

Letters on Revival--No. 14.

by Charles Finney

The decline in revivals is primarily due to the lack of revival spirit in the ministry, and the remedy is for ministers to come into a deeply spiritual and revived state of mind.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Ezekiel 34:2-5, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:17-18, Romans 12:11, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 5:16, 1 Peter 5:2-3

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the alarming decline of revival spirit among ministers, emphasizing that without a passionate commitment to revival from the ministry, the church cannot expect to experience spiritual renewal. He argues that ministers must lead by example, embodying a deep spiritual awakening to inspire their congregations. Finney believes that the superficiality in the hearts of ministers is a significant barrier to revival, and that a truly revived ministry will naturally lead to a revitalized church. He calls for ministers to confess their own shortcomings and to actively engage in promoting revivals, asserting that the health of the church is directly linked to the spiritual state of its leaders.

Transcript

TO ALL THE FRIENDS AND ESPECIALLY ALL THE MINISTERS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

Dear Brethren:

I hope my brethren will bear with me, while I further insist on the general delinquency of ministers, especially of late, in regard to revivals.

There has been so manifest and so lamentable a falling off from a revival spirit among the ministers of Christ as to become a matter of general, if not universal observation. Nothing is more common than the remark, that ministers, as a general fact, have lost the spirit of revivals, have become very zealous in ecclesiastical matters, censorious, afraid of revivals, of revival men and measures, and that they do little or nothing directly for the promotion of revivals of religion. Now I do not think that this is a universal fact, but as a general remark it is too obvious to need proof, and I think must be conceded by all.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, unless there is a spirit of revival in the ministry, it is in vain to expect it in the church. The proper place for the shepherd, is before or in advance of the sheep. The sheep will follow him withersoever he goes, but if he attempt to drive them before him, he will scatter them in every direction. If

the shepherd fall away from a revival spirit, the sheep will naturally decline also. If he advance in the work of the Lord, they will almost as a thing of course follow him.

The greatest of all difficulties in the way of the promotion of revivals has been, a superficial work of grace in the hearts of ministers themselves. If this is not true I am greatly mistaken.

My brethren, believe me, I speak not this censoriously, or in the spirit of fault-finding; it is the full and deliberate conviction of my own mind--an opinion formed not hastily, but from protracted observation, and from an intimate acquaintance with great numbers of the ministers of Christ of different denominations.

While the ministers of Christ are filled with the Spirit of God, the Church, as a general thing, will not backslide. I say as a general thing; there may in some instances be influences brought to bear on the churches, that will divert them from the promotion of holiness in their own hearts and the conversion of the impenitent, in spite of all that the most wakeful and vigilant ministry can do. Great political excitements, great commercial embarrassments, great depressions or elevations in the business and pecuniary state of the Church or the world, may, in a great measure, divert the mass of professors of religion for a time from deep spirituality, although the ministers may be awake. And yet it is my deliberate opinion that a thoroughly wakeful, prayerful, energetic ministry by their influence would generally if not universally prevent all the calamities and disturbances by so deeply engaging the Church and the community in general on religious subjects, that war, great political excitements, great commercial excitements, speculations or embarrassments would not be likely to occur. However this may be, I cannot believe it to be otherwise than a general truth, that if the ministry are baptized with the Holy Spirit, and deeply anointed with the revival influence, so the Church will be--"Like priest, like people."

And now brethren, it does seem to me that when we ourselves are thoroughly in a revival spirit, our call to the churches to arise and engage in the general promotion of revivals, will be immediately responded to on the part of the Church. Let the ministry only come out in the true spirit of revivals, and I doubt whether any minister in the land can preach for three sabbaths to his church in the Spirit, without finding the spirit of revival waking up in the Church. Let this experiment once be tried; let us wake up to the importance of this subject, confess and forsake our own sins, and cry aloud to the Church, and spare not; let us lift up our voice like a trumpet, and rally the hosts of God's elect; and if they are deaf to the call, then let us inquire most earnestly what is next to be done. But until we are anointed to the work, do not let us tempt the Lord or abuse the Church, by looking out of ourselves and away from ourselves for the cause of decline in revivals.

Do not misunderstand me. I know that the Church is in a state of decline, and needs greatly to be quickened and aroused; but I am confident that the prime cause of this decline in the Church is to be found in the fact that the ministers have been diverted from their appropriate work. And I am also confident that the only remedy for this state of things is first and foremost of all, for ministers to come into a deeply spiritual and revived state of mind. And as soon as this comes to pass, there will be a general revival. And I am not looking for it to come unless ministers do thoroughly wake up to their own state, and the state of the Church.

Your Brother,

C.G. FINNEY

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