

## Revivals And Church History :: Relationship Of Revival And Evangelism -tippit

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### Relationship Of Revival And Evangelism

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The ministry God has given me I would define as a revival evangelist. As an evangelist, my mission is to glorify God by reaching the peoples of the world with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a revivalist in the sense that my vision is to see the Church revived because it is through a revived Church that the world will be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A dead Church is not going to reach the world for Christ. It must be an alive Church; it must be a holy Church. Before we do our evangelism, we first go in and do our work of prayer and seek to get the message of revival into the hearts of leaders.

Perhaps I ought to give a definition of what revival is. I will use Martin Lloyd-Jones' definition. He said, "Revival is when God is known as God." Personal revival is when you and I are growing in the grace of God, and are getting to know God. Also, revival is when God moves in the Church and makes Himself known in the community. And revival in a nation is when God intervenes in that nation and makes Himself known to the people of the nation.

Revival is primarily an Old Testament word. Evangelism is a word of the New Testament. However, you find the concepts in both the Old and the New Testaments. For instance, there is no greater call to revival than in Revelation, chapters two and three. In the book of Acts you find a revived Church. John 15 is the message of fruitfulness, which is what revival is. Revival is the Spirit-filled life as in Ephesians 5:18. The concept of revival is all through the New Testament.

Evangelism comes from a root word which means Gospel and it's in the New Testament. When I preach my evangelistic messages they are mostly from the four Gospels. But the concept is definitely in the Old Testament. You read in Isaiah the good news of a Savior. In the Psalms and other books of the Old Testament, you hear of the Savior.

Let me give you some comparisons and contrasts of the work of revival and evangelism. First of all, revival is the work of God among His people. Evangelism is a work of God in a lost and dying world. God revives His people. God saves a lost world.

Second, a church can be evangelistic without being revived, but it cannot be revived without being evangelistic. There are a lot of evangelistic churches that need to be revived. But when you are revived, you will be evangelistic, because you will have the heart of God.

The third thing, revival always brings God's people back to the cross. Evangelism brings the cross to the world. The preaching of the cross is at the center of both revival and evangelism.

Fourth, revival brings new growth in the life of the believer. Revival forwards the believer on the path that God has called us to walk on, and that is the path of holiness. The revived believer grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and is conformed more into the image of Jesus. Evangelism brings new life among nonbelievers. A nonbeliever can only be resurrected from spiritual death. Evangelism is the beginning process whereby the Holy One comes to live within us and holiness begins to grip us.

Next, revival and evangelism are not enemies. Often in conferences on revival, I hear evangelism spoken of disparagingly and in a negative way. Revival and evangelism are friends that work together. Evangelists have often been God's instruments in bringing revival. Many of the great awakenings of the past were begun by men who were great evangelists. Whitefield and Wesley preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were evangelists whose hearts were on fire for God, and God used them to revive the Church.

The State of Evangelism Today

Today evangelists have fallen into ill repute. In the 1980's I remember having breakfast with a businessman, and a relative of his came into the restaurant. He introduced me as his evangelist friend. The relative laughed and said, "Well, I guess business is pretty bad for you." I responded, "It is bad for that which is not real, but for the real thing, it is still good." Men's hearts are always aching and lost and dying. People are searching for the real thing.

There are reasons why evangelists are looked upon disparagingly. First, there are some who call themselves evangelists who are not evangelists. One of the greatest problems I have in preaching evangelistic meetings is that people have preconceived ideas of what an evangelistic meeting is, and most of the time, they are not evangelistic meetings. You can call them "healing" meetings or "slain in the Spirit" meetings – but they are not Gospel-preaching meetings. The word evangelist comes from the same root word as Gospel. An evangelist is one who preaches the Gospel about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. A lot of what is going on today that is being called evangelism, is not preaching the Gospel.

A second reason for looking on evangelists disparagingly is the use of manipulative methods. I came to Christ in a day in which there were a lot of evangelists. You find today there are very few evangelists. Part of the reason for it is this: out of a desire to get meetings, evangelists felt the need to have results. If you had a lot of results, you were invited to a lot of other churches. Consequently evangelists would manipulate to get people to come to the front.

A third reason why evangelists are discredited is because of the shallow message that we often preach, telling people, "Just pray this prayer and you're all right." The evangelist is worried about results rather than about the message. The success for the evangelist, however, is not how many people come to the front, not how many people pray the prayer, not how many people are in our meetings. Success for an evangelist or for any witness for Jesus Christ, is simply this: how faithful have you been to the Word of God?

I remember preaching an evangelistic meeting in Scotland, and I preached with all of my heart. I preached the Word of God prayerfully and in the Spirit as much as I knew. I extended the invitation and no one came forward and no one gave his or her heart to Christ. People were so apologetic as they came out, and said, "O Brother Sammy, we are so sorry." I told them what my wife often reminds me of. She says, "Sammy, if you don't take the glory when a lot of people respond, you don't need to take the blame when no one responds. That's the work of the Holy Spirit."

I preached in the world's largest stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We had 20,000 people respond. I remember that before I preached the Brazilians said to me, "Sammy, before the meeting starts, we don't want you anywhere near Rio. We want you out somewhere on a beach getting with God." My wife and I spent several days at a lonely beach in southern Brazil meeting with God. I felt so intimidated because I was going to be speaking in the world's largest stadium. It was an opportunity of a lifetime for an evangelist whose heart is for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My heart was churning. I was walking and praying on that beach and I said, "God, what's wrong? Why am I so worried and concerned about this?"

I came to realize I had a fear, and that fear was that no one would come to the stadium. I thought if there were only a handful of people in this 200,000-seat stadium, that would be embarrassing. The Lord began to speak to me about my self-life. And then I had another worry – what happens if a lot of people come and they reject my message? The Lord had to go deep in my heart and deal with this whole issue of success.

I think our view of success is another way in which we have failed in evangelism. We have a wrong definition of success. Success is not how many people respond. There were a lot of people who responded in that stadium in Brazil. It was an incredible moment, but that was not success. I was not one bit more successful in that stadium than I was in Scotland. What the Lord spoke to my heart was this: the only thing you are responsible for is being true to the Word of God. When you stand and preach, you preach the Word and whatever happens, happens. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we have fallen as evangelists into the trap of having the wrong definition of success.

### The Heartbeat of God

The central focus of both revival and evangelism is the heart of God. A revived Christian is a person whose heart beats with His heart, whose heart says, "God, I want You; I want what You want; I desire what You desire!" It is a Christian whose heart has returned to its first love, as it says in Revelation, chapter two. It is a person who knows God, who is part of the Body of Christ, who returns to his first love. He says, "Lord, I love You; I want You; I want to obey You; I want to do Your will." That's the heart of a revived Christian.

It is on the heart of God and in His will according to the Scripture that none should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). What is in the heart of God is, "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" (John 3:16). The world is on the heart of God! It is so much on His heart that He emptied Himself, sending His own Son, who clothed Himself with human flesh. His Son was all God and all man, born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit; He lived a sinless, holy life, and was nailed to a cross. Oh, God's heart beats for a lost world so much that He gave His only begotten Son! A lack of revival is the greatest hindrance to evangelism among God's people. The reason we're not reaching the world is because we've lost our first love.

Acts 21:10-15 has become very important to me. I had preached from this passage, but I had never come to understand it as I have in the last couple years. "After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, 'The Holy Spirit says, "In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles."' When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, 'The Lord's will be done.' After this, we got ready and went up to Jerusalem."

God had commissioned Paul to go to Jerusalem. But after the prophet's message, everybody tried to tell Paul, "You can't do this! You should not go! Paul, you must not do this!" Paul answered, "Why are you breaking my heart?" Do you know why Paul's heart was broken? It was because God's heart was broken. God loved the people of Jerusalem. Christ died in Jerusalem. At that moment it was not the nonbelievers trying to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem. It was the Christians, the followers of Christ. They had legitimate concerns for him. They believed that what the prophet said was a word from God, but the prophet never said, "Don't go to Jerusalem." The prophet said, "This is what is going to happen if you do go to Jerusalem."

### Fear and Apathy

There are a couple enemies of evangelism, and this is why we so desperately need revival in order for there to be evangelism. The two enemies are fear and apathy. Fear is self-centered. When we are afraid, we are thinking about ourselves. We are thinking, "What's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to you?" When we are apathetic, what are we thinking about? We are thinking about ourselves. We have lost our focus.

These friends of Paul's had clearly lost their focus. Their focus should have been: Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, to save every man, every woman, every boy, every girl. And yet fear had gripped their hearts. They were literally paralyzed because of their fear. When 9/11 happened, I believe a spirit of fear gripped America as a nation. I think that a spirit of fear gripped the Christian community.

I had a double portion of fear. I was scheduled in October of 2001 – right after 9/11 – to go to Sudan and preach the Gospel in Sudan. Osama bin Laden built the airport and a couple factories in Khartoum and that is where I was scheduled to preach. The al-Qaeda's network was alive and well there. I had been invited by the Sudan Council of Churches to preach this meeting in the stadium. In April 2001, the churches were going to have a big evangelistic service on Easter weekend and the government forces closed the meeting down. So the Christians went to the Anglican cathedral on Easter morning to have a prayer meeting. The government forces came and surrounded the cathedral, and they began to throw tear gas into the cathedral where people were praying. When the people ran out, the forces began to shoot them. Some Christians were killed and others were thrown in prison.

The Christian Council contacted me and said, "Sammy, would you come under these circumstances?" and I had agreed to come. But I said to them, "Before we come, I want to have permission from the government." In June of 2001 the Christian Council informed me: "We will have permission. The government has told us verbally that we will have permission. We will be able to do this." I said, "All right, get it in writing." In August they contacted me and said, "Permission is coming. We're going to have a document in writing saying that you can stand in the stadium and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It will come sometime between September 10 and 15." Then September 11 happened and everything changed. The government said we could not come.

But I had one problem. I have a friend who is a surgeon, a medical doctor. He is one of the greatest men of prayer I know, and when I had the opportunity to go to Sudan, I sent him an email asking him to pray for me, that I would know wh

at to do about going to Sudan. He called me and said, "Sammy, could you please come to my house?" I went to his house and he said, "I have been praying and God has given me some Scriptures," and he shared them with me. When he shared those Scriptures, they leapt in my heart, and I knew, I knew, I knew that God said I was going to go and I was going to preach publicly the Gospel.

When September 11 happened, I called my friends in Sudan, and I said, "What are we going to do?" They said, "Sammy, we believe God wants you to come." I said, "All right, if you believe it, and the last thing I heard from God was 'Go, I'm coming.'" My team dwindled very rapidly. In fact, it was just me left. My pastor kept saying, "Sammy, are you all right with this?" I answered, "Yes, I'm all right."

I have a little place where I go and pray. I was praying and I said, "Lord, people in Sudan are so lost. I need You. I'm willing to go, but, Lord, You know that I am a coward. Would You send somebody with me?" I went home and my wife said to me, "Sammy, I'll go with you if nobody else will go." And I said, "No, sweetheart, I can run faster without you."

We were caring for our grandchildren, and our son and daughter-in-law came over to pick them up. My son said to me, "Dad, I guess you're not going to Sudan," and I said, "I'm going." My son has a ministry, and he said, "Dad, I've been praying for Sudan for six months, and in our ministry we're having an all-night prayer meeting tonight specifically for Sudan. Can I go with you?" It was harder for me to say "Yes" to him than to my own self.

A lot of people around me didn't understand. Every morning when I came to my office, on my desk would be a paper from the State Department telling Americans to get out of Sudan immediately. People kept coming to me and saying, "Sammy, you know what the State Department said." I said, "God told me to go, and I'm going to go."

I went. I stood and preached the first night and 5,000 people responded. Al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, threatened a blood bath in the stadium. After that the government surrounded the stadium with their troops and said we couldn't get back in. Drunkards showed up at the stadium weeping, saying, "We heard we could find help here." We held a conference on revival with Christian leaders the rest of the time, and I came back home.

My pastor, who is a great man of prayer, said, "Sammy, are you all right with this?" And I said, "I'm all right."

My wife and I went out to eat with him and his wife, and I said, "You keep asking me about this. God told me to go, and I went. Is there something else?" He told me that he and his wife had received phone calls from many of our friends and they said that Sammy is stubborn, and he's outside of the will of God. He's going to cause harm to people's lives, just like Paul when Agabus came to him.

I went back and I looked at that passage of Scripture. I went into all the commentators and all the theologians to find out what that passage was saying, and I discovered that the passage didn't say Paul wasn't supposed to go. It was saying the opposite. I told my pastor, "You don't understand something. This is who I am. This is my calling."

In my youth I had been taught that people of other races were not as good as me. One of the miracles that happened when I was saved, was that false teaching went away, along with the drinking and the immorality that were in my life. My mother thought I had been brainwashed by Martin Luther King, Jr., and I told her, "Mother, I have never heard Martin Luther King, Jr., but I have been heart-washed by the King of kings and Lord of lords." My mother didn't understand that.

In those days, during the 1960's, there was free speech alley time. My three friends and I at LSU, right after the Easter weekend, had the idea of going to preach at free speech alley. Whoever stood up could say whatever they wanted to say as long as they were standing on the little black box that was provided there. When one finished, someone else could get up on the box and speak. We decided to control the box. One of us four would get up and preach for a while and get down, the next would get up and preach for a while and get down, and the next one would get up, and we just kept rotating, preaching on the box. A crowd of a couple thousand people gathered around there. I can remember preaching, "Some of you were with me at frat parties. You saw me getting drunk. Now I want to tell you, I'm not getting drunk. Jesus changed me. God gave me a new life. He filled my life..." and I was going on and on.

The next day the daily paper came out with a front page article: "Students Hold Revival in Free Speech Alley." The write-up quoted my testimony and preaching. We were excited about it. I was excited until I went home on Friday night and my mother was sitting there with a belt, the buckle tied at the hand and she had this newspaper. And I said, "Mom..." And she said, "You have dishonored the Tippit name," and she took the belt and began to beat me till I made my way into the street. I walked down the street that night, tears hitting the street. I hadn't realized how deep the hurt was from being

g rejected by your mother.

I can say to you that after twenty years of prayer, my mother came to Christ. The last ten years of her life, her favorite thing to do was to go to the prayer meeting, and she was one of my biggest supporters.

That rejection hurt, but it was of God. God had a call on my life to go to people of the world who, when they became a Christian, would be beaten and they would be rejected by their families. In a Muslim country, my wife and I were at the secret baptism of a young lady. They asked her, "You know what is going to happen now, don't you? You may be rejected by your family. You may be killed by the religious leaders in this country." And she said, "The night that I came to Christ, I was going to commit suicide. I was already prepared. I had everything laid out. My friend came and brought me to the church and I heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus saved me. What could anyone do to me that I wasn't already going to do to myself?" When she shared that, I realized that there was a point of identity.

I have discovered that in America we are filled with fear, and the root reason there is not evangelism taking place in America, is because of this deep-seated fear. I've asked myself, "Why are we so afraid? What is it that we are afraid of?" And I believe that this is why: we have had such a prosperity Gospel that we are afraid to suffer. And the message of revival is this: "...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:10).

There is little preaching or teaching on suffering today. If you are going to be like Jesus, you will suffer. I didn't say it. Paul said it to Timothy: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). We want to be accepted. We want to be "in" with everyone. The Gospel goes "across the grain" of the American culture, and we will be rejected.

#### Revival Leads to Evangelism

Revival brings us back to the altar of God. Revival is that time in our lives when God works and moves in us, where we come and we taste afresh and anew of the grace and the love and the mercy of God, and return to that first love. When we come back to that first love, God will fill us with His love, and perfect love casts out all fear. It's not that we are so me great, courageous people, but we are filled with the very love of God.

The way of revival always leads to evangelism. There is a way of fruitfulness. John 15 talks about bearing fruit. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit..." (John 15:8). The fruit is the character, the life of Christ. The fruit is that at our heart is beating with His heart, we are reaching out to others.

John 15:2 says that when you bear fruit, God prunes you, so that you will bring forth more fruit. There is only one way to get from fruit bearing to more fruit. It is by way of the cross, by the way of pruning. You must allow God to do that deep work in you, and that is where revival comes in. Revival is the time in our lives when God has to do a pruning process, bringing us through the fire, taking out that which is junk and garbage, and putting in that which is holy and that which is pure, making us more like Jesus Christ, having the heart for Him, the heart that He has. That's what revival is.

I remember on my honeymoon thirty-six years ago, sitting on the beach, watching the waves come in. And the Lord said to my heart, "Revival is like these waves. They come in waves and then there is a lull, and then there is another wave, and then there's a lull." Often it is in the lull that God has to do the deep work in us. We like the spectacular. Revival is often not the top blowing off; revival is often the bottom falling out. It's when everything goes wrong. Then we have only one way to look and that is up. And we say, "O God, O God, I need You."

#### My Revival Testimony

There have been three major times of revival in my life besides daily revival. There is a daily being filled with the Holy Spirit, daily appropriating His fullness. But in addition, there have been three major times of revival in my life. The first time was when I was a new Christian. My wife and I were just newly married. We were serving the Lord, we loved the Lord and were doing the work of youth evangelist. But my heart had become apathetic and fearful. I met a man who was bold and courageous for Christ and his name was Leo Humphrey. Leo challenged me. I saw a kind of Christianity I hadn't seen in anyone else.

For the first time I understood through his life what Galatians 2:20 meant. One night when praying, I took my wife, my material possessions, my future, my ambitions, my dreams and placed them in a casket, and Sammy Tippit died, and I u

nderstood what Paul meant when he said, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . . ." (Gal. 2:20). And I experienced that night a deep work of "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ." It was a reviving time, and for many years that carried me as I walked daily and died to myself, allowing Christ to come into me. As I died to myself, God did wonderful things. Our ministry grew. I wrote four books, and various other things. I wasn't even thirty years of age. The Lord was blessing.

But in time I realized my ministry was bigger than my character, and that God was more interested in my character than He was in my ministry. I asked Him to put me somewhere where no one knew me, and I was called to be the pastor of the Hahn Baptist Church in Hahn, Germany. I began preaching through the Word of God. As I preached through the Word, God began to do a work in my life. The first time of revival in my life, the Lord showed me myself in relationship to me, how I was living. But this second time, God showed me myself in relationship to my wife and how I treated her. I had to die again. There had to be brokenness again. It was a deep, deep work. I thought I would never preach again, not because I had done some horrendous sin, but because I saw myself and my arrogance in relationship with my wife, and I was broken. I came out of that and I knew God had done a work in me.

God began to use us in Eastern Europe. We went into Romania, where revival was taking place. Our ministry exploded. We walked into what God was doing. God blessed and moved, and for the past twenty years it has been absolutely incredible. The ministry grew and things were going great.

A few years ago I held a conference on revival with a thousand pastors and leaders in Africa. After I returned home, I came back to our office and found that none of our computers was working. Our email was not working, and we operate a lot by email. Also, I had American Express wanting to talk to me on the phone. They said I had a huge multi-thousand dollar bill. All of a sudden our finances shut down. Our email provider said that we had to have a credit card, and the credit card people wouldn't accept our card. So that shut down.

I said, "God, what's going on?" I went out and began to seek God. God said, "Sammy, I've got a deeper work to do in you. I did it in you. I did it in your family. Now I'm going to do it in your team." We discovered that an agent who had been working with us had a scheme and had been charging all sorts of things to our credit card. The credit card company caught him, so we had thousands of dollars charged to us.

I went to the owners of the business that the person worked for and said, "What are you going to do about this?" They were Christians, and they said, "That's your problem." I could have sued them, but I knew God wouldn't let me do that. I said, "God, what will I do?"

Our pastor is a good, godly man. His wife came to my wife and said, "Everything you two have done has been by prayer. Why don't you call some of your friends and have a prayer meeting at your house?" So that is what we did. Within about three weeks all the money was returned.

As we prayed and sought God, I went to the prayer meeting in our church. One of the men on our staff was there, and I said, "I don't know what is happening, but I know God is doing something in our ministry. If we are not clean, He isn't going to bless it. I don't care who it is— if we are not clean, God is not going to bless it." He turned white and said, "I need to talk with you."

I went on to discover that people on our staff were actively involved in sin. It hurt me deeply. It hurt God. God had to do a deep work in us as a team. I'm convinced that one reason we don't have churches whose hearts are on fire for God is because of the filth and garbage in our staffs and in our leadership. God is holy!

Revival brings us face to face with a holy God. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . . He who has clean hands and a pure heart. . ." (Psa. 24:3-4). God is no respecter of persons. If our hearts are not clean, I don't care who it is, God has to do a housecleaning among us. I go before my staff periodically and I say, "Are you clean?" We're not like most other organizations. We are in a spiritual battle. It brings brokenness; it brings repentance; it brings cleansing, and it brings more fruit.

I know men who have loved the Lord, and who were mightily used of Him, men I highly respected, but because they were not willing to submit to the pruning process of the Holy Spirit, they are no longer on the front lines for Christ. I'm not talking about people who were phony; they genuinely loved God. But they are no longer on the front lines for Jesus because they didn't submit to the pruning process. If we ever get away from the cross and the pruning that the cross brings, we are in trouble.