

THE NEED FOR A REVIVAL

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

In recent years much has been thought, spoken, and written about revivals of religion.

I. What Is A Revival?

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. That which has never lived cannot be revived. Revival, therefore, is confined to God's people. A revival is the increase of the life which has already been received; the spiritual quickening of God's people, so that they are renewed in their spiritual lives. A revival is a movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians, awakening them and making them God conscious. A revival 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 or incidental, but primary and fundamental.

Times of revival, then, are seasons when Christians are led to be more diligent, more prayerful, and more generous. They result in the salvation of the unsaved.

II. Do We Need A Revival?

Many are convinced that the greatest need of America is an old-fashioned, heaven-born, God-sent, Holy-Ghost revival. America, as well as other nations, has sunk deep into the mire of iniquity. The black treachery of putrid corruption is evident on all sides. Rotten politics, heartlessness, murder, drunkenness, immorality, shame, sham, low standards, shattered ideals, broken homes and blighted lives, together with gambling, greed, materialism, ingratitude, and covetousness, are some of the evidences of a wreckless and sinful age, with a blood count so high that spiritual paralysis will result unless a revival comes and comes quickly.

Along with the rest of the world America is reaching out today for certainty and for security, longing for reality and tired of make-believe. Surely, this is one of the most awesome days that ever shadowed the world. Today, the world's horizon is draped and creped with black war clouds. We certainly need a revival that will tapestry our skies with the rainbow of God's righteousness. What this old world needs is to be washed white in the blood of Christ. National weakness, political graft, moral disintegration, social filth, economic injustice, and spiritual decay in high places is a national disgrace and a stench that reaches to high heaven.

Dr. R. C. Campbell points out that similar conditions existed in the latter part of the Eighteenth and early part of the Nineteenth Centuries. "Infidelity reigned, a moral stupor paralyzed Christianity; sin had entered the nations, and higher criticism had dipped her pen in venom and poisoned the age. Principles were disregarded, and passion was unbridled. To millions the Bible was no more than a cobweb to catch insects. Then, as now, there was a haunting suspicion, a chilling fear of insecurity, an odiousness of distrust, a panicky retreat from terrifying complications and a nervous uncertainty. Many preachers were a laughing stock and objects of disgust. The pulpit had lost its note of certainty. Preachers had toned down and sweetened up God's message until they had no power. They came face to face with the stark truth of that sentence: 'The people do not respect the cloth unless there is a man in it.' Thus vice put on a bold front while self-indulgence and degradation held the center of the stage. The cesspools of iniquity seemed to be full and running

over. The people were bewildered and confused. There was no message of hope and assurance. In the aching heart of humanity was a void that the world could never fill. In man's desperate need, in his helpless condition, in his dire extremity, conscious of his irreparable state, he turned to God and wailed with a piteous and penitential cry for help. The people, weak, fallen, broken-hearted, and needy turned to God and the Great American Revival followed. It is now as it was then, Christ or chaos.

"Today, the black winds of destiny are howling in protest of the way we are living. Surely our day has had enough of the suffocating, deadly chaos, enough of Christlessness, enough of idle mockery, enough of vainglory, to turn us back to God. We have pursued our own way until we have developed an age that is sure of its knowledge, but confused as to its direction; throbbing with power, yet convinced of its weakness; possessing great wealth, yet overwhelmed in debt, materially wealthy but spiritually bankrupt. Riotous living has made us spiritually impotent. Our encouragement is in the fact that these very conditions, according to Christian history, create a hopefulness. Surely, it is time for the pendulum to swing back in the other direction." Let us hope that the dark, benighted days in which we live with their contrary winds and terrible sounds, may be but the herald of the daydawn of a night, sweeping, spiritual awakening.

Wickedness is bold and defiant on all sides. So far as multitudes are concerned, standards have been shattered into splinters and ideals have been tabooed. There is a moral looseness that is deplorable. Trends and tendencies are appallingly alarming. Iniquity is unharnessed and wickedness is rampant. Unless God intervenes and our generation turns to Him, irreparable ruin and unmitigated defeat will result. A revival is sorely needed.

What is sorely needed is our accelerated plunge downward is a solemn turning of our hearts Godward in humble submission to His holy will, thus permitting Him to manifest His presence and power in our midst. The present leanness of soul, carelessness of living, and barrenness of service have had such a gradual development that many professed Christians have become confirmed in their indifference.

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, dissensions, and fault-findings among professed Christians; when there is a worldly spirit in the church; 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 Christians 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 criticize and condemn the faithful than to pray for and work with them; when conversions are seldom and backslidings are evident.

Surely, I need not argue the necessity of a revival. Doubtless the condition of your 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 heav'nly 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?"

III. What Kind Of A Revival Do We Need?

1. A revival to save us from our worldliness.

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

2. A revival to save us from spiritual illness.

Jesus 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 malady, but spiritual illness. Many are ill physically, but the problem of the spiritually sick is even a 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 to restore Christians to a happy and healthy state. The backslidden Christians need spiritual vitamins -- the Bible, prayer, and Christian service -- to restore them to spiritual normalcy. God wants men 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 the Lord's help he was hopeless.

Many are in that state today. They writhe in the clutches of some awful sin. They would be free, but are held captive at Satan's will. The greatest slavery on earth is the slavery of sin. Sin has its binding, blinding, and grinding power. You can see its bite and blight in the world. Thousands who were bound and fettered 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. When that revival is secured, men will be willing to turn to God and say:

"Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus I come;
Into thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee."

Yes, our only hope is a genuine, old-fashioned, Holy Ghost revival. Otherwise, the world sweep of sin will wash us out to sea.