



## Revivals And Church History :: In the World not of the World.. Henry Blackaby

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The following is from a message given at the Heart-Cry for Revival Conference in April 2006 at The Cove, Asheville, North Carolina U.S.A.

The first of several Scriptures from the life of the Lord Jesus that I am going to give you is John 1:11, "He came to His own." If that's all you heard and the Holy Spirit helped you, it would rearrange your life. He didn't come to the lost. He came to His own. Of His own, "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born of God" (vv. 12-13).

Now hear carefully the prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17. At the beginning of His coming, He said, "He came to His own" (John 1:11) and at the end of His life, He said to the Father, "I have finished the work You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). The rest of John 17 is a description of how Jesus related to God's people. He said in effect, "Father, these were Yours and You gave them to Me. You told Me what to tell them and I have told them and they have believed." That was God's strategy to touch a world. God's strategy is His own.

Beginning in John 17:9, you have an amazing sequence of truths. "I pray for them." To whom was Jesus referring when He said, "them"? The disciples. Jesus said, "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world." If Jesus didn't pray for the world, should we? We have taken our cue for our activity from the religious culture in which we live, not from the Scriptures. I believe revival tarries because we do not follow the pattern of God in His Word. I want to share with you in this time that revival tarries because we fail to give attention to God's people. Jesus said, "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them" (vv. 9-10).

How is Christ glorified? In what the lost do or what the believers do? In your relationship to the people of God, is there such a transformation taking place that Christ is glorified in God's people who have been entrusted to your care? Jesus said, "I am glorified in" (v. 10). Then He goes on to say, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one" (v. 11). Not one with each other, but one in the Father and in the Son. Jesus prayed, "Father, may they be one." He continues, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name" (v. 12). If you are a pastor, would you say that of all God has entrusted to you, you have lost none, but that you have kept every one of them because they were His? Have you kept them in relationship to all that God is?

When I began my ministry in California, I read from John 6, "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose" (v. 39). That truth became an absolute for me as a pastor. God adds to the body as it pleases Him. According to the Scripture, God composes the body called the local church and He adds to that body as it pleases Him. How then should I consider my relationship to those He adds? They're His. What's more, it is His will that I should lose none.

After thirty years of pastoring, my wife and I sat through an evening and began to review. Of the three major churches I pastored, two in California and one in Saskatoon, could we remember, apart from those who moved out of the city and moved to another place, any that we had lost? We could not remember one person that we lost from our churches. Many people say, "That's astounding." I say, "No, it's biblical." That's what God intended in the first place.

### Faithful Shepherding Needed

Revival tarries and lingers because we don't care for the people of God. We're like shepherds who let the sheep wander on the mountain at the disposal of the enemy. We do not seek them out and save them. God condemns the shepherds who will not go after or feed His sheep, the shepherds who will not have a shepherd's heart. God won't entrust you with others if you are not faithful with the ones He gives. In Ezekiel 34, God says that He will seek out and save His own, which we are not seeking out and saving. He will find them. He says that He will ask the shepherds to give an account for every solitary one He added to them.

John said concerning Jesus, "He came to His own" (John 1:11). In the seventeenth chapter of John, you see how Jesus related to the ones the Father gave Him. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name" (John 17:12). This is another absolute truth for me as a pastor. While I was with the ones God entrusted to me, I kept them in His name, in His full character. I immersed them, with God's enabling, in the character, nature, activity, purposes, and ways of God. When the people of God are immersed in a deep relationship with God, you don't lose them. They wouldn't think of leaving that kind of relationship, but you have to teach them.

And you have to guide them. There are some who tend to wander. What do you do? You discover a way to find them, keep them, and stop them from wandering. You don't just say what the culture says, that you're going to have to lose some. That thought never crossed my mind. I decided I would do what the heart of God says to do. As Jesus said, "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose" (John 6:39).

How then did Jesus relate to those whom the Father had entrusted to Him? Look at John 17:13 and following: "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves." That also became an absolute for me. I could always tell when one of the believers was struggling. He lost his joy. Jesus said that the reason He gave us what He did is so that His joy might be in us and our joy might be full. How would you know if one of God's people under your watch care was moving away from Him? They lose the joy. It may relate to what's happening in their marriage or in their family. But God has a solution for our marriages and God has tremendous advice for how we guide our children. God has given us everything we need to shepherd the people of God. He says that the reason He is sharing what He's sharing is that His joy may be fulfilled in us.

#### In the World; Not of the World

Jesus said, "I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14-16).

Do you know that the majority of the people in your church spend most of the week in the secular business world? As they go out into corporate America, they're not of that world. But Jesus is saying, "I don't pray that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one in the midst of the world." Are you preparing God's people to be dramatically in the world, but not of the world? Light in the midst of darkness, and salt where it's decaying? Are you helping them to understand how to live out in the real world, in such a way that the enemy does not have a hold on them, but they are defeating him?

Jesus gave attention to the people of God. Pentecost came and His people were ready. Jesus prayed for His own. He did not pray for the world. Then He went on to speak to the Father about what He would have the Father do. He said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth" (v. 17). Are you carefully guiding God's people to hear, understand, believe and practice the Word of God?

For instance, I often listen to prayer in the churches and much of the prayer is based on unbelief. The content of our prayers conditions the way the people of God understand God and His ways. We pray, "Lord, be with us today." I think God would say, "What do you mean, 'Be with you'? I promised I would be with you! Why don't you pray that you would receive My presence?" We might sing, "Lord, show Your power." In return, He might say, "I've done that since the beginning of time. You don't believe Me. Why don't you believe the power I've already shown you?" Did He show His power in the person and presence of Jesus? Yes! Jesus said in effect that all authority and power in heaven and earth had been given to Him. We are to go and He'll be with us.

I've been in pastors' conferences where I've heard someone stand up and say, "Lord, come among us with Your power." I want to stand up and say, "My brother, He doesn't come any other way." When He is present, all His power is present. The difficulty is not with God, it's with us. We must incorporate into our life what is already present. Isaiah 40:21-23 says: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told to you since the beginning? Have you not understood since the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless." In verse twenty-five, the Lord goes on to say, "To whom then will you liken Me? Or to whom shall I be equal?" Lift up your eyes on high and see every star is known by God and it functions in its place permanently, just like God said.

"Why do you say, O Jacob...â€™My way is hidden from the Lordâ€™...Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength...But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength" (vv. 27-31). Many of Godâ€™s people donâ€™t have the faintest idea how to wait on the Lord because theyâ€™ve never been taught. They have no understanding of how God gives strength to the weak or how God gives understanding to the businessman. They donâ€™t understand how the mighty presence of Almighty, Sovereign God functions in corporate America, and in the school systems, and in the court systems.

I spoke to eight hundred lawyers and judges. Every judge that I spoke to had been through Experiencing God and every judge was teaching it in his chambers. Isnâ€™t it amazing that we have eyes to see what God is doing and we never look? We see what the world is doing and condemn the judges. Why donâ€™t you look to see where God is working in the Christian judges? He is doing some incredible things.

#### Solid Teaching Essential

Do you know why revival tarries? Thereâ€™s too little teaching of Godâ€™s people. Jesus taught His own. Everything He heard from the Father He taught and then He prayed. He prayed specifically, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth" (John 17:17). What truth are you giving the people of God? Are you giving them little devotional thoughts so they can feel good when they leave? Or are you bringing them face to face with God as He really is so that God Himself can set them apart, radically set them apart, for His purposes to revive?

God is not reluctant to bring revival; Heâ€™s waiting on us to believe what He says are the conditions of revival. When I get in revival conferences like this someone is bound to say, "Folks, you just need to know that revival is the sovereign work of God and you canâ€™t do anything to bring it." Thatâ€™s not true. It is the sovereign work of God, but the Sovereign God has given us sovereign conditions that are ours to do. When we meet His conditions, He will respond. Is that not what Second Chronicles 7:14 says? "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselvesâ€™" When was the last time you guided your people to understand what it means to humble themselves? When was the last time you told them what it means to seek His face?

Iâ€™ve led many prayer conferences and sometimes at the end of a prayer conference I will ask the question, "Is there anything that has impacted you from this prayer conference?" It is the older people who will say that theyâ€™ve been in church thirty years and that I am the first person who has ever taught them to pray. You say, "We need to humble ourselves and pray," but they donâ€™t know how to pray! Nobodyâ€™s taught them.

I believe that in John 17:17 Jesus is giving us a pattern, "Father...sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth." He goes on to say, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (vv. 18-19). That has become a standard for my own life. Do you know one of the ways God sets apart in increasing numbers His people for Himself? He gives them an example. The people of God need to have a Christian leader who takes seriously the demand to be sanctified by the truth and spends extensive time in the Word of God. They need someone who is listening, hearing, responding, and watching God transform him or her and then hurrying to the people of God and bearing witness to what God has just done in his or her life.

Prior to the Saskatoon revival in Canada (1970), for a year or a year and a half I prayed with Bill McLeod and several others in his office. Every time we gathered, God dealt with me. Every time God began to separate this heart unto Himself. I found that my life was being profoundly exposed to the holiness and truth of God and that I was being radically challenged to let God conform me to the image of His Son. Every week when God transformed me I would hurry back to the church family to bear witness to them of the same truth. In turn, the same truth touched their lives and they began to be separated unto God. For a year and a half, God dealt with me, and then through my life, He dealt in the life of the church. I had that time of cleansing, which is absolutely crucial to anybody who delivers the message of cleansing.

You are a witness of the truth of God. You need to be aware that your people know whether you have designed a sermon or whether you have been transformed from the presence of God. Also, they can tell if your message comes from the heat of an encounter with God that happened that week, not ten years ago. They know when God encountered you that week and said something along the lines of, "This is what I want to do in you and this is what I want to do in the people under your watch care."

All of a sudden, Bill McLeod called me and said, "Henry, that for which weâ€™ve been praying has happened in our church!" Seven and a half weeks, every night of the week, God met His people. The moments of repentance went on to t

three and four and five and six in the morning. Many were encountering the word from Christ, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). We had to have three or four other places to meet just to take care of the people who had come under such severe conviction to repent.

### The Fruit of Revival

God let me be there for ten years after this so I could see the fruit of revival and what God does with transformed people. He took a little church of ten that was ready to disband and that had never started any mission church or another church family, and started thirty-eight new congregations. We took the Spirit of God that was in us and touched community after community after community. We even went to the native Indian reserves. We were on seventeen different reserves

Then God began to tell us to call out laborers, but He didn't say to go to the seminary and ask any that wanted to come. How did He say to get laborers? "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers" (Luke 10:2). Before, that church had never had a college student, but I baptized over 180 college students and about 100 of them felt called into the ministry of missions. That little church then established a training center to train and equip the laborers. God wanted not just to touch us, but to touch the whole province. Town after town was completely changed.

### Practice What We Believe

Is anything happening through your life? Where's the evidence? Is it possible for God to do what Jesus said and there be no evidence that God has done it? Often we believe correctly, but we don't practice what we believe. We believe in the enormous power and presence of God, but we live content not to experience Him. We talk to the people of God about the incredible power of God; yet, somehow we don't teach them how His power is to be experienced in their own lives.

When I read that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), I did too. Have you accommodated to the world? Do you understand what you do to God's name in the way that you handle divorce in your church? Do you understand that in the cross is the fullness of the presence and power and might of Almighty God? In the cross is power not only to save from sin and its consequences but also to deliver from sin's power. Has the power released by God through the cross become available to marriages that are having difficulty? Yes. Most marriages end because of sin, but the power of the cross and resurrection is able to save marriages.

Let me paraphrase from Ephesians 1:18-23: "I pray that the eyes of your heart be open and that you would understand that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and set Him over all principalities, powers, kingdoms, dominions, and every name that can be named, that same power has been given to every solitary one who believes." That is a reality. Do you believe all principalities and powers are already defeated? Christ has already won the victory. Let your people know how to live in the victory that Christ gave over all of those powers of evil.

Are you living in that victory? Is your life a demonstration of the awesome power of God to your children? Are your children so caught up in the power of God in your life that they want to choose the God you serve? Or, do they look at your life and say, "I hear what you say, but I don't see any evidence of the working of that in your life. I'd rather go with the world."

All four of my boys and my daughter are called into ministry. Everywhere I go with my children there is a huge sense of the power and presence of God. Where do they get that? A lot of it is from my life. That's why Jesus said, "I sanctify Myself, that they may also be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:19).

Jesus then prayed to the Father, "that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). Believers have an absolute union with Christ and the Father. First John 1 says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son (v. 3)... and if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have with one another" (v. 7). So Jesus said, "Father I pray...that they all may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me" (John 17:21). Then again He said, "that they may be one as We are one: I in them, and You in Me... that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (vv. 22-23).

### God's Strategy for Reaching the Lost

So what's God's strategy for touching a lost world? God's people. As goes the people of God, so goes the

reaching of a lost world. One of the reasons revival tarries is that we have neglected the people of God. We have not helped that broken, grieving widow. We have not gone after that broken teenager. We have not put our arms around that sinning deacon. Then when someone chooses to leave, we don't go after them. That is a denial of everything that God is. When we let divorce happen in our churches, we deny the whole Gospel of reconciliation. Second Corinthians 5:18 says, "God has given us the ministry of reconciliation." Should that happen in marriages? Yes! Should that happen in broken relationships in the church? Yes. Do you know why it isn't? We have neglected to teach God's people.

When God's people once again return to Him, God returns to them. Revival breaks out in a people who have been taught and led into a vital relationship with the living Christ and when He is their Lord and His presence is being expressed through their lives. When that is happening, revival comes to God's people and the lost begin to be attracted to God through God's people. John the Baptist told us how we're to prepare for an encounter with the living Christ. Luke's Gospel phrases it this way, "that all mankind will see God's salvation" (3:6). Not hear about it only, but see it.

Do you know what happens in your community when the people of God are brought into a vital relationship with the living Christ, the Spirit of the living God, and God Himself? What occurs when His mighty presence anoints and takes up permanent residence with His people? It has an astounding impact on a lost world. As spiritual leaders we need to return to helping the people of God like Jesus did. Read through John 17 again and see the enormity of the purpose of God to touch a world by what He does with His own. You are not neglecting the lost by focusing on God's people. You are simply doing it God's way.

Is the life of Christ flowing in you and then through you? Is there a river of living water issuing out of your life? And everywhere it touches, does it bring life? If not, repent! Some of you may be asking, "Wherein do I need to repent?" Ask God. Stay before Him until He shows you.