

LEST YE FAINT

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE REPEATED REQUEST FOR REVIVAL

“**Wilt thou not revive us again?**” (Psalm 85:6).

TWO QUESTIONS ARE RAISED by the subject at hand.

First, are we concerned about religious revival or spiritual renewing?

Second, would we, in this day of such fearful and false conceptions, understand a true definition of REAL revival?

And, if we did comprehend its meaning, would we be willing to accept it at its face value?

Perhaps designations and characterizations have sadly perplexed the issue and distorted the thinking, but what is sorely needed in our accelerated plunge downward is a solemn turning of our hearts Godward in humble submission to His holy will, thus permitting Him to manifest His presence and power in our midst. The present leanness of soul, carelessness of living and barrenness of service have had so gradual a development that the professing Church has not only not felt any cause for alarm, but has become confirmed in its indifference.

Before there can come a real awakening and a time of refreshing from out of His presence, there must of necessity be contrition of heart, even deep sorrow of soul for the prolonged indifference toward God, and the deep grief we have caused the Holy Spirit. We must be bent and broken sufficiently to feel the hurt which our coldness, stubbornness and impenitence have inflicted upon the heart of Christ. Real revival is not a process, but the outcome or result of the freedom with which we permit the Holy Spirit to operate in and through our lives.

We must endeavor to sense the deep longing of the Psalmist when he solemnly entreated the Lord, saying, “**Wilt thou not revive us again?**” At once, of course, we detect a concern. Spiritual conditions had dipped to a very low ebb. The godlessness of the atmosphere was becoming rather stifling, and his surging emotions found an outlet in a tearful supplication which betrayed a distressful soul, a desiring heart and a discerning mind. He knew the present spiritual status was lamentable; and, in seeking a betterment, he knew the source of blessing.

“**Thou,**” he said, almost breathlessly, somehow realizing that he must fall back upon God or upon nothing. Who else could help? Who else possessed the goodness, the grace, the greatness?

“**Thou!**” his poor, weary heart was pleading. He was addressing the wonderful One, the waiting One, the willing One—the One who had said, “**I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people**” (Psalm 65:2).

The prayer was necessarily brief. Desperation never engages in lengthy supplications. “**Lord, save me!**” cried Peter as the waters began to swallow him (Matthew 14:30).

That was all, but it brought results. So it was with the Psalmist. The burden of his plea was in the one word “**revive**”.

- They needed revitalization for, while there was life, there was no manifestation.
- They sought restoration, for something was lost.
- They desired resolution, for purpose was gone.

The word “**us**” represented God’s erring people, God’s disobedient children, God’s fruitless servants; and the significance of the word “**again**” inheres in the fact that it recalled a better day; it referred to former blessing; it requested another opportunity.

The Revival Possibility

Real revival comes when there is;

- A willing waiting upon God,
- A sincere confession of sin,
- A longing to be forgiven,
- A readiness to make restitution,
- A willingness to forgive others,
- An attempt to correct strained relationships,
- A voluntary abandonment to the Lord of all we are and have,
- A pronounced eagerness to know His Word and will,
- A determination to practice the Truth as He reveals it,
- A private, personal life which is in complete harmony with the public testimony.

With these simple, well-defined conditions met, let us observe what supports the possibility of genuine, Spirit-promoted revival.

GOD WANTS TO REVIVE HIS PEOPLE

Of this we may be well assured. What father would delight in the sickliness of his child? What parent could rejoice in the waywardness and disobedience of his children? That the present need is pathetically and irrefutably great is apparent. The hour calls for a challenge of no small proportions.

When the Apostle Peter spoke of “**stirring up**” the minds of the people by putting them in remembrance, he employed a term which meant “*to awaken fully*”. Many times in every age God’s people have been stirred but not awakened sufficiently to acknowledge their sins and to rally to the cause of Christ, but our Father wants, with affectionate longing, to infuse us with the abundant life.

GOD WISHES TO RENEW HIS PRESENCE

He desires to refresh the hearts of His people and to inspire them with holiness. The flesh is capable of making a grandiose display before a decadent age, to elicit the applause of the crowds; but it does not change the heart from its wild propensities.

It is the recognized presence of God that humbles the heart, strengthens the soul and encourages service. To Moses, Jehovah assuringly promised, “**My presence shall go with thee**” (Exodus 33:14). The quick response of God’s servant, and a very natural one, was, in effect, “How could we possibly go on?”

God will manifest His presence among His people when conditions permit Him to do so.

The benediction had just been pronounced at the close of the evening meeting in a church in Pennsylvania—the close of an ordinary service—when someone in the congregation began singing, “I’ve wasted many precious years, now I’m coming home.” The sudden unannounced singing began before the people had attempted a departure. It gradually increased in volume and impressiveness until it seemed that an Unseen Hand was directing the congregation as a full-sized choir.

A lady in the rear pew arose and walked resolutely to the front, only to be followed by others, all of whom knelt to sob out their hearts before the sympathetic and understanding Saviour. About half of the congregation departed, while those remaining, for the most part, knelt between the pews. When the evening had ended, more than thirty precious folk, with moistened eyes and shining countenances, were assured of a work of grace in their hearts. Joy was predominant among all who were there.

When a discerning brother of Christian maturity was asked his reaction to this glorious occasion, he simply replied, “Anyone could readily see that the Holy Spirit was pleased over something, and the Lord sweetly manifested His presence.” These are the times of refreshing which He wishes us to experience.

GOD WILLS TO REVEAL HIS PURITY

“**Launch out into the deep**” (Luke 5:4), the master commanded Peter, when he had completed His message to the people on the shore. With long, strong, and steady strokes, the little craft was propelled through Genesaret’s historic waters. Did Peter know where the depths were? Of course, those waters were as familiar to this fisherman as his own homestead. But he was to find other depths—depths for which his heart had longed but which had never before become his blessed experience.

It was an experience which one gains, not by plying the seas, but by bending the knees.

Of all the varied developments in Peter's life, none was so fraught with tenderness and beauty as that which occurred in the little ship in mid-sea. A strong, sturdy weather-beaten fisherman, in bent posture, is broken at the knees of Jesus. His bearded, upturned face is stamped with indescribable, gripping amazement, "**Leave me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man**" (Luke 5:8), the poor fisherman mumbles, his eyes suffused with tears.

This was the grandest moment in the life of the Apostle. It was the same Lord Jesus Whose call he had obeyed; it was the very same One Who had pushed out from the shore with him. There was neither conviction nor exclamation on his part then. But now, he has "**launched out into the deep.**"

Now, he has witnessed something, sensed something, faced something which had never become apparent to his understanding before. What he had seen, what he had perceived, quickly revealed to him, by contrast, the sinfulness of his own heart. With Isaiah, he was saying, "**I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts**" (Isaiah 6:5).

It is only as we SEE Him, see Him as He is in all the perfections and purity of His character that the purging is desired and the live coal from off the altar is requested.

GOD WAITS TO RELEASE HIS POWER

Simultaneously with the renewal of the presence of the Lord to a believer's cold and cluttered heart, and the revelation of His purity, comes the release of His power. It is resurrection power. It lifts one back to a higher plane, back to heaven's tableland; back where fellowship is once again enjoyed freely with the Father and with the Son.

- The thoughts are elevated;
- The faith is strengthened;
- The heart becomes eager to do the will of God.

Revival is not a momentary emotional upsurge. It is an unforgettable dealing with Him Whose irresistible voice, which will call forth the dead from their graves, has issued the sovereign command to rise to higher heights in our spiritual experiences.

This is spiritual revival—a new display of the new life which was gained through faith in Christ as Saviour—an energy which transcends and outlasts all fleshly effort, making the conduct attractive, the ministry productive and the prayer-life effective.

The Revival Plea

In the days of Ezra, a throng of people came together in the street. They came, not in response to a church bell or the heralding of a trumpet, nor yet at the summons of a spiritual leader.

The Scriptures state that **“they gathered themselves together as one man”** (Nehemiah 8:1a). It was a symphony of desire. Their motive was indicated in the specific request they made of Ezra the scribe: **“Bring the book of the law of Moses!”** they cried concertedly.

Then, as if the scribe might misunderstand their request, they added, **“which the Lord had commanded to Israel”** (Nehemiah 8:1b).

Anyone who has an active imagination can graphically enlarge upon this scene, which we could deeply wish might have a present-day reenactment

It is implied that Ezra was pleased with the request, for he complied at once, returning to the vast congregation with the law. How little do we appreciate the fact that the Scriptures are so available.

In a report just released, the American Bible Society has begun to spend three million dollars, the largest budget of its one hundred and thirty-one year history, for five million, four hundred and eighty thousand Bibles, Testaments, and Gospels of John for foreign countries.

But in that long ago day the copies of the Law were few. There was no criticism of a service being too lengthy; there was no indication of restlessness. They wanted the Word of God. This proved the pronounced thirst for the Water of Life which people may possess, and the prominent manner in which it will manifest itself if not suppressed.

The plea of the heart for revival grows out of the soil of self-dissatisfaction, and longing for it germinates at once when an honest appraisal of the life is made.

- None can satisfy the heart like Jesus.
- No other love is so warm and welcome, so true and tender.
- No other type of life is so exemplary or so commending as that which is under the control of the Holy Spirit.
- There is no other mental frame comparable to the assurance that we are operating within His will.

And, when one ray of Divine revelation is allowed to shine through the shadows of a backsliding condition, it at once becomes apparent that one is complete **ONLY** in Christ (Colossians 2:10).

All the supplemental things which had been accepted and applied are proved to be false and insufficient.

Then, when the loneliness of being causes the heart to sink into that weird, indescribable emptiness of distance from Christ, even as anyone whose footing becomes insecure grasps for something solid, so the repentant one reaches out insistently for the Rock which is both our Foundation of security and our Fountain of blessing.

This longing, being interpreted, is the same cry as of old, **“firing the Book!”**

“To the weary and sin-bound who sought for His aid,
Did Jesus ever say ‘No’?
And to those who desired Him and earnestly prayed,
Did Jesus ever say ‘No’?

No, no! a thousand times no!
Jesus will never say ‘No’;
To those turning from sin, inviting Him in,
Jesus will never say ‘No’.”

The Revival Plan

Ezra stood on the pulpit of wood (the only mention of pulpit in the Bible) and opened the book.

The people stood at once as they would to honour a sovereign. That they had been sitting or squatting in the street is not to be wondered at when once we learn something of the ancient oriental customs, but the Word of God brought them to their feet.

Several verbs stand out with prominence to give us the skeleton outline of the developments of this open-air meeting.

- They stood;
- They blessed;
- They bowed;
- They worshipped (Ezra 8:5, 6).

They stood in respect for the Word; they blessed in gratitude for its message; they bowed in reverence for its authority; they worshipped in keeping with its directions.

The people of that generation had, through their exile from the land, lost their familiarity with the precious language of heaven.

The inspired account of this occasion emphasizes the fact that Ezra “**caused them to understand the reading**”.

Then followed tears of joy; restoration of worship, fasting and repentance, confession and promise. This was revival.

As these ancient people of God were exiled from the land, just so are many professing Christians today exiled from the Lord.

- They have been corralled in the avenues of willfulness, waywardness and worldliness.
- They have stepped out of the orbit of God’s will.
- They have lightly esteemed His holy commands.
- They have faintly viewed His perfect instructions.
- They have failed to comprehend the solemn import of the Scriptures.

The first step in revival is, obviously, that of bringing the mind of the backslider back into focus with the Word of the Lord. This sets the stage, then, for His way to be followed, His will to be done, and His work to be accomplished.

“The Word of God is quick and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12).

- If we apply it to our lives, does it not follow that we would evidence its life and manifest its power? **“O Lord . . . thy thoughts are very deep”** (Psalm 92:5).

- If we apply His thoughts to our lives, would not our shallowness and leanness give way to depth and enrichment? **“Thy testimonies are very sure”** (Psalm 93:5).

- If we apply His testimonies to our lives, would not there be more certainty in our experience? **“Thy testimonies are very fruitful”** (Psalm 119:41).

- If we assimilate His Word, would we not be more holy?

- If we were as honest as the Psalmist and as conscientious, we, too, would confess, **“Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law”** (Psalm 119:136).

The Revival Proof

When the Holy Spirit manifested His presence on the day of Pentecost as a rushing wind, the place was filled with His presence and the people were filled with His power, so much so, that multitudes in Jerusalem were **“amazed and marvelled”** (Acts 2:7).

The work of the Spirit always elicits awe and wonder, for His ministry is ever productive of God-honoring results. Some of the unmistakable proofs of a genuine awakening in Ezra’s day can be tersely enumerated.

Separation. They separated themselves from the strange people of other lands (Nehemiah 10:28).

One admirable feature of this necessary move was that they did it with both knowledge and understanding. Now they knew at long last something of the way of the Lord. They had now gained or regained an appreciation of His will.

Dedication. They pledged themselves with an oath to walk according to the Word of the Lord (Nehemiah 10:29). This, of course, is the way of life and power, the way of obedience and blessing.

Cessation. Now they would not countenance the intermarriage of their sons and daughters with unbelievers (Nehemiah 10:30). While they were cold and indifferent spiritually, it did not matter. Since the Word of Truth has come to them with new meaning and force, and since they have pledged themselves to follow its teaching, the outlook is entirely different. All unequal yokes were now distasteful.

Ministration. When other matters are straightened out, God’s people become active in His service. Their expressed desire was **“for the service of the house of our God”** (Nehemiah 10:32).

When so many of the members of the body of Christ are out of joint, it is to be expected that the Church militant would limp and lag when the hour calls for an immediate and powerful offensive against a treacherous foe.

The appalling characteristic at the moment is the prevailing lack of concern.

And let us not point our finger condemningly at others, but rather judge ourselves that we be not judged.

- Are our eyes toward the Lord as the eyes of a maid turn toward the hand of her mistress?
- Do our souls pant for the living God as a deer pants for the waterbrooks?
- Do we gird up the loins of our minds in earnest expectancy to hear his voice?
- Do we sit at His feet to learn of Him?
- Are we watchful in our waiting for God's Son from heaven?
- Do we, with David, experience floods of tears because we fail to keep His Word?
- Are we pained, with Paul, as we witness the interminable march of men toward the awfulness of judicial darkness which awaits them?

These are profound and sobering questions. If truthfulness is respected, many of us would experience difficulty in furnishing a favorable reply.

Do you ask, "Will God revive His people?"

He asks, "**Will My people who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray and seek My face?**" (II Chronicles 7:14)

That is to say, "Will My people be revived?"

When we are sufficiently penitent to despise our sin, to disown it, and to depart from it, then will we answer our Father in heaven with David of old, "**When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek**" (Psalm 27:8).

- Then, will God hear from heaven;
- Then will He bless His people;
- Then will the people reverence and obey His Word.

Then will the true meaning of revival be known.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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