

- A. Today is part 4 in our High Intensity Summer series. If you want to catch up, anything you missed is online, on our website.
- B. We live in intense times. News is intense. This virus is intense. Politics is intense. Social media. Doing business. People's emotions. Rates of anxiety are up. Rates of depression and suicide have tripled. We live in an Age of Anxiety.
- C. How should we, the church, the people of God, respond? Take a break?

- A. No.

- B. When the devil turns up the heat, we turn up our mission.

#### I. Tipping Point

- A. I would like to read two key Bible verses for today. Then I want to explain why I picked it, and what I think needs to happen to rescue us from the peril we are in.
  - 1. *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God... (2 Timothy 3:1-4)*
- B. I think St. Paul wrote this after spending 20 minutes on Instagram and Facebook.
- C. Perilous times. The word means savage and fierce due to the casting off of restraints.
- D. In part one of this series, we saw that the devil is subtle. He is locked in incognito mold.
  - 1. In part two we showed how devil works through lies, to brainwash entire societies with the doctrines of demons.
  - 2. In part three whole kosmos-world-system is driving drunk under the influence of Satan.
- E. That is why we are in perilous times. We are saturated with evil. And I believe we have reached a tipping point.
- F. Nothing can fix society. Nothing can fix our world. There is no human solution. No cultural fix. No politician can help us. No legislation can turn the tide. No court rulings. No medical discoveries. No group consensus. No election. No program. No amount of throwing money into the ecosystem. Nothing.
- G. I am not saying to give up. I am not even saying to give up on the things I just listed.
- H. What I am saying that we have reached a tipping point of evil which masquerades as good-without-god. Morally. Spiritually. Culturally. Sexually. Politically. Economically. Philosophically. We cannot turn the clock back. We cannot bring back normal, whatever that meant.
- I. Humanly speaking, the situation is hopeless.
- J. I am not trying to bring you down. I am trying to speak truth, and bring us face to face with reality.
  - 1. Humanly hopeless. Humanly impossible.
- K. But, I am standing here today to remind you that nothing is impossible for God.
- L. There is a way back.
  - 1. *If My people who are called by My name will 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 (2 Chronicles 7:14)*
- M. The only power that can restore our land is the power of God in revival.

#### II. Revival

- A. A lot of Christians have heard the word revival. To most of us the word sounds like a relic of the past. Right up there with buggy whips and rotary phones.
- B. But Revival is an important theological concept. As I see things, Revival is our only hope.
- C. I want to talk about revival. For the rest of our time today, I want to tell some stories of the history of revival in America. Next week, I want to go deep into the theology of revival, and construct that with you from Scripture.
- D. First, a quick definition. And the I want to show you how revivals shaped America, and created the most free and prosperous culture ever in the history of the world.
- E. Definition:
  - 1. *Revival is a sudden and intense work of God in the church so startling that it grabs the attention of the onlooking world, resulting in unusually large numbers of lost people coming to faith in Christ.*
- F. Historians say that America has experienced three nationwide revivals. They are called the Three Great Awakenings.

#### III. The First Great Awakening, 1740-1742

- A. The first pilgrims to America were strong believers in Christ. They saw America as a new promised land, and determined to establish a society founded upon the Word of God.
- B. Unfortunately, as time went on, the spiritual enthusiasm of the pilgrims declined. An increase in wealth, a new generation unfamiliar with persecution, and an almost over-familiarity with things of Christ began to blunt the spiritual edge of society.
- C. By 1679, a group of pastors met in Boston to discuss "the necessity of reformation" and the evils that had "provoked the Lord to turn his judgements on New England." By the early 1700s a Boston preacher sadly observed, "Alas, as though nothing but the most amazing thunders and lightnings, and the most terrible earthquakes could awaken us, we are at this time fallen into as dead a sleep as ever."

- D. America was not even close to being Christian nation. We were a bunch of irreligious pagans.
- E. Into that bleak scene, God raised up a pastor named *Jonathan Edwards*. Edwards received his theological training at what would become Yale University. He became a pastor in Massachusetts.
- F. Edwards spent thirteen or fourteen hours per day in prayer and Bible study. Soon, God began to shake up his church with a spiritual awakening. In 1733, Edwards preached a series of sermons on — surprise, surprise — justification by faith. By the end of the year he wrote, "the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in."
- G. God had begun something remarkable within the church, among true believers, God's own people. The work of the Spirit in Edward's church was powerful.
- H. Edwards' sermons were detailed, doctrinal, weighty, and meaty. Google them. See for yourself. He read his sermons from a manuscript, and was somewhat monotonous.
- I. Being nearsighted, Edwards was forced to hold a candle in one hand, and to bend over his pulpit.
- J. Hardly the dynamic, energetic visionary-leader-preacher, God affected his congregations mightily.
  - 1. Unbelievers present would cry out in agony of conscience as the Holy Spirit convicted them of sin.
  - 2. People would literally pass out.
  - 3. They would clutch their pews in desperation, terrified that God would split open the earth and swallow them to hell right then and there.
  - 4. So many people were saved that Edwards could write, "souls did as it were come by floods to Jesus Christ." Remarkably large numbers of people were saved.
- K. And that's what makes it revival.
- L. The revival spread. Throughout Massachusetts, into Connecticut. The revival peaked under the ministry of itinerant evangelist, *George Whitefield*. Whitefield preached to upwards of 20,000 listeners in open air campaigns.
- M. Imagine the lung-power to project a voice to 20,000 people with no mics and amps and speakers.
- N. Revival spread to Boston, churches were packed, services were held in homes. Revival spread to New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.
- O. One of the fruits of the First Great Awakening was an uncustomary passion for evangelism. Another fruit of the First Great Awakening was cooperation among denominations. Universities like Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth were opened to prepare pastors for the expanding frontier. A concern for justice was born, and slavery was abolished in England, and the seeds of abolition were sown, through revival, in America.
- P. Edwards wrote,
  - 1. *There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were wont to be the vainest and loosest; and those who had been most disposed to think, and speak slightly of vital and experimental [experiential] religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ.... [T]he town seemed to be full of the presence of God...*
  - 2. True revival is God's gut-punch to the devil.

#### IV. The Second Great Awakening, 1800-1825

- A. The First Great Awakening, like all revivals, subsided, and churches returned to business as usual. America grew rapidly. The frontier pushed westward, and the leading edge was essentially lawless and irreligious. By the 1800's the rationalistic theories of Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine, and Locke were exercising tremendous influence.
- B. Thomas Paine predicted, "Christianity will be forgotten in thirty years."
- C. Whereas a previous generations at least demonstrated a reverence for God, with the rise of rationalism, even that disappeared. The status of Christianity was low and depressed.
  - 1. Sound familiar?
- D. The seminaries fared no better. Lyman Beecher, of Yale Divinity School, lamented, the "college was in a most ungodly state. The college church was almost extinct... most of the class before me were infidels and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau... etc., etc."
- E. Another pastor wrote, "The state of religion is gloomy and distressing; the church of Christ seems to be sunk very low."
  - 1. Christianity is never more than one generation from extinction.
- F. Many pastors, aware of the desperate need for pastors on the expanding frontier, made it a priority to recapture Yale college for Christ. A grandson of Jonathan Edwards was made president of Yale just before 1800. His name was Timothy Dwight. Yale was formed to train pastors, yet it had become the citadel of unbelief.
- G. In 1802, Dwight led two influential seniors to Christ. They shared their testimony, and many other students came to Christ. Conviction multiplied, and young college students and future pastors were lit on fire for the Lord.
- H. As students fanned out across the land, they carried the story of an awakening at Yale. The spiritual awakening spread from Yale to Dartmouth, and soon after to Princeton. Eventually, even Harvard returned to its historic Christian roots.

And a generation of young leaders were lit on fire by God. They could carry the spark of revival throughout the growing countryside.

1. Can you imagine the Ivy Leagues again proclaiming the name of Christ? God did the impossible before. I'm praying he does it again.
- I. The population was expanding at an unprecedented pace into Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, and the West. New towns sprang up overnight. Eastern churches emptied out as congregants travelled west. How could the gospel of Christ possibly keep pace with the growth of the nation?
- J. Only through revival, and that is exactly what God sent. The Second Great Awakening made the First Great Awakening look like a Sunday School picnic.
  1. The First Great Awakening lasted only three to five years. The Second Great Awakening lasted upwards of twenty five years.
  2. The First Great Awakening was confined mostly to the eastern towns like Boston and Philadelphia. The Second Great Awakening affected both the eastern towns, and the western frontier.
- K. One seminary president wrote,
  1. *From the time I entered the College, in 1800, down to the year 1825, there was an uninterrupted series of these celestial visitations, spreading over different parts of the land. During the whole of these twenty-five years, there was not a month in which we could not point to some village, some city, some seminary of learning, and say: 'Behold what hath God wrought' [Gardiner Spring in Murray, p. 118].*
- L. While in the East this revival was centered in the colleges and college towns, in the wild west, it was centered in *camp meetings*.
- M. Camp meetings were large gatherings at which people camped for days on end, and many preachers would fan out to preach in groups large and small. The most famous of these is the Cane Ridge camp meetings of August, 1801.
- N. Situated in Logan County, Kentucky, the meetings were held in the heart of spiritual darkness. Logan County was described as, "A Rogues Harbour." An observer wrote, "Here many refugees from almost all parts of the Union fled to escape justice or punishment. . . . Murderers, horse-thieves, highway robbers and counterfeiters fled here, until they combined and actually formed a majority."
- O. Laying the groundwork for the Cane Ridge Camp meetings, a circuit-riding preacher named *James McCready* preached directly to this rough and tumble audience.
- P. He could speak of heaven so graphically that hard-hearted hearers would long to be there. When he preached of Hell, one listener later recounted that McCready could "so array hell and its horrors before the wicked, that they would tremble and quake, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to overwhelm them, and the wrath of God thrusting them down to the horrible abyss."
- Q. The meetings grew until in 1801, estimates at the Cane Ridge meetings range from ten to twenty five thousand people. This is remarkable given the fact that the largest town in Kentucky only had 1,800 inhabitants. One report says, "the roads were crowded with wagons, carriages, horses, and footmen moving to the solemn camp."
- R. Perhaps the central figure in the west was a preacher named *Peter Cartwright*. He is the epitome of the rugged, circuit riding preacher. Saved at a Camp Meeting, Cartwright had no formal education. He began preaching at age sixteen, and kept at it for over forty years.
- S. Being a circuit rider meant never knowing where you would sleep, having only a Bible and a hymnal for a library, and having to rough it up every once in a while. Cartwright reminisced,
  1. *"We walked on dirt floors for carpets... had forked sticks and pocket... knives for knives and forks; slept on bear, deer, or buffalo skins before the fire, or sometimes on the ground in open air. One new suit of clothes of homespun was ample clothing for one year."*
- T. It is reported that Cartwright had a booming voice. He could make strong men tremble and women weep. The wild west needed a strong figure, and Cartwright provided just that.
- U. He was a one-verse preacher, preaching countless times on John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- V. Cartwright often had to resort to fistfights to quiet down the troublemakers in his crowds. For decades, Cartwright organized camp meetings throughout the west.
- W. Peter Cartwright lived well into his nineties, long enough to watch the wilderness become settled. He preached over 14,600 sermons and personally saw over ten thousand conversions to Christ. He contributed greatly to the salvation of the American west, helped launch a worldwide missionary movement, and built hundreds of churches.
  1. I am saying that when culture and society are saturated with evil, God can use the most unlikely people as instruments to bring revival, and do in a minute what no amount of politics and programs can accomplish.
    - a) Lord send revival.

X. Once again, the Second Great Awakening faded, and churches began a downward slide.

V. *The Third Great Awakening, 1857-1858*

- A. The Third Great Awakening is often called the Quiet Revival or the Laymen's Revival. It lasted only two years, from 1857-1858. Once again, American Christianity was on the downhill slide.
- B. In 1857 the financial markets collapsed. Banks folded. Railroads went out of business. The monetary system was on the brink of collapse. Jobs were scarce, and the average working American was tremendous pressure.
- C. A young man named *Jeremiah Lanphier* launched a prayer meeting in New York City in the basement of a church. His pastor was out of town, and Lanphier thought he would approve. His purpose was simply to seek God's mercy in the midst of the financial crisis.
- D. Jeremiah Lanphier sent out invitations to pray on September 23, 1857 at noon. On that day, Lanphier found himself alone. Nobody had come. Finally, at 12:30 five more people trickled in. The next week, the meeting grew to twenty, and then to forty. All of this, led by lay people.
- E. It was decided to hold prayer meetings every day. Soon, the room was packed, and a second room in the church was used. Gradually the meeting outgrew the church, and went into a theater that could seat three thousand. By March, 1858, that prayer meeting was packed.
- F. By April, countless theaters, churches, printers' shops, fire stations, and police stations were opened up for noon hour prayer meetings.
- G. They all followed the same form, with lay people leading, and taking turns praying. Just hearts of believers from all denominations melted together in prayer. The prayer meetings spread up and down the Atlantic. In Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and elsewhere.
- H. God was doing something remarkable within the church. And what happened outside the church?
- I. Conversions were soon reported. As a result of these packed out prayer meetings, churches were crowded and souls were saved. It is estimated that in New York alone upwards of 50,000 people came to Christ. J. Edwin Orr notes,
  1. *The phenomenon of packed churches and startling conversions was noted everywhere.... "from Texas, in the South, to the extreme of our Western boundaries, and our Eastern limits; their influence is felt by every denomination." [The revival] first captured the great cities, but it was also spread through every town and village and country hamlet. It swamped schools and colleges. It affected all classes without respect to condition. There was no fanaticism... It seemed to many that the fruits of Pentecost had been repeated a thousandfold. At any rate, the number of conversions reported soon reached the total of fifty thousand weekly, a figure borne out by the fact that church statistics show an average of ten thousand additions to church membership weekly for the period of two years. [Orr, in Hardiman, pp. 188,9].*

VI. It Has Been a Long, Long Time

- A. *Revival*
- B. That was 143 years ago, and there has been no national revival in America since then.
- C. Revival cannot be manufactured, created, or predicted. It is a sovereign work of God in his own place and his own time. We cannot schedule one, or, God forbid, manipulate one into happening.
  1. But we can ask.
  2. We can pray and seek.
  3. We can lay again the foundation of Reformation doctrines, so that revival has something solid to stand on.
- D. There is absolutely no way that human power or ingenuity or strategizing or planning could accomplish it.
- E. Only God. Only God coming down, pouring out his Spirit, in Revival. God can do it. He has the power. The central doctrinal truth of revival is this: God is the absolute monarch of the human heart. And in revival, he turns hearts in remarkable numbers to himself.
- F. My prayer has been to first create a conception of revival, and then to stir your heart to pray for revival.
- G. I love that America's Great Awakenings were all different.
  1. The First Great Awakening used scholars like Edwards and Whitefield. It was emotional without being fantastic.
  2. The Second featured rough and tumble circuit riders like Peter Cartwright. It was both emotional and fantastic.
  3. The Third was led by lay leaders, beginning with Jeremiah Lanphier. It was neither emotional nor fantastic.
- H. In each case, God did what he saw fit. God was sovereign. God was in charge. God took over. And he used all sorts of people to serve his will. Educated, uneducated, articulate, stammering, young and old. And all the plans and efforts of the churches receded into the background. God is full of surprises, and you can neither confine him nor tame him. God becomes all in all.
  1. *Revival is God's knock-out blow to the devil's schemes for a culture.*
- I. Can we create revival? Absolutely not. But we can be ready for it, and we can pray for it, and we can ask God for it.
- J. Until then, we are to be faithful in the ordinary days, praying for the day when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."