

REVIVE US AGAIN

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"Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Psalm 85:6.

Revival is a term that relates to the people of God. To revive means to restore, or to bring into action after suspension. As applied to religion, Mr. Webster tells us that a revival means, "A renewed interest in religion, after indifference and decline; a period of religious awakening; special religious interest." While we may speak of the Christian's being revived, such cannot be said of the unregenerate because they are "dead in trespasses and sin." They need to be resurrected instead of revived. Revival, therefore, is confined to God's people.

A revival is the spiritual quickening of God's people, so that they are reinvigorated and renewed in their spiritual life. It is an increase of the life which has already been received. It is a movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians, awakening them and making them more God conscious. A revival applies exclusively to those who have been born of the Spirit. It causes Christians to repent of their sins, to clean up their lives, to enjoy their Christianity, and to share it with others. Therefore, a revival is not secondary nor incidental, but primary and fundamental.

I. The Cry For A Revival.

"O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Habakkuk 3:2. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Psalm 85:6.

When is a revival needed? A revival is needed when there is a lack of spiritual power; when there is a lack of Christian confidence and brotherly love among professed Christians; when there are jealousies and fault-finders among professed Christians; when there is a worldly spirit in the lives of church members; when church members fall into gross sins; when church members have lost their "concern for souls"; when church members can easily break church engagements and God's appointments; when church members neglect the privileges of worship and only attend the services of their church when they feel like it or do not have any other place to go; when it is easier to find fault with and to criticize others than it is to pray for them and to work with them; when conversions are seldom and backslidings are frequent.

Surely, I need not argue that there is a crying need for a revival! Doubtless the very condition of your own heart, with its cry unto God for a larger life, is sufficient conviction of that need. It is a blessed fact that when one is born of God he is never quite satisfied unless he believes himself to be on the upgrade, growing in grace. William Cowper's hymn expresses the sentiment of many Christians:

"Oh, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"

What kind of a revival do we need?

1. A revival to save us from our worldliness.

We need a revival that will enable the worldly Christian to free himself of worldly entanglements, ungodly associations, unholy loves, unchristian habits, and unbecoming conduct. The only remedy for a formality, unconcern, indifference, coldness, and worldliness is a genuine revival.

2. A revival to save us from spiritual illness.

Our Lord was and is interested in the bodies of men. Twenty-six of the thirty-five recorded miracles of Christ were performed on human bodies. Wherever there is human pain, He is interested. However, the things that grieve Him most as He looks down on our world today is not physical illness, but spiritual maladies. Many are ill physically, but the problem of the spiritually sick is a far greater one. Spiritual zest and enthusiasm are absent from the lives of too many. They sit complacently in church and sing, "I shall not be moved," or "O, land of rest for thee I sigh." We need a revival that will restore Christians to a healthy and a happy state. Backslidden Christians need the spiritual vitamin of Bible study, prayer and Christian service to restore them to spiritual normalcy. God wants people who can stand without props, walk without crutches, and testify without being coached.

3. A revival to save us from the binding power of sin.

The Psalmist said, "Plead my cause, and deliver me; quicken me according to Thy Word." Psalm 119:154. He felt himself in the grip of sin. In his helplessness he desired an intercessor to plead his case before the high court of heaven. He felt that without God's help he was hopeless.

Many today writhe in the clutches of some sin. They would like to be free, but they are held captive at Satan's will. The worst slavery on earth is that of sin. Sin has its binding, blinding and grinding power. You can see its bite and blight in the lives of so many. But, thank God, thousands who were bound by sin have repented and found life, light and liberty in the blessed Saviour. We need a revival that will release the power of God upon sin-bound men, "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." II Timothy 2:26.

Yes, we need a heaven-born, God-sent, soul-stirring, heart-warming and life-changing revival. Christians need to be revived, because it is God's good pleasure to work through them. When one's spiritual life is at low ebb, when he is without power in prayer, and when his witness is faltering in effectiveness, there is a real need for a spiritual renewal.

II. The Conditions Of A Revival.

That revival blessing is one of the most pressing needs of our time will not be questioned by any who are awake to the conditions which prevail. Many Christians know little about the more abundant life in Christ.

The possibility of a revival cannot be doubted when we study the movements of the Holy Spirit in the past, and when we remember that He is still here in all the plenitude of His grace and power. Though the Spirit of God is sovereign in His activity, conditions have to be fulfilled before He will give a revival. The conditions of a revival are:

1. Humility before God.

Humility brings the soul into a position to hear God's voice, be used by Him, and receive blessings from Him. It enables a Christian to walk consistently, love generously, serve willingly, act meekly, forgive heartily, forbear thoughtfully, and respond obediently.

We have been everything but humble before the Lord. We are a proud, self-sufficient

generation. Remember, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5:5-6.

2. Repentance toward God.

Some have the idea that repentance is only for the unsaved, but the New Testament makes it clear that repentance is also for the Christian. The Christians at Ephesus had left their first love, and were commanded by the risen Christ to repent.

3. Confession to God.

Persistent unwillingness to confess our sins, selfishness, prayerlessness, worldliness, unchristlikeness and disobedience prevent a revival from being experienced. A study of the great revivals of the past shows unmistakably that they came after the Lord's people had confessed their sins to God, and acknowledged their faults to one another. Confession to God must be free, frank and full. The enthroned Christ is the only priest with the prerogative to forgive. Where there is spiritual pride and self-complacency there cannot be a revival. God revives the hearts of contrite ones. Brokenness before God because of our sins is an indispensable prerequisite to spiritual blessing.

4. Renunciation of sin.

Everything which does not have the smile of the Divine approval must be put away. The Word says, "Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump." I Cor. 5:7. Sin in the camp brings defeat to the army of the Lord and holds back the blessing. The Corinthian Church was commanded to put away the wicked person from among their members. The sins of the old life, weights which hinder us in the Christian race, and questionable things should be put away.

God's Word calls on Christians to live a separated life. One of the most persistent and most urgent pleas is for His people to separate themselves from the world. He said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." To "have no fellowship with" means not to go about it, not to touch it, not to have anything to do with it.

5. Prayer to God.

"O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Here the prophet is quite clear and explicit. He knows exactly what needs to be done, what he wants God to do, and when he wants Him to do it. It was in the very midst of the things which were so deplorable. Christ prayed. He commanded us to pray, and He taught us how to pray. There never was a movement of the Holy Spirit among Christians which was not preceded by earnest and believing prayer. People may work up religious enthusiasm, but spiritual revival is always prayed down. There cannot be a revival of God's people until there is a revival of prayer among them. Prayer must come first, just as the blossom must always precede the fruit. The Divine order is, "Ask, and ye shall receive." And the asking must precede the receiving.

Unless we are seeking the glory of God, the honor of Christ, the good of others, and the salvation of the lost we cannot expect our prayers to be answered. The prayer which brings revival down must be definite, united, unselfish, believing, importunate, and Spirit-inspired. Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. When we pray for a revival we should begin with ourselves, for a spiritual revival always begins with a process of self-emptying and a divine filling. We certainly cannot do better than to pray the well-known prayer of the Chinese Christian: "Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me."

6. Personal work with the lost.

Every Christian should have a longing for the salvation of the lost. Something

is very definitely wrong with any Christian who does not have a passion for lost souls. If one does not have it, that fact may be due to an unregenerate state, a worldly life, a lack of faith, a dread of criticism, or a fear of doing harm rather than good. But, every Christian is required to go where there are lost souls and to entreat them to accept Christ as their Saviour. No method can ever be substituted for individual concern for individual souls. Personal work will reach people who otherwise would never be reached.

No visiting preacher, however great as a preacher or successful as an evangelist, can bring a revival to a church whose members are cold and unconcerned about the lost. We have an obligation to see to it that the visiting preacher shall have his heart warmed by those to whom he comes rather than to expect him to bring the fire that will set them on fire. It is a two-sided proposition. If we expect him to bring us a blessing, we must see to it that we give him a blessing. If we are concerned about the lost before he comes, his messages will find a blessed reception and result. The success of a meeting is determined more largely by the preparation of the church members than the preaching power of the evangelist.

And remember, that it is a reflection upon one's intelligence to think that God will answer prayers that profess piety and refuse personal witnessing. It is a testimony to our faith when we add to our praying a faithful and obedient witnessing to the lost. If you would really like to have a revival, get right with God yourself, pray definitely for it, and put yourself at God's disposal for Him to use as He sees fit in winning others to Him.

III. The Consequences Of A Revival.

1. Christ will be glorified.
2. Christians will be refreshed and strengthened.
3. The church will be blessed.
4. The lost will be saved.