

CAN WE HAVE A REVIVAL?

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"
Psalm 85:6.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." II Chronicles 7:14.

With the time rapidly approaching when we shall begin our series of meetings, I am giving much thought and prayer to the vital and important matter of our having a genuine spiritual revival in the lives of our people who know the Lord.

I. What Is A Revival?

Mr. Webster tells us that a revival is "a renewed interest in religion, after indifference and decline; a period of religious awakening; special religious interest." Revival is a term which applies exclusively to those who are the children of God. That which has never lived cannot be revived. A revival, therefore, is confined to God's people. A revival is an increase of the life which has already been received; a movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians causing them to repent of their sins, to clean up their lives, to enjoy their Christianity and to share it with others. Seasons of revival will result in the salvation of lost souls.

II. Do We Need A Revival?

A heaven-born, God-sent, Holy-Spirit, soul-stirring, heart-warning and life-changing revival is the most urgent need of our church today.

III. What Kind Of A Revival Do We Need?

We need a revival of such a nature as to save us from our worldliness, our spiritual maladies and the blinding, binding and grinding power of sin. Surely, I need not argue the need for a revival. The condition of your own heart should be a sufficient conviction of that need.

IV. Can We Have Such A Revival?

That depends upon whether or not we really want a revival. God does not superimpose a revival upon His children. He does not force Himself upon His own. There is no question about our need of a spiritual revival, but do we want it? If so, there is a price we must pay for it, or we shall never receive it. Are we ready to pay that price? What will a revival cost us?

1. Humility before God.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves." Humility includes freedom from arrogance, a modest estimate of one's worth and self-abasement. Humility is the richest pearl in the Christian crown of graces. It is a suit that is always in fashion, never wears out and is always becoming. It is recognized by men, admired by angels and appreciated by the Lord. It brings the soul into a position to hear God's voice, be used of Him and receive blessings from Him. Humility enables a Christian to walk consistently, love generously, serve willingly, act meekly, forgive heartily, forbear thoughtfully and respond obediently.

Far too many Christians today are far from humble before God. So many of us are proud and self-sufficient. We need to remember that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Peter said, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:5-6).

2. United, believing, persevering prayer.

Before we can please God and influence people as we should, we must understand the meaning of prayer and learn to pray. Prayer has been defined as follows: "Prayer is the turning of the soul Godward"; "Prayer is the reaching out of the heart of man toward the heart of God"; "Prayer is the human spirit seeking contact with the Divine Spirit"; "Prayer is the native and deepest impulse of the soul"; "Prayer is the converse of the soul with God"; "Prayer is weakness leaning on Omnipotence"; "Prayer is an avowal of our creature dependence" and "Prayer is laying hold on God's highest willingness." Prayer is communion with God, committal to God and cooperation with God. It is more than merely asking God for something. Prayer is putting ourselves at God's disposal to do what He wills in and with and through us.

A child of God can conquer anything by prayer, but he does not have any power without it. Our success in the work of the Lord will be determined by our praying. By prayer we harness God's omnipotence to our impotence. Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. No praying will mean no results, little praying will mean a few results, and much praying of the right sort will mean great results. Let us pray earnestly, definitely, submissively, persistently and expectantly.

The prayer that God can answer must come from the heart and lips of one who knows Christ as personal Saviour, a life that is being lived in obedience to God's expressed will, and one who is willing to help God answer his own prayer.

A spiritual revival always begins in the hearts of God's people. Therefore, none of us shall ever be able to improve upon the prayer of the Chinese Christian, "Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me." God never sends a revival independently of His own receptive and believing people.

We must realize our dependence upon God for power. When we try to do things in the energy of the flesh God refuses to bless and use us.

3. Reformation of life.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." God earnestly, urgently and persistently pleads with His children to separate themselves from their wicked ways of covetousness, rebellion, murmuring, worldliness, inconsistency, indifference to religious duties and devotion to self-interest. Before we can expect sinners to trust Christ as Saviour, we must forsake our evil ways and turn to God in penitence. God's promises are conditional. He will certainly do His part when we do ours. In substance He says, "If you will do this, I will do that."

4. Personal work with the lost.

Following the united, believing, persevering prayers of the Christians at Pentecost and the consequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit in mighty power upon them, there was the personal telling of "the wonderful works of God." Note the time when the personal work was done. It was not until after prayer had been offered and the Holy Spirit had been received, but it was before the sermon was delivered. Note also the character of the conversation carried on by the praying, Spirit-filled believers. Their tongues were wagging, just the same as the tongues of our church members will wag during our evangelistic meetings. But what were those early Christians talking about? They were talking about "the wonderful works (triumphs) of God."

What were the "triumphs" of God? Surely three were included: the resurrection of Christ, the release of the Holy Spirit and the regeneration of believers in Christ.

Every Christian has been divinely commissioned to go to lost souls, wherever they may be found, witness to them about the saving power of Christ and urge them to receive Him as their Saviour. The Scriptures do not imply that sinners are commanded to come to church and hear us preach and teach. But there is much in God's Word about the imperative duty of every Christian to go to lost people and try to win them to Christ.

Most church members never pray for the salvation of a lost soul. Neither do they ever speak to a lost person about his need of Christ and the importance of trusting Him for salvation. Every Christian should have a longing for the salvation of souls and should strive faithfully to persuade them to receive Christ as Saviour. Something is seriously wrong with the relationship of any professing Christian to Christ if he does not have a passion for lost souls and does not strive to win them to Him. Nothing can ever be substituted for individual concern for specific lost people. Many can be reached through personal work who otherwise will never be won. Lost people will not attend church until some earnest Christian presses an invitation upon them. Christ went out after those who were lost, and so ought we. He said, "Follow me." We cannot follow Christ and not go and witness to the unsaved. Unless we go to the lost, they will never come to Christ and be saved.

If you love Christ, you will go and work personally with the lost in order to please Him. If you love your relatives and friends who are unsaved, you will go and do your best to persuade them to receive Christ as Saviour and escape hell. If you do not go, as He has commanded you to witness for Him, you prove that you neither love Christ nor lost souls. This is the price that has to be paid if people are to be saved. Are you willing to pay it? The response of the unsaved to the invitations of our evangelist, whom the Lord will send to us, will be in direct proportion to the personal work of the members of our church.

Obedience to our Lord in this important matter will result in the salvation of others and will bring an indescribable joy to your own soul and great blessings to the church, as well as bring glory to Him Who has so graciously saved us. Let us pay the price without fail.