

The Cry for Revival

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"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" Psalm 85:6.

It is interesting to notice the time when this prayer was offered. It was a time of mercy. "Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land." It was a time when God had led many to the knowledge of Christ, and covered many sins. "Thou has forgotten the iniquity of thy people." It was now they began to feel their need of another visit of mercy -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

The thing prayed for. "Revive us again," or literally, return and make us live anew. It is the prayer of those who have received some life, but feel their need of more. They had been made alive by the Holy Spirit. They felt the sweetness and excellence of this new, hidden, divine life. They pant for more -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

The argument presented. "That thy people may rejoice in thee." They plead with God to do this for the sake of His people, that their joy may be full; and that it may be in the Lord -- in the Lord their righteousness -- in the Lord their strength.

I. When this prayer is needed.

1. In a time of backsliding. There are times when, like Ephesus, many of God's children lose their first love. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. Believers lose their close and tender walking with God. They lose their close and near communion with God. They go out of the holiest, and pray at a distance with a curtain between. They lose their fervency, sweetness, and fullness in secret prayer. They do not pour out their hearts to God.

They have lost their clear discovery of Christ. They see Him but dimly. They have lost the sight of His beauty -- the savor of His good ointment -- the hold of His garment. They seek Him, but find Him not. They cannot stir up the heart to lay hold on Christ.

The Spirit dwells scantily in their soul. The living water seems almost dried up within them. The soul is dry and barren. Corruptions are strong; grace is very weak.

Love to the brethren fades. United prayer is forsaken. The little assembly no more appears beautiful. Compassion for the unconverted is low and cold. Sin is unrebuked, though committed under their eye. Christ is not confessed before men. Perhaps the soul falls into sin, and is afraid to return; it stays far off from God, and lodges in the wilderness.

Ah! this is the case, I fear, with many. It is a fearfully dangerous time. Nothing but a visit of the free Spirit to your soul can persuade you to return. Is it not a time for this prayer -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

2. A time of temptation. The soul of a believer needs grace every moment. "By the grace of God I am what I am." But there are times when he needs more grace than at other times.

Just as the body continually needs food; but there are times when it needs food more than at others -- times of great bodily exertion, when all the powers are to be put forth.

Sometimes the soul of a believer is exposed to hot persecution. Reproach breaks the heart; or it beats like a scorching sun upon the head. "For my love they are my adversaries." Sometimes they are God's children who reproach us, and this is still harder to bear. The soul is ready to fret or sink under it.

Sometimes it is flattery that tempts the soul. The world speaks well of us, and we are tempted to pride and vanity. This is still worse to bear.

Sometimes Satan strives within us, by stirring up fearful corruptions, till there is a tempest within. Oh, is there a tempted soul here? Jesus prays for thee. Pray for thyself. You need more peace. Nothing but the oil of the Spirit will feed the fire of grace when Satan is casting water on it. Send up this cry, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

3. A time of concern. "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain." When God begins a time of concern in a place -- when the dew is beginning to fall -- then is the time to pray, Lord stay not thine hand -- give us a full shower -- leave not one dry. "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

II. Who need this revival.

1. Ministers need it. Ministers are naturally hard-hearted and unbelieving as other men (Mark 16:14), so that Christ has often to upbraid them. Their faith is all from above. They must receive from God all that they give. In order to speak the truth with power, they need a personal grasp of it. It is impossible to speak with power from mere head knowledge, or even from past experience. If we would speak with energy, it must be from present feeling of the truth as it is in Jesus. We cannot speak of the hidden manna unless we have the taste of it in our mouth. We cannot speak of the living water unless it be springing up with us. Like John the Baptist, we must see Jesus coming, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God." We must speak with Christ in our eye, as Stephen did. "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." We must speak from present sense of pardon and access to God, or our words will be cold and lifeless. But how can we do this if we be not quickened from above? Ministers are far more exposed to be cast down than other men; they are standard-bearers, and Satan loves when a standard-bearer fainteth. O, what need of full supplies out of Christ's fullness! Pray, beloved, that it may be so. "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

2. God's children need it. The divine life is all from above. They have no life till they come to Christ. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Now this life is maintained by union to Christ, and by getting fresh supplies every moment out of His fullness. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him." In some believers this life is maintained by a constant inflowing of the Holy Spirit -- "I will water it every moment" -- like the constant supply which the branch receives from the vine. These are the happiest and most even Christians. Others have flood-tides of the Spirit carrying them higher and higher. Sometimes they get more in a day than for months before. In the one of these grace is like a river; in the other, it is like the shower coming down in its season. Still, in both there is need of revival. The natural heart in all is prone to wither. Like a garden in summer, it dries up unless watered. The soul grows faint

and weary in well-doing. Grace is not natural to the heart. The old heart is always for dying and fading. So the child of God needs to be continually looking out, like Elijah's servant, for the little cloud over the sea. You need to be constantly pressing near to the fountain of living waters; yea, lying down at the well-head of salvation, and drinking the living water, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

3. Those that were awakened and have gone back, need it. A drop fell from heaven upon their heart. They trembled, wept, prayed. But the shower passed by, and the rocky heart ceased to tremble. The eye again closed in slumber; the lips forgot to pray. Ah, how common and sad is this case! The King of Zion lifted up His voice in this place and cried. Some that were in their graves heard His voice, and began to live. But this passed by, and now they sink back again into the grave of a dead soul. Ah! this is a fearful state! to go back to death, to love death, and wrong your own soul. What can save such a one, but another call from Jesus. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For your sake most of all I pray, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

4. Barren fig-trees need it. Some of you have been planted in this vineyard. You have enjoyed sun and shower. You have passed through all this time of awakening without being moved. You are still dead, barren, unconverted, fruitless. Ah! there is for you no hope but in this prayer. Ordinary times will not move you. Your heart is harder than that of other men. What need have you to pray for a deep, pure, effectual work of God, and that you may not be passed by. Many of you would stand the shock much better now. You have grown experienced in resisting God, and quenching the Spirit. Oh, pray for a time that will remove mountains. None but the Almighty Spirit can touch your hard heart. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

III. From whom revival comes.

It is God who must revive us again. It is not a human work. It is all divine. If you look to men to do it, you will only get that curse in Jeremiah 17, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm."

1. The Lord has all the means in His hands. The Son of Man holds the seven stars in His right hand. These stars are ministers. He lifts them up, or lets them down, at His sovereign will. He gives them all their light, or He takes it away. He holds them up and lets them shine clearly, or He hides them in the hollow of His hand, as it seemeth good in His sight. Sometimes He lets them shine on one district of a country, sometimes on another. They only shine to lead to Him. The star that leads away from Him is a wandering star, and Christ will cast it into the blackness of darkness forever. We should pray to Christ to make his ministers shine on us.

2. The Lord has the fullness of the Spirit given to Him. The Father has entrusted the whole work of redemption into the hands of Jesus, and so the Spirit is given to Him. "As the Father hath life in Himself, and quickeneth whom He will, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself, and to quicken whom He will."

It is He who keeps all His own children alive from day to day. He is the fountain of living waters, and His children lie beside the still waters, and drink every moment eternal life from Him.

It is He that pours down the Spirit in His sovereignty on those that never knew Him. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Truly, the whole work from beginning to end is His.

Every means will be in vain until He pour the Spirit down (Isa. 32:15): "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers," until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. We may preach publicly, and from house to house; we may teach the young, and warn the old, but all will be vain; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, briers and thorns shall grow. Our vineyard shall be like the garden of the sluggard. We need that Christ should awake; that He should make bare His arm as in the days of old; that He should shed down the Spirit abundantly.

3. The children of God should plead with Him. Put your finger on the promise, and plead, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear them." (Isa. 41:17) Tell Him you are poor and needy. Spread out your wants before Him. Take your emptiness to His fullness. There is an infinite supply with Him for everything you need, at the very moment you need it.

4. Ungodly men, you are saying, there is no promise to us. But there is, if you will receive it. Ps. 68:18; "Thou has ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." Are you a rebel? Go and tell Him so. Oh, if you are willing to be justified by Him, and to get your rebel heart changed, go and ask Him, and He will give you living water. Prov. 1:23; "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you." Go and tell Him you are a "simple one, a scorner." Ask Him to do what He has promised in Ezek. 34:26: "I will make them and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Now, you cannot say you belong to Zion hill, but you can say you are in the places round about this hill. Oh cry, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

IV. The effects of a revival.

1. The Lord's children rejoice in Him. They rejoice in Christ Jesus. The purest joy in the world is joy in Christ Jesus. When the Spirit is poured down, His people get very near and clear views of the Lord Jesus. They eat His flesh and drink His blood. They come to a personal cleaving to the Lord. They taste that the Lord is gracious. His blood and righteousness appear infinitely perfect, full, and free to their soul. They sit under His shadow with great delight. They rest in the cliffs of the rock. Their defence is the munitions of rocks. They lean on the Beloved. They find infinite strength in Him for the use of their soul -- grace for grace -- all they can need in any hour of trial and suffering to the very end.

They go by Him to the Father. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We find a portion there -- a shield, and exceeding great reward. This gives joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, God loves to see His children happy in Himself. He loves to see all our springs in Him. Take and plead that. Oh, you would pray after a different manner if God were to pour water on the thirsty. You would tell him all, open to Him all sorrows, joys, cares, comforts. All would be told to Him.

2. Many flock to Christ. "Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows?" "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." Just as all the creatures came into the ark, so poor sinners run in such a time. Laying aside their garments (Mark 10:50), their jealousies, they flee together into the ark Jesus. Oh, there is not a lovelier sight in all this world.

Souls are saved. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. They are passed from death unto life."

It is glorifying to God. "He that receives Christ, sets to his seal that God is true." He confesses the holiness of God, His love and grace. His mouth is filled with praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" He begins to long for the image of God, to confess Him before men, to walk in His ways. It gives joy in heaven, and joy in earth. Oh, pray for such a time.

There is an awakening again of those who have gone back. If we have not a time of the outpouring of the Spirit, many who once sought Christ, but have gone back, will perish in a dreadful manner; for they generally turn worse than before. Sometimes they scoff and make a jest of all. Satan is all the worse, that he was once an angel. So they become all the more wicked who have gone back. They generally go deeper into the mire of sin. But if God graciously pour down His Spirit, the hardened heart will melt. Pray for this.

There is an awakening of fresh sinners. It is a sad state of things when sinners are bold in sin; when multitudes can openly break the Sabbath, and openly frequent the tavern. It is an awful sign when sinners can live in sin, and yet sit unmoved under the preaching of the Word, cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. But if the Lord were pleased to revive us again, this state of things would be changed.

I am sure it would be a lovelier sight to see you going up in company to the house of prayer, than thronging to the tavern, or the haunts of sin and shame, that will bring down eternal ruin on your poor soul. It would be sweeter to hear the cry of prayer in your closets, than to hear the sound of oaths and profane jesting, and your hard speeches and reproaches of God's children. Sweeter far to see your hearts panting after Christ, His pardon, His holiness, His glory, than to see them burning after the world and its vain idols.

Oh, lift up your hearts to the Lord for such a time. Plead earnestly the promise, "I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh." Then this wilderness will become a fruitful field, and its name be, Jehovah-Shammah -- the Lord is there.

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