

REVIVE US AGAIN

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

In recent days I have been giving considerable thought and prayer to the vital and important matter of our having a genuine spiritual revival in the lives of those of us whom the Lord has saved. My mind has reverted repeatedly to the prayer of the Psalmist, "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

The meaning of "revive" is "quicken." This is a prayer for a much needed quickening among God's people, and is to be desired as much today as when it was prayed by the Psalmist in ancient times. Revive is a term which applies only to the children of God. That which never lived cannot be revived. A revival has to do with God's people. Mr. Webster defined a revival as a "renewed interest in religion, after indifference and decline; a period of religious awakening." A revival is an increase of the life which has been received already; 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. An unsaved person cannot be revived. He needs to be quickened by the Holy Spirit, and made alive by the Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for his sins.

When the Psalmist used this word "again," he expressed a real longing for the return of the blessing which had been his on a former occasion. "Revive us again."

As those of us who are Christians review our past we readily acknowledge God's goodness and His longsuffering toward us. Time and again through the years we have enjoyed seasons of refreshing from His presence. He has empowered us and used us in His service. However, we are not to be satisfied with past achievements, but we should long for the added blessings which will come to us in response to this earnest prayer from the depths of the heart: "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

Old Testament history abounds with the story of revival. One cannot read the thrilling biographies of Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, and David without sensing the need for and the value of seasons of refreshing begotten by the operation of the Holy Spirit. When men of old began to pray, God began His wonders to perform. Gypsy Smith was asked how to start a revival, and he replied: "Go home, lock yourself in your room, kneel down in the middle of the floor. Then draw a chalk mark around yourself making a complete circle, and ask God to start the revival inside that chalk mark. When he has answered your prayer, the revival will be on." Who can doubt the truthfulness of his statement?

The two outstanding characteristics of the first century church were poverty and power. The members had but little of this world's goods, but they were possessed by the Holy Spirit. Wherever they went the members of the church proclaimed salvation through Christ, and many were saved and added to the church. The two outstanding characteristics of the churches today are wealth and weakness. We have numbers and equipment and many other necessary things, but we lack the power which characterized the membership of the early church. We need a revival which will teach church members that sin is sin, and that there is only one remedy for it, and that is forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ. Such a revival will bring joy and peace to the hearts of God's restless, unhappy and miserable children. The conduct of church members today is such that their witness has been nullified to such an extent that people will just smile or laugh when the church

is mentioned. The line of demarcation between the church and the world has been well-nigh obliterated, and the church has lost its power and most of its influence. Many church members have lost all sense of responsibility and accountability to God, and they are living for themselves. Some of them will not as much as speak to others.

What is sorely needed in the present accelerated plunge of church members into leanness of soul, carelessness of living, and barrenness of service, which has brought so many of them to the place where they do not feel any cause for alarm, but have become confirmed in indifference, is a solemn turning of their hearts Godward in humble submission to His holy will, thereby permitting Him to manifest His presence and power. Before there can come a real awakening and a time of refreshing from God's presence, there must of necessity be contrition of heart, even of deep sorrow of soul for the prolonged indifference toward God, and the deep grief which we have caused the Holy Spirit. Real revival is the outcome of the freedom with which church members permit the Holy Spirit to operate in and through them.

Don't you sense the deep longing of the Psalmist when he solemnly entreated the Lord, saying, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" At once, of course, we detect concern. Spiritual conditions had dipped to a very low ebb. The godlessness of the atmosphere was becoming rather stifling, and his surging emotions found an outlet in a tearful supplication which betrayed a discerning mind, a distressful soul, and a desiring heart. He knew that the spiritual status was lamentable, but he also knew the source of betterment. He knew that he must fall back on God or upon nothing. Who else could help? Who else possessed the goodness, the grace, or the greatness? With the word "Thou" he addressed the wonderful One, the waiting One, and the willing One -- the One Who had said: "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people" (Isaiah 65:2).

The burden of the Psalmist's plea was in the one word "revive." They needed revitalization for, while there was life, there was no manifestation of it. They sought restoration, for something was missing. The word "us" refers to God's disobedient children, His fruitless servants. The significance of the word "again" inheres in the fact that it recalled a better day; it referred to former blessing; it requested another opportunity.

I. The Possibility.

1. God wants to revive His people.

Of this we may be assured. What father would delight in the sickliness of his child? What parent could rejoice in the waywardness and disobedience of his children? That the present need is great is pathetically and irrefutably apparent. Our Father wants to infuse us with the abundant life.

2. God wishes to renew His presence.

It is the recognized presence of God that humbles the heart, strengthens the soul, and encourages service. God will manifest His presence among His people when conditions permit Him to do so.

3. God waits to release His power.

Simultaneously with the renewal of the presence of the Lord to a believer's cold and cluttered heart comes the release of His power. It lifts one

back to a higher plane. Where fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is once again freely enjoyed. The thoughts are elevated, the faith is strengthened, and the heart becomes eager to do the will of God.

II. The Price.

God will never force a revival upon His children. There is no question about our need of a revival, but do we want one in our own hearts? If so, there is a price that we must pay for it, or we shall never experience it. Are we ready to pay that price? What will a revival cost you?

1. Consciousness of need.
2. Distress on account of need.
3. Humility before God.
4. Confession of sin to God.
5. Longing for divine forgiveness.
6. Prayer to God.
7. Reformation of life.
8. Eagerness to learn the will of God.
9. Submissiveness to the will of God.
10. Determination to do the will of God.

If you became aware that you were losing your appetite, that you could not sleep, or that you were unable to breathe comfortably, you would conclude that you were not well and needed some medical attention. So it is with you when you get into the condition of prayerlessness, indifference to the Bible, lack of church attendance, restlessness, irritability and fault-findingness of spirit, it is strictly because your relationship to the Lord needs some attention and treatment. Unless you pay the price of doing something about your spiritual condition, it will grow worse as time passes.

II. The Proof.

When the Holy Spirit manifested His presence on the day of Pentecost, God's children were filled with His power to such an extent that multitudes were amazed. The work of the Holy Spirit always elicits awe and wonder at the results which He produces.

What are some of the things which prove that a Christian has been quickened or revived?

1. Separation.

With both knowledge and understanding the child of God separates himself from that which is evil, when he experiences a revival. He has gained or regained an appreciation of God's will. In all the history of our nation there has never been as much drinking, gambling, adultery, and corruption in high places and in low as there is now. Indecency, immorality, and infidelity are rife. Sin has become so common and prevalent that many pay no attention to it. This is not the attitude of those who are living in conformity to the will of God.

2. Dedication.

When God's children are truly revived they pledge themselves to walk according to the Word of God. The way of dedication and obedience is the way of power and blessing.

3. Service.

When people are right with God they are active in His service. When professing Christians are indifferent, unconcerned, and unfaithful with reference to the service of the Lord, it is always because of sin in their lives and lack of love for the Saviour.

4. Joy.

When God's children get right with Him rejoicing is sure to follow. "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" One cannot be right with God and in love with Him and not be joyous. You will never see a dedicated, obedient, and active Christian who is not joyful.