

Revivals And Church History :: Revival in the Midst of the Communist Revolution in Ethiopia by Rawson Muffett

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Assyria was the whip in God's hand to discipline Israel and to punish them, so that they would awaken out of their heathen slumber. It is possible that communism is the same for the church of Christ as Assyria was for Israel.

There is no doubt that whatever happened in Ethiopia could also happen in Great Britain. Whether it occurs or not, is in God's almighty hands.

Prayer

We have no step-by-step instructions for a revival. However, we know one thing, a revival does not come, except as an answer to prayer.

When there is a revival, it is because somebody has been praying of their own free will; led by the Holy Spirit; and driven from existing circumstances - maybe because of physical, political or economic disaster. The first and last thing is prayer. The revival in Ethiopia was born through, and carried on through prayer. God is Almighty and we have to search for Him. As young people prayed they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Led by the same Holy Spirit, they continued in prayer because they realised that that was the reason they had received it. So every newly-saved person was added on to the number of praying people. That's how the amount of prayer and praise to the Lord gathers momentum. Therefore the continuity of the revival is ensured.

Preaching

The prayers of God's people express themselves through powerful sermons and in the uplifting of young men who are anointed with the Holy Spirit - "surrounded with zeal like a robe". They will take every opportunity that comes along to preach, be it in the school yard or on the mission field.

Of course they will make mistakes, but these get quickly removed through the prayerful teaching of the Word of Truth. These joyful preachers spread the revival. Each of the Christians are expected to tell testimonies of what the Lord has done for them, and the testimony of a changed life is the undeniable proof to the people of the power of God.

The People

Revivals have to do with people (God's nation) and believe it or not it is the same all over the world. There exist so many different Africans and African cultures, tribes and languages, and there are big differences in their characters and temperaments. Yes, their national pride and pride of heritage is strong, but God - the Holy Spirit - is stronger. Are we Europeans really so different?

Poverty

The nation that is touched through a revival is normally, but not always, poor. The Scriptures say that "the poor liked to listen" to Jesus, the rich He sent away empty. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away". (LUKE 1:53). Everyone in the world is worshipping money, but the church worships Christ. Everyone that was born into poverty lived and died.

It is not without reason that James was inspired to write: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you". (JAMES 5:1). It is certain that a relatively poor man in Europe is looked upon by Africans as a rich man. Jesus taught that it is almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. It seems to me that wealth (held back selfishly) and a revival are incompatible. Abundance leads to independence and self-satisfaction. These two characteristics stand in the way of a revival.

The Ethiopians normally don't have this problem - but we as Europeans do. It cannot be said about us that we are "the poor of the world, but rich in faith", but this can be said about them.

As Emperor Haile Selassie was enthroned and the army took control, the rich, who had suppressed the poor, paid with their lives. Many, who were rich before, became proportionally poor overnight; but some of them even found peace and satisfaction in this. In fact, one of the Christians we know said: "Now all my problems have been taken away. I don't have

to worry about my possessions any more". He accepted it plainly as the will of the Lord.

Preparation

The revival started with the young people who were ready for a change. It is possible, that the prayers of the people of God led to the revolution, which for many was encouragement and motivation for the side of the church. Long before the revolution, however, the Lord put it into our hearts to teach the Christians, and others that would hear, that communism is an atheistic and antichrist system.

Persecution

The revolution led almost immediately to the persecution of the church. Many Christians, including orthodox believers, announced openly, that God was punishing them for their sins for allowing an atheistic and communist government. Ethiopians had no choice between revolution or revival (like it would be for us) - they had both at the same time. Their choice was between Christ and communism. The revival had already started before the revolution. For many it was a decision between the power of politics and the power of God. For many, it was, and is a drastic and dramatic decision.

Promises

They trusted the Word of God. The simple faith of the young people in the Word of God was just wonderful. We taught the Word of God - they believed it. We taught verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, trusting in the Scripture that faith comes by hearing God's Word and that is actually what happened. The Ethiopians are normally very religious and the spiritual world is very real for them and they don't have to be convinced of its reality first.

In the past they prayed to evil spirits and it was not difficult for them to open up to the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit was so strong in some meetings that the demonic spirits could not stand the atmosphere. They screamed and many who were possessed with evil spirits were set free. This is another sign of a revival.

Patience is the Key

We find it in the patient prayer and teaching of God's Word. Some left us in the beginning because they could not cope with the pressure of the Word. But the Lord added others, who became diligent Bible students. They taught others, and in this way the knowledge and the love of the Word of God spread. Two years of patient prayer and Bible studies were necessary for God to send a revival. We did our part and the Lord faithfully added His part. The Word of God is the foundation stone on which the revival was built. If the Word did not exist, the Holy Spirit would have nothing to build on. Our emphasis was never on church buildings, but we never despised them. Instead of nice buildings we tried to establish trustworthy assemblies. As far as we know the buildings of other Pentecostal assemblies in and around Addis Ababa are still closed, but the assemblies still continue. So although the church buildings were closed down, the opposite effect happened and the assemblies are growing fast.

The people are meeting in houses for prayer and Bible study. The interest in God's Word is increasing rather than decreasing.

So don't get discouraged if you are praying sincerely for a revival and it seems to be taking a long time to happen. We cannot decide when it will come, but we will be overwhelmed by the happenings when the Revival happens. The joy that we will experience, when we see what God and the Holy Spirit will do in the lives of men and women, and boys and girls, will overshadow everything else.