

## Revivals And Church History :: Why Is There No Revival? By Al Whittinghill

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Surely every honest person in the Church of the Lord Jesus today must have a deep inner awareness that "something is wrong"! Isn't it true that there is an ominous sense of danger as one considers the biblical characteristics of the New Testament Church and then compares them to the state of the Church in our day? Contradictions abound! We may try to cover this uneasiness many ways— humor, amusement, busyness, keeping a positive attitude, distracting ourselves acquiring "the trinkets of time," new building programs, and creating "successful" religious organizations— but the symptoms of Divine displeasure saturate our nation on every level. There seems to be "a rumor from the Lord" that is letting His people get the sense of impending trouble if we do not have a serious change in the attitudes of our hearts. God is seeking to get the attention of the nation, beginning with His Church.

Will we not listen to Him before it is forever too late? Just think of what the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ would be like in our day if God had His way! No one wants revival in the Church more than He who died to purchase her and make her His very own precious, holy Bride!

What are some of the attitudes and thinking that hinder God's people from experiencing Heaven-sent revival? As we consider some of these things, let us first pause and pray that our hearts would be humbled and able to discern what the Spirit of God is saying to us (please read Psalm 80:3-7 and Psalm 85:4-9).

### Why No Revival?

1. An attitude of wrong priorities: Until we have a renewed mind we have no real sense of what is really important. Revelation 2:4-5 makes it clear that the Lord desires that loving intimacy with HIM be the center of everything. Most people are so worn out by their work that they have nothing left for Jesus. Someone once said, "Most Americans worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship." Some who cannot bear a long worship service feel cheated if the sports match is short. We keep trying to fit God into our worldly schedule, when He is waiting for us to be willing to fit into His Heavenly one. Why are you on earth today? What will we say at the end of life when we leave money and everything behind and face eternity? (Matt. 6:33).

2. An attitude of complacency: Complacency is our state when we are self-satisfied and have a casual approach to God. The church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:15-17 shows the attitude of those who become content in "lukewarm living" and become blinded to their true condition. "Why do we need revival? After all, God is blessing us!" Revival will come only to a desperate church, not a contented one. God is ever the rewarder of those who "diligently seek Him," not the mere casual inquirer (Heb. 11:6). Maybe the reason for so little real hunger and thirst for the genuine things of God in our day is because we have gorged ourselves on the things of this world. My old friend Leonard Ravenhill used to say, "The only reason that we don't see real revival is that we are content to live without it."

3. An attitude of resignation: Some Christians say, "If God wants to send revival, He will." This negates our responsibility as a Church to seek His face! Others might say, "We already have revival— just claim it." This self-deceived approach hardly bears comment. Once again I quote Brother Ravenhill: "The Church is so subnormal, if we became normal it would amaze us." I have heard well-meaning people say, "There's nothing that we can do; it's up to God to send revival."

We then end up blaming God's sovereignty for the sad state of the Church. If there is no revival in the Church we can be very sure that the lack is on our part and not God's! In fact, a Christian is more to be blamed for not being revived than a lost man is to be blamed for still being lost! We must stir up the gift of God and press into His desire for the Church. This must start with each individual taking responsibility before God for becoming pleasing to God, and a "channel of revival."

4. An attitude of prejudice, or misconceived notions about revival: We say that we are "open to God," but we really me

as long as He works within our expectations or preconceived terms of reference. It must be "traditional, respectable, rational" with no out-of-control display of emotions. (This might even be the same one who goes to the ball game and paints himself and shrieks for his team.) We want order! The mysterious, irrational, or supernatural has always tended to make the carnal mind nervous. It thinks, "Lord, revive us, but do it this much, and no more— and do it this way and with these people. Thank You. Praise You."

We often believe God to the point of discomfort or inconvenience or costing us something dear, and then we back off. Too many treat Him as "a supernatural aid to a happy life," and we want Him as long as He doesn't change what we like. But any person that is not open to change is NOT open to revival. There can be no revival until we are willing to change. Psalm 110 says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." Am I willing to give up my own ideas? Am I willing to give up my comfortable, but dead tradition? Please see Mark 7:9 if you are hung up on tradition. Oh, to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

5. An attitude of "loving comfortable truth": The Bible warns us that in the last days men will have itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3). They don't want preachers to "scratch" them. They say, "Preach love to us, not self-denial and suffering." "We don't want to offend anyone." "You're making people feel guilty; people won't come back, and we won't grow." "You'll drive people away if you keep preaching against sin."

But friends, sin is THE great hindrance to the mighty outpouring of God's Spirit. It is far better to drive men away by faithful preaching than to drive the Holy Spirit away by unfaithful preaching! It's time to sound the reveille and not sing lullabies! Those who have a "let us sleep" attitude will never appreciate the preacher who sounds the trumpet in their ear. One might say, "Brother, don't expose the sins of the Church to the world." Well, don't worry; they discovered them a long time ago! Given the state of the Church today, there is no comfortable way to get to the place of genuine revival blessing! It may be very painful for us. Our attitude must become that we would rather BE right than merely FEEL right. Light is the only answer for darkness.

6. An attitude of "the love of reputation": This really is "the fear of man" or pride (see John 12:42-43 for a glimpse of it). We have a great fear of "losing our dignity" (we mistakenly think that we have some dignity), or having others think that we "don't have it all together." This is the essence of the heart of a hypocrite. "What will people think if I humble myself and surrender totally to God?" Well, what will God think if you don't? "Poor man, I saw him weeping over his sins in church." We should pity the person who has never cried over the revelation of their sins as God reveals them! I believe that it may even be right to question the salvation of the person who has never wept over his sins in the presence of a holy God. We are called to be a holy people, different and separate from the world. If the world feels at home with us then it is right to assume that "the offense of the cross" has ceased (Gal. 5:11; 2 Tim. 3:12).

The only important thing is, "What does God think?" We must take off our church masks and get honest with God and become real with one another. We must come to the place where we can honestly say, "I'm not afraid of holiness. I'm not going to be afraid of going all the way with God— cost whatever it may."

7. An attitude of ignorance of God's Word: Psalm 11:3 states, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Hosea tells us that God's people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge of God (4:6). Jesus said to the Pharisees in Mark 12:24, "Do you not therefore err, because you do not know the Scriptures, neither the power of God?" All throughout the Bible and history revival has come only as God's people begin to take His Word and His promises seriously. Search the Scriptures and let them search you! Fifty years ago the average lost man in America knew more of God's Word than the average saved man does today. We are too accustomed to eating "secondhand" truth. For the baby, milk is simply food that someone else has digested.

We live in a day of darkness and man-made light. Cults flourish, and the Church languishes in large measure because we do not know the Word of God. It is high time for the Church to return to the Bible! The only hope that the world has is that the Church will once again see herself in God's mirror and be provoked to put on her beautiful garments in response to HIS revelation. The world must hear an anointed "Thus saith the Lord" from an obedient Church.

8. An attitude of disunity: Factions in the body are a proof of carnality. This grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit greatly. "Discord" is the very opposite of the "one accord" that we read of in the book of Acts that made the Church such a mighty vessel of God. Unforgiveness hidden in the Church is like a bullet left in the body! Are we more concerned about our opinions and interests than we are the honor of God? The Bible says that it is "only by pride comes contention" (Prov. 13:10). Divisions will leave as we humble ourselves at the level ground of the cross. One of the watchwords of the great Welsh revival was "Bend the Church and save the world." So often a great move of God has broken forth when proud, di-

sunified believers have obeyed the Scriptures and humbly sought forgiveness of one another. Will we do it?

9. An attitude of compromise: Proverbs 14:14 says, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Compromise never happens because of ignorance. It is a sin against light. It is a "going back" on what God has shown us to our "own ways." He whispered, we were stirred, yet we forgot, ignored, suppressed, or disobeyed the truth. We can rationalize our unwillingness to obey God many ways, but none of them is valid! Are we willing to suffer for righteousness' sake? The devil wants to lure us into a thousand things that will dull us to the truth and cause us to become passive and bored with, or distracted from, the deep things of God.

We live in a day when the world has become "churchy" and the Church has become worldly. Sometimes it is hard to tell who is who. Would you agree? But the Lord knows those who are His, even those who have been squeezed into the mold of the world. He will have mercy on the one who responds fully to His call. It's time to break out of the mold of the world and to be conformed to HIS image. We must not sidestep the real issues that the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts. Calvary must always precede Pentecost! Refuse to tolerate areas in your heart that you find yourself excusing to God or others.

10. An attitude of prayerlessness: Real revival is always transported to earth on the wings of the desperate, believing prayers of God's people. God will not do apart from prayer what He has promised to do in answer to prayer. He will wait until we come to Him with humble, repentant, believing hearts. The greatest moves of God always follow prayer. We can try everything known to man to make things better, or take care of our difficulties, but nothing will work. Without the heartbeat of prayer the body of Christ will resemble a corpse. The Church is dying on her feet because she is not living on her knees. It is time to seek His face individually and corporately. Let us turn to the Lord with all our beings and realize that God yearns to send revival on His people even more than we claim we want revival.

God is faithful to His Word. Nobody wants a revived Church more than He does. If we will remove the hindrances to real fellowship with Him and seek Him as He longs to be sought and found, then He will surely pour out His glorious Life-giving Spirit on us.

Why is there no revival? It is only because His Church has been content to try to live without it. "Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (Psa. 80:3).