

Heart and Soul Revival

2 Timothy 3:5

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think most of you know that Campus Church has a missionary outreach arm which we call Christian Corps, and that's what that newsletter is that you received with your bulletin. It's Christian Corps International. You can see loved ones, the unique purpose it has on the back page there at the top left hand corner of page 4. It reads, "Christian Corps International is a federation of businesses committed to personal evangelism through the practical expression of the spirit and principles of Christ in the secular world." Our aim in this most opportune era, when Gorbachev and Deng are interested in opening up their two countries to free enterprise, is to get thousands of us abroad as businessmen and women who express the Spirit and the principles of Jesus in ways that will begin to affect the ordinary life of the man on the street who never goes to church. It is a vision that God has given us that is just right for the time.

I said that many of us are also involved in educational ministries because that's what Ted and Cathy have been doing in Beijing. Cathy has been involved with IBM the past year and Ted has been involved in teaching business management in the University in Beijing. Many of us have a vision for our worldwide English as a Second Language series at colleges -- because at no time have so many people wanted to learn English. So that's what Christian Corps is about and I'd encourage any of you who are feeling that God wants you to be abroad in that way to apply and begin to come to some of our Christian Corps Institute classes which meet during the week and deal particularly with doing business in the Spirit of Jesus and according to the principles of Jesus.

As you can guess, several of us in Guadalajara, London and here in Minneapolis are connected together in a worldwide trading company. Communication is key to us and one of the ways we communicate with each other is through telex. It's a kind of ticker tape system of communicating via high-speed telephone wires. During this past week, I had the responsibility of taking the IBM computer apart and trying to put a phone modem in it that will connect up with the telephone wires. Gentry went off and enjoyed himself this week and my job was to solve that problem. I spent hours and hours trying to do it. I took the computer apart, put the modem in and then you type in the various signals and I typed in percent Q and I am supposed to get back an answer percent H and percent 2. But there was nothing on the screen, nothing.

At one point in the week, an expert came along and said, "That modem is dead, it's dead", and I said, "It's not. It's alive, I put it in it." And he said, "Yes, but the computer can't find it." And so for the past week I've been typing in percent Q, pulling out memory boards and putting them in again. At last it's solved. I've got through. But I just thought many of us find ourselves in that situation with God.

We send all the right signals, we do all the things that people tell us we're supposed to do, but we don't get any response back from God. We're doing everything we're supposed to do. We're saying the right prayers, we're reading the right part of the Bible, we're going to church and we're sending the signals but somehow we're not getting anything back from Him to tell us that He is alive and that He is responding to us.

Now some of us are in the position that we once did get responses. Some of us have been born of God

in past years or have even been baptized with the Holy Spirit and there was a time when we were getting responses and when we were having some sense of aliveness in our spirits and we could tell there is somebody out there. There is someone out there who is feeding back signals to me. But that ceased some years ago and since then, we have never had any signals back from God to tell us that He is alive and we have joined another group of people who call themselves Christians (and there are thousands of them in this dear land of ours).

They are Christians who run their own spiritual experience totally and completely by their own will power. They have a spiritual experience that they control themselves and actually it wouldn't make much difference to them where there was a Holy Spirit or where there wasn't a Holy Spirit. It doesn't make much difference to them whether there is a God or there isn't a God. They do the things that they're supposed to do and they do them very religiously and very faithfully and very obediently but they have never any sense of God's Spirit feeding back to them.

They are often very faithful in their duties and responsibilities. But the chief mark of their life is a lack of the fragrance of the Holy Spirit and a certain coldness and a certain deadness that pervades all their religious duties, all their church going, all their Bible study, and all their praying. It lacks the liveliness of the Spirit of God coming back to them. They never really have any encouragement from God out there. They just keep on doing what they're doing.

Now in some ways, it's good for a short time, because it delivers you from introspection and from being preoccupied with feelings and being concerned with "is God present in my life or is He not." So, to a certain extent it's good not to be always looking in and introspecting to see if God is feeding back to you. But in some ways after a period of time, it becomes a dead Old Testament kind of religion.

In other words, it lacks the chief mark of the New Covenant. Here is the chief mark of the New Covenant loved ones, if you look at it in Acts 2:38, it was stated very plainly by Peter in the first truly Christian sermon that was ever preached. That is, the first sermon that was preached after Jesus rose and ascended to the right hand of God and poured out the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:37-38: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins'; (and here's the chief mark of the New Covenant) and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (And that they had no experience of.)

They have no experience of a new dynamic in their lives that gives them an awareness of a whole new spiritual world that they never knew existed before. They had no sense of the rising of springs of living water within them, a whole fragrance in their life that seems to come from beyond. They don't have that experience. Their religion is primarily a human initiated and human disciplined experience. It has nothing of the freshness of God's Spirit. It has nothing of a sense of Him feeding back to them responses.

Loved ones, the mark of that kind of religion is outlined in the Bible here and it describes so much of a religion here in our dear nation, it's in 2 Timothy 3:5. Such people are "holding the form of religion but denying the power of it."

It's the kind of religion that enables a nation like ours to be filled with church going, right

alongside gross immorality and widespread immorality. It's a religion with a lot of outward form and a lot of people doing religious things but without the power of God's Spirit moving mightily. It's a religion without a Christ-like love, with a lot of sense of responsibility and duty, a lot of sense of what God wants from us but little sense of the fragrance and the gentleness of Jesus' love in a Spirit rising within.

Brothers and sisters, God has told us what to do if we ever get into that position as a nation or if we ever get into that position as individuals. If we ever get into the place in our own Christian experience where we can't sense God feeding back to us, we can't sense that his spirit is alive and within us, and we don't feel that we're getting signals back, God has told us what to do. So will you turn to 2 Chronicles 7:13. The Father describes that state exactly to us in verse 13.

2 Chronicles 7:13, "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people," now that's the situation. "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain." That's when you sense there is no rain coming from God into your life. When there is no coming of the Spirit of life into you from God. When you're not sensing that He's alive out there. He doesn't seem to be responding to you when He commands the locust to devour the land as our land is. I have to tell you this because it hit me so hard.

I don't know if there are any loved ones who are homosexual here this morning, but you know how I love you and how my heart goes out to you. But I was sitting, having coffee in a restaurant in a certain area of this city and I looked up at this little guy who must have been about 13 years old. He was a newspaper boy. He had sunglasses on and he turned around to me and he had lipstick on. So when God sends the locust to devour the land -- in the disease of aids - it's not a time for preaching at each other but rather the time for getting God to come through to us. It's not a time for condemning and pointing the finger. And it's not a time for trying to whitewash the mess that we're in. It's a time for getting God to come through to us.

"Command the locust to devour the land or send pestilence among my people", and then He gives the direction to us in our personal lives or our national life.

"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." And that's it. If you're in that state personally and we're certainly in that state nationally, that's what God says. He will bring revival to us. He will begin to get signals of His Holy Spirit through to us, "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."

In 1902, Wales was as dead as our nation is. It had lots of church going as our nation has. It had lots of religious activity, but it was dead religious activity. There was not the fragrance of Jesus' Spirit alive in the hearts of people. Then some people began to get together in prayer groups and began to pray for their own individual lives and for their nation, as some had begun to do in Melbourne, Australia.

In a certain school was a young man called Evan Roberts, a young collier of 26 years of age, preparing to enter the ministry. For 11 years he had prayed for a revival and for 13 years he had prayed for the fullness of the Spirit. A word dropped by a deacon in a church meeting 13 years before caused him to determine to know the Holy Spirit.

The deacon said, "Be faithful. What if the Holy Spirit descended and you were absent?" So, through all weathers and difficulties, refusing to be tempted by the boys and the boats on the river near his home, Evan Roberts made his way to prayer meetings and other chapel services year after year. He came from a typical Welsh home and was the son of godly parents. At 12-years-old, he became his father's right hand in the mine and shortly afterwards commenced regular work underground in the mines. He was never without his Bible, which he studied in the intervals of work. And so the time went by until one night, in the spring of 1904, God seems to have drawn near to him in a very special way.

He says that as he prayed by the bedside all night, he was taken up into a great expanse without space or time, into communion with God. This was obviously a crisis in his spiritual life for up to then, God had seemed to him a far away God and he was afraid of Him. But after this, the Lord would awaken him night after night a little after 1:00 O'clock and took him up in divine fellowship for about four hours. He would sleep until 9 o'clock. Then again he would be wrapped in communion with God until about noon in the day.

Just about this time, one of the ministers who had been praying in the prayer groups, came to conduct services in the town where Evan Roberts was attending this training school. He, with some other young men, went to the service. The service was in a place called Blaenach. He went at 7 O'clock to the service. Roberts was already deeply moved, but he quite broke down when at the house, the minister led in prayer and used the words, "Bend us, Oh Lord."

The soul in travail, heard no words but these. "This is what you need," whispered the Spirit of God. "Bend me, Oh Lord", but even yet, the fire did not fall. At the 9 O'clock meeting, the Spirit of God led one and the other to pray and then Mr. Roberts says, "I fell on my knees with my arms over the seat in front of me and the tears freely flowed. I cried, 'Bend me, bend me.'"

Bend us, for we are a self-righteous nation. With all our methods, bend us. Roberts continues, "What bent me, was God commending His love and I, not seeing anything in it to commend." The Holy Spirit had come and melted his whole being by a revelation of the love of God at Calvary. "For God commended of His own love to us in that Christ died for us."

The young man returned to the nearby town and prayed God to give him the seal of six others set on fire by God and the six were given. Then the Holy Spirit bade him return to his own people and speak to them. But he didn't obey. He grew more and more troubled and ill at ease. One Sunday in chapel, he could not fix his mind on the service for always before him as in a vision he saw the schoolroom in his own village and all the young people and his old companions sitting in rows while he addressed them. He tells how he shook his head impatiently and sought to drive all this away but God would give him no rest. Back and back it came as the Holy Spirit whispered clearer and clearer, "Go and speak to these people." At long last Even Roberts obeyed God and went to Loughor, his native place early in November 1904.

He says that he consulted the pastor of his church who told him that he might try and see what he could do. He would find the ground stony and the task hard. Young people came together and they all sat before him as he had been shown by God. At first, they did not seem touched, but presently the Spirit of God began to work and six came out for Christ. Then the Pentecost began. This is what revival is. Soul after soul came forward and the most extraordinary results followed. The whole community was shaken. Meetings lasted until 4:00 in the morning and at 6:00 the people would be awakened by the sounds of the crowds going to the early morning prayer meeting.

The work went on until a local minister said, "The entire population had been transformed into a praying multitude." Man and woman, of whom he had despaired, had voluntarily come to Christ. The lives of hundreds of colliers and tin plate workers were transformed. The men went straight to Chapel from the mills and the public houses were practically deserted.

On November 10, the first public reference to these remarkable scenes was made in a Wales secular paper, which from this time to the wonderment of all, devoted columns to the reporting of the work. They did much in the province of God to spread abroad that which God was doing among His people. Other secular powers did the same and man marveled at the sovereign power of God to move the secular press to report the work of God.

"From Rhoulacore", the Revivalist says, "The young student began to be called, went on to another town and other places, carried on their crest of a mighty wave of the Spirit which swept like a cleansing tide along the mining valleys of Glamorganshire.

Everywhere the people thronged in multitudes to hear the Spirit-baptized young student. At Loughor he spoke, it is said, with impassioned oratory, but once the overflowing stream had broken out, the Spirit of God appeared to put aside preaching and used the voice of testimony. "He slew hanging Him on a tree, him did God exult and we are witnesses," was the burden of the message of the Spirit possessed souls in the days of Pentecost.

This was the Holy Spirit's message through his people as he bore co-witness by signs and wonders wrought among the thronging multitudes. Under the constraint of an unseen power, the chapels were filled with eager people at all hours of the day and the services took their own course under the control of the Holy Spirit presiding as the executive power of the Godhead. Prayers, testimonies and singing broke out in seeming disorder yet acknowledged by all to be the most harmonious order."

The revivalist would enter during the meetings, sometimes unknown to those present until he arose with some word to the people. The burden of his message would be "Obey the Holy Spirit" and when one in the meeting would break out into prayer while he was speaking, he would calmly give place and show to others, his acknowledgement of the presidency of One greater than he.

At some point perhaps, Mr. Roberts would test the meeting and put to it the four definite steps necessary to salvation, which he said the Holy Spirit had given him to urge upon the people. These are the steps. One, the past must be made clear by sin being confessed to God and every wrong to man put right. If you want a revival in your own life, the past must be made clear by sin being confessed to God and every wrong to man, put right.

Two, every doubtful thing in the life must be put away. Every doubtful thing in the life must be put away. Three, there must be prompt and implicit obedience to the Holy Spirit. Four, there must be public confession of Christ. Publicly testifying in a meeting like the communion service tonight, where we will have an "open microphone", testifying openly, confessing Christ in what He is in your life. Forgiveness of others as an essential to receiving the forgiveness of God was often emphasized as well as the distinction between the Holy Spirit's work in conversion and in baptizing the believer with the Holy Spirit.

In truth, the revivalist was giving the full Gospel as preached at Pentecost and like Peter's message had received the co-witness of the Holy Spirit and produced Pentecostal results. "Repent,

change your mind toward God and put away wrong to your neighbor, remission of sins will then be given you and you shall receive the Holy Spirit if you will obey Him and publicly bear witness to Christ." Indescribable scenes took place at the meetings. Sometimes a very torrent of prayer and then of song would sweep over the audience and hundreds of souls would rise to declare their surrender to God.

The congregation would burst out in joyous thanksgiving and hymns of gladness. But the revival's special burden was always the church. Bend the church. We think we're so great. We think we're such a mighty American church but we're nothing. We have our beautiful buildings and have beautiful choirs but the little guy still has lipstick on his lips and we still have our murders and we're trying to legislate it out of us.

"Bend the church and save the world" was his cry. "Bend the church and save the world." The word 'bend' in Welsh conveys the meaning of submission to God and the taking away of resistance to His will. His one aim seemed to be first to get the Christians right with God so that the Spirit might break out in converting power of the unsaved and Calvary was the power both for sinner and saved. The revivalists would break down in a heart-anguish sobbing when he touched the thing. "You would not be cold if you had come here by Calvary", he would say.

Thanks for Calvary was the burden of many prayers. The hymns rang with Calvary, the one most often sung was "The Mount of Calvary", an exultant song of triumph telling of Christ's victory over death and hell at the cross. Another hymn sung with melting power was "Here Is Love Vast As The Ocean." The people sang without books for these hymns had been in their memories from childhood but now quickened and used by the Spirit they rang out as never before.

Many of the sweet singers of Wales were drawn by the Spirit of God into his service and often would be heard a sweet warbling voice like a nightingale's trill breaking out into a hymn while the people were bowed in prayer. A singing revival it truly became. Souls were sung to Christ and exulted over in song when won. The Spirit of gladness and praise filled all hearts as thousands rejoiced in a newfound assurance of salvation.

The Spirit of God did His own work of convicting and many were the evidences of His power working through him in testimony. A young man would return his prize medal and diploma because he had gained it unfairly. A grocer would return money picked up in his shop and kept although knowing the one who dropped it. Long standing debts were paid, stolen goods returned, prize fighters, gamblers, publicans and others of the class rarely touched by ordinary means, came to Christ and quickly the world knew the results.

Magistrates were presented with white gloves in several places because there were no cases to be tried. Public houses were forsaken, rowdiness was changed to soberness. It was said among the collieries that the horses could not understand the language of their drivers because they had given up swearing at them.

Well, you can see, it's not just good preaching or bad preaching, not just nice singing by Bob or playing by Carmen, it's something deeper loved ones. That's what they need. And if you need it in your own life the directions are plain. You repent, you bend before God. You clear up the past completely, you make everything right with all your neighbors, you put everything doubtful out of your life and you give yourself wholly to God. He remits your sins and gives you the Holy Spirit. Then you have to obey the Holy Spirit. Do whatever He tells you and confess Christ publicly.

God will begin to feed back to you and this nation and begin to change it. But it starts with us. The loved ones out there, the homosexuals, don't even know what they're missing. What's the good of preaching at them? It's wrong what they are doing, but do they see Christ like fragrant love in us that attracts them and exposes the coarseness of what they're experiencing in their desperation as a shadow of the truth? Bend the church and save the world.

Let's begin to bend. Let's begin to seek God for a revival in our own lives and in our church and in our nation. Let's pray.

Dear Father, it is more than 80 years since that move and it is more than 30 years from the movement in the Hebrides in Scotland. Father, we need your mighty touch upon us. Oh Father God, we come before you to ask you to bend us. Father, we know that no man is an island. We know that the little guy with the lipstick on is as much our responsibility as that of his father or his mother or the dear men that are misusing him.

Father, we come before you to acknowledge that they are all my sons, that he is our son also. Lord, if you see anything in our lives that is preventing you coming again in mighty power of revival Spirit in our nation, will you reveal that to us now this day so we may bend these mighty wills before you and that we may clean these consciences and make whatever apologies or restitution we need to make to people past and present. We will put everything doubtful in our lives away from us and give ourselves wholly to You so that even Satan will not be able to contradict us when we say we have surrendered all to God. And You Lord God may do whatever you want with our lives from this day forward. Amen.