"REVIVE MY HEART, O GOD"

What To Do about Our Need of Spiritual Renewal

Sunday School January 11-February 15, 2015

<u>January 11</u>

I. Opening scripture: Psa 85:1-7

II. Prayer

III. What this class is NOT about:

- spiritual disciplines
- fighting the culture wars… "taking back America"-- In discussions of revival it's common for people to focus on problems in the culture at large (gay marriage, abortion, divorce, etc.), getting more involved politically, etc.
- evangelism and other Christian activities
- sitting back and hoping Jesus comes soon

IV. What this class IS about:

- The dynamics of spiritual renewal…in a word, revival.
- Spiritual renewal—What is it? Do we need it? If so, how does it take place?
- In many parts of the world the kingdom is advancing. But our focus will be on the US church. I also want to bring it home to our church and to us individually.

V. What is revival or spiritual renewal?

- J. I. Packer: **God revitalizing his church**
  - God: it's a sovereign act of his power & grace
  - Re: implies a present condition that is worse than in former times; there's a present deadness or formality
  - Vitalizing: bringing life to what is dead (as in Ezekiel 37:1-14)
  - His church: it's directed not so much to individuals as to the church. Revival occurs on a broad scale and cuts across denominational and ethnic boundaries and brings unity to Christians. It's focused on believers, not unbelievers, because it's we who need reviving.
- Richard Lovelace: **an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that restores the people of God to normal spiritual life after a period of decline**
- We are working on the assumption that God has chosen to bless his church with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we move toward certain vital norms of health and witness.
- The two questions we will seek to answer are: (1) what are the main streams of spiritual vitality that have flowed throughout the church's history? and (2) how might we experience them again, by God's grace?

VI. Do we need revival?

- Panel: Marc Rutter, Kristin Deckert, Mark Stedman (introduce yourselves)

- Some statistics:
    - Of the 250,000 Protestant churches in America, 200,000 are either stagnant (with no growth) or declining. That is 80% of the churches in America.
    - 4,000-7,000 churches close their doors each year, compared to only 1,000 new church starts
    - Between the years 2010 and 2012, more than half of all churches in America added not one new member.
    - Pew Research Study of 2012: More than 1/4 of American adults (28%) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion - or no religion at all. The "Nones" (claiming no religious affiliation) increased from 15% to 20% of the US adult population between 2007 & 2012. Most church leaders expect this number to rise.
    - There are fewer than half of the number of churches today than there were 100 years ago.
    - Only 15% of churches in the United States are growing and fewer than 5% of those are growing by conversion growth.
    - Ed Stetzer says that what's happening is not the demise of Christianity in America. Instead what's happening is that the church is being more clearly defined. In 1990, 86% of Americans checked the "Christian" box on a survey. Today, seventy-five percent of all Americans call themselves Christians. But of that group, about a third are "cultural" Christians, another third are "congregational" Christians, and another third are true or "convictional" Christians. The number of people in that final group has remained pretty stable over the past 40-50 years.
- Panel, do we need revival?
- Where do you see the church in the US gaining ground and losing ground? What signs of health do you see out there, and what signs of sickness? (KEEP A LIST GOING)
- What trends or problems confronting the church today are most concerning to you?
- What would a spiritual awakening in the US look like?
- What steps toward spiritual renewal should be our primary concern?
- Q&A from the class

VII. Summary of indications something is wrong

- Denominational squabbles & in-fighting
- Prayerlessness
- The dissolution of Christian families
- The decline in parents catechizing their children and worshiping together as families
- The waning influence of believers in the public square
- The loss of confidence in the Bible
- Lack of visible, constructive unity among believers
- Lack of racial, ethnic diversity in local churches

- Decline of institutional loyalty, commitment to one's local church
- Decline of personal evangelism (example: in the PCA in 2013, there were 4800 adult professions of faith in a denomination of 367,000 members. That means it took 76 members to bring one person to faith.)
- Private spirituality: God is here to help me with my problems and help me grow. Lovelace: "Individual renewal is indissolubly connected to the renewal of the whole church. We cannot attain the fullness of the Spirit w/o being turned inside out so our central focus is no longer our own growth, but the glory of God and the growth of Christ's kingdom."
- Church has become a place to be entertained, to be served, rather than equipped for mission
- Church programming, activity and busyness: You may have heard about the Christian from China who visited the United States and toured churches here. At the end of the trip he was asked what he thought about American spirituality. He answered, "I am amazed at how much the church in America can accomplish without the Holy Spirit."
- People are in general "crazy busy": shows up in declining frequency of church attendance even by the most committed members
- Theology without doxology, knowledge without experience - The loss of heart engagement with the gospel
- Dependence upon celebrity preachers, political power, and business methodologies rather than the power of the Holy Spirit and the message of the gospel
- Self-focus—both by members and the church as a whole
- Biblical & theological illiteracy: the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" syndrome
- Decline in striving after personal holiness (focus on justification to the exclusion of sanctification), i.e., easy believism
- Materialism: the selfish quest for comfort, success, and the accumulation of wealth and things... "the laity's ultimate concern for the feathering of their own nests rather than for the enjoyment of God and the advancement of his glory." Lovelace: "Instead of ordering careers, families, businesses and governments around God's purposes, we have, at best, tried to talk about Jesus to others while investing our main energy in pursuing the same things as the world: survival, security and wealth. The church is seen as an enclave of spirituality apart from the struggle for worldly success." (The epitome of this is seen in the health-wealth-prosperity movement.)

VIII. My take

When it comes to indicators that renewal is needed, the main one I see is that we are a people with a **divided heart: misplaced desires, misplaced passions.**

Human behavior and attitudes are motivated by desire, by love. People do what they WANT to do. We are inherently religious creatures. We will channel our passions somewhere: either toward God or toward other objects of worship (idols of the heart). Renewal consists essentially in recovering a profound love for God that

affects every part of our lives. **Augustine**: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Psa. 86:11—"Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."

An analogy might be my lack of love for NFL football…

The condition of the church today seems best described by **Ezekiel 16.** "How sick is your heart....? (v30)" An analogy might be a husband who cheats on his wife.

Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters." The heart has space for only one love (paraphrasing Jack Miller).

Is there hope for renewal? As I said earlier, God has chosen to bless his church with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we move toward certain vital norms of health and witness. So there is something we can do. But ultimately, we must beg God for the grace we need to recover our first love (Revelation 2:4-5).

(Ed Stetzer in *Christianity Today*, Oct 2013):
"As the trend continues, we will see the "Nones" continue to grow and the church lose more of its traditional cultural influence. Christians will likely lose the culture wars, leading to difficult times ahead for us. But we do not need to lose hope. This is not cause for despair. It is a time to regroup and re-engage. Christianity may be losing its top-down political and cultural influence, but Jesus spoke of His followers making an impact in a very different manner. He taught that God's kingdom was subversive and underground. He used examples like yeast, which changes things from the inside, and mustard seeds, which are small and must be planted in order to grow up and out. As the distinctions between Christians and an ever-growing post-Christian culture emerge, we will have to set aside any nominal belief systems and become active agents of God's Kingdom. The answer is not found in waging cultural wars incessantly, or in making a theological shift to the left to pacify a culture offended by the gospel. The answer is in all of God's people, changed by the power of the gospel and propelled by love, moving into the mission field as agents of gospel transformation."

IX. Closing Scripture: Isa 64:1-4

X. Next week: the preconditions of renewal

<u>January 18</u>

Review: the church in the US is in decline

- Many problems (see list from last week)
- God has chosen to bless his church with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the condition that we move toward certain vital norms of health and witness. So what are those norms? What are the main streams of spiritual vitality that have flowed throughout the church's history? How might we experience them again, by God's grace?
- The root problem is lack of desire for God and his glory. People do what they WANT to do. If we loved God, we would keep his commandments. Love is what motivates behavior and attitude. We need to return to our first love.
- "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection"
- Today we're going to see what the Bible says we must do if we are ever going to recover our first love.

I. Opening scripture: Isaiah 57 (esp. vv15-19)

II. Preconditions of spiritual renewal (cross chart)

A. Awareness of God's holiness

- Isaiah 6:1-5
- Exodus 15:11, 19:16-25
- Of God's holy, exalted character see also Rom 11:33-36, Hab 1:13, 2:20; Psa 97:1-5, Heb 10:31, Psalm 7:11
- God's holiness is his differentness… his separation from everything unclean, impure, unjust, untrue.
- Our picture of God has become more and more kindly and humane, like that of an overindulgent grandparent. The image of God as a holy Judge has been more and more dismissed as "Old Testament," "fire and brimstone."
- Natural man cannot stand this attribute of God.
    - Bill Maher, for example, said, "Let's face it. God has a big ego problem. Why do we always have to worship him?" Also, "At least half of the Ten Commandments are stupid." And, "You can't be a rational person six days a week and on one day of the week, go to a building, and think you are drinking the blood of a two thousand year old space god. That doesn't make you a person of faith…that makes you a schizophrenic."
- But the "New Testament God" is just as holy as the "OT God." John the Baptist's ministry was to warn people about "the wrath to come." Jesus said more about hell than heaven.
- If God were not holy, there would have been no cross.
- "The <u>fear</u> of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7).

B. Conviction of the depth of our sin

- Isaiah 6:5 – "Woe is me! For I am lost."
- See also Gen 8:21, Jer 17:9-10, Job 42:5-6
- Examples of sins we don't think about (the cross can only get as big as your conception of sin):
    - Boasting
    - Talking too much
    - Not listening
    - Being inconsiderate or rude
    - Self-righteousness
    - Failing to delight in what God is doing in others
    - Wasting time
    - Being late
    - Controlling people
    - Thanklessness
    - Touchiness, irritability
    - Being harsh
    - Worry
    - Anger
    - Defensiveness
    - Lust
    - Self-contempt
    - Insulting others
    - Gossip
    - Avoiding conflict when it's necessary
    - Not seeking or heeding godly counsel
    - Laziness
    - Over-anything (sleeping, drinking, eating, working, TV-watching, etc.)
    - Discontentment
    - Impatience
    - Envy
    - Deceit, exaggeration
    - Greed
    - Worldliness
    - Prayerlessness
    - Ignoring God's Word, both in public and private
    - Racial prejudice
    - Stinginess
    - Passivity
    - Vanity
    - Trusting in good deeds
    - Profanity
    - Sexual sins

    - Judgmentalism
    - Failing to provide adequately for one's family
    - People-pleasing
    - "Even our virtues are organized as weapons against the rule of God."
- Tongue exercise: THIS WEEK…
    - Don't defend yourself no matter what happened.
    - Don't excuse yourself.
    - Don't run someone down even a little bit.
    - Don't repeat a matter of gossip.
    - Don't boast.
    - Don't complain about anything.
- Story about Raynald III, from Dave Wilkinson:
  In his book, *The Three Edwards*, Thomas Costain describes the life of Raynald III, a 14th-century duke in what is now Belgium. Grossly overweight, Raynald was commonly called by his Latin nickname, Crassus, which means "fat." After a violent quarrel, Raynald's younger brother Edward led a successful revolt against him. Edward captured Raynald but didn't kill him. Instead he built a room around Raynald in the castle and promised him he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room. This would not have been difficult for most people since the room had several windows and a door of near-normal size, and none was locked or barred. The problem was Raynald's size. To regain his freedom he needed to lose weight. But Edward knew his older brother, and each day he sent a variety of delicious foods. Instead of dieting his way out of prison, Raynald grew fatter. When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had a ready answer: "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." Raynald stayed in that room for 10 years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined he died within a year…a prisoner of his own appetite.
- **The human heart is allergic to God.** "Unless we are moved by the Holy Spirit we have a natural distaste for the real God, an uncontrollable desire to break his laws and a constant tendency to sit in judgment on him when we notice him at all. Since his purposes cross ours at every juncture, we really hate him more than any finite object, and this is clearly displayed in our treatment of his Son. We are largely unconscious of this enmity. It is usually repressed through our unbelief, our creation of agreeable false portraits of God, our sense of his distance from us, our fear of punishment or our lact of awareness of the magnitude of our guilt.

Awareness of God's holiness, conviction of the depth of our sin: These are like two sides of a coin; they go together. And revival is an awakening. It's waking up to our own condition and the nature of the true God.

III. How should we respond to these two realities?

A. We dare not minimize either the holiness of God or the depth of our sin.

- How we minimize God's holiness: focusing only on his love and immanence, downplaying his wrath and transcendence; thinking of him as something less than his Word declares him to be; thinking we can take advantage of his grace because he'll forgive; performing, ie., trying to win God's favor with good works or self-contempt; following bad theology
- How we minimize our sin: pretending we're better than we really are; "I'm not that bad"; comparing ourselves with others; making excuses ("I couldn't help it"); relying on our own record; building our righteousness on anything but Jesus; defending ourselves; keeping up appearances; hiding; exaggerating; blaming others

B. Repent & believe the good news!

- Repentance: Admit, turn
    - Admit to yourself, to God, and maybe even to others (James 4:16, 1 Jn 1:9)
    - Own up – don't defend
    - (Say a word about confession of sin as a part of corporate worship)
    - Turn away - Isaiah 55:6-7
- Faith: Run to Jesus – trust the promises of the gospel.
- This is what releases the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Faith in the gospel is the root of all true spirituality.

<u>February 1</u>

Begin with Psalm 85

Pray: "Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me…Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me…."

Review:

- Revival = God revitalizing his church; an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that restores the people of God to normal spiritual life after a period of decline
- The two questions we are seeking to answer are: (1) what are the main streams of spiritual vitality that have flowed throughout the church's history? and (2) how might we experience them again, by God's grace?

Revivals in history

- Judges – decline followed by repentance and revival. "When the people cried out to the Lord, he raised up a deliverer…."
- Good kings of Judah: Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah
- Nehemiah – led a faithful remnant back to Jerusalem, rebuilt the wall and reinstituted the worship of God
- John the Baptist – crowds of people went out to him to be baptized in the Jordan
- Pentecost – 3,000 souls came into the church

The Great Awakening (1730s-1740s)

- Key figures: **Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley**
- "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" – Edwards' preaching was the spark that ignited the blaze of revival.
- Read excerpts of "Sinners in the Hands"
- During the Great Awakening of the 1740s, "it was estimated that in two or three years, 30-40,000 souls in New England (out of a pop. of 300,000) were converted, besides great numbers in NY, NJ, and the southern provinces." That's as much as 12% of the population. Do you know what 12% of today's US population would be? 38 million people. That's equivalent to the population of the entire state of California today.
- **John & Charles Wesley** were major figures of the Great Awakening in England. The renewal continued later in the 18th century under the converted slave trader, **John Newton.** He organized an Evangelical United Front that involved elements of almost every denomination in England. Not only was the church revitalized, but major societal changes took place.
- **William Wilberforce (1759-1833)** – member of Parliament who was instrumental in ending the slave trade in Great Britain. He was a member of an Anglican parish in Clapham, near London. The **"Clapham Sect"** was a group of about 20 Anglican pastors, businessmen, and politicians who spent 3 hours a day in prayer (morning, noon, and evening), lived simply on a fraction of their incomes, and invested in missions, evangelism, and social activism. Some of them lost their health and their fortunes.

- It all began with the preaching of God's holiness and the depth of human sin.
- Unfortunately, in the late 1800s, these Biblical realities started to fade and were replaced by preaching that focused on sentimentalizing God and avoided his attributes of holiness, justice, and wrath. Sin came to be defined as conscious, voluntary acts of transgression against known laws.
- When you hear about what God has done in the past, you may have a whole new perspective on the state of the church today. The problem is our limited frame of reference. People who live in western NC may think they know what mountains look like. But once they visit Colorado they have a whole new definition of mountains!

Preconditions of spiritual renewal: Awareness of God's holiness; conviction of the sinfulness of sin

- Isa 57:15 – "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"

Primary elements of renewal are those streams of grace and truth in which we must swim if we would be spiritually healthy. Optimum spiritual health simply involves remaining in the light of truth about our needs and their fulfillment in Jesus' redemptive work.

- Last week: Justification ("you are accepted, free from the power of sin, righteous in Christ" – the guilt of sin is covered by the righteousness of Christ) and sanctification ("you are a new person in Christ, free from the power of sin, able to grow in holiness" – you have been united with Christ in his resurrection and sin shall not be your master).
- Today: the Holy Spirit within – "You are not alone, you have the Spirit of Christ" – and authority in spiritual conflict – "You are not helpless, you don't have to live in fear, you are in command through the victory of Christ."

I. The Holy Spirit

Lovelace: "The typical relationship between believers and the HS in today's church is too often like that between the husband and wife in a bad marriage. They live under the same roof, and the husband makes constant use of his wife's services, but he fails to communicate with her, recognize her presence and celebrate his relationship with her."

A. Scriptures
   a. John 14:15-23
   b. John 15:1-5
   c. John 16:5-15
   d. John 20:19-23
   e. Acts 1:6-9
   f. Rom 8:1-30

g. 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19
h. Gal 5:16-26

What do these verses teach?

- The Holy Spirit is a Person.
- The Holy Spirit is God. He does things only God can do.
- Through the indwelling Spirit, the Father & Son are in the closest communion with believers.
- The Holy Spirit indwells all who put their trust in Jesus, from the moment of their regeneration. In fact it is the Spirit who breathes new life into the sinner.
- The Holy Spirit's activity in the lives of believers:
    - Sanctifies: the Spirit wants to make us more like Jesus
    - Teaches: the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jn 14:26 says he "will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you." See also Eph 1:17
    - Leads: "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom 8:14)
    - Empowers: Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49 – "stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
    - Guides in prayer: Rom 8:26
    - Illumines our minds: 1 Cor 2:6-16
    - Pours God's love into our hearts: Rom 5:5
    - Gives us words to speak in witness to Christ: Matt 10:19-20
    - Gifts believers for ministry: 1 Cor 12:4-13
    - Reassures believers of their adoption: Rom 8:15-17
    - Preserves (seals) us until we get home: Eph 1:13-14
    - Comforts: Jn 14:16 (parakletos = helper, advocate, counselor)
    - In short-- The Holy Spirit is the continuing presence and power of Christ in the world. He is <u>creating life</u>. He is <u>applying</u> the redemptive work of Christ to our hearts and minds and bringing it to life.

      Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
      That I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

      Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
      Until my will is one with thine, to do and to endure.

      Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,
      Until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

B. Implication: "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18).

How? One way is to build your relationship to God's Word. Compare Eph 5:18-20 with Col 3:16-17.

Ephesians 5	Colossians 3
Vs. 18 – Be filled with the Spirit.	Vs. 16a – Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.
Vs. 19a – Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs.	Vs. 16b – Teach & admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns & spiritual songs…
Vs. 19b – Sing & make music in your heart to the Lord.	Vs. 16c - …with gratitude in your hearts to God.
Vs. 20 – Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.	Vs. 17 – And whatever you do…do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Other things to do to be filled with the Spirit: confess your sin; pray; do things that are too hard for you.

C. Regarding the Lovelace quote above, he goes on: "What should we do to reverse this situation? We should make a deliberate effort at the outset of every day to recognize the person of the HS, to move into the light concerning his presence in our consciousness and to open up our minds and share all our thoughts and plans as we gaze by faith into the face of God. We should continue to walk throughout the day in a relationship of communication and communion with the Spirit mediated through our knowledge of the Word, relying upon every office of the HS's role as counselor mentioned in Scripture. We should look to him as teacher, guide, sanctifier, giver of assurance concerning our sonship and standing before God, helper in prayer, and as the one who directs and empowers witness. It involves moving about in all the areas of our life in dependent fellowship with a person."

II. Authority in Spiritual Conflict

Christians have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Most Christians are not aware that they are involved in spiritual warfare. The truth is that we are continuously subject to his temptations and attacks.

We can go too far in attributing all bad things to Satan, but we can also go too far the other way and minimize the work of Satan. Every one of us has a target on our backs.

A. Scriptures
   a. 1 Peter 5:8
   b. Eph 6:10-20
   c. 2 Cor 2:9-11

B. Satan's tactics
   a. Temptation (to sin, to pride, to subchristian lifestyle and values, to justifying sin, etc.)
   b. Accusation—"Devil" (*diabolos*) means slanderer. Rev 12:10 says "the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God"
   c. Slander of God, blasphemy
   d. Deceit – "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world (Rev 12:9)
   e. Counterfeit miracles
   f. Discouragement
   g. Impeding the spread of the gospel (1 Thess 2:18, "we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.")
   h. Possession, demonization
   i. Physical attack, murder

C. How to battle the devil:
   a. By faith. 1 Jn 3:8 says, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."
   b. Jesus gave his disciples "authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you" (Luke 10:19).
   c. "All authority" has been given to Jesus (Matt 28:18). Think of the chained lions in *Pilgrim's Progress*. "Christian warfare is not a conflict in which the sides are equivalent. The forces of darkness are so chained by the victory of Christ that they are unable to do anything which does ultimate damage to his glory and kingdom" (Lovelace).
   d. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
   e. But we must walk always in the Spirit, clothed in Christ himself (Rom 13:12-14).

III. What does all this mean practically? Do you live as an orphan or a child of God?

Romans 8:12-17 – "Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering." (NLT)

Orphan-Child chart

February 8

Begin with Isaiah 64:1-4

Review:

- Preconditions of renewal: awareness of God's holiness; awareness of the depth of our sin
- Primary elements of renewal:
    1. Justification—you are accepted
    2. Sanctification—you are a new person
    3. Indwelling Holy Spirit—you are intimately connected to Jesus
    4. Authority in spiritual conflict—you are in command

Authority in Spiritual Conflict

Christians have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Most Christians are not aware that they are involved in spiritual warfare. A survey by the Barna Group found that only 43% of Americans believe the devil to be a "living entity," as opposed to a symbol of evil. The truth is that we are continuously subject to his temptations and attacks.

C. S. Lewis in the *Screwtape Letters*: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

We can go too far in attributing all bad things to Satan, but we can also go too far the other way and minimize the work of Satan. Every one of us has a target on our backs.

Who is Satan? A fallen angel at the helm of a complex web of supernatural beings and systems that resist God's reign, hinder his kingdom's advance, and confound his people. A demonic power structure exists with different leaders in charge of different areas and nations (Daniel 10 mentions "the prince of Persia" and "the prince of Greece"). Satan claims control of the fallen world system. The basic motivating drive behind these powers of darkness is their hatred of God. They conspire to frustrate the joint rule of the world by God and humanity. Satan conspired to kill Jewish babies before the birth of Moses and again when Jesus was born.

Why is Satan so determined? Because the agenda of the Messiah is to "degrade and destroy" the occupying powers of darkness and reverse the curse.

- "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8).
- The cross meant the casting out of the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31).

He goes by several different names:

- "Satan" = the enemy

- "devil" = slanderer
- "Apollyon" = the destroyer (Rev 9:11)
- "ruler of this world" – Jn 12:31
- "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" – Eph 2:2
- "the tempter" – Matt 4:3

ASK: How have we trivialized the devil? How have we distorted the Biblical teaching about him? We explain him away. The evil he perpetrates are seen as the result of purely natural forces.

A. Scriptures
   a. Genesis 3:1-7
   b. Matt 13:18-23
   c. Luke 4:1-13
   d. Luke 22:3-6, 31-34
   e. John 8:39-47
   f. 2 Cor 2:9-11
   g. 2 Cor 4:4
   h. 2 Cor 11:12-15
   i. Eph 6:10-20
   j. 1 Tim 4:1-2
   k. 1 Peter 5:8
   l. Revelation 12

B. Satan's tactics
   a. Temptation (to sin, to pride, to subchristian lifestyle and values, to justifying sin, to laziness with spiritual disciplines, to believe false doctrine, to worldliness, etc.)
   b. Accusation—"Devil" (*diabolos*) means slanderer. Rev 12:10 says "the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." Satan brings charges against God to us and takes charges against us to God. "The devil can tune us in to a kind of demonic mental radio station, which is constantly giving us his opinion of our weakness and depravity. He can distort our self-image into a caricature with all our faults exaggerated and all our virtues obscured." He also whispers accusations against other Christians in our ears, caricaturing them in our minds at the same time he is caricaturing us in theirs!
   c. Slander of God, blasphemy
   d. Deceit – "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev 12:9); "he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44)
   e. Counterfeit miracles
   f. False religions and false teaching (1 Tim 4:1-2), including giving false teachers charismatic force. Just like in a dictatorship, the devil seeks to control the media and persuade with propaganda. "He seeks to block the

broadcast of truth, and to insert and energize whatever is morally degrading and conducive to unbelief."

g. Disguise (2 Cor 11:14)
h. Discouragement, demoralizing
i. Blocking the spread of the gospel (1 Thess 2:18, "we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.")
j. Possession, demonization
k. Physical attack, murder (John 8:44)
l. Snatching the Word of God from the hearts and minds of people (Matt 13:19)
m. Blinding the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4)
n. "Sifting" people (Luke 22:31)
o. Confusion – one moment Satan tempts us to be insensitive to sin and careless about God's commands; the next, we fall into depression and discouragement because of our sin

C. Lovelace: "[Satan] is a superhuman being of great cunning and power, a participant in a cosmic war against the reign of God, in which the Fall of man is only one major skirmish. He is the leader of a host of lesser angels called demons. In effect, the Fall was an invitation to this host of spirits to take up residence in the earth as an occupying army."

D. God calls and empowers us to "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). How do we do that? **Know/fight/believe.**

a. **Know** the devil's tactics.
    - 2 Cor 2:11 – "We are not ignorant of [Satan's] designs."
    - Be vigilant and wise, not naive.
    - Know where you are vulnerable.

b. **Fight** with spiritual weapons.
    - Ephesians 6:14ff. – belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit, prayer
    - Have someone pray for you.
    - Christian's fight with Apollyon
    - Romans 14:14 – "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."
    - "They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11)

c. **Believe the truth.** Satan, while a powerful enemy, is a defeated enemy.
    - 1 Jn 3:8, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."
    - Romans 16:20 promises, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."
    - Jesus gave his disciples "authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

- "All authority" has been given to Jesus (Matt 28:18). Think of the chained lions in *Pilgrim's Progress*. "Christian warfare is not a conflict in which the sides are equivalent. The forces of darkness are so chained by the victory of Christ that they are unable to do anything which does ultimate damage to his glory and kingdom" (Lovelace).
- The life of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus (the healings, the casting out of demons, etc.), the death of Jesus on the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus from the grave were the definitive display of the fact that Jesus has the authority, the right, the power to rule over his creation. It was **the beginning of the end** of sin, and death, and Satan's control over humanity.
- The Kingdom of God was **the main theme** of Jesus' ministry. "Kingdom" was his watchword.
- ***Matt. 4:23*** - "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."
- ***Luke 11:14-23*** (cf. ***Mark 3:27)*** - "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man."
- Satan can do only that which God decrees (Job 1-2, Luke 22:31—"Satan has asked to sift you, Peter").
- Also remember that he is not omnipresent.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

February 22

Begin with Isaiah 64:1-4

Review:

- Revival: God revitalizing his church
- God has chosen to bless his church with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as his church moves toward certain vital norms of health and witness.
- We looked at revivals in the Bible and in church history.
- Preconditions of renewal: awareness of God's holiness; awareness of the depth of our sin
- Primary elements of renewal (things you & I must believe in order to see revival):
    1. Justification—you are accepted
    2. Sanctification—you are a new person
    3. Indwelling Holy Spirit—you are intimately connected to Jesus
    4. Authority in spiritual conflict—you are in command

Today: **Secondary Elements of Spiritual Renewal (things you & I must DO in order to see revival)**

1. Mission: doing gospel proclamation and demonstration
2. Community: uniting with the body of Christ in small and large groups
3. Theological integration: developing a Biblical worldview
4. Dependent prayer: relying on the power of the risen Christ individually and corporately

Dependent prayer

Ask most Christians what the most essential condition of revival is, and they will probably say prayer. Prayer is one of the most crucial ingredients both in individual spiritual growth and in the renewal and extension of the church.

Bible promises about prayer:

- ALL READ Matt 7:7-11 – ask, seek, knock…what father among you…
- Matt 21:22 – "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."
- John 14:13-14 – "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."
- Jn 15:7 – "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."
- Jn 16:24 – "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."
- 1 Jn 5:14 – This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."
- James 4:2 – "You do not have, because you do not ask God."

ASK: Do we believe these promises? What keeps us from believing these promises?

Lovelace: Despite the promises about prayer in the Bible, and the testimony of 2,000 years of church history, "both in Evangelical and non-Evangelical circles, the place of prayer has become limited and almost vestigial. The proportion of horizontal communication that goes on in the church (in planning, arguing and expounding) is overwhelmingly greater than that which is vertical (in worship, thanksgiving, confession and intercession). Critically important committee meetings are begun and ended with formulary prayers, which are ritual obligations and not genuine expressions of dependence—when problems and arguments ensue, they are seldom resolved by further prayer but are wrangled out on the battlefield of human discourse. The old midweek prayer meetings for revival have vanished from the programs of most churches or have been transformed into Bible studies ending with minimal prayer…. Deficiency in prayer both reflects and reinforces inattention toward God. Then too, the minimal prayer accompanying many projects in the church may indicate that what is being undertaken is simply what human beings can accomplish pretty well by themselves. The weakness here lies partly in oversimplifying the target and partly in failing to comprehend the transforming role the Holy Spirit plays in every redemptive enterprise….. Our fallen nature constantly pulls us away from prayer."

Concerts of Prayer:
The Concert of Prayer for the Conversion of the World was first suggested by the leading revivalists in Scotland, in October, 1744. They determined that for the next two years they would set apart some time on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings every week for prayer and it was decided that the first Tuesday of each quarter would be time to be spent in prayer. People were to pray for either the entire day or part of the day, as they found themselves disposed, or as circumstances allowed. They would meet in either private prayer groups or in public meetings, whichever was found to be most convenient. As a result a group of ministers covenanted to give themselves weekly to "united extraordinary supplications to the God of all grace...earnestly praying to Him that He would appear in His glory...by an abundant effusion of His Holy Spirit... to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom...and fill the whole earth with His glory." The results were positive but not particularly extraordinary. The movement spread and the evangelical cause was strengthened and the church enlarged in a small way. The practice spread throughout Great Britain, and a booklet printed in 1746 recommended that evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic establish a formal spiritual community through a "Concert for Prayer." John Erskine of Edinburgh, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, sent a copy of this little book to Jonathan Edwards in New England. He was so moved that he wrote a response which grew longer than a letter, so he published it in 1747 as a book, entitled "A humble attempt to promote the agreement and union of God's people throughout the world in extraordinary prayer for a revival of religion and the advancement of God's kingdom on earth, according to scriptural promises and prophecies of the last time." The result was a strong case from scripture for an international Concert of Prayer. From then on 'concerts of prayer' became part of the Anglo-American evangelical scene. But enthusiasm waned when no immediate results were seen. Then there was a period of almost 40 years when this new seed was incubating. Then, in 1784, this burden for prayer was awakened again by the same John Erskine of Edinburgh. He re-published and distributed Jonathan Edward's earnest plea for prayer. Denomination after denomination devoted a monthly Monday evening to prayer, first in Britain, then in the US. In 1791, the year John Wesley died, the storm clouds broke. The beginning of the revival can be traced to the industrial towns of Yorkshire in late 1791,

spreading through all areas and denominations. The Methodists alone grew from around 72,000 at Wesley's death in 1791 to almost a quarter of a million within a generation.
At the same time, the churches in Wales became packed again and thousands gathered in the open air. The Haldanes (Robert and James) and Thomas Chalmers, with a few others, saw phenomenal awakenings in Scotland. Ireland too, saw local awakenings, especially among the Methodists. A remarkable result of these UK revivals was the founding the British and Foreign Bible Society, The Religious Tract Society, The Baptist Missionary Society, The London Missionary Society, The Church Missionary Society and a host of other evangelistic agencies. It also achieved considerable social reform; evangelical Anglicans successfully fought for the abolition of the slave trade, prisons were reformed, Sunday Schools began and a number of benevolent institutions were commenced. In 1794, Isaac Backus and Stephen Gano, along with twenty-three other New England ministers, distributed a circular letter which called for a concert of prayer of believers to pray for a general awakening. They agreed to begin a Concert of Prayer for a general awakening to be held at two o'clock on the first Tuesday of the four quarters of the year. They began in January 1795. By 1798 the awakening had broken out everywhere. Every state and evangelical denomination was affected. Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, took over Yale College in 1795 and saw over half the students converted in just one year. Other colleges enjoyed similar movements of the Spirit.
James McGready and Barton Stone witnessed an astounding revival at Kentucky in 1800, with much trembling, shaking, tears, shouting and fainting. In 1801 Barton Stone was invited to minister at the Cambridge meeting house in Bourbon County. A second visit attracted 20,000 people to a 6-day camp-meeting, which witnessed astounding revival scenes, with hundreds falling at once, with shrieks and shouts and many conversions.

Prayer in the early church

- Acts 1:12-14 – "They all joined together constantly in prayer."
- 1:24-26 – apostles prayed for God to show them who should take Judas' place
- 2:42-47 – the church devoted themselves to prayer
- 4:23-31 – the church prayed for the progress of the gospel and "the place where they were meeting was shaken"
- 6:1-4 – apostles wanted to give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word
- 8:14-17 – Peter & John prayed that the Samaritan believers would receive the Holy Spirit
- 12:1-16 – "The church was earnestly praying to God" for Peter while he was in prison.
- 13:1-3 – the church leaders fasted and prayed before sending Paul and Barnabas off in mission
- 16:25-32 – Paul & Silas were in prison praying
- 28:7-10 – Paul prayed for healing for the father of Publius, the chief official of Malta.
- Paul, in almost all his letters, prays for the people he's writing to and implores them to pray for him.
    - Rom 15:30-32 – "I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my

behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints."
    - Phil 1:19 – "I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance."
    - Col 4:3 – "Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ."
    - Eph 6:19 – "Keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel."
    - 2 Thess 3:1-2 – "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men."

Conclusion: The prayer of faith is the instrument which releases the mighty acts of the risen Christ in history.

SHOW PIPER VIDEO
Piper: "Prayers cause things to happen that wouldn't happen if you did not pray."
Christians hold the balance of power in the world today.

AT YOUR TABLE: How could UPC become more of a praying church?

- We need to correct some of the bad teaching about prayer many Christians have received.
    - Prayer does not have to be long. In fact, the Bible says "let your words be few" (Eccles 5:1-2).
    - Prayer does not have to be eloquent and beautifully expressed.
- We need to spend more time as Life Groups in prayer.
- We need to pray as families and couples.
- We need to have periodic days or seasons of prayer as a church.
- We need to use creative means of praying together.
- We need to get in touch with our desires. Maybe C. S. Lewis' words are *apropos*: "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."
- We need to do more kingdom praying rather than only praying for personal and physical concerns.
- We need to believe in the power of prayer.
- We need to practice <u>fasting</u>.

What is fasting? Abstinence from food, either partially or total, for a set period of time to be determined as the person and circumstances dictate, for the purpose of humbling oneself before the Lord in a time of distress. Another purpose is to prepare for special duties or callings (Acts 13:2-3, Matt 4:2, Esther 4:16).

We see fasting in the Bible:

- Deut 9:18 – Moses fasted for 40 days after the people made the golden calf
- 1 Sam 7 – the Israelites fasted after their defeat by the Philistines and loss of the ark of the covenant
- 1 Kings 21 – Ahab fasted after Elijah warned him of his impending judgment
- Ezra 10 – Ezra fasted because of the Israelites' sin of intermarrying with foreigners
- Neh 1 – Nehemiah fasted when he heard about the destruction of the Jerusalem wall
- Neh 9 – the Israelites fasted and confessed their sins before God for half a day
- Jer 36 – a time of fasting was declared for the Israelites as Baruch read from Jeremiah's scroll at the temple
- Dan 9 – Daniel fasted when he understood about the 70 years of exile
- Jonah 3 – the king of Ninevah declared a fast after Jonah preached about the judgment of God
- Joel 1-2 – Joel called his people to fasting and mourning over their sin, and to "return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate"
- Matt 6:16 – Jesus says, "WHEN you fast…."
- Matt 9:14-15 – Jesus seems to say that now is the period when Christians should fast.

Our BCO says, "The observance of days of fasting and of thanksgiving, as the dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, is both scriptural and rational."

See handout on fasting.

Lovelace: "If all regenerate church members in Western Christendom were to intercede daily simply for the most obvious spiritual concerns visible in their homes, their workplaces, their local churches and denominations, their nations, and the world and the total mission of the body of Christ within it, the transformation which would result would be incalculable. Not only would God certainly change those situations in response to prayer…but the church's comprehension of its task would attain an unprecedented sharpness of focus. Perhaps much of our prayer now should simply be for God to pour out such a spirit of prayer and supplication in the hearts of his people."

Again read Isa 64:1-4

Spend time praying

End with "Spirit of the Living God" – break me, melt me, mold me, fill me