

Letters on Revivals--No. 25.

by Charles Finney

The church cannot exist and prosper without revivals of religion, and without them, it will become nominal and dead.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 5:14-16, Acts 3:19, Romans 12:11, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, James 4:8, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 3:1-3

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Revival"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the critical necessity of revivals for the survival and growth of true religion, arguing that churches cannot thrive without them. He warns against the dangerous belief that churches can prosper without revival efforts, highlighting the decline of spiritual vitality and the rise of nominalism in the absence of such movements. Finney asserts that revivals are essential not only for the church's health but also for the stability of society and governance. He calls on ministers and Christians to actively promote and support revival efforts, as they are vital for the church's mission and the world's hope. The sermon serves as a passionate plea for renewed commitment to the revival of true piety and spiritual fervor.

Transcript

THE FOLLY OF ATTEMPTING TO SUSTAIN TRUE RELIGION WITHOUT REVIVALS

To All The Friends And Especially All The Ministers Of Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Dear Brethren:

Another subject on which I wish to address my brethren, is a tendency which I perceive to exist in the public mind towards a conclusion which to me appears little short of downright infatuation, namely, that the churches can exist and prosper as well without revivals of religion as with them, or even better. Now this is certainly the most preposterous conclusion conceivable; and yet I really know not what else to infer from the general apathy upon the subject of revivals, and especially from the quite extensive hostility against them which is apparent in many sections of the church. Many of the leading men in the church seem about ready to adopt, or at least are earnestly favoring the policy of making no efforts to promote revivals--of discountenancing the labors of Evangelists, and all those extra means and efforts that have been used from time immemorial, whenever revivals have occurred.

Now that the Christian church cannot exist without extensive revivals of religion can be clearly demonstrated; unless the Lord introduces a different mode of diffusing the gospel, from any that He ever has adopted. Nay, indeed, the very supposition is absurd and self-contradictory. What! can it be conceived that the church can succeed in converting the world without revivals? Must not the church herself be revived? Must not religion be revived among the impenitent? If not, will not true piety well nigh cease from the world? The nominal church might exist, I grant, without revivals. They might introduce another half-way covenant system, or receive hosts of ungodly men to the church without their giving any evidence of regeneration; and thus a nominal church might be kept up; but that true piety cannot exist and spread without a great and general revival of religion, and without revivals succeeding declensions as often as declensions in any portions of the church shall occur, is to my mind one of the plainest truths in the world.

I am sorry that I have not the means by me of stating definitely the real results of those experiments that have been tried of promoting religion without revivals; but who does not know that in such cases, the churches have either become extinct, or have become merely nominal churches, having only a name to live while really dead, They have resorted to a half-way covenant, and various other means of filling up the church from the world, without their being truly converted to God. How else could even the nominal church exist? Christians continue to die, and die in fact much faster than sinners will be converted to fill their places without revivals. I believe it to have been a universal fact that church members have died faster than sinners have been converted to fill their places where no means have been used to promote revivals, and where consequently they have not existed. But it is the consummation of folly for the church to expect to keep pace at all with the rapid increase of the earth's population, and especially with the increase of population in this country, without very extensive, continuous and pure revivals. Revivals alone can secure the stability and perpetuity of our religions and civil institutions. I do not believe that this government could exist in its present form, fifty years without revivals; nor is it at all likely to me that it would exist half that time. It was remarkable to see to what an extent the revivals in this country from 1820 to 1840 influenced the public mind, developed reforms, and brought up as from the depths of oblivion the great truths and principles that are the sheet-anchor of every government of opinion under heaven. The fact is, those revivals affected all classes of the community. They affected the whole country and have extended their influence throughout all Christendom. This I have very good reason to know, not only from my acquaintance with this country, but from abundant intelligence received from Europe.

These revivals were beginning and indeed more than beginning to influence the legislation of all Christendom. But let them be done away--let the generation that has witnessed their power go to their graves without the recurrence of those scenes, and what will be the result? A government of mere opinion like ours, in the hands of a people who fear not God, with a temporizing ministry, a licentious press, and all the agencies that are at work to carry headlong all the religious institutions of the land--where are we in twenty or in fifty years without revivals of religion? Witness the efforts of the papacy--the tendency of Puseyism--the efforts of Universalists and errorists of every description--the running to and fro of lecturers on every subject--the spread of infidel books and tracts, and all the enginery of hell to overthrow all order and law and every thing that is lovely and of good report; and then say, my brethren, can the church exist and prosper without revivals of religion?

But to come nearer home;--can we or the present church become any thing less than an abomination and a curse to the world without revivals? Whither is she tending already? Witness the gossip, the worldliness, the pride, the ambition, the every thing that is hateful, growing up and prevailing in churches, just in proportion as they are destitute of the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. Contemplate the cowardice,

the trimming policy, the ecclesiastical ambition of the ministry without revivals of religion--mark how great and overcoming are their temptations to please men and even ungodly church members, when there are no copious outpourings of the Spirit to arouse the multitude and strengthen the hands of the servants of God.

O, it is impossible that desolation should not reign--that the ministry should not cower down before an ungodly public sentiment--that Popery should not prevail, the Sabbath be desecrated--the church ruined and the world undone, without great revivals of religion.

And what can this policy mean, that would hush every thing down and frown on all special efforts to promote revivals? It is certainly infatuation, and if not arrested, it must end in ruin.

I beseech my brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep as far as possible from the appearance or the thought of discountenancing or looking coldly on revival efforts. They are our life. They are the salvation of the church--they are the hope of the world. Instead of allowing them to cease, every minister and Christian ought to aim at increasing them a hundred fold. Every one of us ought to set his heart upon rendering them pure, deep, universal, and as frequent as the necessities of the church and the world demand. Let no man stop short of aiming at this as he values his own soul, and the souls of his fellow-men.

Your brother,

C.G. FINNEY

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