

# THE REVIVAL WE NEED

## FIVE STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Reading: Judges 2:8-19

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1. An outline of the discussion.

(1) First, it is important to define the meaning of the word REVIVAL.

Someone comes into the Church, and says, 'What we need is a revival!' He may be right; but what does he mean by using this word 'REVIVAL'? More evangelism? More lively singing? More enthusiastic preaching?

What does true revival really mean? What does it involve for the church and for the individual. Do we really need a revival? What is its purpose? Should we pray for revival? How do revivals come about?

(2) We begin by assuming that **REVIVAL IS A PARTICULAR AND EXTRAORDINARY WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

We must not say that the Holy Spirit stops being active in the Church and in individual Christians now that we are not in a special period of spiritual revival.

So, we must ask – 'In what way are revivals part of God's purpose in his plan of salvation? What part have they played in history, and how much were they needed?'

(3) There is much confusion among Christians worldwide with the identification of revival of the RENEWAL movements (often called CHARISMATIC RENEWAL), where it is believed that by going back to the early Church of the New Testament and being like that, and expecting to behave like the Christians in the days of the Apostles, days of revival would surely come.

Others identify revival with great evangelistic meetings. This is the way revival is thought of in many parts of the West, particularly in North America – 'Oh, we're going to have a revival next week, and we have booked a special evangelist.' The trouble is, Christians get all worked up, then it all drains away after a few months, and the church goes back to being what it was before the meetings.

(4) Revivals have been a mixed blessing in the past. Some have lasted a long time (some have lasted years), prolonged by biblical preaching and discipline. Some seem to have been shortened by the lack of good preaching and teaching. Other revivals have disappeared quickly, marred by false teachers and error.

(5) Some think that revival is about a Christian's individual inward experience, making it purely subjective, and not an event in history affecting not only individual Christians, local Churches, or groups of Churches, but a large geographical area, even an entire nation.

**'Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me!'**

In the absence of an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit, every believer is still called upon to maintain high spiritual and moral standards, and, in particular, to get on with evangelism.

## **2. An outline of the five Studies in Revival.**

### **STUDY 1**

The Old Testament shows that the Jewish people and nation often fell into spiritual decline, as well as morally and politically. We will look for reasons for that. But there were also special periods of revival in the Old Testament, which it is good to compare with similar periods in the New Testament. They both have points in common, when the Holy Spirit was poured out in an extraordinary way. We can also look to similar periods in the history of the Western and Asian Churches.

Finally, we will look for some special lessons in revival history that will be of help to us in our thinking about revival and praying for it.

### **STUDY 2**

We will see that revival is a period in history when our Sovereign God pours out his Holy Spirit in overwhelming abundance on his people. This produces a deep consciousness of sin both in the converted and the unconverted alike, leading eventually to the uplifting of the Lord Jesus Christ himself as the only Saviour, Messiah and Lord God.

### **STUDY 3**

Although the Holy Spirit is always at work in the believer and the Church, the degree of his working is not always constant, uniform, and unchanging. There are times when he is poured out on God's people with remarkable power, just as in New Testament times.

### **STUDY 4**

Here are some characteristics of revival for us to consider:

- (1) A deep conviction of sin and repentance.
- (2) A sense of the overwhelming power and presence of a holy God.
- (3) A great sense of joy over personal salvation.
- (4) A great desire to be obedient to the Word of God in the Bible.

### **STUDY 5**

All Christian leaders should hold themselves responsible for channelling the power and direction of a revival in a beneficial way. It is a bit like having great showers of rain which need to be stored, channelled, and used to bear the most fruit. Safeguards can be found in the Bible, and through the preaching of the Bible.

(1) The Word of God with exposition and exhortation will bring balance to excited minds and emotions, and actually prolong the usefulness of the revival.

(2) Emphasising certain doctrines in the Bible will prevent the revival from falling into error, and into the hands of false teachers.

- (a) God's sovereignty, holiness, justice and mercy.
- (b) The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.
- (e) Justification by faith alone.

(3) Applying God's moral standards to the Christian life, as all the Apostles did in their letters.

(4) A call to believers to completely dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ, serving him and his people, and bringing the spiritually lost to the Saviour. This also involves the Church in sending out evangelists and missionaries to other countries.

### 3. The nature of true revival

#### (1) The nature of revival in the Bible

(a) The need for revival.

There was a decline even in Bible times:

- national decline of Israel in the Old Testament
- spiritual decline in the New Testament

The reasons for decline:

- the nature of sin and corruption (human institutions inevitably fail)
- man's propensity to idolatry
- human forgetfulness

The results of decline in the Bible

- in the OT, loss of national identity as God's special people. They were absorbed by the nations. **(Isaiah 64:1-4)**
- in the NT, loss of a separate identity of the Church as it grew more and more worldly, and became absorbed by the world. **(2 Corinthians 6:14-18)**

(b) A definition of true revival.

- It is a sovereign act of God's power **(Isaiah 35:1-6; 41:17-18)**
- It brings an overwhelming sense of the presence of God. **(Ezekiel 37:1-10)**
- It is a reversal of spiritual decline. Notice that it is conditional also. **(2 Chronicles 7:13-14)**

#### (2) Revival in the Old Testament

(a) **Genesis 1:2** - Holy Spirit's work built into the Creation

(b) **Judges 3:10** - Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson.

(e) **2 Chronicles 6:26-27, 40; 7:1-3** - Solomon..

(d) **Nehemiah 8:4-9** - the reading again of the Scriptures.

#### (3) Revival in the New Testament.

(a) Pentecost **(Acts 2)**

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit **(Luke 24:47-4; Acts 2:2-6)**

The salvation of a great number of people **(Acts 2:38-41; 4:4, 29-31)**

Constant evangelism **(Acts 6:7; 8:14)**

- (b) The decline of churches, for example:
- Corinth (**1 Corinthians 1:10-11**) a Western (Greek) church.
  - Ephesus (**Revelation 2:4**) an Eastern (Asian) church
  - Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-16, 20) an Eastern (Asian) church

**(4) Revival in Church history**

- (a) Revival is unpredictable.
- (b) There is a connection between prayer and revival.
- (e) God's holiness and judgement become evident.
- (d) Great rejoicing over salvation.
- (e) The immediate reality of the Second Coming of Christ, and heaven and hell.
- (f) The importance of the Bible as the Word of God.

**(5) Some lessons learnt from revival.**

- (a) The centrality of the Saviour.
- (b) The need to do something about sin in the light of God's holiness.
- (e) True and lasting repentance, faith, and joy.
- (d) A return to the Scriptures.

# FIVE STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Reading: Psalm 44:1-8

## 2. THE MEANING AND REALITY OF REVIVAL

### (1) My personal position and involvement.

(a) Conversion of my parents in 1947 after a lifetime of involvement in Church work. Consequent discovery of the Person of the Holy Spirit. My father joined Baptist Revival Fellowship. I was converted in 1949 with immediate interest in BRF – and I was able to hear many notable speakers. The atmosphere I grew up in was therefore very spiritual, while faith and church attendance was in decline after World War 2.

(b) My personal interest in meeting Rev. Duncan Campbell, one of the leaders of the revival in the island of Lewis in the Scottish Hebrides (1949-52). I heard him preach several times in the 1950's, until he died. There is one notable sermon on Ezekiel 37 that sticks in my memory – The valley of the dry bones – which he called 'articulated skeletons!' At the London Bible College, and the Evangelical Library, I had access to many books on revival, and on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. I then discovered the writings of the Puritans on the Holy Spirit, and found that revival attended their ministries during the 16-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries - such men as John Flavel, Richard Baxter, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, John Bunyan. I discovered also that many of these men had been put in prison or were severely persecuted. Yet thousands were converted under their ministry. They were the world's greatest evangelists and Bible teachers.

(c) The ministry of the revival preacher George Whitefield of Gloucester, my home town. His first sermon was reported as follows:

**On the Sunday, in the Church of St Mary de Crypt, he preached his first sermon. We can imagine the scene, and feel something of its solemn excitement. There, not far in front of the pulpit, sits his mother, aged by sorrow before her time; her other sons and her daughter with her. The city-fathers are represented by former mayor Harris, his wife, their son the Governor, Elder Bell and others. Robert Raikes the newspaper publisher is also there, as are also the Rev Daniel Bond Whitefield's schoolmaster, and many of Whitefield's former fellow-students. The members of his Prayer Group are present, and also the women of his more-recently founded prayer group. The ancient church is crowded with over three hundred worshippers, and almost all wait impatiently to hear him.**

**He enters the pulpit very solemnly. His face is quite boyish, yet marked by a spiritual strength, and radiant with an inner holiness. His nervousness can be seen as he begins to preach, but is soon lost as he realises that he speaks with authority from on high, and his words flow out with clearness and power. His sermon is about the necessity of being born again, and exhorts men to live a holy life. Most hearts are deeply affected - some tremendously so. But we may best understand the occasion from his own account, written a few days later in a letter:**

**Glory! glory! glory! be ascribed to the Almighty Triune God. Last Sunday in the afternoon I preached my first sermon in the church of St Mary de Crypt, where I was baptised and also first received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Curiosity, as you may easily guess, drew a large congregation. The sight at first awed me a little, but I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of God's presence, and soon found the great advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when I was a boy at school, and of preaching to the prisoners, and poor people at their own houses while I was at University. By these means, I was kept from being daunted over-much. As I proceeded, I saw the fire kindled, till at last, though so young and among those who knew me in my early days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. A few mocked, but most for a time seemed struck, and I have since heard that a complaint has been made to the Bishop that I drove fifteen mad during my first sermon! The worthy Bishop, I am informed, wanted the madness not to be forgotten before next Sunday.**

Such was the effect of Whitefield's first sermon on his hearers.

Great crowds gathered under his ministry in Britain and America, and he had a lasting influence on the clergymen John and Charles Wesley and the Methodists.

(d) Lastly, I loved reading about the Baptist minister Charles Haddon Spurgeon who preached to congregations of more than 10 000 every Sunday for more than 30 years in London. He experienced revival in his church in 1859 as did Wales, Scotland, Ireland, America, and most countries in Europe and some Asian countries, notably India.

## **(2) Points about revival I find most interesting**

### **(a) The need for an agreed definition of revival.**

When Christians pray for revival, are they praying for the same thing, or something else that goes by the same name? Are they asking for God to work in his way, or in a way that exists only in the minds of men?

How many are praying for a world spiritual revival today? I suspect, very few, although the numbers are increasing. Revival is becoming a more popular subject, with many books being published about it; but in the world, little seems to be happening along the lines of classical revival.

However, I find this encouraging. An interest in revival, and praying for revival, is a sign of spiritual health. When the spiritual health of Christians declines, so too does the desire for revival.

Pastor Oswald J. Smith - THE REVIVAL WE NEED (1933, pp 4-5)

**I have told you about three historical incidents of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Hundreds of others might be given. But these are sufficient to show what I mean. And this is what we need today more than anything else. I remember that such outpourings came to China, India, Korea, Africa, England, Wales, the United States of America, the Islands of the Seas, and many other places. But when I think of Canada, our own beloved country, she has never in all its history experienced a national revival, my heart cries out to God for such a manifestation of himself.**

**Do we need it? Listen! How many of our churches are more than half empty Sunday after Sunday? What a multitude there are who never enter God's house? How many mid-week prayer meetings are alive and prospering? Where is there a hunger for spiritual things?**

**And Missions - the lands beyond the seas, in heathen darkness - what are we doing? Does the fact that multitudes are perishing without the Gospel ever cause us to have an anxious thought? Have we grown selfish?**

**What about the tremendous wealth God has given us? Take the United States as an example, the richest nation in the world today, and the major portion of her wealth in the hands of professing Christians. Yet the United States spent more on chewing gum in one year than she spent on Missions. How many Christians are giving God even the tenth of what he gives to them?**

**Then take our colleges and seminaries, both at home and on the mission field where false teaching can be found. The students are being told that Jesus never performed any miracles, never rose from the dead, and was not born of a virgin; that he did not die as our Substitute, and is never coming again.**

**How many professing Christians are living the Christ-life before men? Oh, how like the world we are becoming! How little opposition we find! Where are the persecutions that were heaped on the Early Church? How easy it is to be a Christian now!**

**And what of the Ministry? Do pastors grip, convert, and save by their message? How many souls are won through the preaching of the Word? Oh, my friends, we are loaded down with**

**countless church activities while the real work of the Church, that of evangelising the world and winning the lost, is almost entirely neglected.**

**Where is the conviction of sin we used to know? Is it a thing of the past?**

(b) Talk of revival is very uncomfortable. Why?

It exposes division among Christians, who do not think alike. Some Pentecostals think one way, some Baptists think another way. Many become dogmatic, and entrenched in their beliefs and practices. They often differ in their expectations of a revival. They make it known what they want, and how they believe God will work. Revival falls into their scheme of things, their theology, their church and denominational setup, their practices, their methods of evangelism, their doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They say, 'God's way is bound to be our way!' The only way to find the correct way concerning revival is to go back to the Bible with its teaching and practice, and test everything by the Bible, as the Bereans did in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Revival can cause great controversy among Christians. When revival comes, some Christians can become the bitter enemies of those who are experiencing it. This has often happened in the past, and is a terrible price to pay for the coming of the day of God's power - jealousy, resentment, envy. The world is very fond of attacking revivals, particularly newspapers, telling lies about them, attacking the leaders in them. That also has happened in the past. When the Holy Spirit comes in power, the unholy spirit, the devil, always counter-attacks. Duncan Campbell, during a meeting, was constantly shouted at by a barmaid sent by the local innkeeper to break up the meeting. She would not leave until he shouted at her - 'You daughter of the devil!'

Revival brings great personal pain to Christians. Revival challenges our spiritual state, searches every part of our hearts and brings conviction of sin before God, who is a consuming fire. When Campbell visited the ungodly husband of a Christian woman, he found him praying in his bedroom in agony of soul. She said, 'Let him be. You have put him in the pot; boil him well!' Revival exposes our sins in public, and also sins between Christians in the same church. We are all called to total dedication to Jesus Christ, who gives us a holy horror of getting entangled with the world. It faces us with the great unfinished task of winning souls for Christ

That is what revival does. It is uncomfortable. To the unbeliever, revival is undesirable.

**(3) Why are so few Christians interested in revival today?**

Why so hesitant, so uncommitted, so undesiring?

In 1812, Princeton Theological Seminary was opened during revival days. The opening declaration reads like this - 'We shall train up persons for the ministry who will be friends of revivals of religion,

There are 3 main reasons why Christians hesitate about revival:

(a) Doubts about revivals come from the attacks upon them by atheists, who see them only in psychological terms - as carrying people away by enthusiasm fuelled by emotionalism and hysteria. They reject the supernatural, or they idea that God intervenes in power in history. They certainly do not believe in the Holy Spirit!

(b) Widespread ignorance about revivals in the Church in the past. The Jews were constantly reminded by the prophets to look back and see what God had done for them in the past. Look at Psalm 44:1. In Spurgeon's Revival Year Sermons (1859) we find a sermon entitled **THE STORY OF GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS** (pp 23-24):

**To come a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wonderful things that God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. To hate religion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity, and the gutters were full of the pollution of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley, men whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush of converts, and the church said: 'Who are these people**

like clouds in the sky, and like flocks of birds at the windows?' Here come the converts. They come! they come! as numberless as the birds of heaven, caught in a rushing mighty wind that cannot be resisted. Within a few years, due to the preaching of these two men, England became full of evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town, and there was scarcely a village without a Methodist church. The Christianity of horses and wagons in which our fathers travelled slowly was overtaken, as it were, by fast express trains. And we are astonished at these stories, and think them wonders. Yet let us believe them; they come down to us as facts of history. And what wonderful things that God did in the old days, by his grace, he will do again. He who is mighty has done great things; and holy is his name!

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the old days. We wonder and take great interest in the facts that God's work came in all of a sudden. The elders in the churches believed that things must grow gently, by degrees; we must go onward step-by-step. Such faithful and continued labour, they say, will bring success in the end. But the wonder is this: all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert three thousand souls. They were converted immediately, and were baptised that very day. In an hour, they were turned to God, and became as much true disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years. So was it in the day of Martin Luther. It did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Roman Catholicism. God lit the lamp, and it burned up, and there was light in an instant - God worked suddenly. If someone could have stood at the door of Luther's church in Wittenberg, and have asked: 'Can Roman Catholicism be brought down, can the Vatican be made to shake?' the answer would have been: "No; it will take at least a thousand years to do it. Catholicism, like a great serpent, has so twisted itself round the nations, and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process.' But God said, 'Not so.' He smote the dragon severely, and the nations were set free. He cut down the gates of brass, and broke asunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in one hour. Freedom did not take years, but it came in an instant. The people who walked in darkness saw a great light. On those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, the light shone.

So it was in Whitefield's day. The awakening of a sleeping church was not the work of ages; it was done at once. Did you never hear of the great revival under Whitefield in a town in Scotland? He was preaching in the churchyard to a great congregation because they could not all get into the building; and while preaching, the power of God came on the people, and one after another fell down as if they were smitten. It was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under conviction of sin. He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges, and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no one can fully tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was equal to it.

So it has been with all revivals; God's work has been done suddenly. Like a clap of thunder, God descends from on high; not slowly and quietly, but riding on a Cherubim like the King that he is!

(c) The third reason why we hesitate about revival is that so few of us have experienced revival. At a personal level, we have not fully experienced 'the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given us' (Romans 5:5), nor 'the power of the Holy Spirit' to evangelise (Acts 1:8).

To be among God people at a time of revival is a glorious thing - when God rends the heavens and reveals himself in a way we never knew before. Sin is revealed, confessed and forgiven; God's holiness makes us tremble; hundreds, thousands in and out of the Church are affected by the call of the gospel, and becomes their main topic of conversation.

Revival, once experienced, leaves a mark that is never removed from the true child of God. He speaks with authority of spiritual matters, and has a holy fear of God. he can say, 'I was there. I saw, I felt, I heard. I know what revival is like because I was there!'



Next time, we will:

(1) Look at 3 views that Christians today have about revival.

(2) See that revival does not stand alone, but is part of the saving plans and purposes of God. Revival is not an after-thought by God to repair the Church when it goes bad.

(3) Note the close connection there is between revival and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as he comes to dead and declining churches as in the book of Revelation.

We close with a prayer of Isaiah (**Isaiah 64:1-2**)

# FIVE STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

## 3. THE PURPOSE OF REVIVAL

### 1. What exactly is revival?

#### (1) In the Old Testament

Natural life:	Genesis 45:27 - Jacob's spirit Judges 15:19 - Samson after battle 1 Kings 17:22 - the boy with sunstroke 2 Kings 13:21 - Elijah's knees
Spiritual life:	Psalms 138:7 - trouble Isaiah 13:21 - the spirit of the lowly
National life:	Ezra 9:7-9 - to build the house of God Nehemiah 4:2 - Jerusalem rebuilt Psalm 85:6 - rejoicing Hosea 6:13 - return to the Lord Hosea 14:4-7 - backsliding Habakkuk 3:2 - mercy after wrath

### PILGRIM'S PROGRESS - John Bunyan. Christian's fight with Apollyon.

Then Apollyon broke into a fearful rage, saying, 'I am an enemy of this Prince; I hate his person, his laws, and his people. I have come out on purpose to stand against you.'

Christian replied: 'Apollyon, beware what you are doing! For I am standing in the King's highway, the way of holiness. Therefore take care what you are doing.'

Apollyon then straddled to whole of the way, and said, 'I have no fear in this matter. Prepare to die; for I swear by my infernal den that you will go no further. Here I will spill out your soul.' And with that he threw a flaming dart at Christian's breast. But Christian held up the shield in his hand, and caught it, and so prevented any danger from that.

Then Christian drew his sword, for he saw that it was time to defend himself. Apollyon, as fast as he could, threw darts as thick as hail, by which, despite all that Christian could do to dodge them, was wounded by Apollyon in his head, his hand, and his foot. This made Christian fall back a little. Apollyon, therefore, continued in his evil work, but Christian again took courage, and resisted as well as he could. This severe fight lasted more than half a day, till Christian was almost spent. For you must know that Christian, because of his wounds, was growing weaker and weaker.

When Apollyon saw an opportunity, he began to get closer to Christian; and wrestling with him, he gave him a dreadful fall. And with that, Christian's sword flew out of his hand. Then Apollyon said, 'I am sure of you now!' And with that, he almost choked him to death, so that Christian began to despair of his life. But, as God would have it, while Apollyon was about to deliver his last blow to make an end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword. And catching it, he said, 'Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I will arise again.' (Micah 7:8) And with that, he gave Apollyon a deadly thrust, which made his enemy fall back, like one who had received a mortal wound.

When Christian saw that, he attacked him again, saying, 'No; in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.' (Romans 8:37-39). And with that, Apollyon spread out his dragon's wings, and flew away, so that Christian did not see him again.

This fight no one can imagine, unless he saw it and heard it like I did. What yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight! He was roaring like a dragon. And on Christian's side, what sighs and groans burst out from his heart! I never saw him smile once until he saw that he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, indeed, he

did smile, and look upwards! But it was the most dreadful sight I have ever seen.

When the battle was over, Christian declared, 'I will here give thanks to him who delivered

me out of the mouth of the lion, to him who helped me fight against Apollyon. And this he did:

Great Beelzebub, the captain of this devil,  
Plotted my ruin; so, to this end  
He sent Apollyon out, who, in a rage set on fire  
Of hell, engaged me in the battle.

But Michael, captain of the Lord's army, helped me; and I,  
With the help of my sword, made him fly away.  
Therefore, I give to God eternal praise,  
And thank and bless his holy name for ever.

(2) In the New Testament

Romans 7:9 - sin revived

Romans 14:9 - Christ's resurrection

Acts 2:16-21 - last days = Gospel Age - pour out (repeated twice) = go on

pouring

out. The purpose of revival = salvation

Conclusions:

Revival affects large groups

Revivals may be expected repeatedly

The pattern is found in Acts chapter 2; 4:31; 8:15-17; 10:44; 19:6

Decline of spiritual life as in Revelation chapter 2-3: Ephesus (2:4-5);

Pergamos

(2:14); Thyatira (2:20); Laodicea (3:15-16)

### 3. Three views of revival.

(1) Opposition to a miraculous supernatural revival. Jonathan Edwards was a Pastor in New England, America in the 18th Century. He wrote during a time of revival - **'The the Spirit works constantly through the ordinances, yet the way in which the greatest things have been done has been by remarkable outpourings, and special times of mercy.'**

In Edward's days, the people were several generations away from revival in the past. There were no living memories of times of refreshing and power. Most Church members were unconverted. Edwards argued that the whole time between Pentecost and the Second Coming of Christ is an age of the Holy Spirit. The OT prophets said this, including Joel. The Christian Church was the OT Church revived. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to be the Comforter and Empowerer, and he has never left us.

We must not rely on times of revival. The Holy Spirit is always here working. In revival he works in an extraordinary way no different to at ordinary times. Without the Holy Spirit there would be no Church, no conviction of sin, no repentance, no conversions, no fellowship, no spiritual gifts, no spiritual fruit, no prayer, no holiness. This is how Christ is preparing his Bride the Church for his coming.

Two important lessons are to be discovered in the Acts concerning the work of the Holy Spirit:

(a) When the Spirit comes in great power, which is displayed publicly, his work is not permanent. After Acts 19, Luke records no more outpourings of the Spirit.

(b) It is a fact of history that all churches are subject to spiritual decline and decay. Paul, Peter, John all appeal in their letters to Christians and churches to improve their spiritual life.

Both the New Testament and Church history tell us the Holy Spirit works at different times and to different degrees of power. His work is variable, and unpredictable.

Lastly, we should not lose heart when the Holy Spirit does not appear to be working in great power in the Church. It is a challenge to us, but we should not be pessimistic. In longing for revival, do not forget to receive what God offers in the Spirit. A famous revival preacher called Evan Roberts of Wales, had fits of depression for the rest of his life when the 1904 revival in Wales ceased.

## What should we think?

We acknowledge that we always need more of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:17; 3:16)

We may expect a constant abiding and supplies of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 1:19)

We need at times to be filled the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8; 4:31; Ephesians 5:18)

These things are the normal Christian life. We have jobs to do, temptation to face, and enemies to overcome. Revival is something else over and beyond all this.

(2) The second view of revival is held by those who think it is just a period a great evangelistic activity.

In America, you might find posters announcing - THE REVIVAL WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUCH A DATE AT SUCH A PLACE.

Since the early 1800s, some have believed that revivals can be promoted. Provided you use the right means, revival is inevitable. The most notable was Charles Grandison Finney whose LECTURES ON REVIVAL (1835) contained these words - **A revival is not a miracle, not it is dependant upon a miracle in any sense. It is purely the logical result of a right use of the constituted means.** He concludes - **Revivals were regarded once as miracles. It is only within a few years that ministers generally have supposed revivals to be promoted by the use of means designed and adapted specially for that object.**

This view no longer sees revivals as special acts of God's sovereign power, but natural events due to men's efforts. God only works when we work, and depends on men's efforts. If you use the right means of evangelism, you are bound to have a revival. I reject this view for 2 reasons:

(a) Because it turns the minds of Christians away from God's grace and mercy. It makes revival a reward for human effort - the opposite of the Gospel message. God grants us the Holy Spirit, not because we deserve it, but because we have earned it by effort. Just follow the method, and revival will come surely, they argue.

(b) Because this theory does not work. Means do not automatically lead to revival, as Finney found in a number of places where he preached. Whitefield had revival between 1740-42, and saw thousands upon thousands saved. After that, he never experienced revival again, but many were converted in Britain and America through his preaching.

Dr. Billy Graham never experienced revival. Someone wrote this - **The Graham Organisation have often held out the prospect of revival coming through the Crusades. I remember Mr. Graham speaking at Wembley Stadium in London about the possibility of revival. He said that beginning there, it could spread not only throughout England, but to the whole world. The fact is, that revival has not come through the Crusades.**

In England, the opposite has happened. Spiritual decline gathers pace in the nation. Only God, in his Sovereign plan and purpose can give it

(3) The third view of revival is little known today, but has been held by all revival preachers in Britain and America since the Reformation. I have shelves of books at home on revival, by John Owen, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards, and many others.

(a) Their belief is based entirely on the teaching of the Bible, and is connected with the nature of the Christian Church. Put simply, it says that Christ is the Head of his Church, and he provides the means for its well-being.

(b) Only Jesus Christ has the authority to dispense the Holy Spirit when he wishes. It is connected with Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:32-33). Since his resurrection and Pentecost, Christ has not ceased to pour out his Spirit from time to time. At no time are true believers without the Holy Spirit, for they could not be born again without him. But when the Spirit come in revival power, Christ is particularly glorified.

#### **4. Revival is closely connected with Christ's resurrection.**

The greatest evidence that Jesus Christ is still alive is the continuing existence of the Church. Souls are still being saved by being brought to Christ. And another historical proof of the risen Christ is his sending of the Holy Spirit in power to revive his Church.

Professor Robert Linder of Kansas State University once wrote - **Among the most noticeable features of Christian growth has been the amazing ability of the faith, periodically, to reform and renew itself. Historians are often struck by the resilience of Christianity and its seemingly inexhaustible capacity to revive after periods of stagnation or decay. In fact, this has been a major theme of Christian history.**

The believer simply points to Matthew 28:20. The Risen Christ, our only Saviour, is with his Church, and is in his Church. He is the source of its life. He resurrects his Church when outwardly everything seems dead.

To him be the glory!

Let us close with Ezekiel 37:9-10.

# FIVE STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

Read Habakkuk 3:1-3

## 4. WHAT IS TRUE REVIVAL?

We need to look carefully again at Acts 1:8. There are mentioned three groups of believers to be brought into the Christian Church in the power of the Holy Spirit - Jerusalem and Judea,(Jews); Samaria (half-Jews); furthest parts (Gentiles). This is the structure of the Acts - and upon each group fell the Holy Spirit to initiate them into the Church through a filling of the Spirit. There is an odd one in Acts 19 - the disciples of John the Baptist.

Since Acts 19, the Holy Spirit is not recorded at doing anything spectacular. The revival was over, but normal Christian growth continued in the building up many Western and Asian Churches, and evangelism was seen everywhere.

The great effort by many Christians in this century to recover their ideal of the first century Church is misplaced, for towards the end of the Acts and the New Testament we find fewer and fewer miracles, no tongues and interpretation of tongues after Acts 19, and no prophecy after Acts 21. We do find a mixture of good and bad churches, and a slow decline of some in Asia to the end of the century (see Revelation 2-3).

In this study, we will look at 3 things:

- (1) Is there a connection with the charismatic renewal movement and true revival?
- (2) What have prominent Christians written about revival in some past centuries?
- (3) What are the true characteristics of revival given by the Holy Spirit?

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### 1. The difference between the desire for 'renewal' and true revival.

It is believed by many that if they put things right in their lives, become very spiritual, display spiritual gifts, and receive great power and an anointing from the Lord, then revival will be sure to come. This has proved to be an error which can be traced back to the teaching of Finney in the 19th century. Even Finney found that his teaching did not work. Dr. Beecher, Pastor of a Church in Boston, America, described how Finney's preaching had no impact on the city.

This legacy of thinking from the past is with us still, confusing individual spiritual awakening with true revival.

Since about 1960, we have seen the emergence of what is called the Charismatic Movement, which teaches that not only do individuals need spiritual renewal through the

exercise of spiritual gifts, but churches also. At least this indicates that many Christians desire revival for the Church.

However, these last 5 decades of 'renewal' have not brought a true biblical and historical revival to the world. Indeed, we have seen an accelerating decline in the churches which is not being arrested. Neither are the churches making any impact on the life of the nation, as all revivals have done in the past. So 'Renewal' has failed in its stated objective - which is revival in the Church. Not only has it failed, but worse, the word and concept of 'renewal' is not even found in the Bible.

**'Renewal' in the New Testament** (the word is found 4 times; and none of these words has anything to do with revival):

Romans 12:2 - present continuous of a verb meaning **go on being renewed; never stop bending your mind to do the will of God.**

2 Corinthians 4:15 - present passive continuous of a verb meaning **to make anew; go on being made new to overcome these present afflictions - there is glory to come!**

Colossians 3:10 - same as in the previous verse.

Titus 3:5 - **shed on us** (aorist, meaning a once for all event) when we were born again. The Holy Spirit made us new in Christ.

Once again, we can say that this is the normal Christian life, not a time of revival. There are two conclusions we may draw here:

(a) The 'renewal' in these four texts has nothing to do with the revival of the Church. It concerns individual Christians, their conversion and their spiritual growth. Not one of these verses connects renewal with revival.

(b) Each of these verses connects renewal with the individual Christian. One speaks of being born; the other 3 speak of a continuing experience of renewal - evidence that we are new creatures in Christ.

Of great interest, the Holy Spirit figures in only one of the verses. He has a part in the Christian's renewal, but not totally, for he is not mentioned in the other 3 verses.

## **2. The characteristics of true revival in the Church.**

(1) A deep sense of God's presence. This is the Spirit's work - to make us aware of the presence of God, bringing feelings of fear and reverence. (Genesis 28:16-17; Acts 2:43; 5:11; 19:17)

The nearness of God's presence always leads to the humbling of God's people. Job 42:6.

(2) Rejoicing that the Church is alive and effective again. Psalms 68:7-9.

The long darkness of the Medieval Period in world history gave way to the Reformation in the 16th Century in the West, the Puritan preachers of the 17th Century, and the Evangelical Awakening of the 18th Century, and the birth of the modern world Missionary Movement. The 19th Century Revival built churches everywhere in the big cities worldwide, and sent out countless missionaries into Asia and Africa. Great evangelism was also a characteristic of the 19th Century. The Church lived again. (Ezekiel 37:8-10)



(3) A deep sense of the weight of sin. Scoffers are reduced to silence before God (Romans 3:19).

I will close with some accounts of revivals from the past, mostly from stories told or written by eye witnesses.

### **THE WILD MAN TAMED**

(Ian R. K. Paisley, *THE FIFTY-NINE REVIVAL*, pp 154-155)

Of all the cases I have heard of, perhaps none is more interesting than the following, told by the Rev. William S. Patton of Dromara, Northern Ireland:

In our parish lives a man named William Gilmore, who earns a livelihood by collecting and selling rags through the area. In all the district there was none more notorious for wickedness. Every penny he could get was spent in drink; and often has he pawned the clothes off his back was spent on whisky. Swearing was so familiar, that scarcely a word escaped his lips without an oath. Frequently has he been seen lying on the road in a fit of epilepsy, and drunk; and after the fit was over, he was heard to swear so awfully that it made the bystanders tremble lest God should strike him dead.

When under the influence of drink, he was always disposed to fight, and many a time his poor wife had to bear the worst of the battle. She knew very well, from hard blows and cruel use, what it is to be a drunkard's wife. When he speaks of himself today, he says that there was no bad practice of which he was not guilty, except theft and murder; 'and indeed,' he says to me, 'I robbed and murdered my children, for I starved them.'

He was a Roman Catholic, and a very intolerant one - the more so, perhaps, because his wife was a Protestant - and he had never been in a Protestant place of worship in all his life. However, he was as ignorant as any Roman priest in those days could desire - for he was not able to read a word. Such was this ignorant Catholic, drunken, swearing, fighting, wife-beating ragman.

When the revival began here, he mocked, as you might have expected. Speaking one day of a person who had been affected, he said, with an oath and a sneer, 'It has not touched me yet!' But soon after that, God's Spirit did touch him.

It was one Sunday evening at the beginning of August. He had ordered his children that day to go to the Catholic school. Their mother, however, unknown to him, had sent them to the Protestant Sunday School. When they came home, learning somehow where they had been, he cursed, and damned, and raged, and threatened; and that is how that Sunday evening was spent.

So angry was he with his wife that he vowed he would not live in the same room with her, and went and lay down on the kitchen floor. During the night he woke up, and felt himself trembling all over from head to foot. He tried to rise, but could not get up - his side seemed numb. He attempted now to speak to his wife, but his tongue refused to work. And so he lay, trembling and praying, all night on the floor. In the morning, he found himself able to rise and speak; and when he got up, he said to his wife and children, 'With God's help, from this time forward, I will lead a new life.'

During the day, he went to see the priest. He was very frightened by what had happened, but ignorant of what he should do, he went off to the priest for advice. But from him he

got no comfort. Some of the converts that he met advised him to go home and pray. He did that, and from that time began to attend our Church prayer meetings, though once or twice after he went to the Catholic Church. For the next five or six weeks his mind was in a doubting, anxious, inquiring, prayerful state, seeking rest, but finding none.

At last, God fulfilled this promise to him, 'Then we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord.' (Hosea 6:3) The truth came home to his conscience. He saw himself as a sinner, and Jesus as the only Mediator; and his weary soul found rest in Christ. To use his own words, he 'gave himself up, body and soul, to Jesus, and trusted him for everything.'

Since that time, he has remained steadfast. No more has he gone to the Catholic Church, and no more, he says, will he go, but he regularly goes to our Protestant church and prayer meetings. Every night he asks his children to read the Bible aloud, and he leads in family worship. He has a prayer meeting in his own house, in which he sometimes takes a part, pouring out his thanks and petitions to God in language which is very common, but very expressive. Often in his travels in the area collecting rags, he suffers from others cursing and mockery. 'You deserve to be hunted out of the country for turning Protestant' said a Catholic to him one day. 'It was not I that turned,' was his reply, 'it was Christ who turned me, or I never would have changed by myself.'

As far as human eye can see, he is now a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## THE REVIVAL IN RWANDA, CENTRAL AFRICA

(THIS IS THAT, 1954, p 14)

The following Saturday, the people from the villages began to arrive for the week of special meetings arranged long before, some walking nearly 100 miles to attend. 'What will happen in the coming week?' was the question on many lips. That evening, there were about 400 people crowded into the building, and I gave a welcome message, urging them to be ready for the Lord and telling what had happened on the previous Thursday. Then, as I led in prayer, the Spirit came down in mighty power, sweeping through the congregation. My whole body trembled with the power. We then saw a marvellous sight, people literally filled and drunk with the Spirit. Never had we seen anything like this. The power and presence of the Lord were awful indeed. Elders and evangelists were swept to their feet, moving around like drunken men, shouting out, 'I am filled! I am filled!' Then some of them turned to me and asked for forgiveness for having criticised me. As soon as I said I had forgiven them, they praised the Lord in mighty and loud praises. They went to one another, or called out a name at the other end of the building, asking for forgiveness for some wrong done. Another called out the name of his wife, telling her he was filled with the Spirit and urging her not to hold out against the Lord. One evangelist made public confession that he had made wrong entries in his report book. There was unbounded joy in the meeting. One elder was clapping his hands and thighs in an ecstasy of joy ... marching up and down the aisle, praising the Lord with mighty shouts, then turning first to the men, then to the women, next to the schoolgirls and schoolboys, urging them to turn to the Lord, saying that Christ was coming again soon. Men, women, boys, and girls were overcome by the power of the Spirit.

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Here are some more eye witness accounts from Rwanda. Notice what a large part repentance of sin played in them.

Later, this woman would tremble again and cry piteously, asking that a certain hymn be sung, but still she found no freedom, until one day I was asked to go and see her, as she couldn't walk. My colleague and I went. She was sitting on a low stool and couldn't move her legs. I tried to help her rise, but it was impossible, her legs seemed fixed or stuck to the ground. We sat down near her, and all the time she was crying pitifully. Then she began to bring out with great sorrow of heart her sin of speaking against the missionary. As soon as she had finished, she was filled with joy, her knees straightened, and she stood and walked. There have been other cases of limbs fixed. A man who never comes to any of our meetings was on his way to his wine palm to drink, when he was arrested by a deep conviction of sin. Both his hands came together at the wrists with a sense of heat, and he could not part them. Then his legs came together in the same manner, and he fell into a sitting position on the road. He then confessed his sins. The Spirit then told him, 'I will release your legs so that you can walk back to your village and tell the folk, but your hands will remain fixed until you have obeyed.' He did so, much to the astonishment of his wife and others, and as soon as he had obeyed, his hands were released. An elder went out to visit him and teach him more fully the way of the Lord. He and his wife then accepted the Saviour.

At one of the meetings, while listening to some folk confessing to the Lord, I looked toward the window, and there was a woman named Mada whom I knew lived in sin. The Spirit told me to raise my hand and point to her and ask her when she was coming to the Lord. A few days later, when our boy was testifying in the village, Mada was listening, and was suddenly thrown violently to the ground, trembling all over and crying out to the Lord for forgiveness. Next Sunday, she testified in the meetings to having been born again. And so the story goes on.

Many such testimonies could be told, and we praise the Lord that there is every evidence of the blessing going deep in the lives of many. Some seem to have grown up spiritually in a night ...

### **THE GREAT AWAKENING - Joseph Tracey (1841)**

Tracey describes the spiritual condition of many Churches in America in the previous century (from the 1740s, before and after the Great Awakening under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and later George Whitefield from England. He speaks of formal Christians and unconverted pastors.

We should remember, too, that many of these converts were already, and had long been, church members, and, because of their lack of living the Christian life, were at best dead weights to the churches. The revival made them active and valuable members. There was a twofold gain. In every such instance, the church felt its deadly burden lighten, and its strength increased. Almost every church has its dead weights, and knows what a hindrance they are to its usefulness; but few these days are able to imagine the condition of a church, where most of the members give no evidence being Christians, except that they are neither heretical nor living a scandalous life; still less, the condition of a church made up mostly of dead weights, all supposing that God looks upon their membership with favour. What must be the value of a revival, in which the members of such a church are converted into active Christians? What can we say of a

revival which brings about such a transformation of churches throughout the length and breadth of the land?

And what can be said of ministers, who are also dead weights? ... They were probably fewer than we might expect, especially in New England. Still, it is useless to deny they existed. When the colleges received young men without even the appearance of piety, to prepare for the ministry; when, if graduates were found to possess competent knowledge, and were neither heretical nor scandalous, their piety was taken for granted and they were ordained of course; when the doctrine that unconverted ministers, though orthodox in doctrine and regular in their lives, were 'the bane of the church,' gave offence, we may be sure that unconverted ministers existed ... There can be no doubt that a considerable number of ministers were converted during the revival. Such was their own judgment concerning themselves; and in the opinion of others, their previous and subsequent lives showed how changed they became.

Of nearly equal importance was the conversion of a considerable number of students, preparing for the ministry. At the time of Whitefield's third visit to America, from 1744 to 1748, there were not less than twenty ministers in Boston who declared Whitefield to be the means of their conversion. Those who owed their conversion to the revival, in the whole country, must have been considerably more. The value of such an outpouring of spiritual life into the ministry was beyond calculation. Every such conversion of a pastor relieved the American Church of a 'plague,' and gave her a blessing. Nor was this all. Many pastor who desired to live a holy life had a very low standard of duty, of hope, and of effort. They were hardly aware that anything else was required of them beside the conscientious performance of a certain round of official services. These being performed, they trusted that God would add his blessing, whether they could see any signs of it or not. Believing that all orthodox and moral men ought to be in the church, it did not occur to them that evidence was required for the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

In the next study:

(1) We will see how revivals can be lengthened in their usefulness by preaching and teaching.

(2) We will consider teaching from the Bible that has been emphasised during times of revival in the past, and which have kept false teachers away.

(3) We will agree that revivals must be kept from excess and being purely subjective by calling Christians to obey God's moral Law, and to engage in evangelism.

Read **Habakkuk 3:17-19**

## **FIVE STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL REVIVAL**

## Read Isaiah 35:1-10

### 5. THE FRUIT OF REVIVAL

#### Introduction:

Isaiah 35:1-10 has often been called 'the great classic statement about Revival'.

(1) The need for revival. Here is an admission that there exists a spiritual desert (1a)

(2) Revival brings forth fruit when it comes (1b-2a)

(3) The aim of revival is bringing glory to God (2b). This is a real indicator that true revival has arrived!

(4) Every revival is preceded by prayer. (3) Consider the remarkable story of the annual meeting of the American Presbyterian Missionaries in 1858 in Dohnavur, South India. They decided after prayer to send a letter to the Evangelical Alliance in England, asking for prayer for revival world-wide. They pleaded for 'A world-wide Concert of Prayer'. This was requested in the booklet for the Week of Prayer in January 1859. This was the year of the great Revival beginning first in America, with thousands of prayer meetings, then Ireland, then England and Wales, then all over Europe, and many parts of Asia.

The Puritan preacher, Matthew Henry, wrote - **When God is about to do a great work, he sets his people to praying.**

(5) The two effects of revival are life and salvation (4-7)

(6) Life for the Church becomes less complex after a revival (8-10)

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When we speak of the fruit of Revival:

#### **1. Revival emphasises the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church.**

(1) In the Old Testament, the Spirit came on certain selected saints of God; but in the New Testament, from Pentecost onwards, every believer has an experience of the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

(2) The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost confirmed the deity of Jesus Christ who prophesied his coming and said that he would do it. (John 14:16-17) Whenever the Holy Spirit comes in revival power upon the Church he declares two important facts:

That Jesus Christ is risen, and alive, and continuing to build his Church.  
That Jesus Christ is the Head of his Church.

(3) During times of revival, the Holy Spirit comes to bring the Church back again to the great truths of the gospel. (John 14:17, 26)

This leads us on to affirm the connection between the nature of the Spirit and the nature of a true revival. The Holy Spirit and truth. Revival reminds us of spiritual reality.

## 2. The Holy Spirit and truth.

(1) Revival reminds the Church of the truth concerning man's sin.

In our evangelism, we talk about man's great need, and what Christ offers us by way of purpose and joy in life. It is rare to hear preachers these days speaking about sin, or Christians testifying to their deliverance from sin. Revival puts Christ the only Saviour from sin back into the centre of the gospel message. Through Christ we are delivered from both sin and hell! This reality and truth is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11)

Jonathan Edwards began the revival in America with a sermon entitled: **SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD**. It was preached on July 8th, 1741 (Sermons, Vol. 2, page 191).

**All you who have never experienced a great change in your hearts through the mighty power of the Spirit working in your souls; all you who were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin to a state of being made anew, and know nothing of light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However much you try to reform your life in many things, and try to be religious, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and private prayer and in the house of God, it is only God's pleasure that keeps you from being, this moment, swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you are hearing, soon you will be fully convinced of it. There were those who were like you, but now they have gone into eternity; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them when they did not expect it. And while they were saying, 'Peace and safety', now they can understand that those things on which they depended for their peace and safety were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.**

**The God who holds you over the pit of hell, much like one holding spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abominates you, and is terribly provoked. His anger towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He has such pure eyes that he cannot bear to have you a sinner in his sight. You are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous snake in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn citizen did he Governor; and yet, it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. You did not go to hell last night because of God; he allowed you to wake up again in this world, after you closed your eyes in sleep.**

**And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you go up this morning, but because God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell while you sit here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful way of behaving in this solemn worship. Yes; there is nothing else that can be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.**

**O sinner! consider the terrible danger you are in! Here is a great furnace of God's anger, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of divine judgement, that you are held over it by the hand of that God, whose anger has been provoked as much against you as against all who lie condemned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine anger burning up, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn you. And you**

refuse Christ the Mediator, and have no interest in him, and you have nothing by which you can save yourself, nothing to keep away the flames of wrath, nothing of your own works, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to invite God to spare you for one moment.

This sort of revival ministry brought both spiritual grief and great joy to his hearers (Vol. 1, page 92)

(2) Revival brings home to us the truth that Jesus Christ alone must be uplifted and glorified. What a great fruit of revival! (John 16:13-14) All revivals in the past have produced joyful hymns and joyful hymn singing. There is an earnestness in Whitefield's sermons that is missing in modern preaching:

George Whitefield (Sermons, page 70)

Speaking of preaching doctrine in our Gospel sermons, here is a short extract from one of George Whitefield's greatest sermons - on **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST**, preached in days of revival

**And now, where are the scoffers of these last days, who count the lives of Christians to be madness, and their end to be without honour? Unhappy men! You do not know what you are saying. Were your eyes open, and had you the sense to discern spiritual things, you would not speak evil against the children of God, but you would esteem them as the great ones of the earth, and envy their happiness. Your souls would hunger and thirst for such happiness. You would also become fools for Christ's sake. You boast of wisdom; so did the philosophers of Corinth. But your wisdom is the foolishness of 'folly' in the sight of God. What use is your wisdom if it does not make you wise unto salvation? Can you, with all your wisdom, propose a more consistent scheme to build your hopes of salvation on, than what has already been laid before you in Christ? Can you, with all the power of natural reason, find out a better way of being accepted by God, than by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it right to think that your own works by some means deserve or obtain it? If not, why will you not believe in Christ? Why will you not submit to his righteousness? Can you deny that you are fallen creatures? Do you not find that you are full of sins, and that these sins make you unhappy? Do you not find that you cannot change your own hearts? Have you not decided many times to overcome your evil desires, that they should not have dominion over you? Are you not to your evil desires, and led captive by the devil at his will? Why then will you not come to Christ for his holiness? Do you not want to die the death of the righteous, and enjoy their future state. I am sure that that is what you are thinking.**

**You do not want to be miserable in eternity. Whatever you pretend, if you speak the truth, you must confess that your conscience troubles you in your more reflective moments, and even convinces you that hell is not painted fire. And why then will you not come to Christ? He alone can give you eternal redemption. Come quickly, come away to him, poor misled sinners. You lack wisdom; ask Christ for it. Who knows, but he may give it to you? He is able, for he is the wisdom of the Father; he is that wisdom which was from eternity. You have no righteousness; come then to Christ: "He is the end of the law of righteousness to every one who believes." You are unholy: flee to the Lord Jesus. He is full of grace and truth; and all will receive his fullness who believe in him. You are afraid to die; let this drive you to Christ. He has the keys of death and hell.**



**He has abundant redemption. He alone can open the door which leads to eternal life. Leave your reasons to one side, and do not boast in them. Whatever you may think, it is the most reasonable thing in the world to believe in Jesus Christ, whom God sent. Why, why will you die? Why will you not come to him, that you may have life?**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (Revival Year Sermons, pp 48-49)

Here is part of a sermon by Charles Spurgeon **on THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**. What doctrine we find here preached in a year of revival!

**As we come humbly pleading the new covenant, our heavenly Father will not deny the promises contained in it, but will make every one of them 'Yes and amen' to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.**

**Then, again, the blood of the covenant has to do with us in this way: it is not only a fulfilment as regards Christ, and a promise as regards his Father, but it is an evidence with regard to ourselves. And here, dear brothers and sisters, let me speak affectionately to you. Do you not rely entirely on the blood? Has his blood - the precious blood of Christ - been sprinkled on your conscience? Have you seen your sins forgiven through his blood? Have you received forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus? Are you glorying in his sacrifice, and is his Cross your only hope and refuge? Then you are in the covenant. Some people want to know whether they are chosen by God. We cannot tell them unless they tell us this. Do you believe? Is thy faith fixed on the precious blood? Then thou art in the covenant. And oh, poor sinner, if you have nothing to recommend you; if thou art standing back and saying: 'I dare not come! I am afraid! I am not in the covenant!' Christ still invites you to come. 'Come to me,' he says. 'If thou feel that you cannot come to the covenant Father, come to the covenant Surety. Come to me and I will give thee rest.' And when you have come to him, and his blood has been applied to thee, do not doubt that in the red roll of the Chosen is written your name. Can you read your name written there in letters of blood through the Saviour's atonement? Then you will read it one day in letters of gold because of the Father's choosing! The one who believes is the chosen. The blood is the symbol, the token, the earnest, the surety, the seal of the covenant of grace to you. It is the telescope through which you can see things far off. You cannot not see God's choice with the naked eye, but through the blood of Christ you can see it clearly enough. Trust in the blood, poor sinner, and then the blood of the everlasting covenant is a proof that you are an heir of heaven.**

**Lastly, the blood stands in relation to all three of us, and here I may add that the blood is the glory of all. To the Son it is the fulfilment of all his work; to the Father a sure promise; to the sinner it is evidence; and to all - to Father, Son and sinner - it is the common glory and the common boast. In this the Father is well pleased; in this the Son also, with joy, looks down and sees the purchase of his agonies; and in this must the sinner ever find his comfort and joy for ever.**

(3) Revival brings the Church back to the truth of the Bible. The great cry of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century was **SCRIPTURE ALONE**. The Bible alone is the source of saving truth and the gospel. It is final in everything that it says. It is the Word of God; inspired by the Holy Spirit. The supreme authority for all believers.

In 14th Century England, John Wycliffe sent out his Lollard preachers with a translation of the New Testament in the language of the people.

In the 16 Century, William Tyndale translated the Bible into the modern English of his day, so that even the common plough-boy could read it for himself.

In the 17th Century, we have a succession of godly men who preached and explained and applied the Bible to their many hearers.

Revival always brings Christians back to the great old truths of the gospel.

### **3. The most uncomfortable truth of all - revival is linked in God's purposes with prayer.**

See 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Listen to what Spurgeon say (Revival Year Sermons, pp 27-28)

Charles Spurgeon linked prayer with revival. Someone once asked him what was the secret of his great success. He gave a surprising reply - 'My people pray for me!' Here is an extract from the greatest of all his sermons - **THE STORY OF GOD'S MIGHTY ACTS**:

**I will detain you no longer on this subject of God's power, and his servants' faithfulness, except to make one observation. All the mighty works of God have been attended with great prayer, as well as with great faith. Have you ever heard of the way the great American revival began? A man unknown and obscure, had it on his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After wrestling in prayer, he asked in his soul - 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' He hired a room, and put up a poster outside announcing that there would be a prayer-meeting held there at a certain hour of the day. He went in at the proper time, and not a single person was there. He began to pray, and prayed for half an hour alone. Someone came in at the end of the half-hour, and then two more, and I think he closed with six. The next week came round, and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times. At last, the prayer-meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start prayer-meetings. There was scarcely a street in New York that was without a prayer-meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The prayer-meetings became daily, lasting for about an hour, with petitions and requests sent up, simply asked and offered before God. The answers came; and many were the happy hearts that stood up and testified that the prayer offered last week had already been fulfilled. Then while they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell on the people, and it was rumoured that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching very hard, and there had been hundreds converted in a week. The news spread in and through the Northern State - these revivals of religion became universal, and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million of people were converted to God in just two or three months. Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast in Northern Ireland, in the say way.**

**The brother in America had it laid on his heart to pray, and he did pray. Then he held a regular prayer-meeting; day after day they met together to seek the blessing, and the fire came down, and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos, but by hundreds and thousands, and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of his gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Each one of you must make your own estimate of them as you please.**

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the greatest British preacher of the 20th Century, experienced Revival twice in his life - both in Wales: once when he was small boy in the early years of the Century, and once briefly in his first Church in Wales. Before he died, he pleaded for many years for Christians to prayer for revival. Listen to what he says (**AUTHORITY, page 92**)

**But the trouble is that we always start with ourselves and our efforts, and ask God to bless them. When did you last hear anyone praying for revival, praying that God might open the windows of heaven and pour out his Spirit? When did you last pray for that yourself? I seriously suggest that we are neglecting this almost entirely. We are guilty of forgetting the authority of the Holy Spirit. We are so interested in ourselves and in our own activities that we have forgotten the one thing that can make us effective. By all means let us continue to pray for particular efforts, for the minister and his preaching every Sunday, for all essential organisations and for evangelistic campaigns, if we feel led to have them. But before it all, and after it all, let us pray and plead for revival. When God sends revival, he can do more in a single day than in fifty years of all our organisation. That is the verdict of history which emerges clearly from the long story of the Church. This is the greatest need today; indeed, it is the only hope. Let us therefore decide that day by day, and many times during the day, we will spend our time before God pleading for revival. But, foolish as we are, we will never do so until we have come to the end of ourselves and of our own resources. We will do so only when everything else has failed, and we have realised our utter bankruptcy and impotence, and we have come to see that our Lord spoke the simple truth when He said 'Without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5).**

**Let us remind ourselves that the God who, in the past, has come suddenly and unexpectedly upon the dying Church, and has raised her to a new period of life and victory, can do the same still, that His arm is not shortened, nor his power in any sense diminished. Let us wait upon him, let us plead for a period of glory, of power and of influence, that men and women will be converted in masses, and the power of the truth is again upon them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will manifest his authority in the Church in revival.**

**What conclusion do we arrive at as the result of all this? Let us go on with our practical efforts, and let us go on with our study, but God forbid that we should rely on them. Let us equip ourselves as best we can. We will never be as able and as learned as the apostle Paul, Augustine, Luther or Calvin. They were men of great learning and giant intellects. That is the kind of man God seems to use when He does his greatest things in the history of the Church. Let us go on, however, and seek knowledge and equip ourselves as perfectly as possible. But, in the name of God, let us not stop at that. Let us realise that even that, without the authority and the power of the Spirit, is of no value at all. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love (a product of the work of the Spirit), I am like sounding brass or a clashing cymbal.' (1 Corinthians 12:1). It does not matter who I am, or what I may do: it will get me nowhere. It is the authority of the Spirit that alone prevails.**

**Now, this is what grieves me. I very rarely hear any Christians today praying for revival. What do they pray for? They pray for their own organised efforts, either at home or in various other lands. In a typical prayer meeting this is what happens. 'First of all let us have the reports', says the chairman. Having heard them, he adds, 'Let us go to prayer about it. You have heard the facts; let us pray about them.' We pray only for blessing on our efforts, whether it be a great evangelistic campaign, or work in the foreign field. That is quite right, of course. But let us learn to agonise in prayer for a revival of the work of the Lord.**

**Let us pray as Habakkuk did - 'O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in anger remember mercy' (Habakkuk 3:2).**

So then, let us pray for revival!

