

**~Other Speakers M-R: Revival Email List:****"IN THE DAY OF THY POWER"****The Scriptural Principles of Revival****-By Arthur Wallis.**

The word of God presents to us side by side the two foundation stones of every revival - the sovereignty of God and the preparedness of man. Because we cannot understand how they harmonize is no reason for emphasizing one at the expense of the other. There is an extreme view of the sovereignty of God that argues, "If God wills to send revival it will come. Nothing that we do can effect this, so why need we be concerned?"

The word of God and history teach us that such an attitude of indifference and fatalism must be abandoned before revival can be expected. If the blessing comes then we may be sure that somewhere someone has met the conditions and paid the price. Such a view of divine sovereignty ignores the conditions of spiritual preparedness.

There is also an extreme emphasis on spiritual preparedness that ignores the fact of divine sovereignty; it suggests that God is at our beck and call, and that we can have revival any day we care to pay the price, much as we can have electric light the moment we care to turn the switch. The word of God gives us the proper balance by presenting, as here in the first verse of Acts 2, the two aspects side by side.

Revival, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a strategic attack by God upon the strongholds of Satan. The place, the time, and the manner of working are in the sovereign hands of the Lord the Spirit; but His subordinates, through whom He works, must be spiritually prepared when God's zero hour strikes.

**Suddenness**

Since revival may be likened to a strategic attack, it is plain that, as in the realm of human conflict, so in the spiritual, the effect of every attack is heightened by the surprise factor. In revival God works suddenly and unexpectedly. Often even the mass of believers are taken unawares, while wonder and astonishment grip the hearts of unbelievers.

As to Christians being taken by surprise, Charles Finney often noticed it and remarked, "They would wake up all of a sudden, like a man, just rubbing his eyes open, and running round the room pushing things over, and wondering where all this excitement came from. But though few knew it, you may be sure there had been somebody on the watch-tower, constant in prayer till the blessing came."

The effect of the sudden working of the Spirit in revival is very striking in the conviction of sinners. Often without any preparatory concern or even thought for spiritual things, a sinner will be suddenly seized with overwhelming conviction of sin. "But God shall shoot at them; with an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded... and all men shall fear; and they shall declare the work of God, and shall wisely consider of His doing" (Ps 64:7,9).

Describing the course of the Ulster '59 Revival at Ballymena and elsewhere, John Shearer writes of some who "were suddenly pierced as by a sharp sword, and their agonized cry for help was heard in the streets and in the fields. Here, for example, is a farmer returning from market in Ballymena. His mind is wholly intent upon the day's bargain. He pauses, takes out some money, and begins to count it. Suddenly an awful Presence envelops him. In a moment his only thought is that he is a sinner standing on the brink of hell. His silver is scattered, and he falls upon the dust of the highway, crying out for mercy" (Old Time Revivals).

### Spontaneous Working

A movement bears this mark of spontaneity when men cannot account for what has taken place in terms of personalities, organization, meetings, preaching, or any other consecrated activity; and when the work continues unabated without any human control. As soon as a movement becomes controlled or organized, it has ceased to be spontaneous - it is no longer revival.

Wherever the Spirit of God is poured out saints and sinners alike are made acutely aware of the presence of the Almighty. The spirit of revival is the consciousness of God. Just as the "light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun" struck down the zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, and brought him to his knees, convicted and repentant (Acts 26), so does the Eternal Light, in days of revival, burst upon the slumbering consciousness of men with much the same result.

The effects of such manifestations of God are twofold: men are made aware both of His power and of His holiness.

Here is an outstanding feature of revival, and it is not difficult to see why it results in overwhelming conviction both among the saved and the lost, whenever there is unjudged sin.

At such times man is not only made conscious that God is there; but that He is there, as it seems, to deal with him alone, until he is oblivious of all but his own soul in the agonizing grip of a holy God.

If these facts are borne in mind the extraordinary effects of past revivals will not seem incredible. The ruthless logic of Jonathan Edwards' famous discourse, Sinners in the hands of an angry God (from Deut. 32:25), preached in his usual plain and undemonstrative manner, at Enfield, New England, in 1741, could never have produced the effect it did had not God been in the midst.

"When they went into the meeting-house the appearance of the assembly was thoughtless and vain; the people scarcely conducted themselves with common decency", recorded Trumbull, but he goes on to describe the effect of the sermon: "the assembly appeared bowed with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was such a breathing of distress and weeping, that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence that he might be heard." Conant says, "Many of the hearers were seen unconsciously holding themselves up

against the pillars, and the sides of the pews, as though they already felt themselves sliding into the pit."

Similar is the scene described by Charles Finney when he preached in the village school-house near Antwerp, N. Y. "An awful solemnity seemed to settle upon the people; the congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction and cry for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them down as fast as they fell. I was obliged to stop preaching."

Of course the measure of conviction is not often so overwhelming as this, and varies even with different individuals affected on the same occasion, but the explanation is always the same, the manifestation of God in holiness and power.

This strange sense of God may pervade a building, a community, or a district, and those who come within its spell will be affected. At the beginning of the 1904 Awakening near the town of Gorseinon a revival meeting was in progress throughout the night. A miner, a somewhat hardened notorious case, returning from his shift about 4 a.m. saw the light in the chapel and decided to investigate. As soon as he opened the chapel door he was overwhelmed by a sense of God's presence, and exclaimed, "Oh, God is here!" He was afraid either to enter or depart, and there on the threshold of the chapel a saving work began in his soul.

Similar stories could be told of the 1858 American Revival. Revival broke out on the battleship "North Carolina" through four Christian men who had been meeting in the bowels of the ship for prayer. One evening they were filled with the Spirit and burst into song. Ungodly shipmates who came down to mock were gripped by the power of God, and the laugh of the scornful was soon changed into the cry of the penitent. Many were smitten down, and a gracious work broke out that continued night after night, till they had to send ashore for ministers to help, and the battleship became a Bethel.

This overwhelming sense of God, bringing deep conviction of sin, is perhaps the outstanding feature of true revival. The manifestation of it is not always the same. Sometimes it is predominantly the unconverted who are convicted, as in the cases quoted. At other times it is Christians or professing Christians, as in the revivals in Manchuria and China (1906-9) under Jonathan Goforth; or the recent awakening in the Belgian Congo (1953). But the explanation is always the same.

Of the revival in Northampton, Mass., Jonathan Edwards wrote: "In the spring and summer, A.D. 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It never was so full of love, nor so full of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then." To cleansed hearts it is heaven, to convicted hearts it is hell, when God is in the midst.

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-Extracts from "In The Day of Thy Power" by Arthur Wallis.