

Revivals And Church History :: All Hindrances To Revival In The Church Are Due To Sin -goforth

All Hindrances To Revival In The Church Are Due To Sin -goforth - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/23 0:44

All Hindrances To Revival In The Church Are Due To Sin

by Jonathan Goforth

Presbyterian Missionary to Manchuria and China 1888-1935

Upon returning to China in the fall of 1901, after having recuperated from the harrowing effects of the Boxer Rebellion, I began to experience a growing dissatisfaction with the results of my missionary work.

In the early pioneering years I had buoyed myself with the assurance that a seed-time must always precede a harvest, and had, therefore, been content to persist in the apparently futile struggle. But now thirteen years had passed and the harvest seemed further away than ever. I felt sure there was something larger ahead of me, if I only had the vision to see what it was, and the faith to grasp it.

Restless and discontented, I was led to a more intensive study of the Scriptures. Every passage that had any bearing upon the price of, or the road to the endowment of power, became life and breath to me. There were a number of books on revival in my library. These I read over and over. So much did it become a burden on my mind that my wife began to fear that my mind would not stand it.

Of great inspiration to me were the reports of the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, for they made me to know that revivals were not a thing of the past. Late in the fall of 1905 a pamphlet containing selections from Charles G. Finney's Autobiography and Revival Lectures were sent to me by a friend in India. It was the final something that set me on fire!

Spiritual Harvests

On the front page there was a statement to the effect that a farmer might just as well pray for a temporal harvest without fulfilling the laws of nature, as for Christians to expect a great ingathering of souls by simply asking for it, and without bothering to fulfill the laws governing the spiritual harvest.

"If Finney is right," I vowed, "then I am going to find out what those laws are, and obey them no matter what it costs!" Later a brother missionary loaned me the full "Autobiography of Finney." It is impossible to estimate all that book meant to me.

Now I began to see stirrings in the hearts of the people, so much so that a native evangelist said in an awed whisper, "Why the people are being moved on just as they were by Peter's sermon at Pentecost."

At one meeting as I spoke on "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree," conviction seemed to be written on every face and when I called for decisions, the whole audience stood up as a man crying, "We want to follow this Jesus Who died for us."

About this time our Foreign Mission Secretary asked me to visit the revival in Korea. Witnessing the Lord at work in the Korean revival was of incalculable significance in my life because it showed me at firsthand the boundless possibilities of the revival method. Korea made me feel, as it did many others, that Revival was God's plan for setting the world aflame.

The missionaries in Korea were just ordinary people. I did not notice any outstanding people among them. It was in prayer that they were different. Never have I been so conscious of the Divine Presence as I was in these Korean prayer meetings. Those missionaries seemed to carry us right up in prayer to the Throne of God. One indeed had the feeling they were communing face to face with God.

What impressed me was the practical nature of the revival. It was no wild gust of "religious enthusiasm" dying with the wind upon whose wings it had been borne. There were the usual outward manifestations that accompany such miracles.

us outpourings of spiritual power. But beyond that there were tens of thousands of Korean men and women whose lives had been completely transformed by the divine power.

Every one seemed almost pathetically eager to spread the "Glad Tidings." Even little boys would run up to people on the street and plead with them to accept Christ as their Saviour. Everywhere I saw an evident devotion for the Holy Word. Everyone seemed to carry a Bible. And permeating it all was that marvelous spirit of prayer.

On my return to China, I was asked by the missionaries of Kikunsgan to tell them the story of the Korean Revival. On Sunday evening as I drew to a close my account of the Spirit's outpouring on the churches of Korea, it seemed the stillness of death pervaded the assembly. The suppressed sobs became audible here and there. In a little while missionaries were rising to their feet and in tears were confessing their faults one to another.

A conference of prepared addresses had been planned for the ensuing week. But when the missionaries met on Monday morning it was decided that we would throw the prepared schedule aside and continue in prayer, and along whatever line the Lord should move us. Never have I passed more wonderful days among my missionary brethren in China.

Revival Is The Beginning Of A New Obedience Towards God

In the autumn of 1906, I was preparing to set out to see what could be done about reviving the outstations. There was a matter, however, between a brother missionary and myself that had to be made right. I honestly felt that I was right. Nevertheless I felt it would please the Lord for me to go and make this matter absolutely straight. But I argued with the Lord, saying it was the other missionary's fault, not mine, and that it was up to him to come to me, not for me to go to him.

But the pressure continued until I cried out to the Lord saying, "He came to my study and in tears confessed his fault. Does that not settle the matter?"

"You hypocrite!" I seemed to hear Him say, "You know you are not loving each other as brethren, as I have commanded you to do." Still I would not yield.

Then came the final word from the Lord, "If you do not straighten this thing out before you go on that trip, you may expect to fail, for I cannot go with you." That humbled me. I did not want to go on that difficult trip without His help.

The night before I was to start on the trip I had to lead a prayer meeting for the Chinese Christians. All the way to the church the pressure continued: "Go and straighten this thing out, so that I may go with you to the outstations."

Still I would not yield. I started the meeting. It was all right while they sang, and during the reading of the Scripture. But as soon as I opened my mouth in prayer I became confused, for all the time the Spirit kept saying: "You hypocrite! Why don't you straighten this thing out?" I became still more troubled while delivering a short talk on prayer. Finally, when half way through my talk, the burden became utterly intolerable and I yielded.

"Lord," I promised in my heart, "as soon as this meeting is over, I'll go and make the matter right."

Instantly something in the audience seemed to snap. In a moment the whole atmosphere changed. Upon the meeting being thrown open for prayer, one after another rose to their feet to pray, only to break down, weeping. For almost twenty years we missionaries had longed to see a tear of repentance roll down a Chinese cheek.

It was late at night when the meeting closed. As soon as I could I hastened over to the house of my brother-missionary...the difficulty was settled, and because I was led of the Spirit and obeyed the Lord, the blessings on my tour of the outstations far exceeded anything I had dared to hope for.

At each station the Spirit of judgment was made manifest. Wrongs were righted and crooked things were made straight. At one station, I was only able to spend one night but that night the whole audience broke down before the Lord....

Often during the meetings, great waves of prayer would sweep the congregation. Some one would cry, "Pray for my outstation, we are so cold and dead." Or another would ask prayer for their unsaved loved ones and plead with the people to join them in prayer. Instantly scores all over the audience would respond.

It seemed nothing could resist such importunity. A number of influential Chinese leaders had opposed the meetings a

nd declared they would not attend them. Special intercession was offered upon their behalf, and some of the most broken confessions during these meetings came from them.

All kinds of quarrels were made up and innumerable wrongs righted during those days. Though many confessed to grosser sins, yet the burden of perhaps the majority ran along the line of neglected duty, breaking the Sabbath, tithing, testimony to others, right example, neglected Bible study, believing prayer for loved ones and friends--these were matters concerning which many Christians in great brokenness confessed their failure....

Hindrances To Revival

We cannot emphasize too strongly our conviction that all hindrances to revival in the Church are due to sin! The appalling fact is that every sin found without the Church is found also within the Church although perhaps to a lesser degree.

It is sin in individual Church members, whether at home or on the foreign field, which grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit! I imagine that we would lose much of our self-righteousness if we were to find that pride, jealousy, envy, greed, bad temper, backbiting, gossip, talebearing, and all their kindred are just as heinous in God's sight as the so-called grosser sins.

All sin in the believer, of whatever kind, mars the redemptive work of Christ. The filth and bloodguiltiness of the churches can only be swept away by the Spirit of Judgment, and the Spirit of Burning.

In view of the prominence that is given to confession of sin in this article, perhaps I ought to make plain my own views on the subject. We have a strong feeling that sins committed before conversion are under the blood of God's Son and never should be confessed. To do so is to bring dishonor upon Christ's Calvary sacrifice.

We believe that as regards secret sin, that is sin which is only known to the individual soul and God, to confess it at the private altar is, as a rule, sufficient to ensure pardon and cleansing. Yet there are times when secret acknowledgment of secret sin is not sufficient and public confession is the only way to secure relief...

As to sin against an individual, the Scriptures are quite plain. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:22,24).

It is vain for us to pray while conscious that we have injured another. Let us first make amends to the injured one before we dare approach God at either private or public altar.

I am confident revival would break out in most churches if this was done. Then again, as regards public sins, experience has shown us that those can only be swept away by public confession.

True, this amounts to crucifixion; but by our willful disobedience, we have put the Lord of Glory to open shame, and it is the price we must be willing to pay if we are to see revival sweeping through our churches.

Re: All Hindrances To Revival In The Church Are Due To Sin -goforth - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2006/10/23 12:07

Quote:
-----We cannot emphasize too strongly our conviction that all hindrances to revival in the Church are due to sin! The appalling fact is that every sin found without the Church is found also within the Church although perhaps to a lesser degree.

I would guess this is the heart of the issue. Many want to rationalize sin, justify disobedience saying this or that is no longer relevant in our culture, or time thus becoming idolatrous: we are giving allegiance to someone other than God, someone else is calling the shots in our lives. Yes, this is something we all have to deal with, sooner or later and perhaps on a regular basis.

Thanks for posting this article..I copied/pasted it into my documents for more study.

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2006/10/23 14:39

There is a wonderful little book by Him recounting the days of the china revival while he was with the china inland missions after the Boxer Revolt and the happenings of that time period. I understand that he stood pacing the floor for hours (12-14 straight) dictating it to his son-in-law as he wrote down all the happenings at the various outposts and churches. I was looking through my books but can't seem to find a copy of his books (my wife re-arranged, now I'll need to re-read everything just to be able to find somethings :-)), but Greg probably has the Book title, it's an excellent read.!

Re: Goforth - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/10/23 19:25

Quote:

----- I was looking through my books but can't seem to find a copy of his books

Dozman, are you referring to Goforth's "By my Spirit"?

I am currently reading a book by Mrs. Goforth called "How I know God Answers Prayer" What a blessing! Mrs. Goforth did not hide her sins, including the fact that at times her own reluctance to forgive prevented prayers from being answered.

One day, when her child was near death, unable to speak, she spoke to him about the need to forgive a certain person. She could see him move his lips, muttering a confession and prayer for forgiveness. Shortly afterwards he was completely healed.

Yes, unconfessed sin keeps many of our prayers from being answered. To be as sensitive as the Goforths -- to recognize and then admit those sins -- that takes incredible humility.

Goforth was a great leader of revival in China, but sadly, his Canadian associates did not grasp the vision. Last year a high ranking Presby minister told me that Goforth was "behind the times", and therefore he could not understand that the denomination had "moved ahead". Today nobody talks about Goforth. I get strange looks when I mention his name.

Goforth, like Frances Schaeffer tried to steer the Presbyterian Church from plunging into deadly liberalism. Sadly, to a fair extent, he was not respected for his burden.

Actually I would love to have more information about this -- if anyone can point me to it.

I found a few (<http://renewalfellowship.presbyterian.ca/channels/r01171-4.html>) comments here.

Diane

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/23 21:18

Quote:

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My home church back in Toronto, Canada for 7 years was Knox Presbyterian Church: <http://www.knoxtoronto.org/>

And believe it or not this is the church that **sent out the Goforth's!** Sadly as you mentioned there is very little talk about him or the legacy of the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. There is a plaque from the mancurian chinese in the vestibule of the church but sadly it has dust on it and nobody recognizes the work of God that happened.

I know that Jonathan Goforth came back to Toronto and spoke on the working of the Holy Spirit, whether or not the message was received is not certain but this is certain Toronto DID NOT have revival. The presbyterian church when I left has little or no life in it, claiming still to be evangelical yet there is no "attraction" of the Spirit in the church. They are holding

onto rote and the tradition of the church.

I went back from college there for 5 months and started a prayer meeting for revival. there was 15 people in attendance then 10, then 5, then 3, then 1. But the message was made clear to the whole church that it is urgent for God to move and the church to get out of complacency. We need to see the "old paths" again and wail and mourn for our dryness and deadness.

It is very worthwhile to read a biography on Goforth. And as Diane said the life and writings of Mrs Goforth are very encouraging also.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2006/10/23 22:03

That's the book ! It's a real challenging read.