

## Why I Am Not Praying For Revival

*Having heard talk about revival recently, I was reminded of some thoughts that I put on paper years ago. I have not edited them in any way, and simply offer them here for your consideration:—*

I believe it was Finney who said that a revival of religion presupposes a declension. In the context of an institutionalised and established state 'church', where a form of religion is perhaps all that can be hoped for, then perhaps it may be appropriate to pray for revival. Bringing back to life can only be relevant when death has occurred, or when a state has been reached which is very close to death. As far as I can see, revival in these terms would mean a return to a life and meaningfulness within the visible observances of religion. God's purposes are much greater than that and a return to more lively and meaningful religious observance, though perhaps superficially attractive, would unfortunately preserve the observances. Irrespective of the background from which these come, they are ready to be thrown away as 'things which can be shaken', in the face of the kingdom we are receiving, '*a kingdom which cannot be shaken*' (**Hebrews 12:27&28**).

There is a mystique about revival. People pray for it as if it is the one thing that we definitely need, and yet at the same time seem to say that it is entirely up to God's whim whether or not he deigns to let us have it in our situation. Faith, revelation and the ability to trust what he says to us seem to play no part at all in this sort of spiritual conjuring. This is not the God I see revealed in the New Testament.

**If we should be praying for revival**, are we to pray for a situation or for people? Surely it is the people who determine the situation anyway, so for whom should we be praying?

**Is it for the people of 'normal' non-Christian society?** They do not need revival, they need to hear the good news of Jesus proclaimed with authority and they need to see the reality of that gospel at work in the lives of believers. There are individuals for whom I am praying, but I am not asking Father to send a revival so that they will be saved; I am asking for them to come face to face with their need of the Lord Jesus and then to find those needs met by submitting to his love and lordship. It will probably be at least partly through me (and other Christians) that this process will take place.

**Is it for the nominally 'Christian' churchgoer?** If it is right that a revival of religion presupposes a declension, perhaps the religious person is the natural target for revival, but in what way? Are we to pray that they will suddenly see the meaning behind the routine they have been following for years? Certainly! ...but this is not revival, it is conversion! Are we to wait for God to send a revival so that many of these unfortunate folk will find release from the bondage of dead religion? Again, what they need is to see and hear the gospel lived and proclaimed in our lives NOW.

**Is it for the true believers in Jesus?** A frequently voiced 'prayer for revival' is "Lord, send a revival and let it start with me". The feelings are great: effectively it is saying that I am aware of the need around me but I am also very aware of my own need of a closer walk with Jesus. Surely this is a good way to pray, isn't it? Yes, but what does it mean? "I know that I have not been living as close to you as you want me to, and I

want to start now." Sounds good to me, but is this praying for revival? I think it is very simply the normal prayer of a Christian who is aware of failure and wants to go on with his Lord. It will lead to repentance from sin and a fresh awareness of the forgiveness of God. There is little doubt in my mind that this is what many people are thinking of when they think of revival - a freshness of repentance and reality with God - but there is no need to wait for 'revival' for this to happen. To pray "Lord, send a revival and let it start with me", whilst aware of unresolved issues in my relationship with God, is to pray and live a lie. How can I honestly ask him to deal with me in the future when I am not prepared to deal straight with him now? Repentance is the issue here, not revival!

The basic problem with praying for revival is exactly this: it takes the responsibility away from the believer and allows us to 'blame' the will of God for the fact that nothing much seems to be happening. The very real blessing that has undoubtedly come from past 'revivals' has been in direct relation to the fact that believers have been brought to the point where they have met with God in reality. As one by one has been brought to that point, the fire of reality has spread and someone who tried to describe what was happening called it 'revival'. I am less worried by this looking back at what **has** happened and calling it revival than I am by looking forward and praying for revival by that name.

It would be at the very least stupid of me to try to deny the fact that many people have been blessed and many lives and situations changed as men and women have prayed for revival. Starting by asking God to 'send a revival', believers have had some revelation of their own need and have humbled themselves under the hand of God. Whilst 'revival' may not be what our Father has in mind for us, he is certainly not averse to using our genuine desires and (possibly misled) praying in order to bring us to reality with him. Again, you might say that in these cases, 'praying for revival has worked' and I would certainly praise God and thank him for such blessing. **But the purposes of God are much greater.**

What I am looking for, praying for and (by the grace of God) working towards is a real demonstration of the life of the New Testament Church. Men and women who are learning the reality of living in forgiveness, death to the old life, newness of life in Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A church whose very life exudes love, healing, security, joy, release and acceptance. A continuous community of life shared by those who belong to one Lord, irrespective of any labels which each one may or may not carry. A unique company of people whose doors are always open to anyone who is prepared to admit their need and find the fulfilment of that need in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that this is the heart of God for the present day. There are many facets to the way he is bringing it to reality. One of them is to gradually unveil his purpose to us so that we begin to share his vision and burden. As a result, I am learning to pray, within the limitations of my understanding, for the manifestation of this glorious church here on earth in my lifetime.

You might call it revival.

Dave Taylor     October 1992 & December 2008

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