

# *President Fred Luter Jr.'s Address*

## **SBC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**President Fred Luter, Jr.**

**2014 Southern Baptist Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 2014**

**Sermon Text: Psalm 80:18–19**

### **When God Sends Revival**

Psalm 80 deals with a very difficult time in the life of Israel.

Psalm 80 deals with a very painful time in the life of Israel.

Psalm 80 deals with a very trying time in the life of Israel.

Psalm 80 deals with a very challenging time in the life of Israel.

Psalm 80 deals with a very crucial time in the life of Israel.

And the reason that it was a difficult time;

The reason that it was a painful time;

The reason that it was a trying time;

The reason that it was a challenging time;

And the reason that it was a crucial time, is because Israel had once again messed up with God. Israel had once again blown it with God. Israel had once again sinned against God. Consequently, as a result of their sin, the blessings of God were hindered. The blessings of God were affected. The blessings of God were interrupted in their lives. And brothers and sisters, anytime we mess up that bad with God. Anytime we blow it that bad with God. Anytime we sin that bad with God, we are truly in trouble.

Therefore, realizing their plight here in Psalm 80, Israel prays to God for restoration. Realizing their situation, Israel cries out to God for restoration. Listen to their prayer in verse 3: “Restore us O God!”

Verse 7: “Restore us O God of hosts!!

Verse 14: “Return, we beseech you, O God of hosts!”

Verse 19: “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts!”

Well, in like manner my brothers and sisters, look around you.

It is a difficult time in the life of America.

It is a painful time in the life of America.

It is a trying time in the life of America.

It is a challenging time in the life of America.

It is a crucial time in the life of America.

And the reason it is a difficult time:

The reason it is a painful time:

The reason it is a trying time:

The reason it is a challenging time:

The reason it is a crucial time, is because like Israel in Psalm 80, America has messed up with God! Like Israel in Psalm 80, America has blown it with God! Like Israel in Psalm 80, America has sinned against God!

Brothers and sisters, our nation is in trouble; our country is in trouble.

Our states are in trouble; our cities are in trouble.

Brothers and sisters, our churches are in trouble.

America is rapidly turning into a pagan nation! We've lowered our morals; we've lowered our values; we've even lowered our standards to the point where if an athlete comes out of the closet and says that he is gay – our society says he's a hero.

Well, I beg to differ with the NBA! I beg to differ with the NFL!  
I beg to differ with the president! I beg to differ with social media!  
Police officers are heroes! Fire fighters are heroes! EMT workers are heroes!  
Our IMB missionaries putting their lives on the line every day trying to share the Gospel with unreached people groups are heroes. And yet we wonder why our nation is in trouble. The lowering of our morals; the lowering of our values; the lowering of our standards are common today. And it is affecting every area of our society.

The sitcoms that are being made;

The movies that are being produced;

The music that is being played;

The videos that our kids are watching;

The violent video games that our kids are playing.

Rampant crime in our cities and neighborhoods; drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sex abuse, adultery, fornication, child molestation, abortion, homosexuality, same sex marriage, racism, pornography, and gang violence are all common occurrences in our nation; are all common occurrences in our country; are all common occurrences in our cities.

So the question of the hour is: How do we address these issues that are affecting our nation? How do we handle these issues that are affecting our country? How do we confront these issues that are affecting our cities? Well, brothers and sisters, let me answer my own questions.

I am convinced that if things are going to change in America; I am convinced that if things are going to change in your state and my state; I am convinced that if things are going to change in your city and my city, then there must be a spiritual awakening! There must be a spiritual renewal! There must be a spiritual revival that starts in the church!

Now notice I said that if spiritual awakening; notice I said that if spiritual renewal;

Notice I said that if spiritual revival is going to happen, that it **MUST** start in the **CHURCH!**

Not in congress – in the **CHURCH!** Not in the senate – in the **CHURCH!**

Not in the White House – in the **CHURCH!** Not in your house – in the **CHURCH!**

Not in my house – in the **CHURCH!** And if spiritual awakening, if spiritual renewal, and spiritual revival is going to start in the church, then it **MUST** start with prayer!

Brothers and sisters, if there is any hope for spiritual renewal in our country and in our cities, then the renewal must start in our churches! And if it starts in our churches, it must start with the people in our churches – Christians, believers, the body of Christ!

Brothers and sisters of the Southern Baptist Convention, we have a great and glorious opportunity to turn around the downward spiritual trend of our nation if we would take seriously the Great Commission given to the church! And if the church is going to accept this change, this mandate, then we must bathe this effort in prayer. That's what Israel did in Psalm 80, and that's what the churches of this Convention must do! Spiritual awakening and spiritual renewal must start with prayer!

Prayer for the believer is how we communicate with God. How we talk to God. I'm not talking to you. You're not talking to me. Prayer is how we talk to God. In prayer, we are talking to God! It is a form of communication that every member of the body of Christ should take advantage of. As a matter of fact, the Bible encourages this form of communication between God and His sons and daughters.

In Matthew 6:9, Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.

Matthew 7:7 says: “Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened to you.”

Matthew 21:22: “And all things, whatsoever you shall ask shall be given to you.”

Matthew 26:41: “Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.”

Luke 18:1: “Men should always pray and not faint.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”

Philippians 4:6: “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known unto God.”

And finally, as it relates to prayer making a difference in our nation, in our society, in our states, and in our cities, we must mention 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14: “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; I will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Brothers and sisters, if spiritual renewal and awakening will take place in our nation it **MUST** start with the **CHURCH** calling on God in prayer!

That’s what happened in Psalm 80 when Israel prayed to God for restoration. And that’s what we as Southern Baptists **MUST** do to bring about renewal and restoration to our churches in America. So what happens when we call on God in prayer for our nation; and for our churches? Well, I truly believe that God will send revival! However, for God to send revival and renewal to our churches and Convention, I believe there are some things that must happen first.

### **Number One: There must be REPENTANCE.** (v. 14)

Brothers and sisters, we must ask God’s forgiveness for not making evangelism a priority. We must ask God’s forgiveness for not making reaching lost people a priority.

Have you heard the latest baptism numbers reported by our Baptism Task Force through NAMB? Twenty-five percent of our churches reported no baptisms; 60% of our churches reported no baptisms for young people between the ages of 12–17 years old; 80% of our churches baptized only one person between the ages of 18–29.

Oh, it’s no wonder why our numbers are falling.

Baptism numbers are falling

Attendance numbers are falling.

Membership numbers are falling.

Youth numbers are falling.

With those numbers, if we were working on a secular job, many of us would have been fired by now! Oh, we must repent; we must ask for God’s forgiveness, we must tell God we’re sorry.

Because we have the answer for this sin-sick, this sin-saturated, this anything-goes society that we are living in today. And the answer is that we must share with this lost world, the Gospel! The Word of God! Because only the Gospel can transform lives! That’s why Romans 1:16 says “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” I believe that some of us have been saved for so long we forgot how much power the Gospel has to transform lives!

Think about it, you haven’t always been saved.

You have not always been born again.

You have not always been a Christian.

Before you were who you are today, what did it take to change you?

Before you were preaching the gospel. Before you were a pastor.

Before you were singing gospel music.

Before you were a Sunday School teacher.

Before you were a seminary president.  
 Before you were a seminary professor.  
 Before you were an evangelist.  
 Before you were a missionary.  
 Before you were a denominational worker.  
 Before you worked for IMB.  
 Before you worked for NAMB.  
 Before you worked for LifeWay.  
 Before you worked for GuideStone.  
 Before you worked for WMU.  
 Before you worked for the Southern Baptist Convention.  
 What did it take to change you?

In other words, in your “BC” days, in your before Christ days.

In other words, before you bought or were given your first King James Schofield Reference Bible! The question of the hour is, what did it take to change you?

Well my friend, let me answer my own question, you and I were changed when we heard the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and that Gospel changed your life and it changed my life! And that same Gospel can change the lives of lost men, women, boys, and girls today! So let me encourage you pastors: Preach the Gospel!

Let me encourage you Sunday School teachers: Preach the Gospel!

Let me encourage you Bible study teachers: Preach the Gospel!

Let me encourage you seminary professors: Preach the Gospel!

Let me encourage you evangelist: Preach the Gospel!

Let me encourage every church of the Southern Baptist Convention to Preach the Gospel!

In order to reach this iPod, iPad, iPhone generation,

In order to reach this sin-sick society,

In order to reach this lost and dying world, we must give them the Word of God!

Not any gimmicks, not any games, give this lost and dying world the Word of God!

Give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Oh, God, we repent for using substitutes for the Word of God!

But then there is a second thing that must happen for God to send revival and renewal to our churches and to our Convention. Not only must there be repentance.

### **Number Two – There must be REMORSE. (v. 18a)**

Listen to the Psalmist cry after repenting.

Listen to the Psalmist cry after asking God's forgiveness.

Repentance means to turn away from bad actions.

Remorse means a sense of guilt for one's actions.

Brothers and sisters, if renewal is going to happen in our churches and in our Convention, we must have a sense of remorse. We must have a sense of guilt. We must have a sense of regret for not being obedient to the Great Commission.

In the Great Commission, Jesus told us to: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” That's what Jesus told us to do. That's what Jesus commissioned us to do. However, according to our baptism numbers, a lot of our churches are not going. According to our attendance numbers, a lot of our churches are not making disciples. How else can we explain these numbers across our Convention? How else can we explain these numbers among our churches?

Listen, brothers and sisters, we're living in a day and time where there is no commitment to the church. There is no allegiance to a denomination anymore. There was a time when you'd just open up a church door and people would come. There was a time when you were expected to go to church. Many of you grew up like me where we did not have a choice of whether we were going to church on Sunday morning. I can remember vividly my momma telling me;

"Boy, as long as you are living under my roof,"

"Boy, as long as you are sleeping in my bed,"

"Boy, as long as you are drinking my water,"

"Boy, as long as you are eating my food, on Sunday morning, everybody in this house is going to church!" As a matter of fact, I tell people everywhere I go that my momma gave me my first drug problem. She drug me to church; she drug me to Sunday School. But those days are over! Parents are not coming to church; therefore, their children are not coming to church; therefore, their teenagers are not coming to church; therefore, there are no salvation decisions, therefore, there are no baptisms. So, if they are not coming to us, we must go to them!

That's what Jesus meant when He gave us the Great Commission. Jesus told us to go, don't stay!

Go, don't think about it!

Go, don't debate it!

Go, don't study about it!

Go, don't blog about who is supposed to go!

If you are born again; If you are saved; If you are a Christian! If you are believer! If you are a child of God! If you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, well, you qualify. GO, GO, GO, GO! Go and make disciples of all nations! Every tongue, every tribe, every nation, every neighborhood, every race, and every culture. No matter who they are; no matter where they are from; no matter what their situation.

Go and make disciples!

They make speak English, Spanish, French, or German.

They may live uptown, downtown, your town, or my town.

They may be Jew, Gentile, Muslim, or Hindu.

No matter their hairstyle: afro, dreadlocks, comb-over, or bald head.

No matter how they dress: shorts, jeans, t-shirt, or baggy bags.

No matter what's on their feet: Jordans, Converse, Nike, or Reebok.

No matter what's on their body: tattoos, earrings, or body piercing.

No matter what their style of music: hip-hop, gangster-rap, rock and roll, R&B, or even country & western!

Go, go, go and make disciples!

Oh, God, please forgive us for not being obedient to the Great Commission! Forgive us for not sharing the Good News of the Gospel to those in our neighborhood, those in our community, and those in our city. To those who are lost and in need of a Savior! Oh, God, we repent! Oh, God, we are remorseful! Therefore we cry out like the Israelites in Psalm 80, "Return, we beseech you, O God of hosts" (v. 14).

"Then we will not turn back from you" (v. 18a).

Finally, there's one more point to this sermon.

Brothers and sisters of the Southern Baptist Convention, If we expect to do something about the spiritual decline across our Convention; if we expect to see spiritual awakening across our Convention; if we expect to emphasize the importance of evangelism; if we expect to make a priority of making disciples; if we expect to bring restoration and renewal through prayer.

Number One – There Must Be Repentance.

Number Two – There Must Be Remorse.

And if we as a Convention do one and two, I promise you the third thing will happen.

**Number Three – There WILL Be REVIVAL!** (vv. 18b–19a)

Listen to the children of Israel after realizing their faults. Listen to the children of Israel after realizing their mistakes. After there was repentance. After there was remorse. Then they cried out to God for revival!

In like manner, brothers and sisters of the Southern Baptist Convention, we can no longer ignore these reports every year. We can no longer ignore these numbers every year. For another year, our baptism numbers are down. For another year, our attendance numbers are down. For another year, our youth numbers are down. Ladies and gentlemen, we are losing a generation. We can no longer be at ease in Zion while people all around us are dying and going to hell.

Therefore, we must repent. Therefore, we must have remorse and do what Israel did in Psalm 80. They prayed to God for restoration. They prayed to God for revival. As your president for the past two years, that has been my heart's desire. That God would make us one, and that God would send revival and renewal through the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, brothers and sisters, the only way that will happen in this Convention; the only way that will happen in our churches, is if we cry out to God in prayer!

If there is genuine repentance, if there is genuine remorse, and if we call on that name which is above every name!

That name which is above the name of the Republicans and Democrats;

That name which is above the name of the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Senate;

That name which is above the name of those riding a donkey or those riding an elephant;

That name which is above the name of the red states or the blue states.

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

That name that can change the heart of a racist;

That name that can change the mind of a murderer;

That name that can change the desire of a child molester;

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

That name that can change the crowd of a gang member;

That name that can change the habit of a prostitute;

That name that can change the desire of a drug addict;

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

That name that can change the taste buds of an alcoholic;

That name that can change the heart of a hypocrite;

That name that can change the lifestyle of a homosexual;

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

That name that can change the actions of an adulterer;

That name that can change the thoughts of a thief;

That name that can change the destiny of a lost sinner;

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

For His name is Jehovah Jireh; His name is Jehovah Nissi;

His name is Jehovah Shalom; His name is Jehovah Tsidkenu.

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

The Alpha, Advocate, Almighty, Amen, the Author and Finisher of our Faith;

The Captain of our Salvation, The Chief Shepherd;

Oh, I wonder if you know His name!

The Door, Cornerstone, Commander, Creator;  
The Faithful Witness, The Good Shepherd, the Great High Priest;  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
The Head of the Church, the Holy Child, the I Am;  
Immanuel, Jehovah, King of the Ages;  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
The Lawgiver, the Lamb of God; the Lion of Judah;  
The Lord of All, the Son of God, the Son of Man;  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
The Resurrection and the Life, the True Light;  
The Lord of Glory; the Mighty God, the Messiah;  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
The Lord of Righteousness, the Rock, the Bright and Morning Star;  
The Prince of Peace; Redeemer, the True Light, the True Vine;  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
The Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Rose of Sharon, the Everlasting Father;  
The Deliverer, the Just One, the Word of God, the Man of Sorrows;  
The Only Begotten Son of God; the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End;  
The Alpha and the Omega, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords!  
Oh, I wonder if you know His name!  
That name which is above every name, that at the Name of JESUS, every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that Jesus Is Lord!!!

I've heard the joy bell sound, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves. I'm going to share it all around, Jesus saves, Jesus saves. To the utmost Jesus saves, to the utmost Jesus saves. He will pick you up and turn you around, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Jesus saves!

Brothers and Sisters of the Southern Baptist Convention, will you repeat this after me; "Lord, send a revival; Lord, send a revival; Lord, send a revival and let it begin with me!"

May God Bless you, your family, and your ministry is my prayer.

— *from the office of Dr. Fred Luter Jr.*