

**Articles and Sermons :: REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL AWAKENING (PART 12) by Bill Elliff****REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL AWAKENING (PART 12) by Bill Elliff - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2023/3/7 10:27**

We have all observed the extraordinary movement of God in the last thirty days, highlighted by the sixteen days of non-stop worship at Asbury University. It seems to be spreading across America, incrementally but significantly, to college campuses and local churches. It's not an all-consuming tidal wave yet, but a rapidly rising tide. If you know Christ, your heart is optimistic that what is happening could be the beginning of a nationwide spiritual awakening—a movement of God we desperately need.

One of my dearest friends wrote to me that I have pastored for over 40 years. This retired 85-year-old physician said that he had followed what was happening at Asbury and read carefully all that was occurring. But then he said, "I still had not been able to experience personal revival in my life as I so wanted."

We all have our responses to what happened. Some may ignore or even criticize, but most Christians are asking, "What about my church, my campus, Lord?" And, more humbly, "What about me?"

CORPORATE OR PERSONAL?

If revival is the "extraordinary movement of the Spirit of God that produces extraordinary results," we must ask, "Is revival corporate or personal? Is it for a group of people or for me?" And the answer, of course, is YES!

Everything that happens with a group of people must happen, first and foremost, with individuals. I listened today to an 8-minute video describing the Asbury awakening. It was the testimonies of students, one by one, who had encountered God. The overwhelming summary of those testimonies was that God had visited their campus. It has been a merciful outpouring of His manifest presence. Salvation, healing, reconciliation, and deliverance from sin and addictions has happened rapidly. But it has been personal to each of them. They were faced individually with what they would do as they beheld the glory of the Lord and they cooperated with Him and were radically changed. (You can hear it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJwQSEihmhQ>)

WHY DO WE NEED REVIVAL, AND WHERE IS IT FOUND?

You can use whatever terms you desire, but the great tragedy of our day is that we have never encountered Christ or we have drifted from the Christ we know. The Lord spoke to me about this in my daily Scripture reading in Mark 10 and Psalm 65.

Mark records the story of the rich young ruler who had everything but one thing: life. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he asked. Jesus knew the real issue. He told him to walk away from what he thought would give him life (his possessions) and follow the only One who could give him life. "Come, follow Me," Jesus simply said. The man was so convinced that his worldly idol was necessary that he walked away from Jesus.

Spiritual awakening comes when God stands before you, offering you life for the first time or the 1,000th time. It is not found in a formula, a particular type of worship expression, or six simple steps. If you want life, you must come to Jesus. "Where else can we go?" Peter said, "for you alone have the words of eternal life."

All true Christians drift. Christ describes all of us as He speaks to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. Some of us are orthodox, but we don't love Jesus anymore. Our intimacy with Him has evaporated. Others are proud and think they need nothing. Others have gotten turned by some false teaching. Some have allowed subtle compromises and tolerations to pull us away from Jesus. Many are apathetic, asleep, or lukewarm. Take your pick. We all live there more than we'd admit, and our lives, homes, and churches show the results of our lack of intimacy with Christ.

Read through Christ's prescription for these churches and individuals (us), summed up in one repeated word: repent. We must turn from what has consumed us. We must come back, not to a system or a program, but to Christ. He alone has life. He's standing at the door, knocking, waiting for access.

AND IF

Some are hesitant to sit quietly before the searchlight of God's word and Spirit and let Him evaluate us. But if we seek Him, He will let us find Him. And when we humbly bow at His feet again and fall in love with Him all over again, the reward is spectacular. It is described to us by David in Psalm 65.

He will hear our prayers.

O You who hear prayer, to You all men come. (Psalm 65:2)

You will not find Him too busy or unconcerned. You also will not encounter a stern God whose great delight is to punish a thirsty seeker. As you humbly come, you will be overwhelmed by the beauty of His holiness, lovingkindness, and mercy. You will find Him waiting. He loves you and wants to talk with you. In fact, He has given His own Son so that you can stand with peace facing Him and enjoy this "grace in which we now stand" (Romans 5:1-2)

He is listening. Will you come to Him? Cry out to Him? Pray with no intermission? Wait in silence before Him? Seek Him with all your heart? Will you tarry until all impediments are gone, and you are deeply aware of His presence?

He will forgive your sins.

Iniquities prevail against me. As for our transgressions, You forgive them. (Psalm 65:3)

There is no weight heavier, no disease deadlier, and no chain tighter than the sin we experience as we walk away from Him. He longs to cleanse us and liberate us. To remove the chains and heal the scars. You can run everywhere, trying to assuage the guilt and the pain of your sin. Or, you can seek Him honestly, transparently, and fully and let Him forgive, cleanse, and restore.

Are you willing to admit your sin and acknowledge your need? When was the last time you let the Great Physician do a complete spiritual exam? And are you ready to let go of the things you've been turning to for life and come follow Jesus?

He will give you the gift of His presence.

How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You to dwell in Your courts. (Psalm 65:4)

There is no greater joy, no greater delight than Him. "In Your presence is fullness of joy," David sang. The believer is indwelt by God's Spirit. But we all know that we can have His Spirit but His Spirit not have us in full measure. That's why we were given the command to be continually filled (controlled, dominated, consumed) with His Spirit. Sin interrupts this filling, and we lose the conscious awareness and essential empowering of His presence.

Are you experiencing Him in such ways that you are filled with joy? Have you been grieving or quenching His Spirit? Have you lost the joy of His salvation, and you feel as if He is distant? Are you willing to do whatever is necessary to draw near to the Lord? If you will, He will draw near to you.

Your heart will be completely satisfied.

We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple. (Psalm 65:4)

C.S. Lewis pursued academics with a passion but finally realized there was only one place his soul could be made happy.

God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

OUR RESPONSE

I read an article by a well-respected Christian writer as he commented about the current movement at Asbury and beyond. I respect this man and have been blessed by his teaching in the past. But I was surprised and saddened by his response. Unless I'm misreading, (and I could be), he seemed dismissive of what is happening. He wrote,

“You don't need to care about everything. You don't need to take an interest in everything. You don't need to have an opinion on everything. You certainly don't need to voice your opinion on everything. If a situation like that at Asbury doesn't intersect your life in any way, you can pray for it or you can just never give it another thought” both perfectly valid responses under the circumstances.”

I respectfully and deeply disagree.

My 86-year-old friend decided not to ignore what was happening. It did give it “another thought.” The end of his note to me described how his search culminated in a wonderful personal reviving. His heart is so full that he said, “I am going to share this with our men's prayer group on Tuesday morning and my small group.” Maybe some of them have had the same problem. Thank you so much for helping me to be set free!

When you encounter God and experience a new measure of His presence, you cannot help but tell others. It's the reviving, both personal and corporate, that we all need.

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