

Articles and Sermons :: Revival or Ruin ~ Don Courville

**Revival or Ruin ~ Don Courville, on: 2008/11/18 14:07**

This article was published in the form of a small booklet after God brought revival to the church my father was pastoring back in 1985. In light of the coming revival conference in Greenock, he wanted it to be shared on SI.

**Revival or Ruin**

*A true story of revival coming to a small Baptist Church in northwestern Nebraska*

Donald P. Courville

“Out of 21 civilizations that have perished in history, 20 have perished, not from outward enemy overthrow, but from inward moral decay.”

—A noted historian

It really all began around the last part of 1984, when a pastor friend from White Clay, Nebraska went to a revival crusade under the Sutura Twins Ministry in Arizona. While they were there God deeply touched their lives with revival.

When they got back they wanted to meet with my wife and me to pray for revival. As we met together and they shared what God had done in their lives I knew that was what I wanted also. As they shared how God was humbling and breaking them and cleansing them it struck a need in my own heart. Even though I could preach and witness there was still a feeling of pressure. A pressure that is like a water faucet with water coming out but feeling that there is more to be had if only the valve was opened up more.

As we prayed plans began to fall into place. First was the inviting of John Musser to come and minister in our churches. John arrived on April 5th in our area and began his ministry at White Clay, Nebraska. God had already begun to work before John came, but when the preaching started the revival fires began to spread. After eight days of revival at Extension Community Chapel with great blessing, Evangelist John Musser moved to Gordon Baptist Church, Gordon, Nebraska and preached his first message on April 17th, a Wednesday evening. What happened during the next eighteen days is described in one word, “Revival”. Because of God’s unusual working in so many ways many have wanted a written record of what God did, especially the evangelist. This is a record of some of what happened. The title “Revival or Ruin” was chosen because of the evangelist’s frequent use of the term and also its vivid truth concerning our churches in America. If we are not living in a revival atmosphere then we are on the way to ruin. Revival is the normal atmosphere of a church, anything less is death. I just read this morning a good description of revival by Vance Haver. He said “We hear much about revival these days, but the heart of revival is the Lordship of Christ. A mere emotional upheaval, a spurt of religious excitement, is not revival. When Christians become convicted of rebellion against the rule of Christ in their lives, confess their sins, renounce self, take the cross and let Jesus have the first and last word in everything, that is revival by whatever name you call it.” This pretty well describes what happened in the lives of many people during the eighteen days of revival at the Gordon Baptist Church.

Evangelist John Musser began his first message on April 17, 1985, speaking on “The Holy Spirit and Revival”. The spirit of the Lord was working during that first evening for there were many decisions including three for salvation. But as we learned, and you will too if you want revival, there will be opposition to the Holy Spirit’s working. Paul said in 1 Cor. 16:9 “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” Just before the evening message, John received a phone call about his brother being severely beaten in the face by someone with a baseball bat. Satan uses things like this to try to shake us up and weaken our faith. Before and during the Revival meetings Pastor W

es Labrie from White Clay, Nebraska had many abnormal things happen to him and his family. We also had these happenings. For weeks before the meetings began we had so much company there was hardly any time for prayer. Paul said, "For though we walking the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." II Cor. 10:3-5. So if a warning could be given it would be to recognize the distractions and deviations of the enemy. These things may be necessary and normal but become barriers to block that which is important, especially prayer.

On Sunday, April 21st our meetings officially began even though the Holy Spirit had already started the Wednesday before. People began to respond to the promptings of God's spirit. Many decisions were made from the start for salvation and all through the meetings. One of the unusual things was that usually after revival comes to a church evangelism follows, but we saw people getting saved from the beginning. As a matter of fact some even came so they could be saved. One evening a young lady who came to be saved immediately stood to her feet when the invitation was given. I told John that all he needed to do that evening was give an invitation. Oh what joy there was when those who accepted Christ came up from the prayer rooms and immediately confessed Christ as Saviour. One young man in our church was shocked when his friend confessed that he had just received Christ. He said, "I thought he was already a Christian, I wonder how many more of my friends are like him?" This is a powerful message to us. Since that night he has brought many to church and after the meetings he was bringing in teens to the youth meeting. Like Andrew, we must bring men to Jesus.

By Tuesday, April 22nd, the Holy Spirit was moving. Many were dealing with bitterness and other sins that had lain in some dark corner of their heart. They were responding immediately to the invitation and going to the prayer rooms. Some were making restitutions to others for personal sins committed. There was confessing of faults one to another and praying one for another. As the song says "Nothing between my soul and the Saviour". Many were expressing the fullness of the Spirit in their lives as they had never known before. As confessions were made cleansing came. Prov. 28:13 says "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." This joy was very evident in their lives and faces and in their testimonies. Oh what a time of blessing! It might be good to stop here and say that not everyone got in on the revival. Some only came to a couple of the twenty services we had. Some never knew anything happened because they never came at all. Some even came to several meetings but still never fully yielded their all to Christ. So revival ends up being a very personal thing just like salvation. Someone said "Revival is God's finger pointing at me" as the old spiritual song says, "It's me Oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer". It's me in need but the flesh likes to say, "I know I'm not perfect but look at so and so. If they would change their act then things wouldn't be so bad in the church." This is pride. It's sin when we refuse to deal with our own bad attitude. We develop bitterness, we grieve and quench the Spirit, we dishonor Christ, weaken the church and if we fail to repent we are the cause of the ruin of the church. This is why we say it's "Revival or Ruin."

As the revival broke out there was also a breaking out of dozens of things needing to be done. There was a big demand for tapes of the messages. After a few days of trying to make tapes I found myself busy with "other things" to the point of not having enough time for prayer and service to the evangelist. After recognizing this area and committing it to the Lord the pressure was relieved. There was a sweet closeness of the Spirit, but also the Holy Spirit was sensitive to the slightest sin that was produced in the flesh. We had to watch the services and our own hearts constantly. If someone would sing in the revival meetings, and their own hearts had not been revived it would be very obvious to those who God had already touched. The meetings were greatly affected by other believers coming down from the White Clay area, some thirty six miles away. Many drove hundreds of miles during the meetings. God provided for needs in unusual ways. On April 24th God provided a hot water heater for the baptistry so we could have warm water for the two baptism services we had. God used one man to hook up the heater in a short amount of time. Folks began to volunteer for jobs to do or to just come to the church and do things that needed done. Someone volunteered to help out with the secretary work for the many needs in that area. Amid all the things needing to be done there was a constant need, even a craving by me for prayer. I would snatch moments whenever I could for prayer. The pace was so fast that I might go through a whole day without eating or even thinking about eating. But during all the activity God was probing even deeper into my own heart, exposing things that I was not consciously aware of.

April 25th John spoke on "Victory in the Christian Life", the message God used to break me down. For days God was dealing with me about these hidden areas. At first I thought the evangelist was just speaking on the things we had talked over together. It seemed like every word he said was meant just for me. At the invitation I immediately dropped to my knees on the front row and let God answer the prayer of my heart that I had been praying for months. Lord, send a revival into my life and be thorough with me. Oh, what a cleansing the Spirit of God brought into my heart as I confessed bitter feelings and wrong attitudes. How hard it is to confess a sin even though you feel that your part was only 5 or 10% wrong.

ong. When we constantly focus on other's faults its only evidence that we are trying to cover up and justify our own. It was a week after the revival services that God revealed to me that all those things in the messages that John was using for illustrations about me, were in reality conviction in my own heart by the Holy Spirit. Isn't it strange that when we think the preacher is talking about us, how we are slow to see that it's not that at all but the voice of God saying, repent you sinner. Oh, how we hate to face our sin. But oh, how good cleansing feels when we do. One of the things that was of significance was how God touched the lives of the missionaries in this area, and the lives of some preachers. Many drove down from South Dakota to attend the meetings. Oh, I think it is true that if his people (preachers and missionaries especially) will humble themselves and pray, and seek his face, and turn from their wicked ways; then he will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land. Humility is a key ingredient in revival. Without it we don't truly repent and turn from our proud ways. John said many times that if the preachers will be broken then revival will follow.

God opened up some special times for ministry among the fundamental pastors and missionaries of this area. There were some times of special sharing of God's tender love to us. Because of the heavy demonism in this area many had been under oppression from the enemy. The revival brought a lifting of this oppression and a new refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

On the Sunday of April 28th – we were awakened at 5:30 in the morning by a young girl banging on the door. When I opened the door she ran in and around the house like she was on drugs. After an hour of talking with her the police took her back home. What was this? We are convinced that it was a demonic attack. We tried to talk with the girl but couldn't get her to make sense. She would say "I know you" and I would say, "But I don't know you, how do you know me?" She would say, "I know you, I'm afraid of you, stay away from me." I asked her if she knew Jesus and she replied that she "knew about Jesus." When asked if she had received Jesus as her Saviour she would just start mumbling incoherently. She kept mentioning her fear of me even though we had never met. The Word says "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Sunday was a tremendous day in the meetings. The Friday night before, we had packed the building back to the front door. And Sunday night it was full again. After the service we had a great testimony time with the baptism of several folks.

By now we are sensing that the Lord would have us move into the community. Already dozens of decisions had been made. People were coming from as far away as 90 miles, and folks were aware that things were happening at the Baptist Church. After a service of two to two and a half hours people would remain for spiritual fellowship for sometimes as long as an hour and a half. But how to reach the community? This was our question. On Monday, April 29th we literally went in circles trying to find the right place to hold meetings. We had a couple of possibilities but they didn't fit our need. What we thought we needed was the city auditorium, but it wasn't available. Our pressure was to find something for Thursday and Friday nights and be able to get it put in the paper Tuesday. By Tuesday morning the deadline came for the newspaper. We finally completely committed the matter to God. After we prayed, we visited the High School and we were offered the use of the High School gymnasium and cafeteria. We had a pizza blast planned for the youth Friday night after the services the Lord provided all the pizza and pop and taught me a precious lesson in the process. My personal lesson was on trying to round up money for the pizza and pop that God had already spoke to someone about providing. I should have spent my time praying instead of going in circles. The day before our first community service God opened up a door for hand out sheets to be done by a Christian printer in Chadron. This was a real blessing. By the time of the Thursday and Friday night meetings God had already opened up doors for John to speak in the High School and Grade School on his deliverance from drugs. When the pamphlets went out the community was already aware of things happening.

Both nights' attendance was good with an extra big crowd Friday night. God worked and there were many decisions for Christ. One unique thing was how we stayed up to 2:30 Saturday morning counseling with teens and sharing the claims of Christ in their lives. I remember getting home at 4:00 in the morning and hearing the birds already beginning their morning songs. God was working and nothing mattered but doing His will. The Spirit was willing and the flesh must submit.

By now we are down to our last Sunday and last day of meetings. It's May 5th and eighteen days have passed. This last day was full of blessing and testimonies. I gave a testimony in the morning service of how God had dealt with me over the last couple of weeks. Others had been sharing all along of God working in their lives. In the evening service there was one lady's decision to quit working in a place that sold liquor. Another of how God was opening up a door to witness to a neighbor, another of how God had spoken to him months before to witness to a neighbor and he didn't, and t

he man died. Another shared on how she led a neighbor to Christ after ten years of God's working and leading. Even the last night souls were saved as God was convicting hearts. Oh, to have Revival. If we don't then its Ruin. It's Revival or Ruin. Habakkuk cried out "O Lord, Revive thy work in the midst of the years". Hab. 3:2B. Well this is just a small part of a large thing. I could not put on paper the brokenness of hearts and the tears that were shed. I could not put down on paper the embracing of restored friends, the praises and Amens that came from joyful hearts. Nor can I express the feeling of the Holy Spirit as He moved in hearts at the invitations and people fled to the prayer rooms to get their hearts right. God knows the sacrifices that many made to help the tremendous expenses of such a crusade as this in a small church. But Oh the rewards of revival are worth any price. Revival is life. My prayer to God was "Lord its revival or \_\_\_\_" I could think of nothing else. We had to have it. I knew that without it, it was Ruin. Even to exist with a "Normal" church program is ultimately Ruin. But God sent revival as we prayed that he would. Did He not say "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."?

There were many lessons we learned that have not been shared here also. You must always give all Glory to God. Don't exalt man. Don't exalt Satan by focusing too much or saying too much of his attacks. He's the defeated enemy. Focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make much of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. Thank God often for the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise God for the wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit. Learn to let the peace of God rule (be the umpire) in your hearts, "To the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Col. 3:15. Learn to spend much time in prayer and expect God to work, for "without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrew 11:6

If you need revival in your life and in your church then start praying for it. Start by confessing all sin and turning from it. Keep praying until God sends revival.

If you read this and have sensed that your life is empty, that God is not in your life, but you would like Him in, then consider this. God wants to be in your life, to bring you into a meaningful relationship. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:16-18. It's your sin that cuts you off from God.

The Bible says in Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And God says in Roman 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". Sin is our problem but Jesus Christ is the solution. He is the answer for man's sin problem, for your sin problem. The Bible says in Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God's love gift was to come down to this earth, take on a human body, go to Calvary and die on the cross as our substitute, and rise again the third day. He could die in our place because He was sinless. God's justice demanded that our sins be paid for. Justice would be for me to go to hell and pay for my own sin. But God's Grace was to pay for my sins Himself.

It's like the boy who stood before the judge who was his own father. The boy was guilty and the judge was an honest man. How could he be fair and still free his son? He asked his wayward son if he was repentant for his sin. The boy with broken sobs confessed that he was. The judge then pronounced that his sentence was \$1000 fine or six months in jail. The boy was broke and totally helpless as he listened to the sentence. Then as soon as the gavel came down, the judge stood up, took off his robe, stepped down from his high position and went over the clerk and paid \$1000. He then turned to his son and opened his arms to him. The son immediately ran into his father's arms. He was guilty but yet he was pardoned because the price for his crime was paid. He became free when he accepted his father's love and repented of his own waywardness. This is the way God's love is. The question is "Are you willing to repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour?"

The Bible says in Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord". The Bible also says in John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name". Receiving Jesus is repenting of your sinful life and inviting Him to come in. Jesus Christ is God's gift. The Bible says in 1 John 5:11-13, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Why not stop right now and confess to God your sins and invite Jesus Christ into your life? Your prayer is the expression of your

faith. After you do this you need to confess to others that Jesus Christ is your Saviour. Roman 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." You need to be baptized. Acts 2:41 says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." A step of obedience and public identification with Christ and other believers is necessary for starting your new life with Christ right. You need to join a Bible believing church where you can grow spiritually and have fellowship. Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." May God bless you as you obey Him.

Remember its Revival or Ruin. The early church was born in revival and thrived in revival. Read the Book of Acts. But when sin enters into the believer's lives the revival fires are quenched and ruin is on the way. Does your church need revival? Do you need revived? Then start by following the suggestion of Dr. R. A. Torrey on: "A Sure Way to Have Revival."

#### A Sure Way to Have Revival

I can give a prescription that will bring a revival to any church or community or any city on earth. The prescription is as follows:

FIRST, let a few Christians (they need not be many) get thoroughly right with God themselves. THIS IS THE PRIME ESSENTIAL. If this is not done, the rest that I am to say will come to nothing.

SECOND, let them bind themselves together in a prayer group to pray for a revival until God opens the heavens and comes down.

THIRD, let them put themselves at the disposal of God for Him to use as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. That is all!

This is sure to bring revival to any church or community. I have given this prescription around the world. It has been taken by many churches and many communities, and in no instance has it ever failed; and IT CANNOT FAIL!

By Dr. R. A. Torrey

(Read II Chron. 7:14 and Jer. 33:3)

#### Re: Revival or Ruin ~ Don Courville - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/11/19 23:55

Someone said "Revival is God's finger pointing at me" as the old spiritual song says, "It's me Oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer". It's me in need but the flesh likes to say, "I know I'm not perfect but look at so and so. If they would change their act then things wouldn't be so bad in the church." This is pride. It's sin when we refuse to deal with our own bad attitude. We develop bitterness, we grieve and quench the Spirit, we dishonor Christ, weaken the church and if we fail to repent we are the cause of the ruin of the church. This is why we say it's "Revival or Ruin."