

A Promise of Revival

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon emphasizes the promise of revival, urging believers to be earnest coworkers with God and to make proper use of the favor of God to bring down the rain of revival.

Scripture: Amos 9:13, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 9:37

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the promise of spiritual revival as foretold in Amos 9:13, illustrating that the church will experience an unprecedented ingathering of souls, where the harvest will be so abundant that sowing will commence even before the previous harvest is fully gathered. He highlights the need for active engagement in ministry, urging believers to labor fervently for the lost, as revival will bring conversions from unexpected places and among unlikely individuals. Spurgeon reassures that God's power is absolute and can transform even the hardest of hearts, encouraging the church to remain diligent in their efforts regardless of immediate results. He calls for a renewed commitment to prayer and action, asserting that the church must not become complacent but should actively seek to fulfill its mission in times of spiritual awakening.

Transcript

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt" (Amos 9:13, KJV).

Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Now the land is barren, and its valleys are parched. Yet the promise stands true that one day Palestine will be as rich and fruitful as ever it was. However, while this promise will be carried out, this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise. Therefore, I will endeavor to explain my text as a promise of revival, as a lesson of doctrine, and as a stimulus for Christian exertion.

A Great Promise of Spiritual Revival

According to the metaphor used, there is a promise of a surprising ingathering. The harvest is to be so great that, before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the plowman shall begin to plow for the next crop. Because of the abundant fertility, one season shall run into another. For the church, this means we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls.

We read of such marvelous revivals a hundred years ago, but we have since seen a season of lethargy and soul-poverty among the saints. Now I believe God is about to send times of surprising fertility to His church. In these modern times, if one sinner is converted, we rejoice with surprise. However, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds. Where the Word of God has been powerful to hundreds, it shall be blessed to thousands, and even nations shall be converted to Christ.

There is no reason why we should not see all that God has given to us multiplied a hundredfold. There is sufficient life in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered. God the Holy Ghost is not limited in His power. I believe that our harvest will be so heavy that while we are taking in the harvest, it will be time to sow again. Prayer meetings will be succeeded by the inquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved, and before they are finished, it will be time again to preach and again to pray.

We never can be contented with going on as the churches have been for many years. Even if God sends revival, it will not exonerate us from the awful guilt of having been idle. Let all be saved who live now, but what about those who have been damned while we have been sleeping? Who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our religious fashion, content to go along the path of propriety, and walk around the path of dull routine, but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls? Revival has not come before it was much needed.

The promise also seems to convey the idea of amazing rapidity in the work. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature, but it is quite consistent with grace. Indeed, there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work. However, here is a promise that one of the signs of revival will be the marvelous growth in grace of those who are converted.

There is no need for the pulse of the church to be forever slow. The Lord can quicken her heart, so that her pulse will throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself. As fire from heaven, so will the Spirit rush from the skies; and as the sacrifice that instantly blazed to heaven, so will the church burn with holy and glorious zeal.

Additionally, notice the heightened activity that is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor, but here we find laborers endowed with extraordinary energy. One sign of a true revival, and indeed an essential part of it, is the increased activity of God's laborers.

Many ministers think that preaching twice on Sundays is the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. However, it is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, not preaching to earnest people. Indeed, ministers may sometimes lack rest during times of revival, but it will never hurt them. In fact, what pastor would not like to die of such a disease-- the disease of being so greatly blessed!

We have not yet, however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, "the mountains shall drop sweet wine." Mountains are not a likely place for wine. Whoever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks or gushing out from the hills? By this we are to understand that in times of revival, conversions will take place in unusual places.

Brethren, I have seen this week what I never saw before. Although I am accustomed to preaching to crowded congregations, this week I have seen the people of Dublin, Ireland, without exception, regardless of class, crowd in to hear the gospel. I have seen Roman Catholics listening to the Word with as much attention as Protestants. I have seen men who never heard the gospel before, whose tastes and habits

were not likely to be puritanic, nevertheless sitting to listen. I have never before seen such intense eagerness of people to listen to the gospel.

A work of God is even occurring among the sailors, the group of men most would suppose to be the least likely to be reached by the gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back recently, I spent the most pleasant hours that I have ever spent. On the first vessel that I entered, I found my hands very heartily shaken by the sailors. They were calling me "brother." When I asked, "What makes you so kind?" one said, "Because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus."

I made further inquiry and found that, out of the whole crew, only three were unconverted men. Though most of them had been without God and without Christ, by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God, they had all been converted. I talked to many of these men, and I have never yet met more spiritual, heavenly minded men. They have a prayer meeting every morning before the boat starts, and another prayer meeting after she comes to port. On Sundays a minister comes on board and preaches the gospel. The cabins are crowded, and services are held on deck when they can be.

My heart was lifted up with joy to think of a ship being made a floating church. When I came back by another ship, I did not expect to have the same experience, but it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. "Ah! Sir," said the sailors, "we have the best proof that there is a God here, for we have seen this crew marvelously brought to a knowledge of the truth, and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord."

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths are now loudest with their songs. Those who were the most daring children of Satan have become the most earnest advocates of the truth. Such unlikely conversions are the mark of true revival.

Further, from the text we learn that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversions. Notice that the text does not only say, "the mountains shall drop wine" but that they "shall drop sweet wine." When debauched persons are converted to God, we say, "Well, it is a wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first-class Christians." However, the remarkable reality is that these are the best Christians alive. The wine that God brings from the hills is sweet wine.

The most extraordinary ministers of any time have been the most extraordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan if it had not been for his profanity. We might never have heard of a John Newton if it had not been for his wickedness on shipboard. These men would not have known the depths of Satan nor the power of divine grace if they had not been allowed wildly to stray before being wondrously brought back to Christ. In true revival you will always find that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons.

A Great Doctrinal Lesson of Spiritual Revival

From the text, we also learn that God is the absolute monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here "If men are willing . . .", but He gives an absolute promise of blessing. He basically says, "I have the key of men's hearts. I am master of the soil--however hard and rocky it may be, I can break it. I can make it fruitful."

When God promises to bless His church and to save sinners, He does not add, "If the sinners are willing to be saved." Man has a free will, and God does not violate it, but free will is sweetly bound with fetters of

divine love until it becomes more free than it ever was before. The rushing mighty wind of divine influence sweeps away every obstacle. The unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace, and sinners who would not yield are made to yield by God.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. The power of preaching is bought--it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself. Men are hardened and indifferent, but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness. If that power be put forth, what can stand against it?

Divine omnipotence is the doctrine of revival. We may not see it in ordinary days by reason of the coldness of our hearts, but we must see it when extraordinary works of grace are wrought. We are all blind and stupid in a measure, and we must see some of these extraordinary motions of divine influence before we will fully understand God's power. Learn then, O church of God, this great lesson of the nothingness of man and the eternal all of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on Him. Look for your success to His power, and while you make your efforts, trust not in them but in the Lord Jehovah.

A Stimulus for Further Exertion

The duty of the church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister's duty to preach the gospel in adverse times as in fruitful seasons. We are not to think that if God withholds the dew, we are to withhold the plow. We are not to imagine that if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is to act, not to worry about results.

The church must do her duty even though that duty should bring her no present reward. If we sow the seed, and if the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do. The duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed. We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it does not come, we must not cease from duty.

Remember that even when this revival comes, instruments will still be needed. The plowman is needed even after the harvest, and the treader of grapes is needed, however plentiful the vintage. The greater the success, the more need of instruments. Brothers and sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be needed. They shall say, "Tell us what we must do to be saved." They shall come to your house and ask for your prayers. They shall demand your instructions. The glory that God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

I sometimes fear that the wind will blow on us, and we will have our sails down. Up with the canvas now. Let every effort be used. Let us be earnest coworkers with Him. It is yours today to bring down the rain even though it is God's to send the clouds. Now, you Elijahs, pray it down! Go to your knees, believers. You can bring it down, only you. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

Will you lose the opportunity, Christians? Will you lose for lack of effort? If so, the church is a completely cowardly church and is unworthy of its time. When there are such times as these, if every man does not go to work, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of soul that can possibly fall upon us. I believe that the church has often been plagued and vexed by her God because when God has favored her, she has not made proper use of the favor. Let us spend this week in special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can and plead at the throne.

Do it, O Thou Crucified One, for Thy mercy's sake! Send forth Thine Holy Spirit now and grant, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to Thy love and to Thy grace.

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