

Biblical Revival

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. Neh. 1:6b

Nehemiah's confession was the beginning of a mighty work of God in Israel. It was part of a longer prayer of calling upon God, as recorded in [Nehemiah 1:4-11](#), and was the first act in the process of returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the city. What happened here is instructive for us.

Historically, Christian "Revival Meetings," were times when ones' commitment to God was to be revived or stirred up, and there was often the element of going deeper with God than ever before. Back then, we took scriptures like Rev. 2:4-5 seriously: *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*"

In the old days we were encouraged by promises like Isaiah 57:15b: *I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.* There was an expectation of hearts being turned back toward God.

Authentic Revival

"Revival" is a popular word among some Christians today, but it can have a very different meaning than it did only a few years ago. Certain elements of the church have somehow fallen into the mindset of simply claiming or declaring the fruit and blessing of revival without the perquisite of confession and repentance. They like the "rain your blessing down" songs better than "I Surrender All."

Authentic revival includes both the "if" and the "then" of scriptures like I Samuel 7:3: *If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.* And don't forget the two parts of [II Chronicles 7:14](#).

This goes deep. Authentic revival reaches to the core issues of our life. It addresses the objects of our love and affection. The things that make life good for us. And it calls us to an act of deliberately separating ourselves from anything that interferes with our love for God.

Exuberant "worship" is a big part of the exciting "revivals" of our day. But where are the confession and repentance – not for "their" sins, as in those of the abortionist or porn addict - but for "our" sins, as in our love for the world; our pride; our separatist spirit which so brutalizes the unity Jesus prayed for; and our indulgence in the fleshly pleasures that American opportunity has offered us? Without such repentance, our "worship" is only "resounding gongs or clanging cymbals."

Soak on [Joshua 24:14-24](#) and read how he set them up for v23, "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." It's loaded and it's instructive for us! Joshua didn't want word-games or superficiality, he wanted authenticity.

Where today is the blending of separation, confession, reading of the Word, and worship that we read of in [Neh. 9:2-3](#)? I challenge those who promote these modern-day “revivals” to stand in their church and read [Neh. 9](#), and [10:28-39](#), as written, and then to reword them into confession, repentance and declarations for American Christians today! Be sure to make lots of room at the altar, and have a good supply of tissues when you do that!

Our Particular Darkness

Light shines the brightest in darkness. If we are serious about revival, we'll ask God to transform us in the areas of our culture's deepest darkness, and for Christians in America that means two things.

Our first need is to deal with the potentially negative side of the “opportunity” of America. It has almost incapacitated the Church. Please read “Opportunity Is,” Part III in [“The Cosmic Battle.”](#) We are only playing games with “revival” until we deal with this feature of life in America. My sense is that because of the measure to which we have been captured by opportunity, only a few American Christians will truly turn to God until the opportunity I speak of is taken from us.

Second is the balance between our national and Christian identities and focus. Many Christians are concerned about and praying for our nation. But is “America” or “the Church” the issue? Do we truly understand that, “as goes the Church, so goes the nation”? Do we accept responsibility for our nation's troubles, which could only have come because of our failure to be salt and light? If we did, wouldn't the vitality of the Church be our primary concern; wouldn't our own repentance be seen as the door to God's blessing; and wouldn't the future of our nation become secondary to the purposes of God?

Conclusion

“Separation” is not only an Old Testament concept. Does God mean what He says in II Cor. 6:17; *Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.* Does this state a prerequisite to revival and to the fullness of God in our life – and to His blessing upon our nation? Consider all of [II Cor. 6:14 - 7 :1](#) and ask yourself what it says to us today. Better yet, ask God.

Biblical revival begins with our recognition of a need and accepting responsibility for it. It advances into an encounter with God which transforms us to the depth of our being. It produces new attitudes and affections and results in greater devotion to God and to His agenda.

Biblical revival's fruit includes healed relationships; harmonious families; a readiness to serve others; increased giving; new personal freedom and joy; and similar evidences of our surrender to the rule of Jesus at a deeper level. Nothing else so validates revival or convinces skeptics that it is authentic. Not even signs and wonders.

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