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The Revival We Need

by A.C. Dixon

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."—Ps. 119:25.

"I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word."—Ps. 119:107.

"Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word."—Ps. 119:154.

These Scriptures give us the definition of a true revival, the dire need of such a revival, and a simple description of how to get it. I. THE TRUE REVIVAL DEFINED

A true revival is a quickening according to God's Word, not according to some man's magnetism or eccentricity. A talented evangelist may swoop down upon a community and make a stir by sharp, striking sayings, draw large crowds and quicken a kind of interest; but such a quickening may be according to the evangelist, not according to the Word of God.

Now, what we need is an increase of spiritual life which is in line with scriptural teaching. A revival means a giving of more life. David had life; what he wished for was life more abundant. We have love for God and men; what we need is more of the same quality; but be sure that it is love according to the Word of God. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.'

Obedience, not sentimentalism or unctuous joy, is love. Such obedience to God will be linked with unselfish ministry to man.

A missionary by the name of Crossett died years ago in China. He was greatly loved by the Chinese people.

He chose a life of poverty, because he did not have time to make money. He spent his days and nights with the sick, the poor, the anxious. He led many of them to Christ. He thought not of himself, but of others. He loved men, not because of the ties of kinship or nationality, but because they were men with immortal souls precious in the sight of God.

Such love we need in abundance: a love producing a zeal that consumes us. A love that burdens us for the salvation of men.

Faith

We need a quickening of faith; faith in the power of the God of Pentecost to convict and convert three thousand in a day. Faith, not in a process of culture by which we hope to train children into a state of salvation, but faith in the mighty God who can quicken a dead soul into life in a moment; faith in moral and spiritual revolution rather than evolution.

Conviction

We need conviction. Looseness is in the air, and we know who the prince of the power of the air is. There is a charity prevalent which rejoices not in the truth. We need men and women who believe something definite and are willing to live and die for their faith.

Is there on earth today a John Knox, willing to face a Queen Mary and declare to her that she is an idolatress?

Is there among our young women an Anne Askew, who, rather than profess what she does not believe, that the real presence is in the wafer, would go to the tower and have her bones crushed on the rack, then from the stake in Smithfield, go up to God in a chariot of fire?

Is there among our older women an Elizabeth Gaunt, who, while the thumbscrews are on her thumbs and fingers, tightened until the blood spurts, refuses to worship saints and bow down to the host?

Have we any John Philpot and John Rogers left in our ministry, who are willing to burn at the stake rather than give even

silent consent to soul-destroying errors?

Have we not, on the other hand, a namby-pamby, flabby sort of faith—a jellyfish conviction, without any backbone? Is not our religion too much like a ball of wax—put into any shape by touch with things about it? We need a revival of religion of solidity and substance—a religion that resists evil and error and, with the gentleness and faithfulness of Christ, is true to itself and to its Author.

Conscientiousness

There is a great need also of a revival of conscientiousness—a religion not of the hothouse, which thrives under the heat of song, sermon and services on Sunday, but of sturdy growth, that will flourish in the soil and atmosphere of everyday business. Honest merchants, truthful lawyers, faithful preachers, loyal citizens, devoted mothers, wives and husbands, obedient children, industrious workmen are the needs of today and every day.

A quickening of conscientiousness that makes us ready to do the right at all hazards is better than a season of froth and foam of feeling or rapturous joy.

The grocer who went home from church and burnt his bushel, because he knew that it was a false measure, received more benefit from the sermon than if he had gone home, clapped his hands and shouted hallelujah, without thinking of his dishonesty.

Such a revival as that will last. It will not be like the beautiful snowflower of Siberia, which comes up through the snow and perishes in a few hours under the withering blast of evening. The flowers of faith and joy which blossom one day and wither the next are not of the species of the rose of sharon or the lily of the valley.

II. OUR DIRE NEED OF SUCH A REVIVAL
The True Revival Will Lift Us Out of the Dust and Help Us to Shake Off All That Clings to Us
"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."—Ps. 119:25. Dust is the symbol of earthiness as opposed to heavenly-mindedness.

David's soul had an attraction for dust. Drooping or dead things hold dust. It will not stick so easily to living objects; and the cure for this dust magnetism is a larger infusion of life.

The sick eagle wallows in the dust; it has not strength of wing to rise and shake it off. But the eagle full of life soars above the dust and gazes into the sun.

Christians who are today wallowing in the dust of worldliness need an infusion of strong, healthy life that they may "mount up with wings as eagles."

The True Revival Will Sustain Us Under Life's Burdens
"I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word."—Ps. 119:107. Dust mars and hinders life, but it is not heavy. There are Christians not covered with dust, living consecrated lives, who have on them heavy burdens of responsibility, calamity or sorrow. Such as those need quickening, that they may have strength to bear their burdens.

David was afflicted very much. This word afflicted has a wider range than bodily disease, but he does not pray for a lessening of the burden. What he wants is more life to carry what he has and to assume larger burdens. Burden-bearing develops a strong, healthy man, while it crushes the weak and sickly.

We need more life under these burdens, that they may develop us rather than crush us.

Responsibility, disappointment and sorrow make men despair. They give up the conflict, sometimes on the very verge of victory, for the lack of life to bear up.

A man in California had spent his little fortune seeking gold. Every dollar was gone, and he was in debt. Disheartened and demented by his despair, he left his drill one day, went to his cabin, shot his wife and child, then killed himself. Such wickedness! Such tragedy! Such misplaced values! His friends, who pulled up his drill, found on its point the richest kind of ore. If he had held out but a day longer, he would have been rich.

Thus we may be on the very verge of great success, yet fail for the lack of the life that bears disappointment.

The True Revival Will Break All Bonds That Enslave Us
"Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word."—Ps. 119:154. This reveals to us a condition of bondage. "Deliver me"—set me free. This freedom comes through

h a revival—a quickening according to God's Word.

Some of us are bound by habit—the habit of doing evil or the habit of doing nothing good. It is difficult to tell which is worse—the habit of doing what is wrong or the habit of neglecting what is right. Oh, for the quickening that will deliver us from these do-nothing bonds!

Others are bound by the fear of men. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they spoke the Word of God with boldness. They feared neither the face nor the sword of their enemies.

Many are bound by self-interest. They are afraid to offend those out of whom they make profit. They will not be out-and-out Christians lest some who read not the Bible and care nothing for religion will not be pleased. The social circle in which they move is not an atmosphere of religion. The opinions of their friends do not encourage active work for Christ.

We need a quickening that will give us strength, like Samson, to break the cords which these Philistines of the world have put upon us.

III. HOW TO GET SUCH A REVIVAL

Pray for it. Every text is a prayer: "Quicken thou me according to thy word." It is a personal prayer. It is well to pray for the pastor, for the church and for the world, but it is better to begin by praying for one's self. "Quicken me."

If you are quickened, somebody else will be. If the fire begins in your soul, the flames will catch the combustible material about you. You need to strike the spiritual match that can burn up a city.

The fact is, all quickening must be individual. The Lord does not quicken the crowd. The tongues of flame at Pentecost came not upon the crowd but "upon each of them."

A revival that comes in answer to prayer is God-given, the only kind worth having. A revival gotten up is soon put down. A revival produced by a series of mechanics, whether of song or invitation or eccentricity, can be destroyed by an opposite course of mechanics. It is simply a battle of force with force, with which God has nothing to do.

The revival which we call the Reformation was born in prayer. Luther's habit was to pray three hours a day. The knees of Melancthon were found after his death to have been made callous by kneeling.

Pentecost was preceded by ten days of supplication and prayer.

Peter and John were in the spirit of prayer on their way into the temple, when the other great revival in which many were converted was commenced.

After Christ had cast out the devil from the demoniac, He said, 'Such as this cometh out only by prayer.'

Oh, for Elijahs who can break up the spiritual drought by praying rain out of the skies!

Jonathan Edwards preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" many times, but only on one occasion was it signally blessed. He read from a manuscript, holding it up awkwardly to the light; yet while he read, the people took hold of the pews, fearing that they were sliding into Hell.

What was the secret? A little company of his members had met the Saturday before, remained together without supper, continued in prayer all night, and forgot their breakfast next morning as they pleaded with God for His hand of power upon their pastor.

John Wesley carried an old man around with him to pray for him. The secret of his vast power was doubtless the intercession of this godly man.

Chiniquy was converted on a Saturday evening, and he spent the whole night in prayer and praise. No wonder when he stood up before his large congregation the next day and preached Jesus Christ, the gift of God, a thousand souls were converted.

What we need now for quickening is not so much money and wisdom as the spirit of supplication. Pray for yourself until the new life is infused. When that new life comes, it will lead you to pray for others.

The servant girl in a New England town prayed all night for the salvation of her mistress. That mistress, unable to sleep, convicted of her sin, not knowing the cause, urged her husband to go out and get some preacher to pray for her. Then, reflecting that the servant girl was a Christian, they went to her room, and before opening the door they heard these words: "O Lord, bless Mistress. Have mercy on her, for she is good to me." Opening the door gently, husband and wife knelt down by the side of their servant girl and asked her to pray for them.

We need not riches nor honor nor position to have the ear of the King. The weakest may be made powerful by the quickening of the Spirit. If you cannot pray, then try David's petition: "Quicken Thou me, and I will call upon Thy name." Pray for the grace to pray; pray for the spirit of prayer; and the God of all mercy and grace will show forth His power.