

DO WE WANT A REVIVAL?

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

In the first three verses of this chapter the writer refers to a previous revival. He recalls the time when God delivered Israel from captivity, forgave the iniquity of the people and in sovereign grace restrained the fierceness of His anger.

The central message of this psalm is the answer to the question as to why God's people need a revival.

A revival is needed to:

I. Restrain The Righteous Anger Of God. Psalm 85:4-6.

God reveals righteous anger against those of His people who live in:

1. An unrevived state. Psalm 85:5-6.

This unrevived state is described in three words:

(1) Iniquity.

"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people" (verse 2). Iniquity denotes wickedness, and the tragedy is that such wickedness can be found in the hearts of Christians. Every Christian has two natures -- the old and the new. If he is living in the fulness of the Holy Spirit, the new nature is dominant and the old nature is under control. If he is living in an unrevived state, then this wickedness finds expression in subtle forms of iniquity. The Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). In other words, if I look with approval upon anything which is out of adjustment to the will of God, the Lord will not hear me. This explains why so many prayers are never answered, so much service is not blessed and so many lives are barren of spiritual fruit. Think of the sin of non-attendance at church services, and the lack of godliness in everyday life. God does not condemn sin in the lost person and condone it in the Christian. Peter said, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" (I Peter 4:17).

(2) Lawlessness.

"Thou hast covered all their sin" (Psalm 85:2). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Lawlessness is an arrogant violation of the will of God.

(3) Carelessness.

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8). How often we hear the expression, "I couldn't care less." Iniquity and lawlessness have produced an insensibility to evil and therefore a cold, calculated carelessness.

2. An unrepentant state. Psalm 85:4.

"Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease." It is one thing to be unrevived, but it is even worse to be

unrepentant. For too long we have thought of the message of repentance only in terms of the unregenerate sinner, but we must remember that God calls His own people to repentance. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5). "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16). "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3). "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). Yes, revival is needed in order to restrain the righteous anger of God.

II. Restore The Conscious Awareness Of God.

Revival has been described as a person or a group saturated with the presence of God. When this takes place, the only thing that matters is the will and glory of Christ. Revival is not some worked-up excitement, but it is an invasion from heaven which brings a conscious awareness of God.

The conscious awareness of God means:

1. The smiling of His face.

"Wilt thou not revive us again?" "Wilt thou not return and revive us again?" It was an accepted fact among God's ancient people that when He was angry He turned His face away. On the other hand, when God met with a repentant and restored people, in their minds there was a picture of a smiling deity. This is the significance behind the threefold blessing pronounced by the priests upon the children of Israel in Numbers 6:24-26, namely "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

2. The showing of His grace.

"Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation" (Psalm 85:7). The conscious awareness of God in the believer's life is a guarantee of victory. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). It is the divine intention that each believing heart know this divine mercy and deliverance daily.

3. The sounding of His voice.

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8). Every revival has been accompanied by a new recognition of the voice of God.

III. Reveal The Gracious Activities Of God.

"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him;

and shall set us in the way of his steps" (Psalm 85:9-13).

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden there has never been a moment when God has not been active. Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Because Christians are not living as God wants them to live, He is not able to work through them. At the present God is at work, like a trickle of water, but when revival comes He works in a great way, like a downpour of water.

1. His saving activity.

"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land" (Psalm 85:9). God is saving some now and then, but if we were truly revived He would save more.

2. His sanctifying activity.

This is evidenced in three ways:

(1) In personal life.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). What a delightful description of a sanctified life! When Christ dwells in us in revival fulness, we can see the glory of God. God wants men and women in whom mercy, truth, righteousness and peace are found.

(2) In general life.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:11). Every great revival effects outstanding reforms.

(3) In material life.

"Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase (Psalm 85:12). Material advancement, as well as the health of the people, is a fruit of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When God moves among a people in revival blessing He lays out a pathway for His people to travel.

Are you prepared to be broken in repentance and bent to meet the divine conditions for a revival? There is a price that we must pay for a revival, 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." Far too many church members are far from humble before God. They are proud and self-sufficient. We need to remember that the Bible says, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

2. United, believing, persevering prayer.

"Prayer is an avowal of our creature dependence." "Prayer is laying hold of God's highest willingness." Prayer 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. None of us can improve upon the prayer of the Chinese Christian, "Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me." 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 us and to use us.

3. Reformation of life.

"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 us to separate ourselves from our wicked ways of covetousness, rebellion, murmuring, worldliness, inconsistency, indifference to religious duties and devotion to self-interest. Before sinners will trust Christ as their Saviour, church members must forsake their evil ways and turn to God in penitence.

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's power had been received, but it was before the sermon was delivered. What were those early Christians talking about? They were talking "the wonderful works (triumphs) of God." What were the triumphs of God? The resurrection of Christ, the release of the Holy Spirit and the regeneration of believers in Christ were included among the triumphs of God.

The Scriptures do not imply that lost sinners are commanded to come to church and hear the gospel of Christ. But there is much in God's Word about the imperative duty of every Christian to go to lost people and try to influence them to receive Christ as their Saviour. Failure to do this is positive proof that one does not love Christ or lost souls. Unless Christians go the unsaved will never be saved. Are you willing to pay the price?