

IT'S TIME FOR REVIVAL

Revelation 2:1-5

INTRO: Again, let me say how much we love and appreciate our mothers here at C1C. You are a treasure indeed to our family of faith. Thank you for all you do.

Today, I want us to shift our attention to the subject of revival. For the last few weeks we have been applying the Word of God to our current crisis. But I sense a very real need for us to look ahead at what God desires to do in and through His church, in the way of a spiritual awakening.

In times of trouble, God always makes Himself known. He cares about you and me. That should not be a surprise, given the fact, that He sent Jesus into the world to redeem it, but we often forget just how much God loves us. He's been very attentive to the needs of His children over these last weeks. And He cares about what you've been through. He has also cared FOR you, whether you are aware of that or not. Especially with us, here at Christ First Church, God has been extremely merciful and kind. But God is not content with just our SURVIVAL, He longs to send us REVIVAL.

REVIVAL, what does that mean? I want to answer that question today. Most of you know that before planting this church, I spent 16 years in the ministry of revival. I preached revival meetings and conferences all around this country, and in other countries as well. I love the topic of revival. I long to see revival that leads to a cultural awakening. You will sometimes hear those two words, revival and awakening, used interchangeably. But there is a distinction between them. Notice...

REVIVAL is the sole discretion and work of God among His children. It takes place when God chooses, if God chooses, in a church that has become weak, and is in danger of dying. Revival changes the atmosphere of worship within the church. Worship becomes real. There is often the manifestation of emotions, when people confess openly their sins, and cry out to God for forgiveness. Revival also brings with it great praise to God.

AWAKENING happens as an overflow of revival. Revival sometimes spills from the church into the community and has a cultural impact. When that happens the community notices a great change. Often, many during this time will accept Jesus as Savior and churches will grow exponentially.

Today, I'm talking about Revival. Now just to clarify, revival, as it is in the Bible, is not evangelism. Even though evangelism and a desire to see sinners saved almost always follows true Revival. Also, Revival is not emotionalism, although there may be great emotional manifestations connected to it. True Revival is not a series of meetings led by an evangelist, however, it has been true, that during extended times specifically set for the purpose of prayer, and preaching, that God has honored His church with His extraordinary presence, bringing with Him Revival to His children.

Richard Owen Roberts - "Revival is an extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit, producing extraordinary results."

S.E.Wirt - "Revival is the inrush of the Spirit into a body that threatens to become a corpse.

Let's look at this subject for just a moment and see what God will share with us...

I) CHARACTERISTICS OF REVIVAL: There are certain characteristics that have followed every great revival/awakening the world has ever known. They are...

1. A keen awareness of the awesome presence of a Holy God.
2. Conviction of sin, with people crying out for mercy.
3. Things of eternity, especially the facts of heaven and hell, becoming more real than the cares of life.
4. There is a deep and overflowing joy and delight in the Lord for those brought out of a conviction of sin to faith in Christ.
5. A real reverence for the Holy God and a fear of Him, that arrest people in their sin.
6. Great concern for the salvation of sinners, and the willingness to plead with people to give their hearts to Christ, and not go to Hell.
7. The lives of those awakened are radically altered, with worldly lifestyles renounced.
8. People become enthusiastic to pray and study the Bible.
9. Those that experience real Revival tend to remain faithful to God and His church, working for God the rest of their lives.
10. The church's priorities change, and become much more spiritual; the Bible is honored, read, obeyed and shared; prayer becomes the church's passion; and as the Holy Spirit is given His rightful place, holiness becomes paramount.

Revival is finding ourselves in oneness with God, led by His Spirit out of the world into close proximity with Him.

James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

II) THE COMMENTARY OF REVIVAL: Real revival is such a phenomenon that, thankfully, it has been well reported each time it has occurred. We have a vast record of the outpouring of God's Spirit. Let's read a few...

Charles Finney lived and preached during the time of the Second Great Awakening. He tells of a night that he was preaching in Sodom, New York, near Antwerp, "An awful solemnity seemed to settle upon the people. The congregation began to fall from their seats in every direction, and cry for mercy. If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them down as fast as they fell. I was obliged to stop preaching." (as the Spirit worked)

I) CHARACTERISTICS OF REVIVAL:

II) THE COMMENTARY OF REVIVAL: CONTINUED Duncan Campbell

Lewis, Scotland 1949 "...a crowded church, the service is over; the congregation, reluctant to disperse, stands outside the building in a silence that is tense. Suddenly, a cry is heard from inside the building; a young man, burdened for the souls of his fellow men, is pouring out his soul in intercession. He prays until he falls into a trance, and lies prostrate on the floor. But heaven has heard, and the congregation, moved by the power of God, comes back into the church, and a wave of conviction sweeps over the gathering, moving strong men to cry for mercy. This service continued until the small hours of the morning, but so great was the distress and so great was the hunger which gripped men and women that they refused to go home, even though others were assembling in another part of the parish. A number of those who now made their way to the church were moved by a power they had not experienced before. Others were deeply convicted of sin, and crying for mercy in their own homes before coming near the church. None who were present at that early morning visitation will forget the moving scenes, some weeping in sorrow and distress, others with joy and love filling their hearts, falling upon their knees, conscious only of the presence and power of God, who had come in revival blessing. Within a matter of days, the whole parish was in the grip of a spiritual awakening. Churches became crowded, with services continuing until three o'clock in the morning. Work was largely put aside as young and old were made to face eternal realities."

Lewis Awakening, Scotland 1950. In one parish, Duncan Campbell conducted four services nightly for five weeks. At the same time, desperate praying took place. People could not sleep. Houses were lit all night. People walked the streets in great conviction. Others knelt by their bedsides, crying for pardon. Within 48 hours, the drinking house was closed, nearly every young person between the ages of twelve and twenty had surrendered to Christ, and every young man between the ages of 18 and 35 could be found in the prayer meetings.

U.S.A. 1857 Third Great Awakening. "The influence of the awakening was felt everywhere in the nation. It first captured great cities, but it also spread through every town and village and country hamlet. It swamped schools and colleges. It affected all classes without respect to condition... The number of conversions reported soon reached the total of fifty thousand weekly."

The New York Times, March 20th 1858 "We have seen in a business quarter of the city, in the busiest hours, assemblies of merchants, clerks and working men, to the number of 5000, gathered day after day for simple and solemn worship. Similar assemblies we find in other portions of the city; a theatre is turned into a chapel, while churches of all sects are opened and crowded by day and night."

2 Chronicles 7:14 *"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 sin and heal their land."*

I) CHARACTERISTICS OF REVIVAL:

II) THE COMMENTARY OF REVIVAL:

III) THE CALL TO REVIVAL: The last great spiritual awakening in America was the Jesus movement, which took place about 40 years, plus, ago. A few years earlier, an April 8, 1966, Time magazine cover posed this question: "Is God Dead?" Five years later, a 1971 issue of Time described a spiritual awakening: It said, "Jesus is alive and well and living in the radiant spiritual fervor of a growing number of young Americans. ... If any one mark clearly identifies them, it is their total belief in an awesome, supernatural Jesus Christ, not just a marvelous man who lived 2,000 years ago, but a living God." What a difference a few years, and God, can make.

R.A. Torrey, a friend of Dwight L. Moody, was a great preacher and evangelist in his own right. He gave this prescription for revival during a February 1917 address at Moody Bible Institute: "Let a few of God's people, they don't need to be many, get thoroughly right with God themselves—the rest will count for nothing unless you start right there; then let them band themselves together to pray for a revival until God opens the heavens and comes down. Then let them put themselves at God's disposal to use them as he sees fit. That will bring a revival to any church, any community."

Let's review: (1) Get right with God, (2) get together with other Christians and pray for revival and (3) make yourself available to God in total surrender.

Revival and Spiritual Awakening, that outpouring of the Spirit, is up to God. We can't organize it, but we can agonize for it in prayer and call upon God to send it.

Let's read our text...

Revelation 2:4-5 Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, "*I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent*".

In these verses we find the three R's of getting right with God, the three R's of having a spiritual revival personally.

A) REMEMBER: vv 4-5a Were things different before? Was your faith stronger before? Remember that.

B) REPENT: v 5b Change your direction. Do a U-turn.

C) REPEAT: v 5c "...do the first works..."

CONCLUSION: Ultimately, Revival is God's to give. But if we seek His face in humble prayer, and submit to His will and commands, God will hear from Heaven, and heal us of our sin sickness and even do the miraculous in our lives. But the greatest joy we can know will be His precious presence in our lives.