

# The Pastor & Revival

by David Smithers

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of watchfulness, prayer, and cooperating with the Holy Spirit in order to experience a successful revival.*

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 12:1, Acts 2:1, Romans 8:26, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 1 John 1:1

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Revival"

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## Description

David Smithers preaches on the godly wisdom gained from pastors who experienced years of revival during the Great Awakenings in America. He emphasizes the need for watchfulness, prayer, and cooperation with the Holy Spirit in preparing for and experiencing revival, cautioning against dismissing the wisdom of past revivals. Through the examples of Pastor Theodore Cuyler and Pastor J. O. Peck, he highlights the importance of being vigilant, prayerful, and responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in ushering in a revival.

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## Transcript

The following material represents the godly wisdom born out of the day to day experiences of pastors who actually witnessed years of revival. To them revival was not a philosophy, a fad, or just an old story, it was something they lived. These men labored in the Lord's vineyard during the most prolonged period of revival history known to the Church. Imagine if you can, living and ministering for nearly five decades during the second and third Great Awakening. Since your earliest memories you would have continually heard about wonderful revivals in one part of the country or another. It was a time when America was known for her rare spirituality rather than her rank sensuality. Revivalists shook the nation with powerful preaching, followed by daily prayer meetings and transformed lives. Pastors all over the country rejoiced as they saw virtually years of gospel work accomplished in only days.

Many of us are longing and praying to see this kind of glory return to the Church. Still, there is much confusion and debate over how it is to be truly accomplished. As we seek understanding on the process of revival, we need to take care not to commit the sin of Rehoboam. Being wise in his own eyes, young king Rehoboam rejected the counsel of his father's elders, and as a result, divided the Kingdom. (1 Kings 12). We can not afford to quickly dismiss our forefather's wisdom and experience, under the convenient assumption that, "God is going to do a new thing." Though many are confident that a revival is eminent, we must be very careful not to be presumptuous about a revival that is still yet to be experienced. Whether or not we see a revival in the future I believe will be determined by the choices we make today. Please

now consider the wisdom and advice of men who, like the Apostles, proclaimed only those things which they had seen, heard and handled. (1 John 1:1-4).

#### The Need for Watchfulness - Pastor Theodore Cuyler

Theodore Cuyler graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1846, and after entering his first pastorate in Burlington, New Jersey witnessed a remarkable revival. In 1853 Mr. Cuyler moved to New York City into the Market Street Dutch Reformed Church, where he was instrumental in another revival. Eventually, in 1860, Cuyler went to Brooklyn where he pastored and built what was then the largest Presbyterian Church in America. Mr. Cuyler was also well acquainted with many successful preachers, such as Horatius Bonar, C. H. Spurgeon, D. L. Moody and Charles G. Finney.

On the subject of being prepared and watchful for a coming revival, Theodore Cuyler writes, "One day the wife of one of my two church elders came to me in my study, and told me that her son had been awakened by the faithful talk of a young Christian girl, who had brought some work to her husband's shoe store. I said to the elder's wife: 'The Holy Spirit is evidently working on one soul, let us have a prayer meeting at your house tonight.' We spent the afternoon in gathering our small congregation together, and when I got to her house it was packed to the door. I have attended thousands of prayer meetings since then, but never one that had a more distinct resemblance to the Pentecostal gathering in 'the upper room' at Jerusalem. The atmosphere seemed to be charged with a divine electricity that affected almost every one in the house. Three times over I closed the meeting with a benediction, but it began again, and the people lingered until a very late hour, melted together by 'a baptism of fire.' That wonderful meeting was followed by special services every night, and the Holy Spirit descended with great power. My little church was doubled in numbers, and I learned more practical theology in a month than any seminary could teach me in a year. That revival was an illustration of the truth that a good work of grace often begins with the personal effort of one or two individuals. The Burlington awakening began with the little girl and the elder's wife. We ministers must never despise or neglect 'the day of small things.' Every pastor ought to be constantly on the watch, with open eyes and ears, for the first signs of a special manifestation of the Spirit's presence. Elijah, on Carmel, did not only pray; he kept his eyes open to see the rising cloud. The moment that there is a manifestation of the Spirit's presence, it must be followed up promptly. For example, during my pastorate in the Market Street Church, New York, (from 1853 to 1860), I was out one afternoon making calls, and I discovered that in two or three families there were anxious seekers for salvation. I immediately called for a series of meetings for almost every evening. A large ingathering of souls rewarded our efforts and prayers. I have no doubt that very often a spark of divine influence is allowed to die for want of being fanned by prayer and prompt labors, whereas, it is sometimes dashed out by inconsistent or quarrelsome church members. It was to Christians that St. Paul sent the message, 'Quench not the Spirit.'"

#### The Necessity of Prayer - Pastor J. O. Peck

J. O. Peck was a respected and successful Methodist pastor in the latter part of the 19th century. He had been both a witness and a instrument of many genuine revivals. From his own experience he had learned that, "In every revival there is an inter-blending of the divine and the human agencies." Therefore he regularly warned the Church against neglecting their duty to pray for revival. Some have falsely assumed that because a revival seemingly comes without noticeable preparation and prayer, that such things are not necessary. Addressing this subject Mr. Peck writes, "There are times when revivals seem to be spontaneous manifestations of divine power, having no visible human agency at work. Dr. Lyman Beecher

had one of these spontaneous revivals. It came suddenly and powerfully. It swept the town with mighty power. After it was over Dr. Beecher was visiting a bedridden member of his church in a remote part of the town. This member told him that day after day for weeks he had felt a great burden of prayer for the unsaved, and that he began at one end of the town and prayed for each household till he had included every family. Then, as if this were not enough, he prayed for each family again. In an instant Dr. Beecher knew from whence the revival came. It was born in the heart of that bedridden mighty wrestler with God!

One Sunday a stammering blacksmith asked his pastor to appoint an inquiry meeting for the following Monday night. The pastor said there were no indications justifying such a step, but the blacksmith insisted that there was going to be a revival, and begged the pastor to announce the meeting. It was done. The night was stormy, but to the pastor's astonishment the room was full. Many were weeping, and the majority stated that they were brought under conviction on the Friday afternoon previous. That was the precise time when the old blacksmith had felt a great burden for souls and, locking himself in the shop, had given the afternoon to prayer until he won the victory. I believe that all revivals, which seem to come without any human agency, will be found to have their origin in some man or woman of mighty faith...

The Great Awakening in New England under Jonathan Edwards seemed to come without the intervention of human agency; yet for years Dr. Edwards and his saintly wife had been besieging the throne of grace, praying day and night, "O Lord, revive Thy work!"

Cooperating with the Spirit -Pastor Theodore Cuyler

"While it is true that we finite creatures cannot predict the [exact] times or seasons of the Spirit's special presence, yet it is always right to be praying for an outpouring of the power from on high. The late Dr. Thos. H. Skinner told me that two or three of his elders, in Philadelphia, met in his study to prostrate themselves before God, and to ask for a baptism of the Spirit. They emptied themselves and prayed to be filled with Christ. He did fill them. Then they interceded most fervently for the awakening and conversion of sinners. Presently a most powerful revival shook the whole church like the mighty blast which filled the upper-room at Pentecost. Mr. Finney tells us that for fourteen successive winters there was a rich spiritual blessing brought down upon a certain church just because it was the custom of the church officers to 'Pray fervently for their minister far into the night before each Sabbath.' Those wise, godly men honored Christ's ambassador, honored His gospel, honored their own duty and felt their own responsibility. They did not run off to Egypt for help. The prayer-hearing God honored them... When the influences of the Spirit are recognized in your congregation in any degree, you must be on the alert, and be prompt and untiring in your cooperation with the Divine Agent. The secret of success in a revival is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit."

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