

The Cross and Revival

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

Revival is possible when we see the Cross as the centre and basis of all the working of the Holy Spirit, and we understand how to co-operate with Him.

Scripture: Joel 2:28-29, Matthew 7:15-20, John 4:24, Acts 2:17-18, Romans 8:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Revival", "The Cross"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the centrality of the Cross in the process of Revival, asserting that true Revival is the outflow of the Holy Spirit through the human spirit. She outlines the conditions necessary for Revival, including the removal of obstacles such as unforgiveness and ignorance, and the importance of cooperating with the Holy Spirit. Penn-Lewis warns of the perils of Revival, particularly the risk of counterfeits and the danger of relying on feelings rather than spiritual discernment. She encourages leaders to be spiritually equipped and vigilant in guiding meetings to ensure the purity of the Holy Spirit's work. Ultimately, she calls for prayer and preparation for Revival, recognizing its potential to transform lives and communities.

Transcript

If we look back at the messages of the preceding meetings we can see why Revival comes into view at this juncture. In the Revival in Wales the outstanding theme was the message of Calvary. It is only when we see the Cross as the centre, and the basis of all the working of the Holy Spirit that Revival becomes possible. Let us now seek to understand some of the laws and perils of Revival even when we know something of the various aspects of the Cross. In dealing with this subject I will embody matter from a manuscript which was intended to form part of the last chapter of 'War on the Saints', and for some cause it was omitted. It has its origin in lessons learned in the Revival in Wales.

First let us define briefly that Revival, in its essence, is the outflow of the Spirit of God through the human spirit. This is in harmony with what Fausset, the well-known evangelical commentator, says about the human spirit. He writes, "The spirit of man is the receptacle of the Holy Spirit, and is the organ in which He dwells, and through which He works". You will see, by this simple definition, how vitally all the truths of the Cross, and the laws of the spiritual life, which we have been considering, affect the question of 'Revival'.

Now let us ask, What are the primary conditions for Revival, apart from prayer? First, the negative: the removal of all obstacles to the outflow of the Spirit. This brings in the work of the Cross applied by the

Spirit of God.

Second, the positive: understanding how to co-operate with the Holy Spirit of God. This brings in the life-side of the Cross, the inflow of the Holy Spirit and the believer learning experimentally how to walk in the spirit.

Now as to some of the main 'obstacles'. (1) In the spirit an unbending, unforgiving, grasping spirit. (2) In the life ignorance of what is right and what is wrong, so that things which hinder the Holy Spirit are tolerated. (3) In the service of God-unwillingness to speak of the things of God, and to testify.

For dealing with the obstacles is needed- (1) The cleansing of the spirit (2 Corinthians 7: 1), by the putting away of unyieldedness; the forgiving of those who have trespassed against us, the surrender of a 'grasping' spirit by giving up all to God. (2) The seeking of light from God upon 'right' and 'wrong' in the life, and the putting things right as the light is given. (3) The surrender to God for obedience to the monitions of the Holy Spirit in the way of speech and testimony. Here comes in the Blood to cleanse all that the light reveals, and the Cross in its delivering power, setting free the believer by his identification with Christ in His death, applied by the Holy Spirit.

Now as to the perils of Revival: These again primarily may be briefly defined as, (1) the danger of acting or living by 'feeling', or the sensuous life, instead of the spirit-life; and (2) the peril arising from the spirits of evil counterfeiting the workings of the Holy Spirit. Alongside of the danger of becoming dominated by 'feelings' and emotions, the perils of Revival come mainly from the invisible world of spirits. The Counterfeiter is watching to counterfeit, and to insert his workings in the place of God's workings. The fact became clear again and again in Wales, during the height of the 1905 Revival, that it was possible for God to begin with a pure work of the Holy Spirit, and for the counterfeiting spirits to insert a 'counterfeit' which the soul ignorantly accepted. In this way the same manifestations appeared, but the source was changed without it being detected. The changing of the source of the supernatural manifestations without the believer's cognizance is therefore the main peril. A very small inserted 'stream', or 'tincture' from the enemy, causes mixture which may not be discerned at first, but which sooner or later produces fruit in confusion and trouble.

In view of this danger-the principle danger-if we pray for Revival, we should pray God to prepare intelligent and spiritually equipped children of God to guide and help His people. Believers who know the ways of God, and who know the ways of the enemy, and are really endued by God with the power of discerning spirits, able to tell at once when the source of spiritual phenomena is changed. Such souls can discern when the spirit working in a meeting is changed from pure to counterfeit, and know how to deal with the spurious spirit, and how to bring the gathering back into the pure stream of God again. This occurred in the Revival in Wales many times, and those who watched the leadership of the one who was thus 'discerning' the spirits at work, marvelled.

I recollect once being in a meeting in England where the atmosphere was as pure as crystal. The spirit sense, when it knows God, can sense atmosphere, and where God is in great power there is a sense of the 'terrible crystal' Ezekiel spoke about. It then seems as if the atmosphere is so transparent that everything in it out of harmony with God seems repulsive and painful. The atmosphere of the meeting referred to was like this, when one who was present rose to pray, and immediately it seemed as if a muddy stream was poured into the meeting, filling the atmosphere with a sense of 'thickness', and the pure and beautiful clearly crystal sense of the Holy Presence of God was gone. That soul had prayed from

the sensuous soulish life, and not from the spirit.

Those who have this acute and sensitive consciousness of what is 'spirit' and what is 'soul'-or sensuous-can detect it in themselves by the sound of the voice, which becomes 'metallic' or harsh, when the believer draws upon his 'natural' resources, but when he speaks from the spirit there is an exquisite softness, and purity in the voice, which makes the tone beautiful. Ah yes, everything that comes from the Spirit of God is beautiful. There is nothing repulsive-nothing that you would shrink away from-so beware of forcing yourself to accept, as of God, what your spirit shrinks from as repulsive. So many to-day are being drawn into counterfeits because they do not remember this. Let us have a right conception of God's presence. Where He is in power you get a foretaste of heaven, and this heavenly presence is felt by your spirit, not your soul, i.e., your physical consciousness. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Alas! that so many to-day should be deceived as to their true spiritual state, by the effort made in many churches to appeal to the sensuous, and the natural love of the beautiful, through beautiful music, and attractive singing, which will count for nothing in eternity. If it is true that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit", of what avail is all the sensuous worship caused through the soothing, or satiating of soul-desires, with no real knowledge of God or His gospel. Let us see to it ourselves that our worship of God is in spirit, and in truth.

As we have seen, the chief peril of Revival is, that when God begins to work in abnormal power, the counterfeiter has his opportunity. It is then that, what a writer in America calls 'the high order spirits', the religious spirits, that 'hover upon the Alps of the spiritual life', hover about those who are entering realms of the spirit they have never known before. Not the gross and repulsive spirits, but refined and beautiful spirits, are the ones most to be feared. When Paul said that Satan had transformed himself into an 'angel of light', he plainly meant that Satan can appear to be light when he himself is all darkness. He can give 'flashes of light' and 'floods of light', and fill a room with light. Can you tell when they are from the enemy?

All that we have been learning about the Cross will equip us to meet these 'perils'. Therefore if we pray for and desire Revival, we must ask God to enable us to apprehend the truths that will fit us to be of use to Him when it comes.

Now lastly, let us summarize some hints on how to conduct meetings to bring about Revival, or during a time of Revival -which means during a time when the Spirit of God is working in great power-for these 'hints' are adaptable and 'Revival'-true Revival cannot be worked up by methods. These hints are only to show how to co-work with the Holy Spirit on the right occasion, so as to give Him full liberty to work. We have seen that 'Revival' is the result of an influx into and an outflow from the human regenerated spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the enduement of power, therefore brings into acute consciousness the spirit sense, which, if we learn to read it correctly, will teach us how to co-work with the Holy Spirit in the conducting of a meeting, not only as He moves through our own spirit, but as He moves in the spirit of others.

1. First as to the leader of the meeting: The leader should be one chosen of God, and equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit. He must therefore be: (i) Baptized with the Spirit, so that he is conscious of the spirit sense referred to, whereby he knows the mind of the Spirit in himself, and is able to discern it in others.

(2) The leader, thus open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, should be able to speak at any moment as the need arises free from dependence on notes, or aids to memory. To guide the meeting under the guidance of the Spirit, he needs to be able to speak 'as the Spirit gives utterance, and to know the right moment and the right message.

(3) The leader must never let go the reins of the meeting, leading throughout, although he may outwardly appear to be taking no part at all. I may illustrate the importance of this by a concrete example. I was once watching a huge gathering where one who had been greatly used in Revival in another land, was present, and the meeting was given over to him. He spoke just a few words, and then placing his watch upon the desk, he bowed his head in prayer, and deliberately let go the meeting as if he had nothing to do with it. It could be seen that he had taken his hands right off it. That is, he did not continue to inwardly hold it, by watching, and readiness to intervene. The result was startling. The moment he 'let go', there was a wild outburst from a section of that meeting, which was indescribable. There was a 'hissing' as if serpents were there, and a wailing noise like the whistling of the wind in the rigging of a ship in a storm. The leader did not attempt to deal with this, and there was no regaining of the control of that gathering-it was practically wrecked. No work of God could be done in that atmosphere. This shows that when God gives charge of a meeting to any one, he is responsible to hold it for God, and to rely upon the Holy Spirit in directly quenching any inroads of the spirits Of Satan. No one could pretend that the outburst I have described was of God.

(4) The leader must keenly watch the meeting, seeking, in reliance upon God, discernment when to touch it (outwardly), and when to leave it alone; and when to move with God in song, or prayer, or message.

2. Second, AS TO THE MEETING: a programme of prearranged plan is no hindrance, for it can be used if there is no discernable movement of the Holy Spirit among the people. But the leader must be ready to drop the 'programme' when the Spirit of God shows him to do so. But the meeting should not be allowed to 'take its own course' until the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly at work among the people.

We saw this to-day in the Prayer Conference. There was a blessed working of the Holy Spirit, and He was in control. The last quarter of an hour, all who prayed, prayed in the spirit. It is a great sign that the Holy Ghost is in control when people are 'condensed' and to the point, with no garrulousness of the 'flesh'- It is the atmosphere that is the great thing. When God is fully in control you will find that the meeting will need very little guiding by the leader.

The intrusion of fleshly activity at any point should at once be dealt with. This can be done by taking the meeting to prayer, or by the leader speaking. The 'flesh' must never be allowed to take control of a meeting, even though it may break in for a brief period. The leader should watch how to check it, and eliminate its effects by some Spirit-guided course of action.

The leader should also be on guard and keenly ready to discern any breaking out of evil spirits, who are always watching to insert their own stream when there is any movement by God. By the discerning of spirits, which is given with the endowment of power, a leader who knows the life after the Spirit, can detect the first trace of the working of the enemy. He need not tell the people of this, but by prayer, or a message of truth, or silent resistance (in spirit) he can quickly extinguish their workings.

3.. Third, how to get a 'heavy' meeting into liberty. (i) The 'burdens' on all present may first be removed by asking for audible prayer, or expression of need. People go to a meeting burdened with their own troubles, and with their spirits crushed or weighted. Burdened in spirit, they are not open to God because they are

burdened. The leader begins to speak to them, and think them 'so hard'. But they are not 'hard'-they are burdened. It would probably 'liberate' the meeting if at first all could be free to express their burdens, either in prayer or by asking for prayer of others.

(2) The leader should take time to get the meeting free. When it is free from weight, pressure, heaviness, he will find it easy to give the message.

(3) The leader should be in victory himself, so that he is able to lift the meeting, and not be dependent upon the people for his own liberation. Sometimes the speaker himself goes to a meeting burdened, and trusting for inspiration to come to him from the meeting. But that is not God's way. The speaker should not be dependent upon the response of the people, but be able to change the atmosphere and bring the gathering into liberty, i.e., the meeting should not be used as a 'crutch' to make up for lack of prayer and preparation, or to liberate the speaker from his own burden.

(4) The speaker should give his message even if he is conscious of opposition to the truth he is giving, either in the atmosphere from the powers of darkness, or by the people, and as he does so the Holy Spirit will work, and the meeting will be mastered by the truth, thus forestalling the devil, who will otherwise get a hold upon it.

We have been talking about an endowment of power that is effective, and there is a degree of the power of God working through us which would conquer any meeting. The secret of it lies in the 'grain of wheat' life, for when the believer is deeply immersed in the death of Christ, there is an outflow of the Holy Spirit which, as it were, soaks the meeting, as if it were soaked in an overflow of the river of life flowing from the Throne of God. Something more than the individual getting of blessing. However much we may know of God's working through us already, there must be possible a stronger, purer force of the divine Spirit in our spirits, if we learn more deeply the conditions of the working of His power.

In any case it would always be best for the speaker not to put down 'hard' meetings to the state of the people, but to look upon such 'hardness' as a deeper call to the Cross for himself, and to the 'grain of wheat' experience of fellowship with Christ.

(5) All in the meeting should understand they are free to take part, and there should be no tie to time. The meeting should be free to go on until it is evident that the Spirit of God would have its conclusion. This is one of the greatest needs in 'Revival', but very difficult circumstantially to obtain. Yet so often when the Spirit of God has been at the highest point of working, it has been necessary to close the meeting. Only God can show His servants how this point can be met. May He teach us how to work with Him in Revival power.

Note.-The question may be asked whether, in view of the Lord's Return, we are to pray for, or expect, Revival. There is, undoubtedly, at the present time an awakening of prayer for 'Revival', for the conviction is growing that the only alternative to 'Revolution' is 'Revival' or the Lord's Coming. The history of the French Revolution, and how England was saved from a similar upheaval by the Revival through Wesley, is referred to by many, and it is historically true that again and again when England seemed as much in the dark as Darkest Africa, God intervened in answer to the cry of His people.

But "THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH " Whether 'Revival' will precede that glorious event or follow it, we do not know. The Apostle Peter's word at Pentecost, that the outpouring then given was only an earnest of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy for the latter days, is sufficient to show that 'Revival' is

now due, whether it comes before, or as a result of the Lord's Coming. In either case we can pray for it, and prepare the way for it, whether we shall be in it, or out of it, by being "absent from the body, and present with the Lord".

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