

The Prayer Chain

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Ye have not, because ye ask not

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THE NEED FOR REVIVAL!

by Hyman Appleman (1902-1983)

Some people think the need for a revival is a sign of decadence in a church. This is not always so. In the New Testament, in the Old Testament, in Christian history, revivals have been a part of God's plan for the advancement of the kingdom. This is natural. This is spiritual. This is psychological. It is impossible for a farmer to be always harvesting. The same is true of the Lord's work. We cannot have a perennial revival. It is impossible to have a perpetual harvest, physical or spiritual. We are so constituted that it is impossible for us to be always on the heights. We would go mad with the strain. We could not endure it. The flesh is still with us.

What many people call revivals are not revivals at all. You have heard of revivals with supposedly great singing, with supposedly great preaching—and with few if any noticeable results. Such meetings are not revivals. They may be extended seasons of singing and preaching, but that is all. A revival is a revival. You do not have to be told you were born. You know it. You were there, not consciously, but you were there. The same is true of a revival. You will know it. You will witness it when it comes. Mere preaching is not enough.

We want something that will make people know there is a God in heaven, that the Bible is His Word, that the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ. A real revival shakes, breaks, melts, molds, and causes the power of God to flow over the hearts of people. We want a revival. God is ready to give it. He wants us to have it. He will give us that kind of victory the minute we make room for it. How can we make room for God? That is our present and pressing problem. Let us therefore consider the purpose of a revival, the personnel of a revival and the price of a revival.

The first purpose of a revival is to expose sin in the hearts and lives of God's people and in the hearts and lives of the unsaved multitudes. You know without my telling you that when workmen build a giant skyscraper, the higher they go the deeper they must go. As the walls go higher, the basements and subbasements go deeper. The same is true of a revival. To build a structure for the glory of God and the salvation of the lost, you must dig, blast and carry away all those things which might hinder progress. I can say by experience—thank God, I can witness to you of personal knowledge—that nothing can convict of sin, condemn for sin, bring people faster and more definitely to a realization of their sins than a revival of religion.

There has never been so much gambling, drinking, adultery, corruption in high places and in low as there is now. Immorality, indecency, infidelity are rife. How we need to expose the rottenness, the evil, the corruption in the hearts of all the people! We go on day after day, month after month, year after year, in the even or uneven tenor of our ways. Sin becomes so common, so prevalent that we pay no attention to it. We have every sort of philosophical and psychological explanation. "Everybody does it." Our consciences are dead. Our minds are befogged by Satan. We have grown fat and sleek in our souls. We love to hear soft, warm, perfumed platitudes. We need a shock of terrific dynamite to blast us out of the rut into which the devil has thrown us. The only kind of explosion that can accomplish this is a Holy Ghost revival.

The second purpose of a revival is to enlist souls. First we must seek to enlist God's people. Why are our churches half empty? Why do not souls come to Christ? Because Christians are not sufficiently concerned about the work of the Lord. We have to enlist God's people. We must enlist those who are twice born, who are washed in the blood, who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who claim the Lord as their personal Saviour.

We must enlist also the unsaved, bring them out of darkness into light, lead them from hell to heaven, from sin to salvation, from iniquity to righteousness. We must win them for the Lord Jesus Christ. The majority of people who have been saved since the beginning of Christianity have been reached and enlisted during revival meetings. The majority of those who will be saved in this dispensation of grace will be reached for Christ during revivals.

The third purpose of a revival—the chief purpose, God help me to tell it, the noblest motive, the highest passion, the only purpose God can really bless, God will bless, God has blessed—is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. I am very much afraid that one, if not the chief, reason why God is not blessing our efforts more is that we are selfish, that we have no thought for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why many of us are not doing anything. Many of us are not in love with Jesus. We have no compassion for the lost. We work for each other, for our churches, for our pastors, but the least little thing throws us off balance.

If we are in love with Jesus, if we have a passion for Jesus, no matter what the difficulty, no matter what anybody else does, our passion for Christ will drive us to give, to pray, to do. We need to exalt Christ. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Only by enthroning Christ can we claim the promises of God, the fullness of His Holy Spirit, the answers to our prayers.

Consider also the personnel of a revival. Most important, of course, are the Three Persons of the Trinity: God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There are many things we can do in our own strength. We can visit, advertise, invite, attend services, but, my friends; we are utterly unable to bring about a revival. We need God. We need Christ. We need the Holy Spirit, to convict, to constrain, to convert, to consecrate, to attract. Thank God, I can tell you, dogmatically, positively, assuredly, beyond doubt or peradventure, that the Holy Spirit is eager, longing, and able to bless us if we will but give Him the opportunity.

A revival is also composed of church members: Christians—you and I. Give me three hundred people dedicated to God, surrendered to Christ, submitted to the Holy Spirit, who will say, "You can count on me"—give me even two hundred who will go the limit for Jesus, for the Gospel, in the Holy Spirit, for the souls of men—and we will take a city for the Lord Jesus Christ. I have been in campaigns when the people were hot, when the people were cold, when the church was big, when the church was little; I have conducted meetings in the North, East, South, West, from one end of the country to the other. There is, I believe, only one unknown equation in a revival, only one thing that can stop us from having a victory, only one thing that will keep God from giving us a revival. Would you like to know what it is? I will tell you. Look in the mirror. There between the frames of the mirror you will see the only thing that can stop us from having a spiritual upheaval. God is ready, willing, and able to bless us.

Christ will deny us no good thing. The Spirit's power has never abated.

A revival is also composed of unsaved souls, backsliders, those out of Christ for any reason. If we pray for them, if we go after them, they will come by the scores, by the hundreds. It has been so everywhere. But they will not come unless we go after them. I have heard people say that in olden times sinners came to church. That is not true. It is not in the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ went after them. He sent His disciples after them. It is so in Christian history. It has always been difficult to reach sinners. They have never come of their own free will. The devil had them, has them, will have them, until we cut them loose by the power of the Spirit from his hold. I believe, I know, with all my soul I am certain, that the unsaved will come to the place of meeting, will come to Christ if and when you and I in compassion, consecration, anxiety, intercession, with yearning, longing, anxious hearts, even weeping eyes, go after them and press the claims of the Lord upon them.

We have considered the purpose and the personnel of a revival. Now let us think about the price of a revival. What is the price of a revival? What did Moses have to pay? What did Samuel have to pay? What did Elijah have to pay? Isaiah? Hezekiah? What price did Joshua have to pay? What price did Peter and Paul and Luther and Wesley and Whitefield and Spurgeon and Moody and Billy Sunday have to pay? Each of us has to pay the same price—exactly the same price. There is no difference. There never will be any difference. God has never changed His terms. Power is costly. The most expensive power in all the world is the power of Pentecost. The price is high—but we can pay it. Here is how.

We must have a personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will study the biographies of these men I mentioned, you will find that they were characterized by one outstanding attitude. They were in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I must fall in love with Jesus. Passion and devotion to Christ will take care of the sin problem in our lives. If we love Jesus we will hate the devil, hate the world, and hate sin. If we really love Jesus, all that might put a shadow between Him and us will be a horrible detestation to us. I wish I could go to each of you, one by one, and ask you, “Do you love Jesus?” I wish I could press the question upon you until your hearts responded with the answer, “Yes, I love Jesus more than I love life itself.”

- We must visit for Jesus' sake.
- We must invite for Jesus' sake.
- We must sacrifice for Jesus' sake.
- We must attend services for Jesus' sake.
- We must give our money for Jesus' sake.
- We must preach for Jesus' sake.
- We must win souls for Jesus' sake.

We must have a personal devotion to Jesus—not in word only, but with all our hearts, with all our souls. There must be a passionate devotion that will wake us in the night, that will be with us in the day, that will beset us on every hand, at home and abroad. “Jesus, Jesus, blessed Jesus!”—that must be the cry of our hearts.

The second price of a revival is a purposeful compassion for the souls of men. I say “purposeful” because I mean it. There is compassion and compassion.

B. B. Crimm held a revival in Lawton, Oklahoma when I was a soldier at Fort Sill. He could tell fascinating stories about dogs. I went every night I was not on duty. Church members sobbed and wept over his dog tales, but I knew that most of them never prayed, never sought the lost. I do not know what you call that in English, but the Jewish name for it is hypocrisy. It is lying. By compassion I do not mean the compassion which causes one to weep when a moving story is told. I mean the compassion that burns high and clear when there is no revival that flames on Monday even more than on Sunday, and is higher on Tuesday than on Monday. I mean the kind of compassion that gives us no rest nor peace until we give the best of our thought, the best of our talents, the best of our time, the best of our efforts to seeking out the lost for the Saviour.

- We need a purposeful compassion that will wake us in the morning crying, “O Lord, for Jesus' sake, save our city.”
- We need a compassion that will drive us to our knees and make us say when we go to bed at night, “O Lord, for Christ's sake, save our people.”
- We need a compassion that will seek out and make opportunities to witness for Christ day and night. That is purposeful compassion.

The third price that we must pay for this revival that God wants, that you, Christian reader, want, that I want, is persistent intercession. We must have not only personal devotion to Christ, purposeful compassion for the souls of men, but persistent intercession.

- We must pray without ceasing.
- We must pray as we have never prayed before in all our lives.
- We must pray for ourselves.

Pray for our fellow church members, pray for the backslidden, the indifferent, the unconcerned, the unconsecrated, pray for the pastors, pray for the evangelists, pray for the choirs and pianists. We must literally saturate our towns with prayers. If I were to ask you the question “Do you believe God answers prayer?” you would answer immediately, “I surely do.” Do you? Do you believe God answers prayer? How do you know? Has someone told you? Do you know it “secondhand”? Have you ever tested the truth of the statement? Has God ever answered prayer for you in a mighty, miraculous way?

If you believe the Bible is the Word of God, if you believe the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ, if you believe there is a God in heaven, if you believe God can give us a revival, if you want to see a torrential visitation of God's Spirit, I challenge you, I appeal to you, I implore you, I beseech you, from this moment on, without rest or cessation, let us—all of us, each of us—lift our cities to God's throne of grace. Let us keep them there in the white heat of our prayers until God answers by fire and sends us a revival from above.

This is God's plan for a revival. Comply with it and the heavens will flood the earth with showers of blessings. Let us plead God's grace until the Holy Spirit creates within our hearts a burning passion for Christ, a purposeful compassion for souls, a ceaseless intercession for power and victory.

LET'S DO IT ! PRAY FOR AMERICA TO RETURN TO GOD!