

Let your hearts be much set on revivals of religion. Never forget that the churches have hitherto existed and prospered by revivals; and that if they are to exist and prosper in time to come, it must be by the same cause which has from the first been their glory and defence.--Joel Hawes

If any minister can be satisfied without conversions, he shall have no conversions.--C. H. Spurgeon

I do not believe that my desires for a revival were ever half so strong as they ought to be; nor do I see how a minister can help being in a "constant fever" when his Master is dishonoured and souls are destroyed in so many ways.--Edward Payson

An aged saint once came to the pastor at night and said: "We are about to have a revival." He was asked why he knew so. His answer was, "I went into the stable to take care of my cattle two hours ago, and there the Lord has kept me in prayer until just now. And I feel that we are going to be revived." It was the commencement of a revival.--H. C. Fish

It has been said that the history of revivals is the history of religion, and no one can study their history without being impressed with their mighty influence upon the destiny of the race. To look back over the progress of the Divine Kingdom upon earth is to review revival periods which have come like refreshing showers upon dry and thirsty ground, making the desert to blossom as the rose, and bringing new eras of spiritual life and activity just when the Church had fallen under the influence of the apathy of the times, and needed to be aroused to a new sense of her duty and responsibility. "From one point of view, and that not the least important," writes Principal Lindsay, in "The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries," "the history of the Church flows on from one time of revival to another, and whether we take the awakenings in the old Catholic, the mediaeval, or the modern Church, these have always been the work of men specially gifted with the power of seeing and declaring the secrets of the deepest Christian life, and the effect of their work has always been proportionate to the spiritual receptivity of the generation they have spoken to."

As God, from the beginning, has wrought prominently through revivals, there can be no denial of the fact that revivals are a part of the Divine plan. The Kingdom of our Lord has been advanced in large measure by special seasons of gracious and rapid accomplishment of the work of conversion, and it may be inferred, therefore, that the means through which God has worked in other times will be employed in our time to produce similar results. "The quiet conversion of one sinner after another, under the ordinary ministry of the Gospel," says one writer on the subject, "must always be regarded with feelings of satisfaction and gratitude by the ministers and disciples of Christ; but a periodical manifestation of the simultaneous conversion of thousands is also to be desired, because of its adaptation to afford a visible and impressive demonstration that God has made that same Jesus, Who was rejected and crucified, both Lord and Christ; and that, in virtue of His Divine Mediatorship, He has assumed the royal sceptre of universal supremacy, and "must reign till all His enemies be made His footstool." It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that, from time to time, He will repeat that which on the day of Pentecost formed the con-elusive and crowning evidence of His Messiahship and Sovereignty; and, by so doing, startle

the slumbering souls of careless worldlings, gain the attentive ear of the unconverted, and, in a remarkable way, break in upon those brilliant dreams of earthly glory, grandeur, wealth, power and happiness, which the rebellious and God-forgetting multitude so fondly cherish. Such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit forms at once a demonstrative proof of the completeness and acceptance of His once offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and a prophetic "earnest" of the certainty that He "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation," to judge the world in righteousness."

And that revivals are to be expected, proceeding, as they do, from the right use of the appropriate means, is a fact which needs not a little emphasis in these days, when the material is exalted at the expense of the spiritual, and when ethical standards are supposed to be supreme. That a revival is not a miracle was powerfully taught by Charles G. Finney. There might, he said, be a miracle among its antecedent causes, or there might not. The Apostles employed miracles simply as a means by which they arrested attention to their message, and established its Divine authority. "But the miracle was not the revival. The miracle was one thing; the revival that followed it was quite another thing. The revivals in the Apostles' days were connected with miracles, but they were not miracles." All revivals are dependent upon God, but in revivals, as in other things, He invites and requires the assistance of man, and the full result is obtained when there is co-operation between the Divine and the human. In other words, to employ a familiar phrase, God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone. God and man unite for the task, the response of the Divine being invariably in proportion to the desire and the effort of the human.

This co-operation, then, being necessary, what is the duty which we, as co-workers with God, require to undertake? First of all, and most important of all--the point which we desire particularly to emphasise--we must give ourselves to prayer. "Revivals," as Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman reminds us, "are born in prayer. When Wesley prayed England was revived; when Knox prayed, Scotland was refreshed; when the Sunday School teachers of Tennybrook prayed, 11,000 young people were added to the Church in a year. Whole nights of prayer have always been succeeded by whole days of soul-winning."

When D. L. Moody's Church in Chicago lay in ashes, he went over to England, in 1872, not to preach, but to listen to others preach while his new church was being built. One Sunday morning he was prevailed upon to preach in a London pulpit. But somehow the spiritual atmosphere was lacking. He confessed afterwards that he never had such a hard time preaching in his life. Everything was perfectly dead, and, as he vainly tried to preach, he said to himself, "What a fool I was to consent to preach! I came here to listen, and here I am preaching." Then the awful thought came to him that he had to preach again at night, and only the fact that he had given the promise to do so kept him faithful to the engagement. But when Mr. Moody entered the pulpit at night, and faced the crowded congregation, he was conscious of a new atmosphere. "The powers of an unseen world seemed to have fallen upon the audience." As he drew towards the close of his sermon he became emboldened to give out an invitation, and as he concluded he said, "If there is a man or woman here who will tonight accept Jesus Christ, please stand up." At once about 500 people rose to their feet. Thinking that there must be some mistake, he asked the people to be seated, and then, in order that there might be no possible misunderstanding, he repeated the invitation, couching it in even more definite and difficult terms.

Again the same number rose. Still thinking that something must be wrong, Mr. Moody, for the second time, asked the standing men and women to be seated, and then he invited all who really meant to accept Christ to pass into the vestry. Fully 500 people did as requested, and that was the beginning of a revival in that church and neighbourhood, which brought Mr. Moody back from Dublin, a few days later, that he might assist the wonderful work of God.

The sequel, however, must be given, or our purpose in relating the incident will be defeated. When Mr. Moody preached at the morning service there was a woman in the congregation who had an invalid sister. On her return home she told the invalid that the preacher had been a Mr. Moody from Chicago, and on hearing this she turned pale. "What," she said, "Mr. Moody from Chicago I read about him some time ago in an American paper, and I have been praying God to send him to London, and to our church. If I had known he was going to preach this morning I would have eaten no breakfast. I would have spent the whole time in prayer. Now, sister, go out of the room, lock the door, send me no dinner; no matter who comes, don't let them see me. I am going to spend the whole afternoon in prayer." And so while Mr. Moody stood in the pulpit that had been like an ice-chamber in the morning, the bedridden saint was holding him up before God, and God, who ever delights to answer prayer, poured out His Spirit in mighty power.

The God of revivals who answered the prayer of His child for Mr. Moody, is willing to hear and to answer the faithful, believing prayers of His people today. Wherever God's conditions are met there the revival is sure to fall. Professor Thos. Nicholson, of Cornell College, U.S.A., relates an experience on his first circuit that impresses anew the old lesson of the place of prayer in the work of God.

There had not been a revival on that circuit in years, and things were not spiritually hopeful. During more than four weeks the pastor had preached faithfully, visited from house to house, in stores, shops, and out-of-the-way places, and had done everything he could. The fifth Monday night saw many of the official members at lodges, but only a corporal's guard at the church.

From that meeting the pastor went home, cast down, but not in despair. He resolved to spend that night in prayer. "Locking the door, he took Bible and hymn book and began to inquire more diligently of the Lord, though the meetings had been the subject of hours of earnest prayer. Only God knows the anxiety and the faithful, prayerful study of that night. Near the dawn a great peace and a full assurance came that God would surely bless the plan which had been decided upon, and a text was chosen which he felt sure was of the Lord. Dropping upon the bed, the pastor slept about two hours, then rose, hastily breakfasted, and went nine miles to the far side of the circuit to visit some sick people. All day the assurance increased.

"Toward night a pouring rain set in, the roads were heavy and we reached home, wet, supperless, and a little late, only to find no fire in the church, the lights unlit, and no signs of service. The janitor had concluded that the rain would prevent the service. We changed the order, rang the bell, and prepared for war. Three young men formed the congregation, but in that full assurance the pastor delivered the message which had been prayed out on the preceding night, as earnestly and as fully as if the house had been crowded, then made a personal appeal to each young man in turn. Two yielded, and testified before the

meeting closed.

"The tired pastor went to a sweet rest, and next morning, rising a little later than usual, learned that one of the young men was going from store to store throughout the town telling of his wonderful deliverance, and exhorting the people to salvation. Night after night conversions occurred, until in two weeks we heard 144 people testify in forty-five minutes. All three points of that circuit saw a blaze of revival that winter, and family after family came into the church, unto the membership was more than trebled.

"Out of that meeting one convert is a successful pastor in the Michigan Conference, another is the wife of one of the choicest of our pastors, and a third was in the ministry for a number of years, and then went to another denomination, where he is faithful unto this day. Probably none of the members ever knew of the pastor's night of prayer, but he verily believes that God somehow does for the man who thus prays, what He does not do for the man who does not pray, and he is certain that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.'"

All the true revivals have been born in prayer. When God's people become so concerned about the state of religion that they lie on their faces day and night in earnest supplication, the blessing will be sure to fail.

It is the same all down the ages. Every revival of which we have any record has been bathed in prayer. Take, for example, the wonderful revival in Shotts (Scotland) in 1630. The fact that several of the then persecuted ministers would take a part in solemn convocation having become generally known, a vast concourse of godly persons assembled on this occasion from all quarters of the country, and several days were spent in social prayer, preparatory to the service. In the evening, instead of retiring to rest, the multitude divided themselves into little bands and spent the whole night in supplication and praise. The Monday was consecrated to thanksgiving, a practice not then common, and proved the great days of the feast. After much entreaty, John Livingston, chaplain to the Countess of Wigtown, a young man and not ordained, agreed to preach. He had spent the night in prayer and conference--but as the hour of assembling approached his heart quailed at the thought of addressing so many aged and experienced saints, and he actually fled from the duty he had undertaken. But just as the kirk of Shotts was vanishing from his view, those words, "Was I ever a barren wilderness or a land of darkness?" were borne in upon his mind with such force as compelled him to return to the work.

He took for his text Ezekiel 36:25, 26, and discoursed with great power for about two hours. Five hundred conversions were believed to have occurred under that one sermon, thus prefaced by prayer. "It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale, so that many of the most eminent Christians of that country could date their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case, from that day."

Of Richard Baxter it has been said that, "he stained his study walls with praying breath; and after becoming thus anointed with the unction of the Holy Ghost he sent a river of living water over Kidderminster." Whitfield once thus prayed, "O Lord, give me souls or take my soul." After much closet pleading, "he once went to the Devil's fair and took more than a thousand souls out of the paw of the lion in a single day."

Mr. Finney says: "I once knew a minister who had a revival fourteen winters in succession. I did not know how to account for it till I saw one of his members get up in a prayer meeting and make a confession. "Brethren," he said, "I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight for the descent of the Holy Ghost among us. And now, brethren (and he began to weep), I confess that I have neglected it for two or three weeks." The secret was out. That minister had a praying church."

And so we might go on multiplying illustration upon illustration to show the place of prayer in revival and to demonstrate that every mighty movement of the Spirit of God had its source in the prayer-chamber. The lesson of it all is this, that as workers together with God we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions which prevail around us today. Are we concerned about the coldness of the Church? Do we grieve over the lack of conversions? Does our soul go out to God in midnight cries for the outpouring of His Spirit?

If not, part of the blame lies at our door. If we do our part, God will do His. Around us is a world lost in sin, above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work.

And so the old cry comes to us with insistent voice, "Pray, brethren, pray."

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