

God's Way to Revival

by Walter Beuttler

Revival is a divine intervention that brings people back to a previous state of relationship with God, and it involves a sense of need and hunger for God, leading to a response to God's drawing.

Scripture: Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 43:19, Isaiah 57:15, Isaiah 64:4, Hosea 14:7, Joel 1:2, Joel 2:12, Joel 2:25, Habakkuk 3:2, Acts 3:19

Topics: "Revival", "Repentance"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches on the concept of revival, highlighting the various expressions in the Bible that convey the idea of revival as a return to a previous state or relationship with God through divine intervention. He emphasizes the need for confession of failure as a step towards restoration, pointing out that God's plan is for steady growth and constant communion with Him. Beuttler draws parallels between Israel's historical cycles of sin, judgment, repentance, and restoration, and the need for revival in the Church and in individuals today.

Transcript

Although the term revival is not found in the Bible as such, the experience is there and so is the idea. This concept is also found in an impressive variety of more or less synonymous expressions employed in prayer and promise.

"Will You not revive us again?" Psalms 85:6; "Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years," Habakkuk 3:2; "They shall revive as the corn," Hosea 14:7; "To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isaiah 57:15; "When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," Acts 3:19.

In these and other expressions the idea has to do with bringing one to a previous state in, or relationship with God by some form or measure of divine intervention.

Strictly speaking, there should be no such need. Whenever we speak of the need of revival, we indict either ourselves or others, frequently both, as having backslidden at least to some degree. Nevertheless, where such backsliding has actually occurred, this indictment constitutes a desirable confession of failure as an initial requisite to restoration. It should be obvious to everyone that God's plan is not a continuous cycle of sinning and repenting, backsliding and restoration, but a steady growth in God and a constant walk with God on an ever-ascending path.

However, since fallen nature with its innate propensity to gravitate away from God is what it is, this ideal is unfortunately not the experience of a multitude of people as amply evidenced by the history of Israel and the Church. Israel's apostasies in a many times repeated cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and restoration were due to her failure to keep her covenant relationship with God.

Therefore, a new revival, so-called, was the only means to arrest Israel's drift away from God and to restore her to divine favor in whatever possible degree for however temporary a period. Even so, Israel was still gravitating toward national disaster, a course which these revivals only temporarily interrupted but did not ultimately prevent.

Yet these revivals did have the potentiality and purpose of saving Israel from the ultimate consequences of her evil ways. On more than one occasion these revivals gave Israel periods of peace and prosperity, sometimes of considerable length. The failure of revivals to keep Israel from relapse and provide a permanent cure lay in Israel's failure to abide by the principles inherent in revival as a remedy, not in the failure of the remedy itself. The story would be entirely different if they had maintained after revival the same consecration which brought them into revival. Likewise, the record of Israel would be still worse had it not been for seasons of revival. God was certainly not pleased with their defection, but He was with their return.

The very same principle applies today in the history of the Church, the course of denominations, and the experience of individuals. God's people should never be in need of revival. There is a far better provision. But when there is need for revival, thank God, revival is available. Although we do not believe in the need for revival, we believe in revival when we need it. When such sense of need finds vocal expression among the people of God, it is at least an honest expression of a regrettable fact and a glimmer of hope for a change for the better.

The Call to Revival

A true sense of need for revival is actually the call of God to revival. Such a sense can only be accounted for by the drawing of the Spirit of God in accordance with the will of God. A conscious need of God and hunger for God is actually God Himself hungering within us for Himself. When such drawing of the Spirit is followed by the necessary responses to God on the part of man, revival in some form and commensurate with that response is inevitable.

God Himself is delighted to respond to man's response. Whenever one of Israel's leaders recognized in her defection from God, the true cause of her national calamities, God evidenced His pleasure by supernatural intervention in her national affairs. The availability of revival to arrest a trend away from God or to regain lost ground is not only a deduction based on historical events inside and outside the Scriptures, but is also a scriptural assurance of a glorious fact. "I will restore to you the years that the locust have eaten" (Joel 2:25).

Furthermore, the promise of things beyond past experience and above natural expectation is an additional scriptural assurance of an even more glorious fact. "Behold, I will do a new thing... I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:19). "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what He has prepared for him that waits for Him"(who has worked for him that has waited for Him, margin) (Isaiah 64:4).

The Way To Revival

Revival is the keynote of the book of Joel. Pentecostal revival through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the essence of that keynote. The trumpet call of Joel arouses the people to the need of revival. His message shows them the way. What, then, is the way?

First, reflection:

"Has this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" (Joel 1:2). This book with its message of Pentecostal revival is addressed to the older generation because of their experience and greater observation over a longer period of time. This older generation had seen what the younger generation had not seen.

God's people suffered a national calamity without parallel in the memory of even the oldest inhabitants. The drought was so severe that the daily sacrifices had come to an end for lack of grain, wine and oil. Now the old are asked to reflect on the present state of affairs in contrast to the past so as to impress the younger generation with this unprecedented situation in preparation for the application of remedial measures.

A wholesome reflection on the glories of the past, during times of spiritual declension, plays a valuable role in heart searching's for cause and cure. Those who look back in objective reflection toward greater heights once possessed in God, than presently experienced, do not necessarily want to go back to "the good old days" for a mere repetition of previous experiences. Seeing the contrast between then and now, they simply want to use this unfavorable comparison as an incentive to press forward to higher heights and as a fulcrum to remedial action.

Second, alarm:

"Blow you the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm" (Joel 2:1). There are times when God's people need to be aroused to an honest assessment of the factual situation. "That which the palmerworm has left has the locust eaten; and that which the locust has left has the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm has left has the caterpillar eaten" (Joel 1:4). The desolation of the land was brought about by different agencies in progressive stages. Worse things were still in store, yet the people continued in lethargy and self-indulgence.

A church beset by increasing worldliness and decreasing spirituality needs to be aroused into a state of alarm. When the people of God substitute feasting for fasting, entertainment for worship, rhetoric for prophecy, ritual for revival, luxury for self-denial, the television set in place of family prayer, the approbation of the world for the reproach of Christ, there is ample ground for great alarm. Joel, in faithfulness to his nation and in obedience to his God, did not play a lullaby on his trumpet to induce a slumbering unawareness of the realities of his day, but an alarm to arouse the people into a consciousness of their need.

Third, repentance:

"Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn you even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). True repentance has three major components involving man's entire personality; namely, intellect, emotion and will.

Intellectually, man sees his wrong; emotionally, man feels his wrong; and volitionally, man corrects his wrong. Consequently, repentance is a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of deeds. Each

one of these three factors are present in true repentance and in that sequence, whether we are conscious of them or not.

The repentant prodigal son reached the turning point in a far country when he came to himself in the realization of his state and the acknowledgment of his plight; when he felt in his heart the sting of remorse and the shame of his deed; when he returned to his father with confession of sin in humility of spirit. Returning with contrition, he was met with compassion; coming in rags, he was clothed with a robe; suffering with hunger, he was dined at a banquet; weeping in sorrow, he was met with rejoicing.

Fourth, supplication:

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly... let them say, Spare Your people" (Joel 2:15-17). Now the prophet sounds the trumpet call for collective prayer by old and young, male and female, priest and people. Even the wails of the suckling's are a part of this prayer meeting which is characterized by earnestness in supplication, self-denial in fasting, genuineness in repentance, weeping in sorrow, persistence in intercession and diligence in seeking God.

There is no thought of prayer beautifully phrased and impressively uttered, no delight in mere rhyme and rhythm, no interest in dignified robes and religious paraphernalia, and no clamor for ornate ritual and imposing architecture. The need is too great, the distress too deep, and the cries too loud for the observance of ecclesiastical proprieties and traditional sanctions.

Things lose their meaning and men become shadows when God is all that matters. He will restore what was once enjoyed when those things that displaced Him will be displaced by Him, when we pursue again that which interests Him and discard that in which He has no interest. He will be found anew when He is allowed to be both center and circumference in our lives so that we can say with the psalmist of old,

"All my springs are in You." Psalms 87:7

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