

“Revive us again.”

There was a preacher who was preaching one Sunday evening, telling everyone how bad hell could be. And there was this one man who would fall asleep every Sunday. And so the preacher got to the point in his sermon where he banged on the pulpit to emphasise how bad hell was, and he shouted, “In fact if anyone here really wants to go to hell, let them stand up now.” Well, that groggy man, all he heard was the “Stand up part” and so he did. The whole church was in shock and they looked around at the man. Until finally the man turned around and said, “Well preacher, I don’t know what we’ve just voted on, but it looks like we are the only ones for it!”

And the point of the story is that some people think that going to church will just tire them out. Why do some people talk about church and about worship as if it is exhausting? They talk about church and worship as if it would make us tired to do it. You hear people saying all the time, “I’m too tired to go to church” And the implication seems to be, “Well, church will just wear me out” or “Church will just make me more exhausted.”

You never hear people say, “Well, you know, I’m tired, I’m worn out, I might just go to church tonight to get fired up”. “I’m going to go to church tonight to charge up the batteries”. You see, that’s what it is supposed to do. An opportunity to praise God ought to get us fired up. David said in Psalm 28:7 “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.”

We can all think of times like that. We can all think of times when our hearts leapt for joy. When our hearts are aflamed for God. But you know that a fire must be refuelled, or it will go out. You see we may call it refuelling or recharging our batteries but God calls it revival Psalm 85:6 says, “Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you.”

Maybe this morning you need God to relight a fire in your soul that’s getting a bit cold. Maybe what we all need is revival. So what is revival? First of all, let me tell you what revival isn’t. Revival is not a set of church meetings. Churches years ago used to say, “We are going to have revival on such and such a date and this will be called revival week”. That’s not revival, it’s a good thing to do but it’s not revival. And revival isn’t an evangelistic crusade, that’s not really revival. It’s not even church growth, because a church can be growing but that’s not revival.

You see revival is for Christians and Christians alone. The very words means, something that is alive but about to die and needs to come back to life, it needs to be awake. If you’re not a Christian this morning you don’t need revival, you need redemption. If you’re not a Christian this morning you are dead in your sins and your transgressions and you need to come to life. But if you are a Christian there is a good chance during the course of your Christian life that you are going to need a few revivals.

Years ago some churches used to have 2 week long meetings, and one of the reasons for that was, because often the 1st week was for revival. The whole influence of the first week was to get the whole Church on fire for God, and the 2nd week they would focus on evangelism. But they decided that going to church for 2 weeks was just too much so they cut it down to 1 week and went straight on to the evangelism. But as years went by they decided that, that was too much so they cut it down to about 3 nights. And then they had no fruit so they just stopped doing it all together.

Maybe it wasn’t fruitful because they were trying to do evangelism before they had revival. You see, the Book of Acts is supposed to be the norm for the church and I think sometimes God’s church is so sub-normal, that if normal ever showed up, it would seem abnormal to us. There is a very real sense that’s God’s church is like a sleeping Giant and Satan’s motto is, “let sleeping giants lie.”

So, God has to revive His church. But just what is revival? “Revival is experienced when God visits His people to awaken them spiritually”. And this can happen at many different levels. One of the most famous revivals of the last century was in the first part of the famous “Wells revival”. 100,000 people came to Christ in just 5 months. They had to start closing down pubs because nobody was going to them. They had to let the wardens off at prisons because there was nobody to put in jail because the whole nation was having revival. And do you know what they said about the Wells revival? They described it this way, “The churches are full of people and the people are full of God.”

The closest definition of revival in the New Testament I could find is in Acts 3:19 where Peter says, “Repent, then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” That’s what revival is, it’s a “Time of refreshing that comes from the Lord” and wakes His people back up, and rekindles the fire of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Revival is almost always followed by a great numbers of people coming to Christ.

But the amazing thing about revival is that it cannot be manufactured. Revival is Heaven sent and not man made. God cannot be forced to send revival by anything we do. It is a strange, sovereign, visitation from God, where he restores life into His weak church. He cannot be obligated to send revival but he longs to send it, he longs to get that sleeping giant back up on its feet. So that **sub-normal** becomes **abnormal** and **normal** comes back. You see, we cannot organise a move of the Spirit of God, but we can set ourselves ready to catch the wind when He blows.

Now may well ask **well, why do we need revival?** Let me tell you why we need revival. Revival is needed because we are prone to let our love for God go cold, and we let the fire get low. **There was a church in the highlands that used to have revival meetings every spring. And there was an old man who would come every spring; he would come back to God. He would be hot all through the summer, but he would cool of in the autumn and by wintertime, he would get cold and drop out. Oh but every spring he would get fired up again. So the first night of revival he was on the back seat. The next night he moved up 2 rows and the next night he moved up another 2 rows, and by the 4th or 5th night he's down the front shouting, "Fill me Lord, fill me." And a lady that knew him well said, "Careful Lord he leaks".**

And that's a problem we all face, we all tend to leak. God fills us up the Holy Spirit; He starts the fire in our hearts but after time that fire just doesn't burn as bright as it used to. Revival is needed because we often neglect to fuel the fire. God said to his church in Ephesus, in **Revelation 2:4, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love."**

The main reason revival is needed is because of our tendency to neglect our love relationship with God. Now you may not have noticed that you don't love God as much as you used to but God does. God does notice. You see revival is all about love. In **Jeremiah 2:2** God said to his people, **"I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me."**

I don't know of a bride that is deeply and passionately in love with her husband on night, when she gets into bed. And when she wakes up in the morning, she doesn't love him anymore. That's not what happens. What happens is, is that over a period of time that relationship gets taken for granted. Over time they go through the routine of relationships. And suddenly after time you realise that you just don't love each other like you did at first.

But let me tell you something about God. He is not going to over rule your choice to forsake him, he is not going stop you from falling out of love with him.

So, let me ask you, **do you need reviving this morning? What are the signs to look for, to see if you need revival? What are some signs that the fire is burning low?** I've recently suffered some of these symptoms, but you can just take them for what they are worth. These might be indicators that the fire is getting low, but you just ask yourself honestly if they apply to you.

One sign is that prayer is no longer a vital part of your life. It's just something you do occasionally.

Another sign is that you've grown content with your biblical understanding and you don't hunger for more. You've acquired about all the knowledge of the Bible you need.

Another sign is that when you study the Bible it's for information and not for transformation. You can sit in Bible class and talk about the Bible for hours but not be any different when it's through.

Another sign is that thoughts of eternal things are rare. The temporary dominates all of your thinking.

Another sure sign is that the gathering of God's people is not eagerly anticipated. You can hear someone say, "We are having a fellowship day at someone's house to be followed with a Bible study". And you sit there and you know in your heart that you have absolutely no intentions of going. You are not even thinking about going because it isn't even important to you to even think about going.

Another sign is that pointed spiritual discussion embarrasses you. It can be at work, down the street or even in the church foyer and someone gets talking a bit too much about Jesus and you just want to kind of change the subject.

Another sure sign is that certain sins can be indulged in. Without an uproar in your conscience.

Another sign is you can easily mouth hymns and scriptures. But nothing happens in your heart.

Another sign is that you can hear God's name being used wrongly and His standards being put down. But nothing ever happens in your heart.

Another sign is division and quarrels in the church. They don't bother you.

Another sign is that you are slow to respond when you hear of an opportunity to minister and serve in the church.

Another sign is that injustice and human misery never crosses your mind.

Another sure sign is that the lost-ness of people without Christ never crosses your mind. You never stop in the town centre or somewhere and thought, these people don't have Christ.

Another sign is that you hardly ever think about or sense God's presence in your life.

Another sign is that strong desire to just praise Him for His grace hardly ever fires up in your heart.

Now I don't know if that strikes a cord with you or not. But you know today if you have drifted away from that love relationship you used to have with God. You see revival is not just a change of your behaviour. Revival is about falling back in love with God, and the thing about God is that He is always willing to save the marriage.

You see revival is promised when we return to God. If you will turn back to God, he will light the fire again. God said to his people in **Malachi 3:7**, "Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord almighty."

God wants revival more than you do; he wants to see his church wake up and he wants to see you wake up. So, when does revival come? God and God alone will decide if He is going to send revival to His church. God and God alone will decide if He is going to send revival to **Great Britain**. But you don't have to wait for God to send revival to **Great Barr** for you to return to God.

You can return to God right now. You can return to God today. You don't have to go somewhere else to find God; He will meet you right where you are. But it must be on God's terms and let me show you what they are. This passage explains what must happen for God to send revival.

Turn your Bibles to **2 Chronicles 7**. Solomon has just dedicated the temple and in his dedication he has prayed a prayer and he prayed, "God when we sin and turn away from you, if we confess, will you come back to us, you might send the locusts; you might send another army, you might send a plague, you might withhold the rain because we sin and we turn from you, but if we come to this temple and pray and come back would you show up again?"

And here is God's answer, **verses 11-13** "When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people."

Now listen carefully to God's terms. **Verse 14** "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land."

God says He is looking for people to **humble themselves**. God says He is looking for people to **pray and seek his face**. And God says He is looking for people to **turn from their wicked ways**. That's what God is looking for when He returns to his people. **But what stops that from happening?**

If the first thing that God is looking for is for people to **humble themselves**. Then that means that God is looking for a sufficient spirit. There are among us too much of the spirit of the **Laodiceans**. God wrote to the church in **Laodicea** and said, in **Revelation 3:14-22** "You know, you're so self-sufficient, you say I am rich, I don't have a need for anything."

And God says, “What you don’t know is that you are wretched, poor, pitiful, blind and naked.” “Your problem is that you are so efficient and so ignorant of how empty you really are.”

God said in Isaiah 57:15, “I live in a high and holy place, but also with me who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” God can only fill those who are not filled with themselves.

The 2nd thing that hinders revival is a complacent heart. God says He will return when you pray and seek His face. Revival cannot be manufactured but it can be sought. It must be sought by people who do not want to be comfortable with sub-normal. God says in Jeremiah 29:12+13, “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Are we too complacent, have we been seeking Him with all our heart for God to come and visit his people? God says in Isaiah 55:6+7, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

So finally, the 3rd thing that hinders revival is a disobedient walk. God is waiting for people to turn from their wicked ways. Why do some people ask for God’s direction if they have no intention of changing their own? In every revival in the Bible you can see a profound sense of God’s holiness accompanied by a thorough confessing of sin. Getting serious about sin and holiness is necessary for revival.

Let me finish by saying that I believe, if God truly did come and visit His church, there would be such an amazing confessing of sin, because the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. And it is painful to come under genuine Holy Spirit conviction. But let me tell you what is more painful and miserable. That is to ignore everything I’ve said this morning and go back into your car. And go back to normal Oh half asleep Christianity and slowly drift further and further away from God.

I don’t know if God will send revival to Great Barr but there is no reason for you to wait for revival to come into your heart, and there is no reason for you to live drifting away from God. So right now, I am going to ask you, to ask God to light the fire, and rekindle those feelings back. We’re going to have a time of silent prayer so you pray your own prayer and do business with God right now.

Father we ask you to revive us again, may each soul be rekindled with fire from above, this is our prayer in Jesus name Amen. As the song says, “We praise thee O God, for the Son of Thy love, For Jesus who died and is now gone above.” “Hallelujah! Thine the glory, Hallelujah! Amen! Hallelujah! Thine the glory Revive us again”. If you humble yourself, seek his face, turn from your wicked ways, return to God. God will light the fire. The joy can be rekindled; the heart can burn again with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

If you’re not a Christian, then remember you don’t need revival, you need redemption. You need someone who bring can you back to life from your sins. You need to turn away from the ways of the world and turn to the way of God. You need to confess Jesus is Lord before witnesses. And you need to be baptised for the forgiveness of your sins, so that God can give you a piece of Himself to live within you.