

Something Must Be Done (Part One)

by Gardiner Spring

Gardiner Spring's sermon highlights the urgent need for revival in the church, drawing parallels between historical and contemporary spiritual decline.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:30, Proverbs 27:4, Mark 15:10, Romans 1:29, Galatians 5:21, 1 Timothy 6:4, James 1:21, James 4:5, 1 Peter 2:1

Topics: "Vices And Sins", "Christian Character"

Description

The preacher delves into the concept of malice (kakia) as a quality of wickedness, depravity, and ill-will, highlighting its destructive nature and the root of various vices. Kakia is described as a vicious disposition that rejoices in hurting others, leading to a wicked habit of the mind. Envy (phthonos) is explored as a form of malice that resents others' excellence or happiness, leading to division, strife, and even murder. The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting aside malice, envy, and hatred, as they destroy fellowship and lead to a corrupt and loveless way of life.

Transcript

"The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD." (2 Chron. 29:16-17, KJV)

As we look back upon the past and forward to the future, a multitude of thoughts naturally rush upon our minds. But there is one subject that may well supersede the consideration of every other: the welfare of the church of Jesus Christ. We have seen her desolation and felt her reproach, and something must be done for her deliverance and enlargement.

Our text may give us helpful direction for the state in which we now find ourselves. When Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah, he found religion in a low and languishing state. His father, Ahaz, was not only an idolatrous king but notorious for his impiety. The torrent of vice, irreligion, and idolatry had already swept away the ten tribes of Israel and threatened to destroy Judah and Benjamin.

With this state of things, the heart of pious Hezekiah was deeply affected. He could not bear to see the holy temple debased and the idols of the Gentiles exalted. Although he was but a youthful prince, he made a bold, persevering, and successful attempt to effect a revival. He destroyed the high places, cut down the groves, and broke the graven images. He commanded the doors of the Lord's house to be opened and

repaired. He exhorted the priests and Levites to purify the temple, to restore the morning and evening sacrifices, to reinstate the observation of the Passover, and to withhold no exertion to promote a radical reformation in the principles and habits of the people.

The humble man or woman of God will read the account of the benevolent efforts of Hezekiah and his associates with devout admiration. As he looks back, his heart will beat high with hope. Success is not restricted to the exertions of Hezekiah. A revival of religion is as within our reach as it was within his over twenty-five hundred years ago.

What Is a Revival of Religion?

Because most of us have not personally experienced any general outpouring of the Holy Spirit, many talk about revivals of religion without any definite meaning. Some identify them with the illusions of a disturbed fancy or the wildest expressions of enthusiasm. But revival is neither of these things. Far from being an illusion, revival is a plain exhibition of the power and grace of God that is apparent to the reason and conscience of every impartial mind.

Showers of divine grace often begin like other showers, with here and there a drop. The revival in the days of Hezekiah arose from a small beginning. In the early stages of a work of grace, God is usually pleased to affect the hearts of some of His own people. Here and there an individual Christian is aroused from his stupor. The objects of faith begin to predominate over the objects of sense, and his languishing graces begin to be in more lively and constant exercise.

In the progress of the work, the quickening power of grace pervades the church. Bowed down under a sense of their own stupidity and the impending danger of sinners, the great body of professing Christians are anxious and prayerful. In the meantime, the influences of the Holy Spirit are extended to the world, and the conversion of a very small number frequently proves the occasion of a very general concern among a whole people.

Everything then begins to put on a new face. Ministers are animated. Christians are solemn. Sinners are alarmed. The house of God is thronged with anxious worshipers. Opportunities for prayer and religious conference are multiplied. Breathless silence pervades every seat. Not an eye wanders, not a heart is indifferent, while eternal objects are brought near, and eternal truth is seen in its wide connections and felt in its quickening and condemning power.

The Lord is there. His own almighty and invisible hand is felt. His Spirit is passing from heart to heart in His awakening, convincing, regenerating, and sanctifying agency upon the souls of men. Those who have been long careless and indifferent to the concerns of the soul are awakened to a sense of their sinfulness, their danger, and their duty. Those who have cast off fear and restrained prayer have become anxious and prayerful. Those who have been rebellious and far from God are subdued by the power of God (Eph. 2:13). He brings those who have been long in bondage out of the prison house (Isa. 42:7), knocks off the chains that bind them to sin and death, and receives them into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

Is this an idle tale? If the immediate and special influences of the Holy Ghost are to be expected in the edification of a single saint or the conversion of a single sinner, why may they not be expected in the edification and conversion of multitudes? It is not above the reach of God's power nor beyond the limits of His sovereignty. God can as easily send down a shower as a single drop. He can as easily convert

thousands as one.

Revivals bear no uniform features. God is sovereign. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). Still, wherever God is pleased to manifest His power and grace in enlivening and invigorating the graces of His own people, and in turning the hearts of considerable numbers of His enemies at the same time to seek and secure His pardoning mercy, there is a revival of religion.

The Need for Revival Today

This necessity is of the most pressing kind. We may not feel it, and this itself is among the chief indications of our darkness. In all its forms, spiritual declension possesses a hardening, infatuating tendency (Rev. 3:17). When a church once begins to forsake God, they are more and more disposed to forsake Him. Their coldness degenerates into negligence, and their negligence into universal declension. It is the natural operation of the Laodicean spirit to make the subjects of it insensible to their true character and deplorable state. But shall we sleep over the verge of apostasy? Let us be aroused from our lethargy and look at our real condition.

1. An evidence of the need for revival is the worldliness of professing Christians. The great object of professing Christians seems to be to become rich. If we should judge from their habitual deportment, it appears that the thought has never entered their minds that God's purpose for them is the building up of His kingdom. Though God has said, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9), yet they will be rich. Their chief end does not appear to be so much to glorify God and enjoy Him forever as to obtain and enjoy the world. They "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19) heartily, supremely, and habitually.

During times of spiritual declension, you seldom find either the young or the old, either male or female, wasting their ardor and exhausting the strength of their affections for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Instead, their thoughts, their time, and their talents are swallowed up in the world. Many who profess to be pilgrims here on earth live as though wealth were their idol. While this lamentable fact stares us in the face, does it not demonstrate that something must be done for the languishing, depressed state of the church?

Christian brethren, it is this worldly spirit that blights our hopes and that chills religion to the very heart. This is what withers your graces, poisons your comforts, and blasts the fair fame of your Redeemer's cause. While this spirit pervades the professing people of God, how can it be otherwise than that there will be few to weep over the condition of the church, few who are jealous for her honor or affected by her reproach, few who struggle for her prosperity or are in travail for the birth of her children? In such a state, do we not need help from above? Where is our hope without a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord?

2. Another evidence of our need of a revival of religion is the indifference of God's people in regard to the power of godliness in their own hearts. It cannot be denied that there are seasons when the people of God appear to be roused from the languor. But these seasons are so short that for the most part we may be said to be in a state of deplorable stupidity. Nor can anything less be expected from the predominating spirit of the world.

The mind is always active. The affections are always placed on one supreme object. Believers never do and never can forsake God while they are in the exercise of supreme love to Him. Spiritual declension

essentially consists in loving the creature more than the Creator. It is by placing their affections upon the world rather than upon God that His people ever lose sight of the permanent realities of religion. It is by choosing another god before Him. It is by wandering after idols that they ever relax their zeal and become remiss in their duty.

And do we not discover decisive evidences of the truth and influence of this principle among ourselves? Who among us appear to realize the importance, to see the beauty, and to enjoy the comforts of religion? Who among us appears to savor the things that be of God rather than those that be of men (Matt. 16:23)? Where is that deep and affecting impression of divine objects that has an abiding influence upon the hearts and lives of true believers?

Ah, brethren! The throb of spiritual life is languid and low. The people of God have become cold and indifferent to all that concerns the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom both within them and without them. They have lost their first love. They have forgotten God and they have forgotten man. They disregard the languor of saints and the impending danger of sinners. Religion has become a dull, languid thing. The sacred flame that once enlightened and warmed is reduced to a solitary spark, and all fervent, steady zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of souls seems to have become nearly extinct.

There is not altogether an absence of external attention to the word and ordinances, but they are cold and heartless. There is much parade and show and poise about religion--this is the fatal deception of our time. But where is its vital energy and ardor? There is a blight of religious dissipation in our Christian community that hardens the hearts of professing Christians and fortifies the conscience of the impenitent against the arrows of conviction. Both the people of God and the men of the world attend upon the services of the sanctuary with a portion of the same kind of feeling with which they would attend upon the diversions of the theater or listen to an argument at the bar. They hear, but it is a sound that plays around the head, and does not reach the heart. They are pleased but not affected. They are interested but not humbled. They go away sometimes extolling the merit and as often the demerit of the preacher, but seldom do they steal silently to their closets under the condemning power of the truth.

There is an awful blank in our religious duties. There is something lacking. The vital savor is gone, and the life-giving Spirit is fled. Our leanness! Oh, our leanness! "Is there no physician there?" (Jer. 8:22). We need His healing power. These desolations must be repaired.

3. Another evidence of our need of the outpouring of the Spirit of God is our abuse of prosperity. The silver clarion of peace has vibrated on our ears, and the rich blessings of peace have been reaped in unexampled abundance. Worldly prosperity has been flowing in upon us in deep, wide channels, and all classes of men have been growing rich. But I hardly dare ask, What return has been made to the Father of mercies for these multiplied favors? God has spoken to us in our prosperity, and we have said, "We will not hear."

It is a mournful fact that we have been forsaking God and that God has been forsaking us. As a people, we have been making our calculations for time and not for eternity. We have been seeking our own and not the things that are Christ's (Matt. 16:23). There has been less seriousness, less attention to religious duties of every kind, less time devoted to the Redeemer.

Do not these things speak a language that is full of meaning? The affecting truth must be told. Prosperity has made us a people presumptuous and hardened in sin. It has imparted both the power and the disposition to dishonor the God who made us and the Savior who bought us. Heaven's mercies have only

made us worse. The better God has treated us, the worse we have treated Him. The more God has done for us, the more we have done against Him. The more He regards our prosperity, the more we disregard His glory (Deut. 32:6).

How true is that divine axiom "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isa. 26:10)! If unrivalled goodness has no other effect than to harden and stupefy, if it does not entrench unbelievers in their rebellion and increase the languor and enhance the sinfulness of believers, do we not need the humbling, quickening influences of the Holy Spirit? The full tide of worldly prosperity seems to have set in with a restless current. Thousands are floating calmly and imperceptibly upon its surface and will ere long plunge down the precipice or drift beyond the hope of return.

It is time to be alarmed! It is time to tremble for the church of Christ! While the enemy is thus coming in like a flood, must not the Spirit of the Lord "lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19)? How can it be expected that sinners will hearken to the voice of the Son of God when saints will not hearken? How can we hope that the world will regard what the church will not regard (Amos 6:12)? How few will be brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus unless the Lord revive the languid graces of His own people and pour out His Spirit upon His enemies?

The people of God are so intoxicated by the world, so stupefied by indifference, so oppressed by criminal unbelief that we need the effusions of His grace. Evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse (2 Tim. 3:13), and we need help from on high. Dying men are daily descending to the tomb, and we must have help from on high. When I think of the probability that before long many of them will be sinking into hell, I feel the pressing necessity of a revival of religion.

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