

History of Revival (1740-1851), 1

by Ian Murray

The study of revivals is essential for encouraging faith, stimulating hope, and leading to self-examination, while revealing God's power and majesty.

Duration: 53:48

Scripture: Judges 2:8, 1 Kings 19:12, Micah 2:7, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 2:5

Topics: "Church History", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the common features observed in revivals. One of these features is a great hunger for the word of God, where people cannot hear it preached enough. As a result, churches often increase their services during revivals to accommodate the demand. Additionally, after the preaching of the word, some individuals may be so convicted and grieved that they stay behind, hoping for comfort or guidance from someone. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of not neglecting the history of the church and the works of God, as periods of spiritual declension are often associated with forgetfulness of God's dealings.

Transcript

O Lord, our gracious God and our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that in Thy providence and in Thy mercy we are met together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for faith in Him and for bringing us to come this day to Thee as those who have no righteousness in themselves, but who rejoice in the knowledge that by His obedience unto death Thou hast provided righteousness for us, that we might come with acceptance even to Thy throne of grace. O God, we pray Thee that Thou would strengthen us in heart and mind, that the unction of Thy Spirit may rest upon us, and that we may together glorify Thee, that our meeting may be under Thy blessing, and that we may sincerely desire in all that we shall do and say to please Thee.

Do Thou hear our cry, and have mercy upon us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Now as you know the subject that I was asked to speak upon this week is the subject of the history of revival.

And that is a subject which I was very delighted to be asked to speak upon. There has been some true revival, we believe, of the knowledge of historic reformed Christianity. And in England that began round about the year 1950.

That's several years before the work of the Banner of Truth Trust began. But about the time, about that year, about 1950, there were a number of influences which caused people, and especially young people, to reconsider the history of the Church, and especially the history of revivals. I suppose for many years in England there had been practically no awareness of the history of the work of God previous to about the last 50 years.

And then there came a point of time in 1949 when John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion were reprinted, when the Evangelical Library opened its work in London, and when a conference began in London called the Puritan Conference. And these agencies focused attention upon some of the great revivals of the past. If you were to go this morning into the Evangelical Library in London you would find it no doubt a rather quaint old building.

But before you would see the books that are on the shelves you would see a portrait of many divines of past generations, of Whitefield and Toplady and the Wesley's and many others. And when that library opened its work in London it caused people to ask many questions concerning these unfamiliar faces and the books that they had written. And then there was also, of course, the ministry of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who I believe is known to many of you.

And he called attention to men such as Whitefield, and in the Puritan Conference, of which he was and is the chairman, that conference directed attention back to the great revivals of the past. Now, under the hand of God, that rediscovery of history provided a great stimulus, an impetus, a movement forward. And I believe then, with all my heart, that the subject that we are to study this week is the one that is so stirring and inspiring and worth coming this distance to speak on.

Let me just give you an example in my own experience in recent months of how this subject can rekindle warmth and life in one's own heart. A few months ago, I had arrangements to go and preach in a village called Rose in North Wales. And when the time came for me to go to this place, I have to confess that I had a good deal of reluctance about the trip.

It was a journey down from Scotland, it meant being away for a few days when I seemed to be particularly busy. And on top of that, the name of Rose was as foreign to me as it no doubt is to you. I had never heard of the place, and I didn't know anyone who lived there.

I had therefore no knowledge of what to expect. And so I went with some hesitation. But when I got there, I found that my host, in whose cottage I stayed for these few days, was an old man over 80 years of age.

But his conversation was more stirring to me than anything I had heard for some long while. He had been a young man in the last movement of the Spirit of God in the British Isles. That is to say, the last extensive revival in the year 1904.

He was then in his late teens, working in a coal mine. I had heard things about that revival, but I had not met someone who had been in the center of part of it, and not met someone who had the doctrinal judgment which this man had. Now he had an excellent library of books.

It would have made some of you men to water at the mouth as we say in Britain. I don't know if you say that. But he couldn't read these books anymore.

He was almost completely blind, but he loved the books, and he knew just where they were on his shelves. Well, we were. It was in the middle of winter, and he would sit by his fire, and he began to speak

to me of those days.

And I could see that the knowledge which he had of what had happened was, at that moment, an inspiration to him. He was truly a man of fervent prayer, of energetic witness. He had been the means in this locality.

He was no preacher, not at all. He had been a miner all his days, but he had been the means of the formation of a church. And as we spoke of these things, the fire burned.

He told me of what had happened in that village, of the homes that had been transformed, of these rough, tough men that had been broken and humbled and brought into the church, and become leaders for many years after. And then, after lunch, he suggested that we might go out and look at the village of Rose. And he would try to point out to me some of the places.

And this is what we did. We went round, and as best he could, he knew the place of course. He had lived in it in childhood.

And I have never in all my life seen so many church buildings in such a small area. I suppose there were only about three or four streets in the place. But there was a time, not so very long ago, when practically the whole community was hearing evangelical gospel preached through the influence of that and of earlier revivals.

When I came home from that village of Rose, with new strength, it seemed to do something too. And I suggest to you that this is the effect that the study of revivals ought to have upon us. Now, before we go any further, I would like to take up, just for a little while, one or two supporting reasons for that assertion on the profitability of our study.

There is of course a danger that the study of church history can be abused. There are some who might say, is there not a danger that studying the past simply diverts us from the present hour? Is it not a danger that we shall seek to relive the lives of other people instead of doing the work that God has given us to do in this present generation? Well, that is a danger. I think it is partly to warn us against that danger that the word of God tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than thee? That is not a question we are to ask in a certain way. We are not to, as it were, complain of the present providence of God in his dealings with the church, and we are not to praise the past in such a way as to disparage what God is doing at this present hour. Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days are better than thee? There is a sinful way, and a way that abuses the history of the church, and into that we ought not to enter.

Nevertheless, recognizing that there is such a danger, I believe that there is a far greater danger which results from the neglect of the history of the church of God, and the neglect of the study of the works which God has wrought in the earth. For one thing, you will always find in the scripture, I believe, that a time of spiritual declension, a time of spiritual indifference, of colds, of deadness, that such periods are ever associated with a neglect and a forgetfulness of the dealings of God with his people. You have, I suppose, a classic statement of that at the beginning of the book of Judges.

At the beginning of that long period of some 350 dark years in the history of Israel, the explanation for the history which is unfolded in the book of Judges is given us there in the second chapter, and in verses 8 and 10, where we read these significant words. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua,

and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel. Those who had seen the works of the Lord, they lived for him throughout all their generation.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died. And also, all that generation were gathered unto their fathers, and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And it was in their ignorance of the works that God had done, that their downward path commenced.

So that we have through the scriptures, these repeated divine testimonies given to us, as to the importance and the necessity of remembering what God has done. When the Passover feast, for example, was instituted, as we read in Deuteronomy chapter 16. And the manner in which that feast was to be kept, was laid down.

The bitter herbs that were to be taken, and no leavened bread, and so on. And when all that is recorded, we read these words, that this was to be done year by year, throughout all generations, that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt, all the days of thy life. It was to perpetuate the memory of something, that there was a visible reminder given them, in the Passover.

So when the children of Israel went across the Jordan, as we read there in Joshua chapter 4, God commanded them to take these great stones. And as they had crossed, and were beginning the conquest of the land, these stones were to be piled up, twelve great stones. And the purpose of those stones, was not for the present generation, they knew what had happened, how the waters of Jordan had parted, and how they had been delivered out of Egypt.

It was for the generations that were to come. And God said there in Joshua chapter 4, and that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, what mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, when it passed over Jordan. And these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.

Now that was God laying upon his people, the command to remember his mighty works. And so it goes on through the scripture. The prophet Isaiah, God speaking through Isaiah, commands them to look to the pit whence they were dug.

Jeremiah commands the people to stand in the old way, and see, and ask for the old paths. The prophets Hosea and Ezekiel, charge the people with the sin of forgetting their early days. God says through the prophet Micah chapter 2 and verse 7, O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straightened? Are these his doings? And so through the history, right way into the book of Revelation, when we find the ascended Christ charging the church.

In the second chapter, the church at Ephesus with the sin of a failure of memory. Remember God says, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent. So we are to study the history of revivals, in order that we may have a standard of comparison.

That we may look at the works which God has done in former ages. That we may ask ourselves, whether the zeal and the devotion, and the fervor of spirit which was then in the church, whether that is our spirit, or is the spirit of the Lord straightened? Are these his doings, says Micah? Are you who profess his name, are you the people in whom that spirit dwells, who worked with such power and grace in former times?

The danger of neglecting the history of revivals then, is the danger that such ignorance will be accompanied by spiritual decline. But there is a second thing to be said.

The primary duty and permanent duty of the church, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the study of revivals, is a great stimulus to the exercise of that faith. And conversely we may say, that the neglect of that history, is an encouragement to unbelief.

We are bidden and charged by the scripture, to know that Christ, ascended and exalted, is the one who commissions the Holy Spirit to bestow all saving blessings upon men. Christ is the dispenser of the Spirit. The mighty operations of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost, were traced by the Apostle Peter, to Christ being at the right hand of God exalted, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

The plenitude of the Spirit is given to Christ, to bestow upon his body. The church lives in the age which the Apostle Paul called, the ministration of the Spirit. The church is to preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

And those supplies of power and of grace from the Spirit, are to be received in no other way than by faith in the exalted person of Jesus Christ, the one who has purchased for sinners, all the work, all the grace of salvation and sanctification. Now if we believe that, as I trust we do, if that is the basis of our hope in revivals, then we need to ask ourselves, why is it that there is so little anticipation of revival in the church? Why is there so little expectation? If we believe that Christ is the one who dispenses the Spirit, who pours out the Spirit, who is not straitened, who can do what he did on the day of Pentecost, then why is it that our anticipation is so feeble? And there is only one answer to that question. It is unbelief as to the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

And even those who have been involved in great revivals, have had to make their confession, that when those revivals began, they could scarce believe the very things which their eyes saw. William Tennant for example, here in New Jersey, in the year 1757, was witness to a great revival. And this is what he said, The work so far exceeded my most enlarged expectations, that I was lost in surprise, and constrained often to say, Is it so? Can it be true? That is when he was in the revival.

Can it be true? Nor is my being eye and ear witness, from Monday to Friday, enough to recover me from my astonishment. I felt as the apostles felt, when it was told them, that the Lord was risen from the dead. The danger of unbelief, is the church's greatest danger.

The danger of not doing justice, to what we are told, concerning the resources of power, and of glory, which are in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom. And the reason why unbelief, takes such strong hold upon the church, is often because of our ignorance, of those works of power, which Christ has done, in years past. Now this week I hope, to mention often the name of Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton, whose book, The Log College, is a description of the great awakening, in the Middle States, in the 18th century.

And in his preface to that book, The Log College, which he wrote in the year 1845, in the preface he says this, speaking to American Christians, Many people among us, are not aware, that the ground on which they tread, has as it were, been hallowed by the footsteps of the Almighty. They are not aware. And that is even more true today.

Here then are some reasons, why we are to study, and ought to study, the history of revival. It encourages faith. It stimulates us to look with new hope, and new prayer, to the person of Christ.

It leads us to self-examination. It humbles us, to realize how weak we are, how lean we are. And at the same time, it brings before us, revelations of God's power and majesty, which raise us up, to this new confident expectation.

Now, as we proceed, I want to, in a few words, attempt to define, the word revival, and then to make three general observations, on the subject. And then, after that, in the course of the following mornings, to deal more directly, with the history of revival, and particularly some of the leaders, of revival, in previous ages. But first of all, let us define, what we mean by the word revival.

By the word revival, we ought to understand, a powerful activity of the Spirit of God, in large numbers of people, at the same time. It is the work of the Spirit of God, not in an individual, but in a large number of persons, simultaneously. And the effect of that work, is to reanimate Christians, to refresh Christians, to raise them up to new vigor, and strength, and zeal, and prayer.

Refreshing Christians, converting sinners, and convicting worldly men, as to the truth of the gospel. Now, in a revival, these three things always happen. There is refreshment for the church.

They seem to be clothed with new strength. People who have been, it may be, Christians for years, they are suddenly charged with energy, and new devotion to Christ. There is the conversion of ungodliness, and there is further, an evidence upon the community, of the presence and the power of God, which may not convert men, but which subdues sin, and which promotes godliness in communities, and sometimes in whole nations, and lands.

That, my friends, is a revival. Let me give you the definition, which a last century American gives Dr. Baxter Dickinson. He defines a revival in these words.

By a revival of religion, we understand an uncommon, and general interest on the subject of salvation, produced by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of divine truth. The work is very commonly preceded by a prevailing and affecting coldness on the subject of personal religion, such as leads Christians to feel the necessity of extraordinary prayer for themselves, and for others. In its progress, the thoughtless are alarmed, convinced of their guilt, inquire what they shall do, receive Jesus as their savior, rejoice in hope of future glory, join themselves to the people of God, and in important respects, pursue a new course of life.

Well, that is a good definition of revival. Let us pass on then from definition to three general observations. The first is this.

It needs to be underlined when we speak of revival, that we speak of a sovereign work of the Spirit of God. A revival is not the result of certain processes in history. A revival cannot be organized.

A revival cannot be produced by any amount of human zeal or endeavor. It is rather a rending of the heavens. It is a divine intervention amongst the affairs of men.

It is God making bear His arm and acting for His people sovereignly and omnipotently. And that is why a revival, almost invariably, I suppose invariably, confounds all human calculations. It is not anticipated generally even by Christian people when it comes.

It is God coming into the midst of His people in such a way that human plans are confounded and men are humbled in the dust and there is an all-pervasive consciousness that God has come amongst His people. Putting the same truth in another way, we can say that revivals are altogether independent of man's support or of man's sympathy. Speaking of the work of the Spirit of God, Jesus says that Spirit, the wind, bloweth where it listeth.

Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. By the Spirit, the resistible power, the most improbable events take place. Israel is withered like a valley of dried bones.

Israel is brought out of Babylon as out of their graves. On the day of Pentecost, the men who crucified Jesus Christ are brought into His church. In the 16th century, the priests of the Roman church, men such as Luther and Calvin, they are made the very leaders of the work of revival in the church.

It is that which is not expected by men which God does. That which cannot be hindered by men. God sovereignly works according to His own decree.

A revival is a sovereign work of God. Now we need to emphasize that because there are a number of writers who deal with the subject of revival and who treat it as though revival can be traced to certain natural causes in history. For example, it is said that the Great Awakening was stimulated by the emotional preaching of the tenants and George Whitfield and others that people were induced to conversion by being brought into a state of alarm by the oratory of such men.

Or again it is said that in the 18th century there were frequent revivals in America. The American revivals of the later 18th century took place in Kentucky and Tennessee and elsewhere. It is so often said by secular writers that these revivals were due to the primitive conditions of the frontier.

People lived a very simple life, they had no entertainment, they were near to death and therefore they were very impressionable. And when there was any religious influence at all it was quite sufficient to bring them into the kingdom of God. And that sort of thinking comes even into evangelical books.

There is a book, for example, on Jonathan Edwards which says that Edwards' preaching on eternity and on hell though it made such a great impression upon the people of his day, that type of preaching could not be expected to influence people today because in the 18th century people were much more conscious of their mortality. Life was much more brittle and frail and therefore people were open to the exposure of that kind of truth. But that is no longer the case.

Now of course that sort of statement is simply a denial of supernaturalism. The 18th century American or Britisher was no more disposed to fear God, no more disposed to be convicted of sin than any sinner in any generation of human history. Revivals are not the product of any natural phenomena or circumstance, they are God-sent and irresistible in their power.

I think we ought to emphasize that. Revivals do not come because there are catastrophes or spiritual or physical dangers. The great revival in New York in 1857 was preceded by an almost universal financial collapse and it was said, wrongly said, that when the wheels of industry stopped turning in New York then men could listen to the Spirit of God.

Now that's a naturalistic interpretation of what happened. It wasn't because there was a financial collapse that there was a revival. There have been many financial collapses.

There have been many wars and famines and disasters of all kinds and men can pass through those things and come through them hardened against the gospel. They do not produce revival. Samuel Miller, who was a minister in New York in the 1790s, speaks of a great pestilence which raged in New York at that time and in his church alone I think the figure was something like 200 people who died from plagues of that period and in the whole city the numbers of course were much greater but he says that in all those events he did not know of one conversion.

It did not produce a revival. Now, revivals then are the sovereign work of God. I have one more comment before I pass this head.

In the last century evangelicals became responsible for confusing the meaning of the word revival and that confusion is with us today. What happened was this. People observed the fact that in every revival there are generally certain common features.

For example, men receive a great hunger for the word of God. They cannot hear it preached too much or too often and therefore in revivals churches find it necessary often to increase their services. There may be services not simply on Sunday and once in the week but right through the week.

People come and come to hear the word preached and when the preaching of the word is over it may be that some are so struck with conviction and with grief that they simply cannot go away. They hope that someone will speak to them some word of comfort or guidance. They remain it maybe for hours after a service is over.

Now these things were observed and men began to say well if we could if we could arrange such things well then perhaps we could have a revival. So it was arranged that there should be protracted meetings the services going on through a week or perhaps two weeks and after the services after meetings where people were invited to stay and the idea was that if we can recapture the circumstances the accompaniments of revival well perhaps we have a revival. And so the idea came in that a series of meetings of special meetings should be called a revival.

And people began to say that we are holding a revival and we are going to have a revivalist to preach to us. And what happened was that the whole idea of revival was being changed. The accompaniments of revival were there.

The prolonged meetings the after meetings but the essence of revival that is the outpouring of the Spirit of God was not there. That cannot be arranged. That cannot be put on to Cuban order.

Not so. But the idea of the special meetings replaced the idea of revival. People arranged their revivals months in advance years in advance.

We have a revival once a year. They meant that they have a campaign once a year which they called a revival. And these people of course were not secular liberals they were evangelicals.

And the tragedy is and perhaps we shall return to this later in the week the tragedy was that it was through evangelical belief that the idea of revival the true idea was pushed into the background. Now this is not just a difference in terminology. It's a vital difference of thought.

The old leaders of revival in the 18th century and the early 19th century they no more thought of promoting or producing a revival than they thought of raising the dead. They knew they had to preach the word but

when and where the sudden Spirit of God would be poured out in abundant measure they did not profess to know. That belonged to God.

That was His secret word. Their duty was to preach His word. But this new definition of revival was taught by men who denied them.

Who said that revivals are the result of laws which if we implement the laws we will get the blessing. That if a farmer if he sows the seeds in the spring he knows he'll have the hardest in the summer if we actually said God will bless. A revival is not a sovereign work of God like a shower of rain from heaven but it comes as men do and act and God then will give the blessing.

And so the word revival became a word associated not with the sovereign action of God but with evangelistic zeal and effort and work and labour and that was called revival. Now words are important. Where we live in Scotland it's a good place perhaps to buy antiques and if you came to Edinburgh and you were wanting to buy antiques I don't suppose you would be very pleased if you saw a shop sign out antiques and later you discover that these articles which were supposed to be antiques have come straight from the manufacturer.

A word is important. A word can change the whole meaning of something. This is what happened with the word revival.

Revivals then are a sovereign work of God. My second general comment is this. Although during this week we are to concentrate upon the history of revivals I think it is very necessary to say that no impression should be given that periods of history when there are no revivals are unimportant and insignificant.

That would be a gross mistake. I suppose we all have naturally an interest in the more sensational and in the more successful and there is a danger that we can concentrate our attention on particular facets of church history and miss long stretches of history because there is nothing in them which appeals to us so much. Now this is certainly a danger with the subject of revivals.

Revivals are not the everyday general, usual work of the Spirit. But the everyday, general work of the Spirit is of infinite preciousness but to the church God is working to all age salvation in the earth. And it would be, and sometimes is I think a mistake that is made to suppose that revivals are the one period that are of value and in between is a kind of period of utter deadness and decline.

Sometimes that impression is unwittingly given by authors who when they want to speak of a revival they paint everything before the revival in the darkest colour just as Rembrandt would paint his pictures black or dark and then the portrait would shine up. Well that sometimes can be misleading. It sometimes can be little work that the Spirit of God will do it.

I don't need to tell you that men like John Bunyan and Matthew Henry and Thomas Boston in Scotland these were men who did their work in a period of declension not in a period of revival. They toiled quietly in the background. The blessing of God upon their work was to come after their death more than in their own lifetime.

That should caution us against the idea that our attention should be fixed only on revival. Let me take an illustration just from the Christian life itself. In the Christian life of the individual believer there are long stretches which are not marked by anything dramatic or sensational when we just seek to do what God has called us to do as Christians.

There are some events which stand out in our lives which we never forget. But for the most part the course of our lives are as it were on an even keel. There are long stretches of time when there is nothing dramatic.

Sometimes there are periods of suffering, of failure, of setback, of depression. There are kind of winters in the soul and even in these periods God is working strategically. And it would be a very misguided Christian who thought that the only thing of interest in his life was the time when he had some mountain peak experience.

That's not so. God works through it all. Now so in the history of the Church.

There are long periods of time when there is no rending of the heavens, when there is nothing altogether dramatic and extraordinary. But these are not periods that we are to ignore or to neglect. I throw that out because I think it is important.

In revivals God acts suddenly. But that is not God's usual way of acting. Do you remember what James said in the fifth chapter of his epistle? Behold he says the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth.

He waits, being patient over it until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye, says James, be ye also patient. God is patient in the outworking of his redemptive plan.

And therefore to suppose that only when God works suddenly that only that is to be considered by us that is a great mistake. There was in Glasgow early in this century a preacher by the name of G. H. Morris. And he tells in one of his sermons how when he was a student in Dundee, on the River Tay in Scotland, he once heard an address by Marconi, the inventor of wireless telegraphy.

And Marconi at that time, of course, was a name upon everyone's lips. The amazing invention of being able to telegraph messages over thousands of miles of ocean. Marconi's name was being spoken of and heralded everywhere.

And when he came to speak in Dundee he came to a packed audience. But Morris says that what impressed him more than anything else was that Marconi told his audience that what he had been able to do was dependent upon the toil and the labour of a student in Dundee forty years before Marconi's own invention. For, he says, without that man of genius, my discoveries would have been impossible.

And Morrison says, I am certain there are not five men in this church who could tell me the name of that Dundee genius. He is utterly forgotten. No one ever thinks of him when the message flashes across thousands of miles.

Yet, though no man owned his toil, he was preparing a fame and a glory for all countries. Now that is true in the history of this church. Our Lord himself said, one man soweth and another reaps.

And those that sow may be forgotten. No one may own or remember them, but their work in the sight of God is as precious as that work of revival harvesting which may come many years later. My second comment then, do not let us suppose, because this week we are studying revivals, that these are the only things that we should pick our attention upon in church history.

Thirdly and lastly then, we must underline the fact that what happens in revival is only a heightening of normal Christianity. It is only a heightening of normal Christianity. That is to say, that though revivals introduce a wonderful change in vitality in the church, the spiritual experience of the church in revival is not different in essence to the spiritual experience of the church in ordinary times.

Under the outpouring of the Spirit, feelings are more intense. Beliefs are held more firmly. Convictions are deeper.

But the feelings and the convictions and the beliefs are the same as exist wherever the Spirit works in the history of the church. It is a difference of degrees and not a difference in kind. Now that's a very vital state, perhaps more so than some of you appreciate just at this moment.

Let me give you a quotation from Joel Hawes, who was a Connecticut minister in the early last century. He says, the theory of revivals is very simple. It is only the increase and the extension to a number of sinners at the same time of that influence of the Holy Spirit which is employed in the conversion of each individual sinner brought to repentance.

It is the increase and the extension to a number of sinners at the same time of the same work that is individually done in one sinner when he is brought to repentance. Now, let me try in a word to explain why that is so important. In revival it is a common thing for emotion to be so strong that men literally fall to the floor.

Sometimes congregations after the preaching of the Word of God in revivals they literally resemble a battlefield. People groan as though they've been shot. Others are quiet and shaken and others weep.

Others sit in silence. There is a shock that descends upon a people and at other times in revivals there is such a stirring of the spirit of praise that men literally leap and dance and rejoice in God. Now, these things are not the essence of revival.

I say they sometimes accompany revival. But men can fall on the floor and others can stand and shout and sing and there's no revival at all. The essential thing is to know that the true work of the Spirit of God in breaking men's hearts and leading them to Christ that work is the same in the case of an individual when there's no revival as in the case of thousands of people in a revival.

And what we've got to look for is the essence of the thing. And not to suppose that a revival is some extraordinary and different kind of Christianity. It is not that.

I close then this morning with a quotation from another American preacher, Edward Payson. And I think he gives us in a nutshell what I've just been trying to say. And with this as I say we shall end.

Payson is preaching from the first book of Kings chapter 19 on God heard in the still small voice. And he distinguishes between God speaking generally to men through a congregation through the mouth of a preacher and God speaking personally to an individual's heart. He says, when God speaks to men in a general way only by his written words or by the voice of his ministers, he does not address them in this personal manner.

He addresses characters and classes, not individuals. When this is the case, no man hears for himself. No man feels that he is particularly addressed.

Hence, large congregations often sit and hear a message from God, while perhaps not a single individual among them feels that the message is addressed to himself or that he has any personal concern in it. But, it is not so when God speaks with his still small voice. Everyone to whom God thus speaks feels that he is spoken to, that he is called as it were by name.

Hence, while multitudes sit around him, he sits as it were alone. To him alone every word seems to come absorbed in the truth thus presented in reflecting on his own conduct, guilt, and danger, and on the character and commands of God, he is almost unconscious of the presence of his fellow worshipers. His attention is chained to the subject by bonds which he cannot break, and sentence after sentence, truth after truth falls upon his ears, and is impressed on his conscience with a weight, an energy, and an efficacy which omnipotence alone can give.

And, when God thus speaks to the whole, or to the greatest part of an assembly at once, as he sometimes does when he comes to revive his work extensively, these effects are experienced, and these appearances exhibited by all. This is a revival. No scene on this side, the bar of God, can be more awfully, overpoweringly solemn than the scenes which such an assembly exhibits.

Then the Father of Spirits is present to the spirits he has made, present to each of them, and speaking to each. Each one feels that the eye of God is upon him, that the voice of God is speaking to him. Each one therefore, though surrounded by numbers, mourns solitarily and apart.

The powers of the world to come are felt. Eternity with all its crushing reality opens to view, and descends upon the mind. The final sentence, though uttered by human lips, comes with scarcely less weight than if pronounced by the judge himself.

All countenances gather blackness, and a still solemn, profound, and awful pervades the place, interrupted only by a stifled song, or a half-repressed sigh. My heroes, such scenes have been witnessed within a very few years, they have been witnessed in hundreds of places. This was Edward Paton.

My heroes, such scenes have been witnessed within a very few years, they have been witnessed in hundreds of places.

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