

Revival our need of power

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[0 : 00] Luke 24, verse 49. Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, that tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

Tarry in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

Now I give you out this text in connection with the theme of our preaching in the mornings of these subsequent weeks, because we are planning to look at the theme of spiritual revival.

We believe in this congregation that the Church of Jesus Christ greatly needs a spiritual revival.

And if I may say so, this was perhaps one thing that I missed when I read through the assembly reports. Unless I missed the reference, I must confess that I did not see the word revival mentioned.

[1 : 29] It may be there and I missed it, but it certainly did not seem to be there in a prominent way.

Now of course, having said that, it is fully understandable because the writers of the reports of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland are all profoundly interested in the subject of spiritual revival.

We believe that what our churches and what our nation needs more than anything else is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God.

that nothing can reverse the trend of evil in our nation, and even in some of the churches. A trend which is downward towards greater and greater permissiveness, greater and greater toleration of evil, greater and greater neglect of the Holy Scriptures.

And so that's why we are looking at this theme of revival. So the particular concern I have today is with this text of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is talking to his disciples. He has died and he has risen again from the dead in this particular chapter that we are taking our text from in Luke 24.

[2 : 43] And he is just about to ascend back to glory to be with his Father. And he is issuing instructions to the disciples and to the apostles and he is saying this to them.

Wait in Jerusalem. Tarry there. Wait there. Until something wonderful and stupendous happens to you. I shall give to you the promise of my Father.

Wait in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. Now that was of course the prophecy of what was to take place a few days later on the day of Pentecost.

And we were reading in Acts 1 and especially in Acts 2 first of all how these 120 disciples were obedient to Christ and they were waiting on the Lord.

They were tarrying as it were. They were pleading with God in prayer to send this promise down. Doubtless they had hardly any idea in detail as to what it was they were asking for.

[3 : 58] It had never happened before. There never had been a religious revival of this kind in history before. Pentecost was the beginning of a new era and a new age. And in some ways of course it was unique and unrepeatable but not in every sense because it was the first of a series of great spiritual revivals that God was to send and is still to send upon the church in order to gather his children home.

What I'm concerned to draw attention to today is the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ refers to this revival when it would come.

Notice the word he uses. It's the word power. Tarry of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

Now that's most instructive and interesting. What is the difference between the church when it is being revived and the church when it is not being revived?

Well the difference can be summarized in this one single word the word power. Let me spend a moment on that term.

[5 : 22] It's very important that we should do so. Do you remember how our Lord said this to his apostles when he was talking to them at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles?

Well I could turn you to one or two of the verses that we might look at it together. Acts chapter 1 and verse 5. Here we have Jesus talking to the apostles. John the Baptist truly baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Now that's interesting isn't it not? John the Baptist baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Just as John put the water on them so God is going to pour this water of the blessing of the Spirit down from heaven upon them.

there's going to be a mighty effusion of the Spirit of God. He'll baptize them with fire as Jesus said and as John the Baptist says somewhere else.

And then turn to verse 8 of Acts chapter 1 a little lower down. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

[6 : 51] There you have this same word again. You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

And then in another verse that we won't turn to in Romans chapter 1 do you remember how Paul describes the gospel? He says to them in that chapter 1 of Romans the gospel is the power of God. And right into the Corinthians he uses the same word. I did not come to you with excellency of speech and of wisdom declaring unto you the gospel of God.

I did not want your faith to stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. and he's very fond of this word power the apostle Paul and he talks about the effect of the preaching of the gospel which he and the other apostles in a time of revival were able to give and the effect of their preaching was this he said it was mighty to the pulling down of strongholds mighty to the pulling down of the power of the devil upon earth.

We see the effect of this in the sermon that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Now let me suggest an experiment to you. How do you think it was that 3,000 people were converted on the day of Pentecost?

[8 : 29] Was it because of the elegance and the beauty of Peter's words in Acts chapter 2? Was it because there was some magical potency in the words that he selected in Acts chapter 2 in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost?

Well if that's what you think you go into the high street this afternoon with a Bible make it the NIV if you think that the AV is too hard for the man in the street or any version of the Bible you choose and you read to them coming out of the shop Acts chapter 2 and see if it has the same effect upon the people in the high street of air as it had in Jerusalem and I can assure you in all likelihood you'll be very disappointed.

Why doesn't it have the same effect? Well because if you and I were to read it there in all possibility there would be something missing which was not missing when Peter preached the sermon originally.

Now what is there in this sermon what was present on this day of Pentecost? It was this power 3,000 people were gripped and arrested and converted to Christ.

They professed faith and they were baptized into the name of Christ the very same day. Now that was because there was this power there and it was with these apostles wherever they went and they were accused you might remember on one occasion by somebody in the Acts of the Apostles like this.

[10 : 00] These are the men that have turned the whole world upside down wherever they went. There were tremendous changes. Those that have worshipped idols you remember they used to get hold of their idols and they made a bonfire of them.

And those that were interested in magic and necromancy and witchcraft they got their books of magic and they burned them publicly. And others who had lived lives of besotted vice and crime and sin they were purified and cleansed.

And what we're interested in is how did that happen? And we get the answer in our text. Tally in the city of Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high.

And this is the point that we notice that over and over again in the history of the church God has sent this power down.

Let's look at it from another point of view. Think of the church buildings here that you know of in the town of Eyre or wherever you live in Scotland or England or wherever it is.

[11 : 14] Huge church buildings in this town of Eyre. Many of them now are used as secular premises. Theatre perhaps or auction hall or do-it-yourself centre or something like that.

These huge edifices what is the power that built these places? Or go to Troon whenever I go to Troon or even still more to Logs I see these enormous churches the size of a cathedral you'd expect to find buildings that size in London a great metropolis rather than some small provincial town like Troon or Lars.

What on earth built these huge buildings in a relatively small centre of population? Or go to Edinburgh and there you have a whole city of crumbling spires and yet they weren't always crumbling they were once buildings full to the door with people crowded with people right up to the First World War and a little bit beyond.

And the same is true in London. Somebody was writing a letter that I read the other day and spoke about going to Westminster Central Hall the famous Methodist church possibly the most famous in the world in some ways.

And this man is now a retired Baptist minister and he said I went to that Methodist church when I was a much younger man in the 1940s and I heard the famous W.E. Sangster preaching.

[12 : 52] His was a name to be conjured with in those days. And there was a vast congregation in the 1940s thousands were there several thousand. But he said I was worshipping there recently again some nice young man with a tidy degree after his name was preaching a tiny handful.

You could have put one person in each row of seats because there were so few. Probably not even a hundred in this vast auditorium. My friends you see the difference you see the point I'm making. Why were these churches so filled once upon a time? Indeed. Why were they ever built in the first place? What was the power that built those churches?

You would never get them built today with the interest that people have today. Was it because people were more religious in the old days? Was it because people were more interested in Christian things than they are today in the old days?

No, that's not the ultimate explanation. Though that might enter into it a little. The explanation is these church buildings were originally built and filled because of something that God was doing in that generation.

[14 : 10] They lived in times of revival times of blessing just along the river here. Alexander's sawmill now in Heathfield in Eyre but it used to be here and he was a free church elder the man that owned that.

And the free church after the disruption of 1843 it had no building to speak of so they had to worship in the open air and yet there were hundreds of people there sitting on planks of wood in the open air and the minister could hardly stop his sermon because the people were craving more and more preaching.

The tears were coursing down the cheeks of some of the people. It was as though I'm quoting the minister's own words of that time William Grant said this it was as though the people were saying to me in effect Sir we would see Jesus.

Now what was happening? Was it because he was an eloquent preacher? No he was really quite an ordinary man. There was nothing particularly outstanding about the man. How were the people so interested in those days?

It was because the church of that generation was endued with this power from on high. God was pouring out a blessing upon the people.

[15 : 31] The church was awakened and stirred not simply in one or two places but in many places across the land. Now our interest of course in this subject is not purely historical.

We're not looking at this like antiquarians who want to fill our minds with the recondite facts about the past. that's not our concern. We talk about these things because we are persuaded before God there is no solution to the church as difficult as this hour but that we should have another of these visitations.

And so I want to say three things this morning quite briefly in the time that I have. The first thing I want to say from our text and bearing in mind also the act of the apostles because I want us to think also in terms of the acts of the apostles and you may wish to turn to Acts chapters 1 and 2.

My three points have a great deal to do with that because you see Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 1 are closely related to Luke 24 49. They are the fulfillment of this promise of Christ.

In Luke 24 49 Jesus talks about the power which will be coming down and now in Acts chapters 1 and 2 we see how they wait for it and then in chapter 2 how it actually becomes a reality and the promise is fulfilled.

[16 : 56] And this I'm going to call the three steps towards spiritual power and revival in the church.

Now we can't make these things automatic but a study of the subject of religious revivals in any age and there have been many hundreds of them always tends to lead to the same general conclusion that there are stages in a revival.

That there's a sort of preliminary stage. And the first step that I'm talking about now is one of these preliminary stages to revival. It's what I'm going to call when the church feels herself to be powerless.

That's the first stage. Now let me give you the picture and paint you the picture of these 120 disciples in Acts chapter 1 in the upper room.

There they are in Acts chapter 1. Reference to the numbers made in verse 15 if you haven't noticed it. There was 120 of them. Now that's not a very great number is it?

[18 : 07] There's plenty of prayer meetings that can boast more than 120 in Scotland today. And yet from these 120 there were to emerge men and women who would turn the whole world upside down.

The Acts of the Apostles is an account of how the Gospel which was confined originally to Jerusalem spread out to Judea, Samaria and then came to Rome the capital of the then world. And so the whole of the Acts of the Apostle shows us how this power went out. But now I'm looking particularly at the first step before that revival and it is the step I refer to as when the church feels herself to be powerless.

Now this my friends is something that I ask you to search your own heart about. Do you care that the church in our land today is almost powerless?

And I say that advisedly and without exaggeration. I know, thank God, there are some people being converted. I know, thank God, there are some congregations that are getting on encouragingly in terms of their outreach and numbers.

[19 : 34] By no means would I wish to blacken the situation more than the sanctuaries. But when you take what we call a conjunct view of the state of things in the religious world in Scotland and still more in England, surely it should enter into our souls like a sword of rebuke that there is so little power, there is so little of the witness of the church being felt in our society today.

How do I know that the church is powerless? Well, by the attitude of people towards going to hear the preaching of the word of God.

I have mentioned already that in days when the power is there, people cannot get enough preaching. They will listen for hour upon hour, in the cold, in the open air, to the preaching of the word of God.

Their souls are hungry for the truth. But now you know, don't you honestly, what the state of affairs is like in Britain today, Scotland and in England and elsewhere.

That if people can drag themselves to God's house for the morning service, they think they've done a wonderful miracle. And then most of them, or many of them, think that the rest of the day is for the picnic, or off they go for a few rounds of golf.

[21 : 04] And yet they're glowing with virtue that they have been to God's house at all. And that shows, you see, the little effect the truth is having upon them.

That they hurry back home and are glad to spend several hours at the television set. But when they come to God's house, they can hardly stifle their yawn.

That's, you see, because in our generation, everywhere people have become so dead to the things of the Spirit. Now, we of course, are very much an exception to so many of other things I've been saying.

But we must never forget that the things that I have castigated and delineated for you are so terribly and tragically true of the great majority of congregations all around us.

It's a sign of the powerlessness of the Gospel. And you see the powerlessness in another way, too. Even when there are professions of conversion to Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter whether it's a Presbyterian church or a Baptist church, it doesn't matter, anything like that.

[22 : 17] But so many of these so-called converts, when they have made their profession of faith, they still look like the world. they still talk like the world.

They still dress like the world. They have the smell of the world upon them. And they don't seem to have that conviction deep wrought in their spirit that you get in the biblical conversions or in conversions in times of revival.

Now, there again, I'm not trying to exaggerate or overstate the matter. Of course, there are numerous exceptions to what I say. And praise be to God, there are genuine, real, spiritual conversions.

There are men and women in this generation who hunger for the word of God and for fellowship, who live for God. I'm persuaded there are people sitting right in front of me who would die for the cause of Christ if you were called on to do it.

I don't hesitate to say that. But, oh, my friends, generally speaking, we must say to ourselves, the church in our times is asleep and dead.

[23 : 20] and we need this power and the first step is when we say to ourselves, our power is gone. Let's be honest. No amount of committees or meetings, no amount of human organization is going to put this right.

This is not something which the arm of man can correct. We are powerless. All that we do seems so feeble. A dear Baptist minister friend of mine in Glasgow said this to, in my hearing, or was repeated to me the other day.

You know, there's a certain garden festival in Glasgow, and the Civic Corporation gave many tickets out to local residents to say that they could come to the garden show free. And they came in their thousands to see the flowers on the Sabbath day, I'm referring to, on the Lord's Day, and other days.

But this church that I refer to, they also had given out thousands of free invitations to come to hear the gospel that men might be saved from their sins and go to glory.

And this dear friend of mine said, we got one person came. Now that just shows the powerlessness of the truth, for it's one of these times of the powerlessness of the gospel.

[24 : 39] These men have not the slightest wish to go to hear the truth preached, but they have every desire to go to every other place. Now the second step, and I'm being very brief here, the second step towards the beginning of a revival is when the people of God begin to pray.

Now we get this in one or two verses that I want to draw attention to in Acts chapter 1 verse 14. You'll see it there. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

They all continued in this ten-day period with one accord in prayer and supplication. Now that's most important for us to notice. Notice chapter 2 verse 1.

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord. in one place. You know, they were praying for one thing.

It's a wonderful thing when there's a sense of absolute oneness in prayer. That's when things begin to happen of a spiritual kind.

[25 : 59] When there is this oneness of mind. When they're all there. all there with one accord. They weren't just saying to God, thank you Lord for this and thank you Lord for that and thank you Lord for the next thing and thank you for a nice day and thank you for Beethoven's Sonatas and thank you for food in our mouth.

Not just that. They were praying for God to come in power and demonstration of the Spirit. They were crying to God to come down and awaken the church and bring the glory in.

They wanted the manifest, demonstrated presence of God amongst them. Maybe they didn't understand all of that involved. But they were of one accord.

They knew that Christ doesn't tell lies or exaggerate. And when he said to them, tarry in the city of Jerusalem till you be endued with power from on high. They knew that he must know what he was talking about though they may not understand the full implications as yet.

Oh how we need that Spirit. I wonder if the church is getting anywhere near. When I say the church I mean the whole church everywhere.

[27 : 09] Is getting anywhere near to this spirit of unanimous crying out and supplication for the Spirit of God to come. That's what happened in New York in 1858.

Did I not mention it before? A little downtown prayer meeting with half a dozen people grew and grew and grew until the whole city of New York was feeling the effect of it. They had to stop the business at four o'clock in the afternoon to let the people get to the churches.

All the city of New York was crying out to God for the Spirit to come. No wonder within a few months there was exceptional blessing and revival broke out there and in many parts of America and in Ulster and in Scotland and here in England.

Thousands of people were converted. They said that one of the ten of the population of Scotland started to go to church in that one year or so. That was the effect of the blessing of revival. God's power coming down on the preaching, on the living of the people, giving them a desire to be spiritual. So that instead of tumbling out of bed and tumbling into the pew and yawning away through the services, the people of God were now aflame for the truth.

[28 : 18] It meant everything to them now. They were preparing for the Sabbath now. They were preparing their bodies and their minds for the Word of God. Preparing their souls by secret devotion.

And the blessing came. And now then the third phase. And this is the most important of all. Acts chapter 2 verse 2.

Now I would submit to you that Acts chapter 2 verse 2 is in many ways one of the most interesting verses and important verses in the whole of the Bible.

Acts chapter 2 verse 2. Every word is full of interest. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Isn't that a glorious verse? What would you give to see that happen?

[29 : 26] You would give your right hand and so would I. It would be a good thing to die if only this would happen. Suddenly a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

And it filled all the house where they were sitting. Now there are certain lessons for us to learn from this. Notice first of all that there was nothing human here.

It wasn't contrived. It wasn't something that man invented. It wasn't a gimmick of the church to get the Gentiles to listen. It wasn't some stunt.

It was God the Holy Spirit. Now of course the day of Pentecost in many ways was unique. these tongues of flame and the noise of the wind.

Whether these things ever happen again we're not interested in just now. These are the phenomena, the charismata. They're not of supreme interest. What is of supreme interest is the way God came and blessed the church with this power in the preaching and witnessing.

[30 : 35] And they became potent and powerful and effective witnesses, every one of them, to the truth of God. They were filled with certainty after the truth of the gospel. And on this note indeed I must end.

The power becomes manifest in many ways. And always in the quality of the witness of God's people. have you ever felt any of this feeling of the Spirit in your own heart?

Not perhaps in this corporate way that they felt it. But it is possible to seek this from God individually. It's possible to get a taste of this power personally.

Every true believer has some of it. We need much more of it. So that what you say has the ring of certainty about it. Let me close by referring to how this happened in England two and a half centuries ago.

There was a very young man, George Whitefield, almost unknown, a Church of England man. He had not long been a minister. And he wasn't very welcome in some of the buildings of the Church of England, so he decided that his concern for the souls of the people was too great for him to keep silent.

[31 : 53] So he went to Bristol, in the field, the place where the people were desperately poor, many of them miners. They had hardly any money.

And he began to preach to them about the way Christ had died for sinners, and that they could immediately be saved, as soon as they believed in Christ. They could immediately know that they had salvation by the witness of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

He told them they were sinners in the hands of an angry God, that if they trusted in the Saviour, they would be forgiven, no matter how black their past would be.

And he says the first indication he had that these miners were listening to him was that their black faces suddenly had channels of white visible.

The coal dust was washed away by their tears. Hundreds of them. And that was the beginning of a great movement which spread all throughout England and Wales, and in Scotland as well.

[32 : 59] Whitfield and Wesley and Charles Wesley, who died exactly 200 years ago this year.

These great men, they saw it happen again, but this is only one of very many similar revivals.

Now I put to you this question as I put it to myself. Are you asking God to give the church this power again? I would say to you, give him no rest night and day, wherever you're going, walking, waking, rising, eating, cry to God mightily to send this spirit of power down.

God is faithful. When he answers the prayers of his people, there is no stopping the blessing.

In 1860, the General Assembly of the Free Church met in Edinburgh, as is due to meet in a few days' time in Edinburgh. They had to spend a whole day specially set aside to hear the report from every part of Scotland as to how churches were being blessed with the revival of that year.

It was called the Revival Assembly. The Revival Assembly. What a wonderful word. Instead of talking about buildings and finances and laws and lawsuits and problems and difficulties and the deadness and the darkness and the need of this and that and the other, they had men come to the front saying, how many hundreds had come to Christ?

[34 : 27] How many new prayer meetings had begun? How many new mission halls have been opened? How many families have been gathered to Christ? How many new family worship services have been set up in different families?

The Revival Assembly. That's what we believe in. I hope we all believe in that and I hope we catch the vision and cause God to know that we are confirmed to have the power all over again.

as you can see, and that's why I have a lot of our house. Thank you. I hope we have a ProVE System community for each community. such as the 23rd week of a year.

A very first week has been a prior working plan. I jeszcze have a nice vacancy for what we believe in this and season now. And a couple of events have wspól about the train for longer than the truck. Where do you need to talk to support your friends? You can get even more life during this meeting. I hope you make this free for the invitation Monday, and then Ethan.