

Why There Is No Revival

by James A. Stewart

The sermon argues that there is no revival in the church today because of the rejection of the supernatural, denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit, ignorance of the mystical body of Christ, by-passing of the Lordship of Christ, and stealing of the glory of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 42:8, Malachi 3:8, John 16:14, Acts 5:3, Acts 5:31, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 4:4, Colossians 1:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Christ's Lordship"

Description

James A. Stewart delivers a powerful sermon addressing the lack of permanent revival work in the midst of believers, attributing it to the rejection of the supernatural, denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit, ignorance of the mystical body of Christ, by-passing the Lordship of Christ, and the stealing of the glory of God in modern Christian ministry. Stewart emphasizes the need for believers to return to a deep reverence for the supernatural power of God, the recognition of the Holy Spirit's authority and leadership, the unity of the body of Christ beyond denominations, the essentiality of acknowledging Christ's Lordship, and giving all glory to God alone.

Transcript

Many dear saints are perplexed and even discouraged at the seeming indifference of Jehovah after all the highly organize efforts being put forth to promote revival.

As one who has agonized before the Throne of Grace, may I humbly suggest some reasons why there is no permanent work of the God in our midst today

The Rejection of the Supernatural

The modern God Who many believers serve is hedged about with so many limitations, laws and conditions that He is practically powerless to do anything outside the ordinary laws of nature.

J.H. Jowett has observed "We are living too much as men lived before the Holy Spirit was given. We have not occupied the new and far-stretching land of Christian privilege . . . Therefore many of the gifts and graces and perfumes of the Apostolic Age are absent from our modern life."

So many believers have come to deny the possibility of the supernatural I the church in spite of the fact that the whole fabric of Christianity is interwoven with the supernatural. A supernatural gospel is meant to

accomplish supernatural results because it has a supernatural power behind its messengers. We are living in the last days of a dying dispensation of grace when the Holy Spirit is seeking to work in a miraculous way. We have been so brought up in a church that we have lost the sense of the majestic and power of Jehovah. How little sense of the supernatural pervades our services! Oh, how one longs for the Spirit of God to break through all our convictions, campaigns and planned programs and take full control of the church. Shall the faith of a Michael Peden or a William Carey be simply an occasional and extraordinary phenomenon of Christian experience, or shall theirs be the normal standard of Victorious Christian living?

Denial of the Personality of the Holy Spirit

This is the day of denial of the personality of the Spirit. There is a grave danger in our high-powered evangelistic machinery that we may organize the blessed Spirit out of the church. It is easier to organize than to agonize! Unless the Holy Spirit is given the prominent place in the seat of authority, there will be only false fire, no matter how big the financial budget may be. How many evangelistic campaigns I have known in which the executive member of the Godhead was completely ignored!

Revival comes from the Holy Spirit, and it is only a He is honored and obeyed that there can be a true spiritual awakening. Since the day of the Pentecost when He was installed as the administrator of the church, it has been His prerogative to undertake the leadership of all the gospel conquests. Throughout the Acts we see Him as a divine person residing in and over the church. For example, in the fifth chapter we have the unveiling of the presidency of the Spirit in the death of Ananias and Sapphira: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? . . . Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God."

In the thirteenth chapter, we see the Spirit exercising His divine authority as the Lord of the harvest: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

In the general assembly gathering in the fifteenth chapter, the chairman James recognizes the Spirit's leadership by announcing to the delegates: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us . . ."

How extraordinary these words would sound in a Christian convention today! So far have we removed ourselves from the authority of the Spirit of God that such language would bring only a knowing smile from the delegates. Yes, the sin of the church today is the denial of the personality and presidency of the Spirit of Pentecost.

Campaign after campaign is conducted without Him. An occasional reference may be made to His Name; but alas, He is outside the camp and wounded in the house of His friends. The Holy Spirit is the source of all true revival. All our efforts apart from Him, no matter how big they may be, are like so much beating of the air. A church without her Pentecostal experience is utterly powerless to move herself or others.

Can it be that the church of Christ has so denied the Spirit of God His rightful place of authority and administration that it is too late in the day for Him to return? This is a very solemn and heart-searching question that ought to drive us to our knees in deep humiliation. Something is vastly wrong when we see so little results for our efforts.

Ignorance of the Mystical Body of Christ This is a day when men like to magnify their denominations. Many evangelistic efforts seem to be conducted for the sole glory of the denomination. How often in evangelistic campaigns is a good gospel message offset by an invitation that implies that denominational

membership is equivalent to membership in the supernatural body of Christ! Denominational membership can never be a substitute for the new birth.

In our special love and loyalty of our denomination, we must be careful not to ignore the whole mystical body of Christ which is composed of all true born-again blood-washed souls. How tragic it is to see many lovely believers who never glory in the oneness of the body of Christ! The Holy Spirit has very little concern for any special denomination or group, as such. He is seeking to break down the denominational barriers that divide the saints of God. The barriers that we so carefully erect now will be destroyed suddenly at the coming of the Lord.

There are no denominations in heaven. Why should we not seek to prepare for glory now! No wonder George Whitefield cried out in his day:

"I wish all names among the saints of God were swallowed up in that one name of Christians! Are you in Christ? If so, I love you with all my heart!"

The time has come now for us to preach this transforming truth of the oneness of the body of Christ as expounded by Paul in such letters as Colossians and Ephesians. It was this precious truth that brought revival to the churches in Hungary under my ministry. God cares little for the numerical increase in church membership but rather for all true additions to the mystical body of Christ. To such, the Holy Spirit alone can make any real additions

By-Passing of the Lordship of Christ

In our evangelical preaching of today there is a by-passing of the emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. In so doing, we have given the impression that the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ is a second experience of grace or a sort of optional after-choice in the Christian life. Actually, many messages addressed to Christians at a holiness convention should be in reality a part of the gospel message addressed to sinners. In one of his Gospel messages, Peter declares "Him hath God exalted . . . to be a Prince and a Savior." (Acts 5:31.) Today we have reversed the gospel message by stating Him to be a Savior first and then a Prince! We do not deny that it is possible for a time to come in the believer's life when he will recognize more clearly what is involved in the Lordship of Christ, but this does not alter the fact that a person cannot receive Christ as Savior without having in some manner recognized Him as Lord. Romans 10:9 declares "That if thou shalt confess that Jesus is Lord and in thine heart believe that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (B.R.V.) The Word of God makes it perfectly clear that the objective of all true evangelism is the control of the sovereign Lord over the lives of those He has redeemed.

How can we have revival when the vital note of the Lordship of Christ is omitted from our present-day evangelism? As one has truly reasoned, "What is the Gospel of God's grace but the gospel of His sovereignty? Wherein lies the vital efficacy of the gospel of grace unless it relates to His kingdom and leads the individual soul to an acknowledgement of His sovereignty."

The Stealing of the Glory of God

The question is posed by Jehovah to a backslidden people, "Will a man rob God?"

Today in our Christian ministry man has dared to rob God of His glory. In our work today too much praise and glory is given to Christian leaders. Page after page is written about the instrument while scarcely a word is written about the Blessor Himself. Magazines that write of men and movements have a large

circulation while those which write mainly of the Person of Christ, giving God the glory, can hardly keep going for lack of support. When unusual blessing occurs, the evangelistic party gets so much publicity from the Christian press that God is robbed of His glory.

If the work has been a true movement of the Spirit of Pentecost and we can truly testify, "It is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes," then how can we give glory to man? The Welsh revival of 1904 has a solemn message for all revival seekers today. Set Joshua, whom God used as a leader in that mighty movement, speak with characteristic insight of one of the disappointing features of that time:

"The Welsh revival was the product of much soul agony. In its stages, the production retained its bloom, as when a peach is carefully plucked from a tree. It lost this, however, when human fingers played with it. The newspapers reported every odd thing for the sake of circulation among people who desired the human side of the revival made public. Reports threw light on the human side of things and the divine side was forgotten."

In this day of evangelistic glamour it is almost amusing to read of the saintly George Mueller in 1876 apologizing for a facsimile of his autograph and photograph, which appeared in a book of his sermons:

"During the last thirty years I have been asked both verbally and in writing for my likeness, but my reply has invariably been 'As I do not wish to direct attention to myself but to my Lord and Master, I must decline to comply with your request. Twenty years ago I was offered 500 pounds sterling if I would allow it to be published, but the offer was declined for the reason already given.'"

A.W. Tozer has warned us. "It is our belief that the evangelical movement will continue to drift farther and farther from the New Testament position until its leadership passes from the self-effacing saint to the modern religious star. Within the last quarter of a century we have actually seen a major shift in beliefs and practices of Evangelicals so radical as to amount to a complete sell-out, and all this behind the cloak of fervent orthodoxy.

"Until such self-effacing men return again to spiritual leadership, we may expect a progressive deterioration in the quality of popular Christianity year after year till we reach the point where the Holy Spirit withdraws like the "Shekinah" from the Temple. It is open question whether or not the Evangelical Movement has sinned too long and departed too far from God to return again to spiritual sanity."

The Shekinah cannot be manifested unless God gets all the glory in our ministry. God will not send revival in order that men and movements may be magnified. The crowning ministry of the Holy Spirit is to exalt the glorious Redeemer: "He shall glorify Me." God has said "My glory will I not give to another."

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