

## Revivals And Church History :: Conditions For Revival -orr

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### Conditions For Revival

by J. Edwin Orr (circa 1930)

Revival, primarily, is the renewal of life in something that has already possessed life. It is impossible to revive something that has never been alive.

II Chronicles 7:14

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"

The word "Revival" in its ordinary sense, means the coming of life and renewal to something that has already possessed life.

Let us take an example in nature. We walk into the garden during the winter season, and there we see the old oak tree... leafless. There it has stood, for several months, a sorry sight---a few withered leaves hanging on empty branches as if in self-pity. To all outward appearances, it is dead. But come back again with me next month and I will show you a wondrous thing---little buds of beautiful, delicate green pushing their way upwards towards the light of a springtime sun, breaking through the relics of their winter prison. Soon the tree is in the glory of its leafy splendour. It is a seasonal marvel, this renewal of spring, when all that seemed dead becomes alive before our wondering eyes. What has happened ? There has come about a revival of the old tree.

It is the same in the spiritual realm. Revival, primarily, is the renewal of life in something that has already possessed life. It is impossible to revive something that has never been alive. But there is one important difference---the dying of the summer life of the tree is due to natural causes, and the same causes ring about the springtime awakening.

Spiritual death, on the other hand, is due to the disease of sin.

The best definition of "revival" is the phrase:  
"Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Beginning then with the understanding that a revival is an awakening among Christian people, let us study the conditions under which revival is given. The prayer of the Psalmist, " Wilt Thou not revive us again ? " teaches us that God is the source of revival. It is easy to make the Bible our text-book in this study, for it abounds in examples of revival. In the Old Testament, one of the best studies is found in the story of the revival at Mizpeh.

I Samuel 7

The antecedents of the story recounted in the first book of Samuel, chapter 7 are important. It is clear that a period of confusion and anarchy was brought about by the spiritual disobedience of God's people. Point by point, we may compare this state of affairs with the present day---is it not true that spiritual disobedience has caused a great decline today ?

As a result, defeat came on every hand, and after that a period of eclipse. The Ark of the Covenant, that sacred possession of the children of Israel, was lost to their bitterest enemies---and comparing it with today the Ark may be considered as the symbol of the mighty Presence of the Lord. And we know that we have lost such---the glory has departed.

The Ark was returned to the keeping of Kirjath-jearim."And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long ;for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord."

The fact that it seemed a long time to wait, and the fact that all the people of God lamented after the Lord, is one of the

egative encouragements. They had come to the end of themselves: they were in despair.

Look around our own country today. Christians know well that a dozen years have passed since any great demonstration of the power of God. The time is long, and the people are lamenting.

I say again, it is encouraging. The fact that little prayer groups of saints are lamenting after better things and praying in the agony of despair for revival, is surely an encouragement. The tide has turned.

Satan never persuades folks to pray for a revival. The prayer itself is born in the Will of God. God wants to revive us. And, knowing His Will, despairing of ourselves we are thrown back upon God. "Revive Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years ---"

It is at that stage we come across the intervention of God by the mouth of His servant. It seems as if God said: 'I want to give you revival even more than you desire to have it; but you must pay a price.'

So it is with us. "And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

"If----" God's blessing is conditional upon our wholehearted desire. "If you really want revival, here are My conditions." ---  
"Put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you."

Idolatry

Today we no longer worship idols of wood and stone, but just as much as ever before, we sin against the Lord by enshrining in our hearts idols of our own making.

Strange gods-the gods of the outside world.

No matter what it may be if we follow the world in worshipping gold, it is our gold. If we fall away from wholehearted service to God, we generally put something else there. Who or what is the Usurper in your heart ?

Sin...greed...anything.  
Any strange god has got to go.  
The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And, worship only Thee.

Ashtoreth or Ashtaroth is called the "abomination of the Zidonians." Its worship was the worship of the flesh. God's people must get rid of all that taint.

"Prepare your hearts unto the Lord." We prepare our hearts unto the Lord by seeking His Will and then accepting it. Supposing I were to say to you just before a meeting in which we expected the blessing of God, "I must go and prepare my heart unto the Lord ! " What would you imagine---that I had gone to a dance ? No, rather you would expect to find me on my knees seeking God's will by prayer and by reading His written Word. That is the preparation of heart that we all need today---first a revival of Bible study and prayer. You cannot reap without first sowing, " And serve Him only."

An Irish friend once said to me: "If Christians served their earthly employers with the same carelessness and incompetence, they would all have got the sack long ago."

We tremble to think of our wobbly sense of duty, or our utterly hopeless perspective.