

Revivals And Church History :: Tozer on Revival

Tozer on Revival - posted by lwpray (), on: 2003/9/23 2:07

What About Revival?

Part I

There seems to be a notion abroad that if we talk enough and pray enough, revival will set in like a stock market boom or a winning streak on a baseball club. We appear to be waiting for some sweet chariot to swing low and carry us into the Big Rock Candy Mountain of religious experience.

Well, it is a pretty good rule that if everyone is saying something it is not likely to be true; or, if it has truth at the bottom, it has been so distorted by wrong emphasis as to have the effect of error in its practical outworking. And such, I believe, is much of the revival talk we hear today.

My reason for doubt of the soundness of it is that we appear to conceive of revival as a kind of benign miracle, a feverish renaissance of religious activity which will come upon us, leaving us morally just as we are now, except that we will be a lot happier and there will be a great many more of us. It's a good talking point and it has an aura of superior godliness about it; but the trouble is that it is just not true.

Our mistake is that we want God to send revival on our terms. We want to get the power of God into our hands, to call it to us that it may work for us in promoting and furthering our kind of Christianity. We want still to be in charge, guiding the chariot through the religious sky in the direction we want it to go, shouting "Glory to God," it is true, but modestly accepting a share of the glory for ourselves in a nice inoffensive sort of way. We are calling on God to send fire on our altars, completely ignoring the fact that they are our altars and not God's. And like the prophets of Baal we are working ourselves into a frenzy as if we could by violence command the arm of the Almighty.

The whole error results from a confused notion of revival and a failure to recognize the moral laws that underlie the kingdom of God. God never moves whimsically; His ways are never impulsive or erratic. He never sends judgment unless there has been a violation of His laws, nor does He send blessing apart from obedience to those laws. So precise are His movements both in justice and in mercy that an intelligent observer, aware of the circumstances, could predict with complete accuracy any visitation of judgment or grace God might send to a nation, a church or an individual.

Of this we may be certain: We cannot continue to ignore God's will as expressed in the Scriptures and expect to secure the aid of God's Spirit. God has given us a complete blueprint for the Church and He requires that we adhere to it 100 percent. Message, morals and methods are there, and we are under strict obligation to be faithful to all three.

Today we have the strange phenomenon of a company of Christians solemnly protesting to heaven and earth the purity of their Bible creed, and at the same time following the unregenerate world in their methods and managing only with difficulty to keep their moral standards from sinking out of sight. Coldness, worldliness, pride, boasting, lying, misrepresenting, love of money, exhibitionism—all these things are practiced by professedly orthodox Christians, not in secret but in plain sight and often as a necessary part of the whole religious show.

It will take more than talk and prayer to bring revival. There must be a return to the Lord in practice before our prayers will be heard in heaven.

A. W. Tozer

The Size of the Soul

Re: Tozer on Revival - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/9/23 11:08

Once again, Tozer brings us back to our senses.

This needs to be embedded into our minds and hearts. May it be committed to memory and may it start with me.
Thanks Lars.

Re: Tozer on Revival - posted by lwpray (), on: 2003/9/24 4:25

Personal Revival

Revival may be experienced on three levels, viz., in the individual, the church or the community.

It is impossible to have a community revival where there has not been a church revival, and unless at least a few individuals seek and obtain a spiritual transformation in their own hearts, there can be no hope for their church, for a church is composed of individual Christians.

It is a mere commonplace to sing or pray, "Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me." Where else can a spiritual quickening take place but in the individual life? There is no abstract "church" which can be revived apart from the men and women who compose it. The vague notion that there is somewhere a mysterious Body of Christ whose members are unknown, an invisible company upon whom the Holy Spirit can fall in answer to prayer, is a grand fallacy.

It serves as a hiding place from reality to believe that such an unidentified superchurch actually exists apart from the plain ordinary people we see in our Christian gatherings and in our churches from week to week. But we may as well face the truth: Christians are people and people can be identified. They have names and faces and homes and friends and jobs. They keep house, go to school, drive trucks, buy, sell, travel, eat and bathe and sleep exactly as other people do. The seed of God is in them and their names are written in heaven, but they are not invisible. The world knows who the Christians are.

No church is any better or worse than the individual Christians who compose it. To look beyond the known members to some mysterious group which is imagined to be there, secretly prepared for a revival, is to err seriously in a province where error can be costly.

One consequence of our failure to see clearly the true nature of revival is that we wait for years for some supernatural manifestation that never comes, overlooking completely our own individual place in the desired awakening. Whatever God may do for a church must be done in the single unit, the one certain man or woman. Some things can happen only to the isolated, single person; they cannot be experienced en masse.

Understood aright these are truths full of great encouragement and good hope. Nothing can hinder you or me from experiencing the revival we need. It is a matter for God and the solitary heart. Nothing can prevent the spiritual rejuvenation of the soul that insists upon having it. Though that solitary man must live and walk among persons religiously dead, he may experience the great transformation as certainly and as quickly as if he were in the most spiritual church in the world.

The man that will have God's best becomes at once the object of the personal attention of the Holy Spirit. Such a man will not be required to wait for the rest of the church to come alive. He will not be penalized for the failures of his fellow Christians, nor be asked to forego the blessing till his sleepy brethren catch up. God deals with the individual heart as exclusively as if only one existed.

If this should seem to be an unduly individualistic approach to revival, let it be remembered that religion is personal before it can be social. Every prophet, every reformer, every revivalist had to meet God alone before he could help the multitudes. The great leaders who went on to turn thousands to Christ had to begin with God and their own soul. The plain Christian of today must experience personal revival before he can hope to bring renewed spiritual life to his church.

A. W Tozer

The Size of the Soul

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/9/24 10:24

Quote:

----- Nothing can prevent the spiritual rejuvenation of the soul that insists upon having it.

Quote:

Though that solitary man must live and walk among persons religiously dead, he may experience the great transformation as certainly and as quickly as if he were in the most spiritual church in the world.

Quote:

The man that will have God's best becomes at once the object of the personal attention of the Holy Spirit. Such a man will not be required to wait for the rest of the church to come alive. He will not be penalized for the failures of his fellow Christians, nor be asked to forego the blessing till his sleepers catch up.

Quote:

Understood aright these are truths full of great encouragement and good hope.

Yes! What encouragement!

Hope these few quotes serve as appetizers for the main meal of this must read thread.

First the cart, then the horse.

Re: Tozer on Revival - posted by lwpray (), on: 2003/9/27 12:44

Prayer Is Not Enough

These words are addressed to those of God's children who have been pierced with the arrow of infinite desire, who yearn for God with a yearning that has overcome them, who long with a longing that has become pain. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Hunger is a pain. It is God's merciful provision, a divinely sent stimulus to propel us in the direction of food. If food-hunger is a pain, thirst, which is water-hunger, is a hundredfold worse, and the more critical the need becomes within the living organism the more acute the pain. It is nature's last drastic effort to rouse the imperiled life to seek to renew itself. A dead body feels no hunger and the dead soul knows not the pangs of holy desire. "If you want God," said the old saint, "you have already found Him." Our desire for fuller life is proof that some life must be there already. Our very dissatisfactions should encourage us, our yet unfulfilled aspirations should give us hope. "What I aspired to be, and was not, comforts me," wrote Browning with true spiritual insight. The dead heart cannot aspire.

In nature everything moves in the direction of its hungers. In the spiritual world it is not otherwise. We gravitate toward our inward longings, provided of course that those longings are strong enough to move us. Impotent dreaming will not do. The religious urge that is not followed by a corresponding act of the will in the direction of that urge is a waste of emotion. The awe-inspiring power of a discharge of lightning may dissipate itself in the atmosphere and accomplish nothing, while a flashlight battery may provide illumination for a minor hours on end. One is a dramatic display of immense power without direction and the other a quiet application of modest energy to an intelligent purpose.

It is my conviction that much, very much, prayer for and talk about revival these days is wasted energy. Ignoring the confusion of figures, I might say that it is hunger that appears to have no object; it is dreamy wishing that is too weak to produce moral action. It is fanaticism on a high level for, according to John Wesley, "a fanatic is one who seeks desired ends while ignoring the constituted means to reach those ends."

Granted that the man who seeks revival has stopped thinking in plurals and has narrowed his faith down to one single individual, himself, what then? How can he find that after which his soul is yearning? How can he cooperate with his hungers to the end that he may indeed be filled?

He must rid his mind of the false notion that prayer alone will bring the blessing. Normally all transactions between the soul and God are carried on by prayer. It is right and scriptural and according to the testimony of all the saints that any spiritual advance on any front, any deliverance, any purification, any endowment of power, comes by the prayer of faith. Our error is that we try to secure these benefits by prayer alone.

The correction of this error is extremely difficult for it entails more than a mere adjustment of our doctrinal beliefs; it strikes

s at the whole Adam-life and requires self-abnegation, humility and cross-carrying. In short it requires obedience. And that we will do anything to escape.

It is almost unbelievable how far we will go to avoid obeying God. We call Jesus "Lord" and beg Him to rejuvenate our souls, but we are careful to do not the things He says. When faced with a sin, a confession or a moral alteration in our life, we find it much easier to pray half a night than to obey God.

Intensity of prayer is no criterion of its effectiveness. A man may throw himself on his face and sob out his troubles to the Lord and yet have no intention to obey the commandments of Christ. Strong emotion and tears may be no more than the outcropping of a vexed spirit, evidence of stubborn resistance to God's known will. Jacob wrestled against the angel through one whole night. It was only after he had been defeated that he became the aggressor and refused to let go of God. Why did Jacob resist so long? Because he was ashamed to confess his name to the angel. When he finally broke down and admitted that he was the supplanter, the victory was won. He triumphed in defeat.

No matter what I write here, thousands of pastors will continue to call their people to prayer in the forlorn hope that God will finally relent and send revival if only His people wear themselves out in intercession. To such people God must indeed appear to be a hard taskmaster, for the years pass and the young get old and the aged die and still no help comes. The prayer meeting room becomes a wailing wall and the lights burn long, and still the rains tarry.

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Let any reader begin to obey and he will have the answer. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21).

Isn't that what we want after all?

A. W Tozer

The Size of the Soul