

The Revival We Need!

Texts: Psalm 85:6; Habakkuk 3:2; Isaiah 57:15

We cannot make revival happen; only God can grant revival, but we trust the word from James 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

I want us to consider the revival we need, then think practically of how we might see revival come to pass. R. A. Torrey addressed our responsibility while speaking at a conference in 1917. He gave this prescription for revival:

"Let a few of God's people, they don't need to be many, get thoroughly right with God themselves—the rest will count for nothing unless you start right there; then let them band themselves together to pray for a revival until God opens the heavens and comes down. Then let them put themselves at God's disposal to use them as He sees fit. That will bring a revival to any church, any community."

We can't organize a revival, but we can agonize for it in prayer. We can call on God to send it. We need revival in our nation, our churches, our families and our individual lives. There are four characteristics that are uniquely germane to revival:

1. DECIDE TO PRAY

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."

Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

We often quote verse fourteen of II Chronicles 7, but please notice how verse thirteen blends into verse fourteen: "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! So 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 desperately:

2. DEAL WITH SIN

Going back to the great revival text in II Chronicles the seventh chapter, 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 can not 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.

3. DISCOVER THE WORD

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

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."

When the wicked King Ammon died, his eight-year-old son, Josiah became king. This was the king prophesied three hundred years before his birth, by name! He did right in God's sight and did not alter from the path of righteousness. Eighteen-year old Josiah sent Shaphan to the house of the Lord to relay an important message to Hilkiyah, the high priest. Hilkiyah was to tap into the coffer of the temple to help finance the repair of the House of the Lord. Hilkiyah in his search found the Word of God. He gave it to Shaphan, who read it to King Josiah. II Kings 22:11, 13: "And it came to pass, when the king had heard

the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes...Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

A similar response took place in the revival under Ezra and Nehemiah. The Bible records their fascinating response in Nehemiah 8:8-10. We observe that Nehemiah encouraged the people to stop weeping and become joyful. 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."

4. DETERMINE TO LOVE

Love to God must be our paramount desire if we are to experience true revival. 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 they had a problem. 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). By the way, 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, Polycarp 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 nineteenth 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 they 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 Him.' 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 the basic need is to re-adjust our love and make Jesus Lord of our hearts so that He might be Lord of our lives. "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).

-Pastor Pope-