

Spiritual Revival: The Need of the Christian

by C.H. Spurgeon

We need revival because we have departed from the living God and need to be restored to a healthy spiritual condition.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Psalm 77:10, Isaiah 57:15, Habakkuk 3:2, Matthew 11:28, John 15:5, Romans 12:2, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Humility in Faith"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the urgent need for spiritual revival among Christians, urging believers to recognize that true religion is solely the work of God. He points out that many church members exhibit a lack of genuine godliness, and their conversations often neglect the name of Jesus, indicating a need for deeper communion with Him. Spurgeon calls for self-examination and humility, encouraging Christians to groan over their spiritual condition and to seek God's help in reviving their souls. He concludes by reminding the congregation that revival cannot be achieved through self-effort but must come through earnest prayer to God, who alone can restore life and vitality to their faith.

Transcript

"O Lord, revive thy work" (Hab. 3:2).

All true religion is the work of God. He regards the work of grace as being even more glorious than His works of nature. He is, therefore, especially careful that people know that He is indeed the author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is anything in the heart that can be acceptable to God except that which God Himself first created there. If there be anything in our souls that can carry us to heaven, it is God's work from first to last. Therefore, we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the text "O Lord, revive thy work!"

We Should Begin with Ourselves

We too often flog the church when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. Let us, therefore, start by remembering that, as a part of the church, our own lack of revival is in some measure the cause of that lack in the church as a whole. I believe that the mass of Christian men in this age need a revival, and my reasons are these:

1. Look at the conduct of many who profess to be the children of God. Although it is very common to join a church, are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Is morality more pervasive? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, the age is as immoral as any that preceded it. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter, but within, the bones are just as rotten as before. Society is not at all improved.

My brethren, it is well known that a man's honesty is not guaranteed because he is a member of a church. The lives of too many members of Christian churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them at all. If men were truly what they professed to be, why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that imitation of the devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and there? God in heaven knows that what I say is true, and so do many of you in your hearts.

The members of Christian churches are not what once they were. It is fashionable to be religious. Persecution is taken away. The church has, with few exceptions, no gates. Persons come in and out just as they would march through St. Paul's Cathedral. They make it a place of traffic instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot reserved for the holy of the Lord. If they are Christians, they lack revival. If there is life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes. It needs to be fanned and it needs to be stirred.

If this is true in your case, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Ask Him to search and try you lest a false profession of faith should be a mere tinsel in which to go to hell. If you are His, ask God to give you grace so that you may turn to Him with full purpose of heart and live according to revived godliness in your soul.

2. Examine the conversation of many professing Christians. You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December and still never be informed about their religion by what they say of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all. On Sabbath afternoon, faults are found with the ministers, and all kinds of conversation takes place, which they call religious because it is concerning religious places. But do they ever talk of what Christ said and did and what He suffered for us here below? Do you often hear the greeting addressed to you by your brother Christian, "Friend, how does your soul prosper?"

Surely we as Christians talk too little about our Lord and Master. When we step into each other's houses, do we talk about the cause and truth of God? Why, we must not talk of this doctrine because perhaps someone disbelieves it. We must not notice such and such a truth in Scripture because a friend doubts or denies it. And so we drop all the great and grand topics that should be the staple commodities of godly talk and instead begin to speak of anything else because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual. Is it not a sad truth that many of us have need to pray, "O Lord, revive Thy work in my soul so that my conversation may be more Christlike, seasoned with salt, and kept by the Holy Spirit"?

3. Consider that there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ. How much have we to cry out against ourselves for a lack of holy fellowship with Jesus, which is a distinguishing mark of the true child of God! Let me ask some of you how long it has been since you have had a love visit from Jesus. Perhaps some of you will be able to say, "It was but this morning that I saw Him; I beheld His face with joy and was ravished with His countenance." But I fear the greatest part of you will have to say, "Ah, sir, for months I have been without the shinings of His countenance."

Brethren, let me not condemn you. Let me not even judge you. But let your conscience speak. Mine will and so will yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without Him? I fear many of the troubles of our heart spring from lack of communion with Jesus. Let each of us, then, for I am sure that each of us have need in some measure, put up the prayer "O Lord, revive Thy work!"

We Should Groan Because of Our Spiritual Condition

I can almost hear one professor saying, "Sir, I need no revival in my heart; I am everything I wish to be." Down on your knees, my brethren! Down on your knees for him! He is the man that most needs to be prayed for. He says that he needs no revival in his soul, but he needs a revival of his humility at any rate. Those are in the best condition who, while they know they need reviving, yet feel their condition and groan under it.

Habakkuk knew how to groan about his spiritual condition. "O Lord," said he, "revive thy work!" Alas, many of us lack revival, but few of us feel that we lack it. It is a blessed sign of life within when we know how to groan over our departures from the living God. It is easy to find hundreds who have departed, but you must count by ones those who know how to groan over their departures.

What have you been doing about your own spiritual declension? What has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? I cannot understand how your piety can be of any brilliance if you can live without the sunlight of Christ and yet be happy. Christians will sometimes lose a sense of intimate fellowship with Jesus, but they will always groan and cry when they lose Him. The true believer, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy. He will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans that will at last prevail with God and bring the blessing of revival down. He will, days and nights in succession, cry, "O Lord, revive Thy work!"

Let me mention some groaning times that will always occur to the Christian who needs revival:

1. A Christian will always groan when he looks upon what the Lord has done for him in the past. If he is what he should be, he will always weep when he remembers God's lovingkindness of old. Whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it cannot bear to think of "the banqueting house" without saying,

The peaceful hours I then enjoyed,

How sweet their memory still.

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill.

When he hears a sermon that relates the glorious experience of the believer who is in a healthy state, he will put his hand upon his heart and say, "Such was my experience once, but those happy days are gone. O that I might again behold Him! O that I might once more see His face!" He will weep when he remembers how the Lord was precious to him, how He laid bare His heart and was pleased to fill his heart with the fullness of His love. Such times will be groaning times, when Christian remembers "the years of the right hand of the most High" (Ps. 77:10).

2. A Christian who lacks revival will groan during participation in religious exercises. He will go up to the house of God, but he will say to himself,

Ah! How changed! When I once went with the congregation to keep the holy day, every word was precious. When the song ascended, my soul had wings. When the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say amen. Now the preacher preaches as he did before, but the sermon is dry and dull to me. I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same, but my heart is heavy. My harp strings are broken and I cannot sing.

The Christian will return from those blessed means of grace sighing and sobbing because he knows he needs revival.

The same will be especially true during the Lord's Supper. When he sits at the table, the unrevived Christian will think,

O! What seasons I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine my Master was present, but now it is dry bread to me. It is tasteless wine with none of the sweetness of paradise in it. I drink, but all in vain. No thoughts of Christ. My heart will not rise. My soul cannot heave a thought halfway to Him!

And then the Christian will begin to groan again, "O Lord, revive Thy work!"

Those of you who know that you are in Christ but feel that you are not in a desirable condition because you do not love Him enough nor have the faith in Him that you desire to have, I would just ask you this: Do you groan over it? Can you groan now? When you feel your heart is empty, is it an aching void? When you feel that your garments are stained, can you wash those garments with tears? When you think your Lord is gone, can you hang out the black flag of sorrow and cry, "O my Jesus! O my Jesus! Are You gone?" If you can, then I bid you do it. Do it, and may God be pleased to give you grace to continue to do it until a happier era will dawn in the reviving of your soul!

Conclusion

Perhaps some of you will say, "Sir, I feel my need of revival. I intend to set to work this very moment to revive my soul." Do not say it, and above all things, do not try to do it, for you never will. Make no resolutions as to what you will do. Your resolutions will be broken as certainly as they are made, and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins.

I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, turn your groaning into prayer. Say not, "I will revive myself," but cry, "O Lord, revive Thy work!" And let me solemnly tell you that you have not yet come to know how sad your estate really is if you would talk of reviving yourself. If you but knew your own condition, you would as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battlefield heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as you would expect to revive yourself without the help of God.

I bid you not to do anything, nor seek to do anything, until first of all you have addressed Jehovah Himself by mighty prayer--until you have cried out, "O Lord, revive Thy work!" Remember, He that first made you must keep you alive, and He that has kept you alive must restore more life to you. He that has preserved you from going down to the pit when your feet have been sliding can alone set you again upon a rock and establish your goings.

Begin, then, by humbling yourself--giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian, but beginning at once with firm prayer and earnest supplication to God: "O Lord, what I cannot do, please do! O Lord, revive Thy work!"

Christian brethren, I leave these matters to you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred and in anything judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts and turn your houses into places of mourning. Weep, my brethren: "It is a sad thing to depart from the living God." Weep, and may He bring you back to Zion that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

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