

REVIVAL AT ANY COST!

Written by Greg Gordon

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HOLY DESPERATION

*A Fervent Exhortation For
A Revival Of Religion In Our Day*

The prophet Isaiah declared the woeful state of Israel over three thousand years ago: "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." How much different are we? Churches are failing, leaders are fumbling, and truth is fallen in the streets. The prophet Isaiah continues with this divine reprimand: "they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not." And what shall the end of a people be that "hide not their sins"? I have seen a strange thing under the sun: professors preaching "continue in sin" from the pulpit. The Apostle Paul in contrast preached "God forbid" which is one of the strongest emphatic statements in Scripture used to convey the ceasing of sin in the life of the believer. John Wesley said: "What one generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace." Sadly we have tolerated a hell-less, eternity-less, sin-less gospel and this next generation is aimed at accepting this as the genuine apostolic original. The true Christian witness seems to be almost overshadowed by false doctrines, false cults, and false prophets. It is time for a holy desperation for revival to arise in God's people! Mary Warburton Booth said this when the Salvation Army movement was waning: "How we have prayed for a revival—we did not care whether it was old-fashioned or not—what we asked for was that it should be such that would cleanse and revive His children and set them on fire to win others." We need a fury of passionate pleading, desperate crying, fervent praying for a heaven-sent revival in our day. Chuck Smith gave this searing statement to a church that does not realize its hour: "Today, we are living in desperate times. Yet, the Church is not desperate before God in prayer." Leonard Ravenhill said that "Revival only comes by birth." With birth comes laborious gestation, travailing birth-pains, and conceptional agony. Shall the birthing of revival be any different? Revival prayer is born out of a holy and healthy desperation for the presence and power of Christ in His church. We need not shrink back from emotions and displays of desperation for revival. Read this old report from one hundred years ago with the Irish Presbyterian Church: "Perhaps you say it's a sort of religious hysteria. So did some of us when we first heard of the Revival. But here we are, about sixty Scottish and Irish Presbyterians who have seen it—all shades of temperament—and, much as many of us shrank from it at first, everyone who has seen and heard what we have, every day last week, it is certain there is only one explanation—that it is God's Holy Spirit manifesting Himself in a way we never dreamed of. We have

no right to criticize; we dare not. One clause of the Creed that lives before us now in all its inevitable, awful solemnity is 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.'" God is desiring to manifest Himself in ways that we "never dreamed of" which is reminiscent of the Scripture in Psalms that says: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." Oh Lord! turn back our captivity and grant us revival.

REVIVAL OR DEATH

"For decades sincere believers have asked, 'Why don't we have revival?' And for decades the answer has always been the same, 'We don't have revival because we're willing to live without it!' It really is that simple. Do we really want to hear the truth? God responds to hunger and thirst. He fills those who recognize their need, who are empty and broken, who are at the point of desperation, who are panting for Him the way a deer pants for water in the desert. He answers dependent prayers. Sure, we want revival, but we don't need revival. That's the difference. God will meet us at our point of need, not our point of preference. Revival is God's radical measure to get the church in a given area or at a given time back to normal before it falls into spiritual oblivion and cultural irrelevance. Revival comes when we realize that it's either revival or death, revival or continued backsliding, revival or the world around us goes to hell." In this above quote from Michael Brown, he really speaks to the high requirement for revival namely in one word: everything! Oh brethren, we must realize that this has always been so; there are no shortcuts with God. We will never see a revival until this is realized and acted upon. In light of eternity let us have tears for our lack of desire and desperation for God. John Knox was a great man of God and this was his prayer, "God give me Scotland or I die!" Again, John Hyde, who was a missionary, prayed, "God give me souls or I die." Again, Whitefield prayed, "God give me souls or take my soul!" May we take it further, dear reader; can you pray: "Give me revival or I die?"

Where are those that have a burdened heart like Evan Roberts? He prayed for revival night and day for twelve years. At the end of these twelve years he prayed with such intensity, agony and urgency that his landlord asked him to vacate his living quarters. Is there a burning in your soul? a building desire in your heart? Let us not fool ourselves; the prayer meeting is "dead" and so are multitudes in their trespasses and sins. We need a holy desperation to fill our prayer meetings, a holy zeal that will not relent until revival comes. The "Lord comes suddenly" to His temple; let us not be found sleeping or great will be our shame. Mario Murillo in his article: 'Vital insights into God's preparations for revival' states: "now is the time to pull out all the stops. No program is sacred, no worthy project is worth enough. None of the ointment can be spared. It is revival or death!" William Seymour, the father of the modern day Pentecostal movement prayed for five to seven hours a day for over a year for revival. And what resulted? A glorious, powerful, sweeping Pentecost swept the world. Winkie Pratney told why there was no revival in the church over twenty years ago: "We do not have men and women who are prepared to pay the same price to preach the same message and have the same power as those revivalists of the past. Without these firm believers, the community can never be changed. Our concern is conciliatory, our obedience optional, our lack theologically and culturally justified. Quite simply, it costs too much!" S.B. Shaw, who wrote on the Welsh revival,

shares the results of a true heaven-sent revival: “A revival that like a tornado will sweep away all the old dried-up sermons, and all the cold formal prayers, and all the lifeless singing, and like a whirlwind will carry everyone that comes in its path heavenward. A revival that will fill the hearts of saints with holy love, and so burden the hearts of God's ministers that the word of God will be like fire shut up in their bones. For such a revival our heart cries out to God! For such a revival we are ready to watch and toil and pray.” May we take it further dear reader, for such a revival are you willing to die?

IF NO REVIVAL

In the writings of Isaiah we see three clear consequences for the result of the nation of Israel not having repentance towards God. May I say that these three consequences will also be ours if we do not have a renewed repentance in the Church and a revolutionary revival from Heaven. If no revival then we will see these three judgments come on the earth and surely anyone that has been awakened to the hour will realize these monstrous consequences already have fallen upon us. If no revival, then hell will be enlarged. “Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure.” Oh the horror of it, hell yawning and swallowing multiplied millions of souls that will be damned forever. To just see a glimpse of this reality will shake any soul to ask, “What can be done?” George Whitefield said: “At the day of judgement we shall all meet again.” How will you feel when you meet all of the millions of souls that could have been saved if you prayed and sought God for a revival of religion? When the Church does not have revival hell enlarges. What a frightful thought.

If no revival, then sin will abound. Men will begin to draw sin “with a cart”, speaking of the enormous amounts of sin that abounds in a season when the Church is not being the salt of the earth. We see that evidently today where people call good evil and evil good and to such God says, “Woe unto them.” As Richard Baxter said of sin, “It is the murderer of the whole world.” The only hope for lost captive sinners is Christ! Yet the Church and Christians keep multitudes from Christ. Lamentable fact! When the church is not the “light of the world”, the world falls into outer darkness. When the Church does not have revival, sin abounds on the earth. If no revival, then the Word will be despised. In a season where there is no revival in the church the world will begin to disregard the law of God, as the Scripture says, “they have cast away the law of the Lord.” And they begin to “despise” not only the Word of God but the “Holy One of Israel.” This is a doublesmart; the church is ineffective and God is mocked. Martyn-Lloyd Jones wrote to this fact: “Does it grieve you my friends, that the name of God is being taken in vain and desecrated? Does it grieve you that we are living in a godless age? The main reason we should be praying about revival is that we are anxious to see God’s name vindicated and His glory manifested.” When the Church does not have revival God’s name is despised.

Leonard Ravenhill wrote: “this generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of sinners.” This responsibility is of eternal consequence, dear reader; being a Christian is a somber thing. Over a hundred years ago Andrew Bonar wrote: “Revivals begin with God's own people; the Holy Spirit touches their heart anew, and gives them new fervor and compassion, and zeal, new light and life, and when He has thus come to you, He next

goes forth to the valley of dry bones...Oh, what responsibility this lays on the Church of God! If you grieve Him away from yourselves, or hinder His visit, then the poor perishing world suffers sorely!" Evan Roberts wrote: "Prayer is buried and lost, and Heaven weeps. If all prayed, the wicked would flee from our midst or to the refuge."

LOSS OF REPUTATION

Perhaps one reason why there is no revival is because the ministers are not willing to pay the cost, namely the loss of reputation. Gilbert Tennet was used mightily of God in the second great awakening. Hear him give account of the popular preaching in his day: "They often strengthened the hands of the wicked by promising them life. They comfort people before they convince them; sow before they plow; and are busy in raising a fabric before they lay a foundation. These foolish builders strengthen men's carnal security by their soft, selfish, cowardly discourses. They have not the courage or honesty to thrust the nail of terror into the sleeping souls!" Preaching without unction, praying without fervor, are two reasons why revival taries in our day. We need a moratorium on reputation to see revival. May God rouse this generation to a passionate pursuit for revival and a determined ardor to see it come to pass.