

# BILLY SUNDAY



**Billy Sunday** (1862-1935), was a professional baseball player from 1883 to 1891 for Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia teams. He was converted through the street preaching of Harry Monroe of the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. He left a \$5,000 a year salary as a baseball player for a \$75 a month for the previously evangelistic YMCA. From 1893 to 1895 was associated with J. Wilbur Chapman. He was an evangelist from 1893 to 1935. It is estimated that over 300,000 people walked the "sawdust trail" to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. (Adapted from "The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church," page 387, Elgin S. Moyer, 1982, ©Moody Press, Chicago, IL)

For more information about Billy Sunday, please visit the [Christian Biographical Resources](#) for many links, pictures, and articles about this great evangelist.

## "The Need For Revivals"

Somebody asks: "What is a revival? " Revival is a purely philosophical, common-sense result of the wise use of divinely appointed means, just the same as water will put out a fire; the same as food will appease your hunger; just the same as water will slake your thirst; it is a philosophical common-sense use of divinely appointed means to accomplish that end. A revival is just as much horse sense as that.

A revival is not material; it does not depend upon material means. It is a false idea that there is something peculiar in it, that it cannot be judged by ordinary rules, causes and effects. That is nonsense. Above your head there is an electric light; that is effect. What is the cause? Why, the dynamo. Religion can be judged on the same basis of cause and effect. If you do a thing, results always come. The results come to the farmer. He has his crops. That is the result. He has to plow and plant and take care of his farm before the crops come.

Religion needs a baptism of horse sense. That is just pure horse sense. I believe there is no doctrine more dangerous to the Church today than to convey the impression that a revival is something peculiar in itself and cannot be judged by the same rules of causes and effect as other things. If you preach that to the farmers - if you go to a farmer and say "God is a sovereign," that is true; if you say "God will give you crops only when it pleases him and it is no use for you to plow your ground and plant your crops in the spring," that is all wrong, and if you preach that doctrine and expect the farmers - to believe it, this country will starve to death in two years. The churches have been preaching some false doctrines and religion has died out.

Some people think that religion is a good deal like a storm. They sit around and fold their arms, and that is what is the matter. You sit in your pews so easy that you become mildewed. Such results will be sure to follow if you are persuaded that religion is something mysterious and has no natural connection between the means and the end. It has a natural connection of common sense and I believe that when divinely appointed means are used spiritual blessing will accrue to the individuals and the community in greater numbers than temporal blessings. You can have spiritual blessings as regularly as the farmer can have corn, wheat, oats, or you can have potatoes and onions and cabbage in your garden. I believe that spiritual results will follow more surely than temporal blessings. I don't believe all this tommy-rot of false doctrines. You might as well sit around beneath the shade and fan yourself and say "Ain't it hot?" as to expect God to give you a crop if you don't plow the ground and plant the seed. Until the Church resorts to the use of divinely appointed means it won't get the blessing.

### **What a Revival Does**

What is a revival? Now listen to me. A revival does two things. First, it returns the Church from her backsliding and second, it causes the conversion of men and women; and it always includes the conviction of sin on the part of the Church. What a spell the devil seems to cast over the Church today!

I suppose the people here are pretty fair representatives of the Church of God, and if everybody did what you do there would never be a revival. Suppose I did no more than you do, then no people would ever be converted through my efforts; I would fold my arms and rust out. A revival helps to bring the unsaved to Jesus Christ.

God Almighty never intended that the devil should triumph over the Church. He never intended that the saloons should walk rough-shod over Christianity. And if you think that anybody is going to frighten me, you don't know me yet.

When is a revival needed? When the individuals are careless and unconcerned. If the Church were down on her face in prayer they would be more concerned with the fellow outside. The Church has degenerated into a third-rate amusement joint, with religion left out.

When is a revival needed? When carelessness and unconcern keep the people asleep. It is as much the duty of the Church to awaken and work and labor for the men and women of this city as it is the duty of the fire department to rush out when the call sounds. What would you think of the fire department if it slept while the town burned? You would condemn them, and I will condemn you if you sleep and let men and women go to hell. It is just as much your business to be awake. The Church of God is asleep today; it is turned into a dormitory; and has taken the devil's opiates.

When may a revival be expected? When the wickedness of the wicked grieves and distresses the Christian. Sometimes people don't seem to mind the sins of other people.

Don't seem to mind while boys and girls walk the streets of their city and know more of evil than gray-haired men. You are asleep.

When is a revival needed? When the Christians have lost the spirit of prayer.

When is a revival needed? When you feel the want of revival and feel the need of it. Men have had this feeling, ministers have had it until they thought they would die unless a revival would come to awaken their people, their students, their deacons and their Sunday-school workers, unless they would fall down on their faces and renounce the world and the works and deceits of the devil. When the Church of God draws its patrons from the theaters the theaters will close up, or else take the dirty, rotten plays off the stage.

When the Church of God stops voting for the saloon, the saloon will go to hell. When the members stop having cards in their homes, there won't be so many black-legged gamblers in the world. This is the truth. You can't sit around and fold your arms and let God run this business; you have been doing that too long here. When may a revival be expected? When Christians confess their sins one to another. Sometimes they confess in a general way, but they have no earnestness; they get up and do it in eloquent language, but that doesn't do it. It is when they break down and cry and pour out their hearts to God in grief, when the floodgates open, then I want to tell you the devil will have cold feet.

### **Revival Demands Sacrifice**

When may a revival be expected? When the wickedness of the wicked grieves and distresses the Church. When you are willing to make a sacrifice for the revival; when you are willing to sacrifice your feelings. You say, "Oh, well, Mr. Sunday hurt my feelings." Then don't spread them all over his tabernacle for men to walk on. I despise a touchy man or woman. Make a sacrifice of your feelings; make a sacrifice of your business, of your time, of your money; you are willing to give to help to advance God's cause, for God's cause has to have money the same as a railroad or a steamship company. When you give your influence and stand up and let people know you stand for Jesus Christ and it has your indorsement and time and money. Somebody has got to get on the firing line. Somebody had to go on the firing line and become bullet meat for \$13 a month to overcome slavery. Somebody has to be willing to make a sacrifice. They must be willing to get out and hustle and do things for God.

When may a revival be expected? A revival may be expected when Christian people confess and ask forgiveness for their sins. When you are willing that God shall promote and use whatever means or instruments or individuals or methods he is pleased to use to promote them. Yes. The trouble is he cannot promote a revival if you are sitting on the judgment of the methods and means that God is employing to promote a revival. The God Almighty may use any method or means or individual that he pleases in order to promote a revival. You are not running it. Let God have his way. You can tell whether you need a revival. You can tell if you will have one and why you have got one. If God

should ask you sisters and preachers in an audible voice, "Are you willing that I should promote a revival by using any methods or means or individual language that I choose to use to promote it?" what would be your answer? Yes. Then don't growl if I use some things that you don't like. You have no business to. How can you promote a revival? Break up your fallow ground, the ground that produces nothing but weeds, briars, tin cans and brick-bats. Fallow ground is ground that never had a glow in it. Detroit had a mayor, Pingree, when Detroit had thousands and thousands of acres of fallow ground. This was taken over by the municipal government and planted with potatoes with which they fed the poor of the city.

There are individuals who have never done anything for Jesus Christ, and I have no doubt there are preachers as well, who have never done anything for the God Almighty. There are acres and acres of fallow ground lying right here that have never been touched. Look over your past life, look over your present life and future and take up the individual sins and with pencil and paper write them down. A general confession will never do. You have committed your sins, one by one, and you will have to confess them one by one. This thing of saying, "God, I am a sinner," won't do.

"God, I am a gossip in my neighborhood. God, I have been in my ice-box while I am here listening to Mr. Sunday." Confess your sins.

How can you promote a revival? You women, if you found that your husband was giving his love and attention to some other woman and if you saw that some other woman was encroaching on his mind and heart, and was usurping your place and was pushing you out of the place, wouldn't you grieve? Don't you think that God grieves when you push him out of your life? You don't treat God square. You business men don't treat God fair. You let a thousand things come in and take the place that God Almighty had. No wonder you are careless. You blame God for things you have no right to blame him for. He is not to blame for anything. You judge God. The spirit loves the Bible; the devil loves the flesh.

If you don't do your part, don't blame God. How many times have you blamed God when you are the liar yourself. You are wont [accustomed] to blame him for the instances of unbelief that have come into your life. When should we promote a revival? When there is a neglect of prayer? When your prayers affect God? You never think of going out on the street without dressing. You would be pinched [arrested] before you went a block. You never think of going without breakfast, do you? I bet there are multitudes that have come here without reading the Bible or praying for this meeting.

You can measure your desire for salvation by means of the amount of self-denial you are willing to practice for Jesus Christ. You have sinned before the Church, before the world, before God.

Don't the Lord have a hard time? Own up, now.

## Persecution a Godsend

There are a lot of people in church, doubtless, who have denied themselves - self-denial for comfort and convenience. There are a lot of people here who never make any sacrifices for Jesus Christ. They will not suffer any reproaches for Jesus Christ. Paul says, "I love to suffer reproaches for Christ" (e.g., Rom. 8:17). The Bible says, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you" (Luke 6:26). "Blessed are you when your enemies persecute you" (Matt. 5). That is one trouble in the churches of God today. They are not willing to suffer reproach for God's sake. It would be a godsend if the Church would suffer persecution today; she hasn't suffered it for hundreds of years. She is growing rich and lagging behind. Going back.

Pride! How many times have you found yourself exercising pride? How many times have you attempted pride of wealth? Proud because you were related to some of the old families that settled in the Colonies in 1776. That don't get you anything; not at all. I have got as much to be proud of as to lineage as anyone; my great-grandfather was in the Revolutionary War, lost a leg at Brandywine; and my father was a soldier in the Civil War.

Envy! Envy of those that have more talent than you. Envious because someone can own a limousine Packard and you have to ride a Brush runabout; envious because some women can wear a sealskin coat and you a nearseal.

Then there is your grumbling and fault-finding. When speaking of people behind their backs, telling their faults, whether real or imaginary, and that is slander. When you sit around and rip people up behind their backs at your old sewing societies, when you rip and tear and discuss your neighbors and turn the affair into a sort of a great big gossiping society, with your fault-finding, grumbling and growling. There is a big difference between levity and happiness, and pleasure, and all that sort of thing.

Make up your mind that God has given himself up for you. I would like to see something come thundering along that I would have more interest in than I have in the cause of God Almighty! God has a right to the first place. God is first, remember that.

Multitudes of people are willing to do anything that doesn't require any self-denial on their part.

I am not a member of any lodge, and never expect to be, but if I were a member of a lodge and there were a prayer-meeting and a lodge-meeting coming on Wednesday night, I would be at the prayer-meeting instead of at the lodge-meeting. I am not against the lodges; they do some good work in the world, but that doesn't save anyone for God. God is first and the lodge-meeting is second. God is first and society second. God is first and business is second. "In the beginning, God!" (Gen. 1:1) That is the way the Bible starts out and it ought to be the way with every living being. "In the beginning, God." Seek you first God and everything else shall be added unto you. Christianity is addition; sin is subtraction. Christianity is peace, joy, salvation, heaven. Sin takes away

peace, happiness, sobriety, and it takes away health. You are robbing God of the time that you misspend. You are robbing God when you spend time doing something that don't amount to anything, when you might do something for Christ. You are robbing God when you go to foolish amusements, when you sit around reading trashy novels instead of the Word of God.

"Oh, Lord, revive thy work!"

I have only two minutes more and then I am through. Bad temper. Abuse your wife and abuse your children; abuse your husband; turn your old gatling-gun tongue loose. A lady came to me and said, "Mr. Sunday, I know I have a bad temper, but I am over with it in a minute." So is the shotgun, but it blows everything to pieces.

And, finally, you abuse the telephone girl because she doesn't connect you in a minute. Bad temper. I say you abuse your wife, you go cussing around if supper isn't ready on time; cussing because the coffee isn't hot; you dig your fork into a hunk of beefsteak and put it on your plate and then you say: "Where did you get this, in the harness shop? Take it out and make a hinge for the door." Then you go to your store, or office, and smile and everybody thinks you are an angel about to sprout wings and fly to the imperial realm above. Bad temper! You growl at your children; you snap and snarl around the house until they have to go to the neighbors to see a smile. They never get a kind word - no wonder so many of them go to the devil quick.

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