

**Revive us, Oh Lord:
Through Radical Evangelism
2 Corinthians 5:11-21**

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: We are praying for revival. I have asked you to pray about two things this year— revival and our impact on the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. As we pray for revival, I have preached this month on the theme of revival.

When I use the word revival, I want you to think this way with me:

A revival is a spiritual awakening in the lives of believers that results in spiritual conversion of unbelievers so large in scope that the results can only be explained as a work of God.

So far, we have talked about the first part of that definition. We have said that revival will be initiated by (1) a radical dependence on God (2) radical praying, (3) a radical return to the Bible, and (4) radical repentance.

Today, I want to address the latter part of our working definition. I want to talk about revival involving the spiritual conversion of unbelievers and our role in that as God seeks and saves the lost.

Text: Knowing, then, the fear of the Lord, we persuade people. We are completely open before God, and I hope we are completely open to your consciences as well.¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who take pride in the outward appearance rather than in the heart.¹³ For if we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we have a sound mind, it is for you.¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died.¹⁵ And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him in this way.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.¹⁸ Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."²¹ He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Introduction: The early church experienced explosive growth because of a conviction to evangelize. When confronted and threatened, they did not pray for their safety but for greater boldness.

The early church believed and took to heart the words of Jesus that their evangelism must start in their cities, but move to ends of the earth. So, in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, we see the early church set apart missionaries to go to other regions to share the Good news of Christ.

With the salvation of one named Saul, whose name is changed to Paul, we see this commission to take the Gospel message to the ends of the earth expand and be the continuing story of the New Testament. This world-wide evangelistic effort culminates in the last book of the New Testament when we see this scene in Heaven with people of every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the Throne of God and they are singing, "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne." (Revelation 7:9-10)

The text before us today contains the motto of the Royal Ambassadors program of our church. This is the program for missions education for boys in grades 1-6. The program is designed to help our boys understand at an early age that our purpose in life as a believer is to help others find a relationship with Christ. This is the culminating point of spiritual revival or awakening.

As always, we let the text drive us today to see several motivating factors of our life-long efforts of evangelism.

Fueling our Evangelism

Our Theology compels us.

Here is, first of all, a theology of judgment.

But, here also is a theology of love.

Paul is a maligned preacher by this point in his ministry. In many respects, the purpose of 2 Corinthians is a self-defense of the credibility of his ministry. First Corinthians has been something of a harsh letter. He has had the unenviable task of pointing out many wrongs in the church. The Corinthians have presumably fired back another letter, and this letter seeks to give defense to his ministry.

At the heart of his defense is the Gospel. Some might think Paul out of his mind (v. 13), but the theological conviction that drives his passion is that those who believe in Christ will go to Heaven, and those who do not believe in Christ will go to Hell. That must be our conviction. When that is our conviction, we cannot be silent.

Our Transformation calls us.

Paul's evangelism is further fueled by his own testimony. He recognized that he had been brought from death to life. He was once an enemy of God, but now a friend of God. He was once destined for Hell, but now his true citizenship was in Heaven. He wanted others to be able to know the same transformation.

Our Title commissions us.

The title is Ambassador. This title seems to imply several things.

- We are Representatives.
- We are sent.
- We are not by ourselves.

George Shultz was Secretary of State during the Reagan administration. Before newly appointed ambassadors left to their assigned country, Shultz met with them. He would have them go to a globe he kept in his office. He would instruct them to find their country on the globe. As a final test, so to speak, he would make the candidate go to the globe and prove that he or she could find his country. Mike Mansfield was appointed to be U.S. ambassador to Japan. In his customary way, Shultz asked Mansfield to go over to the globe and find his country. Shultz would later say that what Mansfield did changed his way of thinking. Mansfield went to the globe, spun it, and put his finger on the United States. He said emphatically, "That's my country." Shultz said from that day forward, new appointees were told that story. He would send them off with these words, "Never forget you're over there in that country, but your country is the United States. You're there to represent us. Take care of our interests and never forget it."

We are ambassadors for Christ! We represent Him. We represent the Gospel.

Our Times challenge us.

Urgency must fuel our evangelism. We don't know the days on this earth. We don't know the days that people have left on this earth. Just as Paul did, we must not know people purely or only in a human way (v. 16), we must see them as spiritual people—going to Hell or going to Heaven.

Fanning the Flames of our Evangelism

2 words to guide our Tactics-

Persuasive—Don't be afraid to be persuasive. Before the Apostle Paul died he had opportunity to present the Gospel to governors and kings. Once, someone named King Agrippa asked Paul "Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian so easily?" Paul answered, "I wish before God that whether easily or with difficulty, not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am." (Acts 26:28-29)

Partnerships—All throughout this passage is the plural pronoun "we." This is the task as individuals, but this is the task of the Church.

So What?

- How instructed am I in evangelism?
The Bible says that we should be prepared to give a defense for the hope that is in us. (1 Peter 3:15)
- How involved am I in evangelism?
- How invested am I in evangelism?
In prayer? In giving? In going?

Do you remember the snow storm last winter (2014) that locked up much of the South? I remember people in Atlanta, for example, stranded on the interstate. This was the scene in Birmingham. A particular neurosurgeon, Zenko Hrynkiw, was at one hospital when he was called to another hospital 6 miles away to perform a life-saving surgery. He started to drive, but quickly that proved to be

impossible. He had to walk nearly the whole 6 miles. He walked in, briefly talked to the family, scrubbed up, and completed the surgery, saving the man's life. In an interview following the surgery, the doctor said, "I don't know what the big deal is. The patient was going to die, and that wasn't going to happen on my shift."

Church, people are dying and going to hell. And our question has to be, "How will we be content with that happening on our shift?"