

True Revival

Texts: Psalm 85:6; Habakkuk 3:2

Growing up in the church and being immersed in the traditional understanding of revival in my early days of evangelism, here's what it meant to me: We choose a theme, preferably one with a catchy title. We called for cottage prayer meetings (not to diminish this effort, however, the emphasis seemed to be on the snacks that were served rather than the prayer that was made). We brought in a visiting preacher. Often we invited a visiting minister of music who organized a revival choir. "Pack-a-Pew" night was a main feature when a family or an individual was consigned to do exactly that. The revival was often closed with "Youth Night" with culmination of pizza served. Then the results were tallied at the end of the week to measure the success. I am not criticizing this method because I have been part of this tradition. What I am saying, if I may borrow a phrase from Churchill, is that we are experiencing "terminological inexactitude."

I would like to clarify that evangelism is not revival; evangelism is the result of revival. Evangelism is not revival; it is a resurrection from the dead. Revival is a time of refreshment in the hearts of God's people who already have life; they simply need it stirred. Paul said to Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God..." (II Timothy 1:6a).

We cannot make revival happen; only God can grant revival, but we cannot separate our responsibility that James 4:8 commands us, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." There are four components that we must consider for revival--true revival--to become a reality.

1. PRAYER THAT MUST BE OFFERED

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "It is good for us to draw nigh unto God in prayer. Our minds are grieved to see so little attention given to united prayer by many churches. How can we expect a blessing if we are too idle to ask for it? How can we look for a Pentecost if we never meet with one another, in one place, to wait upon the Lord? Brethren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians."

We often quote II Chronicles 7:14, but please notice how verse 13 blends into verse 14: "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face..." (II Chronicles 7:13, 14). We often think our situation is unique and new to the church, however, our set of problems is as old as Solomon. In other words, if we get away from God, His apparent blessings can cease and we go through hardships until our lack of comfort zone finally makes us cry out to Him in prayer. The result is revival! I

pray we as a nation, church, family and individuals will let our circumstances serve as a wake-up call to prayer, which has been and always shall be the forerunner to revival.

Let us be in agreement that "It is not my brother or my sister, but it's me, oh, Lord, standing in the need of prayer." This thought turns us to our desperate need in dealing with our:

2. SIN THAT MUST BE FORSAKEN

Going back to the great revival text in II Chronicles chapter seven, notice the most often left-out phrase in the passage, "...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).

The late Leonard Ravenhill of England said in contemplating America's need for revival, "You cannot standardize revival. I am not thinking of a church revival; I'm thinking of a national revival. There is only one hope for America and that is that we have a Divine intervention in the nation. Forget your denomination, forget your empty seats. Let's see first of all how God grieves over the sin of the people, and after all, when you look in the Old Testament, God's argument was not with the Amalekites and Hitites and all the other 'ites.' God's problem in the Old Testament was Israel. God's problem today is not communism, Mormonism, moonism or any other 'ism.' God's problem is His church today. We are so worldly. A citywide crusade can cost two million dollars. Revival doesn't cost a red cent, except broken hearts. You can stage a citywide crusade; you cannot stage Revival. Revival is a mysterious divine intervention. I think one of the most awesome tasks given to man was given to John Baptist, when God said, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'"

One of the greatest revivals of modern history was the Welsh Revival of 1904-05. Within two weeks of the original outbreak in Wales alone history says over one hundred thousand came to Christ in conversion. Listen to the perspective of one of the witnesses of the revival: "The bars were not the only places to be emptied. Dance halls, theaters, and football matches all saw a dramatic decline in attendance. The courts and jails were deserted and the police found themselves without any work to do. The story is told of policemen who closed their station and formed a choir to sing at the Revival meetings. Long-standing debts were repaid, church and family feuds were healed and a new unity of purpose was felt across the denominational divides." It cannot be avoided; when revival comes it deals hand in hand with diversions and sins.

There has never been a revival in the history of the church without a thorough hearing and heeding of the:

3. BIBLE THAT MUST BE APPLIED

The Puritan, Thomas Watson said, "Do we prize it in our judgments? Do we receive it into our hearts? Do we fear the loss of the Word preached more than the loss of peace and trade? Is it the removal of the ark that troubles us? Again, do we

attend to the Word with reverential devotion? When the judge is giving the charge on the bench, all attend. When the Word is preached, the great God is giving us his charge. Do we listen to it as to a matter of life and death? This is a good sign that we love the Word."

In the revival under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Bible records these fascinating words: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law" (Nehemiah 8:8, 9). Nehemiah went on to encourage the people to stop weeping and become joyful, but it needs to be pointed out, there would have been no encouragement to let the joy of the Lord be their strength, unless they first attended to inspired words of Holy Scripture. For those of us who are God's children, the Bible is not an optional piece of literature--it is the only Book God ever wrote and we want Him to tell us how to live!

Andrew Murray said in *The Secret of Adoration*, "Take time. Give God time to reveal Himself to you. Give yourself time to be silent and quiet before Him, waiting to receive, through the Spirit, the assurance of His presence with you, His power working in you. Take time to read His Word as in His presence, that from it you may know what He asks of you and what He promises you. Let the Word create around you, create within you a holy atmosphere, a holy heavenly light, in which your soul will be refreshed and strengthened for the work of daily life."

Finally, as we seek God for revival, we must be willing for the paramount desire of our hearts toward God to become:

4. LOVE THAT MUST BE INFUSED

Jesus said to the Bible believing church at Ephesus: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). This church had the right doctrine and right belief in the right doctrine, but their love to Jesus had waxed cool. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37, 38). Let us not forget that getting along with one another is also a part of the out-working of our inward love to Jesus, for He followed up this classic remark with, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

In the early days of Church history we see one of the Apostle John's converts, Polycarp, was denounced to the government, arrested, and tried on the charge of being a Christian. When the proconsul urged him to save his life by cursing Christ, he replied: "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" For this statement, he was burned at the stake. Old Polycarp would rather die in the fire than allow the fire of his love to the Lord Jesus to die out!

R. A. Torrey, one of the most used of God revivalists in the 19th century said, "A young woman in England many years ago always wore a golden locket that she would not allow anyone to open or look into, and everyone thought there must be some romance connected with that locket and that in that locket must be the picture of the one she loved. The young woman died at an early age, and after her death the locket was opened, everyone wondering whose face he would find within. And in the locket was found simply a little slip of paper with these words written upon it, "Though I have not seen Him, I love." Her Lord Jesus was the only lover she knew and the only lover she longed for, and she had gone to be with Him, the one object of her whole heart's devotion, the unseen but beloved Savior."

May God help us not to fail to see our basic need to re-adjust our love and make Jesus Lord of our heart, so that He might be Lord of our life. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1:8).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a dark ink and has a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.