

Address on Revival

by Duncan Campbell

Duncan Campbell's sermon calls for a divine revival to awaken the church and transform communities through the power of God.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 64:1, Matthew 5:14-16, Acts 1:8, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Galatians 1:15, James 4:8, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Duncan Campbell emphasizes the urgent need for revival among God's people, expressing a deep hunger for a fresh manifestation of God amidst the challenges of humanism and materialism. He argues that true revival originates from God and is essential for genuine transformation, as mere human efforts in evangelism have often left communities untouched. Campbell highlights the responsibility of believers to seek a vital relationship with God, asserting that revival is not merely about filling churches but about filling hearts with God's presence. He shares personal testimony of how revival has profoundly impacted his life and ministry, urging the church to be a beacon of light in a dark world. Ultimately, he calls for a collective commitment to seek God's power and presence for true revival to occur.

Transcript

"Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Psalm 85.6).

These words of the Psalmist express the heart-cry of many of God's children today. There is a growing conviction everywhere, and especially among thoughtful people, that unless revival comes, other forces will take the field, that will sink us still deeper into the mire of humanism and materialism.

With that conviction there is also a deepening hunger for a fresh manifestation of God. Indeed, so intense is the longing and so heavy the burden, that the words of the prophet Isaiah are frequently on the lips of God's children: "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down."

We have seen man's best endeavors in the field of evangelism leaving the communities untouched; true, we may have seen crowded churches, and many professions, but then all that is possible on the plane of human activity, as has been witnessed over and over again. It has been said that "the Kingdom of God is not going to be advanced by our churches becoming filled with men, but by men in our churches becoming filled with God." Today, we have a Christianity made easy as an accommodation to an age that is unwilling to face the implication of Calvary, and the gospel of 'simply believism' has produced a harvest of

professions which have done untold harm to the cause of Christ.

We use all the modern means and facilities for the propagation of the gospel -- our technique in Christian work and witness has been developed to a fine art, and during recent years 'evangelize' has been heard from Congress, Convocation and Assembly; but as we look back over much activity in church work and witness, what do we see? Not flags of victory that tell of communities won for Christ; not congregations throbbing with spiritual life, and the desert made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose." No, not flags, but gravestones -- like the stones of our Scottish Culloden, that tell their pitiful tale of frustration and defeat. So we are today faced with the need -- pressing, urgent and awful -- for God to manifest His power: the need of a God-sent Holy Ghost revival.

Many years ago Dr. Henry Drummond wrote of a "natural law in a spiritual world." It seems to me that our great need today is to rediscover a spiritual law in a natural world. The ills that shake the very foundation of our civilization have their roots in the spiritual and not in the material. Man has gone wrong at the center of things and he must get right there. Was it not Gladstone who said: "My only hope for our country is in bringing the human mind into contact with divine revelation"? Now let us be perfectly clear that only God can do that. Is this not the conviction that finds expression in the words of the Psalmist? If there was to be a revival, God must do the reviving, and it was God's people who were to be revived. I read in a little book recently, "We do not have revivals to get men saved -- men get saved because we have revival."

Let us now consider three aspects of revival: its origin, its agency, its outcome.

THE ORIGIN OF REVIVAL. -- "Wilt thou not...?" We do well to remember that in the whole field of Christian experience, the first step is with God: thought, feeling, and endeavor must find their basis and inspiration in the sovereign mercy of God. To me, one of the most disturbing features of present-day evangelism is the over-emphasis on what man can do, and I believe this to be the reason why we so often fail to get men and women to make the contact with Christ that is vital. How few there are today who, in the supreme moment of conversion or decision, become conscious within themselves of a new and overpowering reality -- the knowledge of God having done a saving work within them. The Apostle Paul puts it in clear light in his letter to the Galatians, when he writes: "it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." The fact of ultimate reality, surely, is this, that salvation is of God. He is the God of revival, and we must look to Him and to Him alone.

I have already referred to the cry of the prophet Isaiah -- his convictions were that the mountains would flow, and nations would tremble only when God came down. In other words, he is just saying that nothing will happen unless there is a mighty demonstration of God. It is my own deep conviction that the average man is not going to be impressed by our publicity, our posters or our programs, but let there be a demonstration of the supernatural in the realm of religion, and at once man is arrested. I have seen this happen over and over again during the recent movement in the Western Isles. Suddenly an awareness of God would take hold of a community, and, under the pressure of this divine presence, men and women would fall prostrate on the ground, while their cry of distress was made the means in God's hand, to awaken the indifferent who had sat unmoved for years under the preaching of the gospel.

THE AGENCY OF REVIVAL. -- "Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people...?" God is the God of revival. He is sovereign in the affairs of men. But we must not believe in any conception of God's sovereignty that nullifies man's responsibility. We are the human agents through whom revival is possible. To say, as so many do, "We can do nothing," may be a very accommodating doctrine to "them that are at

ease in Zion," but it will not stand in the light of Divine revelation. Samuel Chadwick, in his book *Humanity and God*, writes: "The operation of Divine sovereignty and the freedom of human will are not irreconcilable to the wisdom of God. Our responsibility is not in the explanation of mystery, but in "obedience to obligation and privilege."

I wonder if we are really alive to our responsibility and privilege. I have read that Robert Murray McCheyne had the picture of the setting sun painted on the dial of his watch, and underneath written, "The night cometh". Every time he looked at his watch, he was reminded of his responsibility as a minister of the gospel, and of the charge entrusted to him. If we study the life of the early disciples, we see how their whole being was animated and actuated by one great purpose -- to be at their best for God. They carried the seriousness into their witness that the man of the world carried into his business, or the explorer into his journeys and toils: they lived for God, and for souls.

I am disturbed by the attitude of the Church in general toward aggressive evangelism or revival. By evangelism I do not mean just an effort to get people back into the Church; this effort, while commendable, does not get us very far. What I mean is something much more: it is the getting of men and women into vital, saving and covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, and so supernaturally altered that holiness will characterize their whole being: body, soul and spirit. It seems to me that the time has surely come when we must, with open mind and true heart, face ourselves with unqualified honesty and ask the question: "Am I alive to my responsibility as a laborer in God's vineyard?" I, personally, have constantly to remind myself that I can be a very busy man, yet a very idle minister. How easy it is to live more or less in the enjoyment of God's free grace, and yet not realize that we are called to fulfill a divinely appointed purpose. Our commission is to declare the whole counsel of God in the midst of men: "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" -- that, brethren, is our privilege and our task. And yet we must confess that too often the great things of God have not been the predominating things: the lesser things of life have been allowed to absorb our interest, and the lure of the lesser loyalty has blurred our vision and robbed us of our passion to win souls for Jesus Christ.

What, then, is the essential to recovery and revival? Surely a whole-hearted desire to be right with God, to stand before Him in an adjusted relationship. I am convinced that if we are to see the hand of God at work, we must give to our lives the propulsion of a sacred vow, and with Hezekiah of old say: "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel." Brethren, the new truths that grip us this morning must find expression and embodiment in a new dedication -- that is, if we are to be men whom God can trust with revival.

As a young student in Edinburgh it was my privilege to sit under the ministry of the late Dr. of St. Columba's. How well I recall the subduing sense of the presence of God that came over us, as that prince of preachers called us to our task. "Upon you," said the Doctor, "Christ lays the great task of evangelizing. We talk of the great trust of human life; the tremendous responsibility of an engine driver, the sea captain, or the leader of an army. There is entrusted to them the care of human lives. But to us there is entrusted the care of human souls, souls to be brought to Christ for pardon and healing through His precious blood, to be sunlit by His presence and consecrated to His service, and at last to be set as gleaming jewels in the crown of His eternal glory: or, because of our lack of vision, be allowed to wander further and further from God, and, as the years go on, trample out the lingering image of their Maker and at last be shut out for ever in the dark despair of unending woe."

"Perishing, Perishing! Thou wast not willing;

Master, forgive, and inspire us anew;

Banish our worldliness, help us to ever

Live with eternity's values in views."

May God help us to make this our prayer!

THE OUTCOME OF REVIVAL. -- Here, I may be allowed to give a word of personal testimony indicating what revival has meant to me. Some years ago, along with Dr. Thomas Fitch, I was speaking at the Edinburgh Convention for the deepening of spiritual life. We had come to the closing meeting, and I had given my address. As I sat listening to Dr. Fitch giving his last message, I suddenly became conscious of my unfitness to be on that platform. I saw the barrenness of my life and ministry. I saw the pride of my own heart. How very humiliating it was to discover that I was proud of the fact that I was booked to speak at five conventions that year! That night, in desperation on the floor of my study, I cast myself afresh on the mercy of God. He heard my cry for pardon and cleansing, and, as I lay prostrate before Him, wave after wave of Divine consciousness came over me, and the love of the Saviour flooded my being; and in that hour I knew that my life and ministry could never be the same again. Nor could I ever doubt the Baptism of the Holy Spirit -- brethren, explain it as you will, to me it was a baptism from on high, and if in any small measure God has been pleased to use me, it is all because of what He did for me that night, when two things became clear to me: Christ's willingness to save the 'whosoever,' and the awful state of the eternally lost in hell. That is what revival has meant to me, personally; and is not that just what happens in a general sense in the community. "Revival," said Professor James S. Stewart, "is a new discovery of Jesus": God becoming real in the midst of men. I have known the Spirit of God laying hold of a community in such a way that you would hardly meet a person that was not seeking after God. Is it not of the reality of God's presence in revival power that Paul is writing -- "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? Brethren, is this light visible in us? Are our lives, are our churches, lights that mark the road that leads men to the Lamb?

In closing, let me use a simple illustration. Some years ago I was on holiday on the Island of Jura. While there I had the use of a very fine sailing boat. One day, with my daughter, I sailed past a lighthouse that seemed to stand erect out of the ocean. It being high tide the rock on which it was built was covered. While passing, the thought occurred to me, "That lighthouse could be as treacherous as the rock on which it is built, but for the light." It was the light that made the difference. The structure was perfect and the building the work of a master -- but a positive danger to navigation apart from the light! Is the lighthouse a far-fetched comparison, or do I see in it a representation of the institution we call the Church and the vocation we call the Ministry -- without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, a positive danger in the community; with the anointing, giving direction because men see God?

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