

Dear Friend:

For many years, I have seen Christians express interest in revival. I have seen them talk about it, pray about it, even sing about it. And further, I have on occasion heard various Christians claim that we are on the verge of a national revival...that the Holy Spirit was just beginning to "sweep across the land."

I have heard this type of thing for many years. And I hope that this prediction proves correct. Yet the type of revival I hear being talked about - thousands being saved, a renewed interest among Christians to be single-hearted in their devotion to Christ, and a major impact (by Christians) on all of society - just never seems to arrive. In general, it seems that society (and the churches) continue to go "downhill."

This bothers me very much. Why are things this way? Is my perception of the situation incorrect? If not, why isn't this expected revival arriving? Isn't God interested in revival anymore? If revival doesn't come, *surely* the reason does *not* rest in him!

As far as I know, *every* revival or "great awakening" that has occurred in the past has been accompanied by (actually *preceded* by) a movement of "extraordinary" prayer among God's people. Christians became devoted to sacrificial prayer: personal interests and goals (the things which preoccupy so much of our time today) were "sacrificed" or set aside, and prayer (that is, communication with God) along with repentance became their primary focal point. And I do not see this happening today.

Is this a true analysis of the situation? Or, am I merely blind to what is going on in the world? I am fully aware that there is a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit in some of the "third world" countries, but I do not see anything of similar magnitude occurring in the West. Again, am I merely unaware of what's going on? Actually, I hope so, but I fear that I am not. (If I *am* blind, then you can probably disregard everything else I say in this letter.)

For the most part, I see people who (on Sunday) talk about sincere, uncompromised devotion to God, but who (the rest of the week) are preoccupied with schedules, things that need done, and all sorts of other things that are "good." It's not that people are doing what is blatantly "bad," but rather they have allowed "good" things to crowd out things that are of much *greater* importance. Most people, it seems to me, acknowledge that they "should" read and study the Bible more than they do, and pray more than they do, yet they still don't do it. *Why?* If it "should" be done, isn't it a moral obligation? Isn't a failure to do it *sin*? Why don't we care enough to change our ways? (And why do we still ask God to bless us?)

We read in the gospels about the "sacrificial devotion" that *must* be a part of the lives of those who would choose to follow Jesus. Was he exaggerating? Does this message have no application for today? Why is it that whenever there is not enough time in our schedule for all our "agenda" (which is probably most of the time), things such as Bible study and prayer are the first to be dropped?

Occasionally some churches (or communities) set aside a few hours (or a day) to focus on prayer. It seems that for a while there is a glowing love, a desire to put God first, a willingness to do all that Christ desires of us. Yet in the weeks that follow, it seems that things slowly return to "business as usual." And though people do not express actual opposition to "sacrifice," repentance, devotion to prayer, etc., somehow it begins again to take second place.

Could it be that the reason revival hasn't struck the land in quite the manner we would desire is because we are not sincerely and single-mindedly devoted to doing *our* part? Surely God gets the credit for revival, whenever it happens, but that does not excuse us from doing *our* part - the things he commands us to do.

There was a time that Israel cried out to the Lord for deliverance from their enemies. Yet he refused to deliver them until they had demonstrated the *sincerity* of their repentance. (Read Judges 10:6-16.) Could it be that we

have failed to demonstrate the sincerity of heart that God requires of his people? Have *we* wholeheartedly devoted ourselves to serving God? Or do we serve two masters? Surely God knows!

We hope and pray that you will give consideration to what we have written. Please forgive whatever might be inaccurate.

Sincerely, in Christ,

One of his people.

We desire to see God's people humble themselves and pray - *regardless* of what God chooses to do (as far as national repentance is concerned).

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They served the Baals, the Ashtaroah, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. They forsook the LORD, and didn't serve him.

So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the Ammonites, and they troubled and oppressed the Israelites that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites that were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. The Ammonites also crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was greatly distressed.

The Israelites cried to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God, and have served the Baals."

The LORD said to the Israelites, "Didn't I save you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites, and from the Philistines? The Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites also oppressed you; and you cried to me, and I saved you out of their hand. Yet you have forsaken me, and served other gods; therefore I will rescue you no more. Go and cry to the gods you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress."

The Israelites said to The LORD, "We have sinned. Do you to us whatever seems good to you; but we beg you to rescue us today."

They put aside the foreign gods that were among them and served the LORD.

And he was grieved by Israel's misery.

Judges 10:6-16

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If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven; I will forgive their sin, and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14

For if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

1 Corinthians 11:31

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

James 4:10

Additional Comments: How to Recognize *Genuine* Revival

I am convinced that, if a genuine revival or "awakening" ever occurs, it will *not* express itself as merely an increase in "religious activities," or in "emotional religious ecstasy," etc. *These things may occur, but they are secondary in nature.* (Even non-Christians and false religions can do these types of things!)

Instead, *the primary expression of genuine revival will be an increased love toward God and neighbor (including one's enemies)* - in accordance with the way that Scripture defines love. After all, this encompasses every obligation we have! All the "religion" in the world cannot substitute for the type of love God requires from us.

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus answered:

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.’

This is the greatest and most important command.

The second most important command is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

The entire Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets are based on these two commands.