

Studies on Revival

How Revivals Occur

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. – Isaiah 57:15

I. The Catalyst for Revival – God or Man?

- This is one of the oldest debates on revivals and dwells in the realm of philosophical theology.
- Imbalanced views
 - God works alone or primarily:
 1. This view prevails among those that place high importance to God’s sovereignty (Puritans, Calvinists, Reformed Theology)
 2. In this, God sovereignly moves upon a place in a supernatural fashion to ignite and spread the flames of revival.
 3. In this, Man is swept along by the currents of God’s providence.
 - Man works primarily:
 1. This view sees revival more as a natural outcome of a prescribed formula.
 2. It does not completely take God out of the equation, but relies on man’s actions as the fuel and catalyst of revival
 3. In this, God only moves once man has made such an environment that God cannot ignore.
- A balanced view
 - Man cannot act alone for much of a revival is supernatural
 - God cannot act alone for revival depends upon human frailty
 - Both God and Man have roles in revival
 1. Believers have turned from God to sin or slumber
 2. God’s blessing is withheld, and judgement turns man back to God - II Chronicles 7:13
 3. Spurred by the conviction of the Spirit, believers seek God again – II Chronicles 7:14a
 4. God responds to man’s repentance and acts according to His grace – II Chronicles 7:14b
- We acknowledge that God is sovereign in the outpouring of His grace (ex. Romans 9:14-18) while also acknowledging that man is responsible to seek such an outpouring (ex. Luke 9:23-24).
- Therefore, we seek revival which God sends at His pleasure – I John 5:14-15

II. When A Revival May Be Expected – Charles Finney

- “When the providence of God indicates that a revival is at hand.”
- “When the wickedness of the wicked grieves and humbles and distresses Christians.” – Matthew 23:37-39
- “A revival may be expected when Christians have a spirit of prayer for a revival.” – Matthew 18:19-20
- “When the attention of ministers is especially directed to this particular object, and when their preaching and other efforts are aimed particularly at the conversion of sinners.” – Matthew 28:18-20
- “When Christians begin to confess their sins to one another.” – James 5:16
- “Whenever Christians are found willing to make the sacrifice necessary to carry it on.” – Hebrews 12:1-2
- “When ministers and professors [of Christ] are willing to have God promote it by what instruments he pleases” – II Kings 5:1-14
- “In truth a revival should be expected whenever it is needed. If we need to be revived it is our duty to be revived.”

“Revivals begin with God's own people; the Holy Spirit touches their heart anew, and gives them new fervor and compassion, and zeal, new light and life, and when He has thus come to you, He next goes forth to the valley of dry bones... Oh, what responsibility this lays on the Church of God! If you grieve Him away from yourselves, or hinder His visit, then the poor perishing world suffers sorely!” – Andrew Bonar

“You never have to advertise a fire. Everyone comes running when there's a fire. Likewise, if your church is on fire, you will not have to advertise it. The community will already know it.” – Leonard Ravenhill