hastening the day through humble repentant prayer.

Why not? Why have we not seen it? I believe that we have not seen revival in our life time for a combination of 3 reasons. We don't believe it can happen, We don't pray for it to happen, and I am not sure we want it to happen.

I must tell you I did not come to those conclusions lightly. Several Months ago as I was looking at this text I began praying, "God why don't you send revival again?" I was actually frustrated with God for not doing what I told Him to do.

After several weeks...I was convicted by the Holy Spirit. "Frank....you don't believe I can do it"

And I knew in my heart that I had given up on God. Oh sure I want these seats filled...I want people to know Christ. I want us to change this community and this world. But I had to admit to God that I didn't believe that he would really bring revival.

I look at our community, our nation, and our world. I see brokenness all around us. Fractured Families, Rampant drug and alcohol use, Unrestrained Materialism, The worship of self, arrogance and pride. The worship of money. People slaves to debt trying to fill that hole in them with stuff or trying to show off to others

The murder of babies...violent crimes..sex crimes..abuse of spouses... The violence against children. Rampant disease some self inflicted

Jesus' church that often looks nothing like Him A political process that nauseates me in both directions. A society of victims easing their pain with prescriptions

And truthfully I had been focused on end times. I just assumed that God was winding this thing down that there was no hope....just an escape clause.

I am passionate about seeing people come to Christ In fact my view of the world motivated me There is a sense of urgency in end times But my assumption...I had to admit...is that God would not change things.... that revival was not possible that we had gone too far

And God broke me. I had to get on my knees and tell God that I, Frank Burns, your pastor, had given up on Him, that I really didn't believe that God would bring revival.

That the best we could hope for is that we could reach some people before the end. I had been focused on what we could do.... and had grossly underestimated what God can do. We bend....God Moves... and....I don't believe I am the only one.

I think many Christians today have given up on revival We really don't believe God will do it again. Yet we look back over history and it happens all the time

We read about it in Jonah The Jewish People read the Book of Jonah As part of their Yom Kippur Services It reminds them that no one is beyond God's hand it reminds them that God brings revival

We read about Revival as people responded to Jesus We read about revival in the First Church as thousands came to Christ in one day. The early church turned the world upside down.

History reflects many revival movements of the Christian Church. John and Charles Wesley brought revival to England. Jonathan Edwards saw revival in colonial America . Charles Finney brought revival to New York in 1857 The Welsh Revival

It would be nice if it happened....but do we really believe it will happen?

So what are we to do?

The first thing that we must do is repent. Confess to God that we really underestimate what He can do in our culture

Next thing...we must pray Moody said this," Every great work of God can be traced to a kneeling figure" But we cannot pray doubting or lacking faith

I said that there were 3 reasons we don't see revival We really don't believe it can happen We really don't pray for it to happen Deep down we may not want it to happen

Wait a minute....not want it to happen? Yes...committing to revival is inconvenient. In Acts the early believers had committed themselves to prayer

Did you notice how the Welsh revival started 17 Students at a prayer meeting that went on for hours into the early morning and then started up again the next evening

Did you notice why the businesses and schools were closing all over the World? Noon prayer meetings that lasted hours.

They prayed specifically...they prayed believing that God would do the impossible

Acts 4:30–31 (ESV) 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Have you ever prayed so hard that the building shook? Revivals come at unusual times and in unusual places...they are inconvenient

I believe many of us are too comfortable and cozy in our salvation It is easier to just hold on a wait until the end Than to pray to God that He postpone the end and bring revival to His land.

Jonah 3:10 (ESV) 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

I believe that God wants to bring revival to Remnant I believe he wants to bring revival to Sarasota I believe that God is going to bring revival again The worldwide Welsh Revival 100 years ago started with 17 students who prayed "Bend me"

I dream of the day when every business in Sarasota closes for noon prayer. When every church is so packed out that the building can't hold them and they spill out onto the streets

I dream of the day when Planned Parenthood shuts down. Not because abortions are illegal but because God has brought revival and no one wants one.

I dream of the day when police had nothing to do, courts are empty, and bars serve mostly food.

When we are more concerned about bringing Revival To America than who gets elected.

I can see it now because I had to confess to God that I could not see it before. You see I had to get on my knees and bend before God moved in my heart and made me desperate for revival.

Church if we bend...God will move We must become a church that is passionate about praying for revival. God tells us how to bend....

2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV) 14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Jonah took one baby step of obedience and God brought revival to the Ninevites.

If God can bring a mighty revival in Nineveh with no better representative than Jonah, and no more Gospel than he preached, certainly God can do the same for the United States, Some of us need to confess that we have given up on God to really change our culture, our nation, and our world.

We have given up on revival. Maybe you didn't believe it could happen Maybe you haven't been praying for it to happen Or maybe you don't want to be inconvenienced

I don't know of a better description of coming to the altar...of bending My people.... Humble themselves.... Pray Seek my face.... Turn from their ways... We bend...God moves.