

Revival and Anger

by Jill Briscoe

The sermon tells the story of Festo, a young man who rejects his faith and is resistant to the revival in his village, but ultimately begins to feel the stirrings of change within him.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 3:5, Romans 12:2, James 4:8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Revival", "Hardness Of Heart"

Description

Jill Briscoe shares the story of Festo, a young man who initially showed promise in his faith journey by praying and confessing his mistakes, but later fell into a life of rebellion and disbelief in God. Festo's heart hardened as he rejected the joy and transformation brought by a revival in his village, choosing to mock those who found happiness in Jesus. Despite his outward confidence, Festo struggled with inner turmoil and a sense that something significant was looming ahead.

Transcript

Festo went to church often. And he read his Bible each day. Later he went away from home to be educated at a good school.

Hark was very pleased to see that some of the boys in Festo's school liked to pray -- at five o'clock in the morning! One of the boys invited Festo to join the prayers. Festo went along. He enjoyed talking to Jesus early each day.

But Festo did some things that made Hark sad. One night Hark watched Festo break a school rule. "Oh no!" the angel said out loud. "All the other boys are sleeping, but Festo is awake. He's creeping out of the sleeping room to smoke a cigarette!"

The next morning, Festo found it very hard to wake up in time for the prayer meeting. First he felt tired. Then he felt guilty. But the other boys helped him.

After the prayer meeting, Hark heard Festo say to himself, If I'm going to follow Jesus, I'd better go to the principal and confess what I've done.

So Festo told the principal he had broken the school rules. The principal prayed with Festo. Then he agreed to give the boy another chance to obey. Hark was proud of Festo. He was learning to be a hero.

But as Festo got a bit older, he had more trouble being a Christian. He stopped praying. Hark was upset to see that, even though Festo kept going to church, he stopped loving Jesus. Festo turned away from his faith.

One day Hark was amazed to hear Festo tell a friend, "I don't know if I believe in God anymore."

"I don't either," said the friend.

"If we don't believe in Him, then we don't have to do what He says," suggested Festo.

"You mean the things He tells us in the Bible?"

"Yes," answered Festo.

"Well then, that means we can be as wicked as we like -- get drunk, cause trouble . . ."

"Right," laughed Festo. "Let's do it together."

Hark was horrified. Had he mistaken his assignment? Maybe he had the wrong Festo! But no, this was the right man. He was living in the wrong way, though.

Festo began to live a very bad life. By now he was nineteen years old. He had finished school and had learned to be a teacher. He returned to his home village and became a teacher at the church school there. He had to go to church or he would lose his job. But he didn't want to go. And when he went, he tried not to listen. Festo and another friend began doing bad things together.

Festo had only been home a very short time when he noticed strange things happening. People were singing and dancing everywhere, praising God. They talked about Jesus and sang hymns to Him day and night. It made Festo angry.

"People didn't behave like this when I lived here before," Festo told his friend. It bothered him to hear songs of praise everywhere he went. He wished people would keep their worship inside the church building.

But church was different now from when Festo was a boy. Back then church was a bit dull! No one wanted to sing the hymns. Everyone was bored -- especially the kids! In fact, most of the people in church looked like they had just eaten sour pickles! When the sermon started, the kids squirmed and whispered. They hoped it would be over soon.

The grownups were polite in church. But as soon as they got home, they began to shout at each other. When Festo was a boy, church people argued and stole things just like people who didn't go to church. They did not behave at all like children of the King!

"Now, everything has changed," Festo said.

"They call it a revival," his friend answered. "It means 'new life.' People say Jesus has visited our village!"

"How silly," Festo laughed. "Jesus died 2,000 years ago. How could He visit our village now?"

"I don't know. But everyone is saying the revival has changed people," his friend replied. "It has changed the ones who used to have such solemn faces. It's even changed the kids who were bored in church. Now

they're full of joy in Jesus. It used to be that people said they were Christians, but they didn't live like Christians. Now all that is different."

"It's wonderful!" Hark wrote happily.

But Festo didn't think it was wonderful.

"Why are all the people singing and dancing in the streets?" he asked his friend in amazement. "They are crazy to behave like this!"

"They are talking about Jesus everywhere!" answered his friend, who was also a school teacher. "You can't stop bumping into people who say they have met Jesus. They insist He has forgiven their sins!"

"That's nonsense," said Festo angrily. "It's all talk -- silly talk! I bet they still steal and shout at each other just like they used to."

"Well . . .", his friend said slowly. "They are different! I heard many of the children in school say they had met Jesus. Last week we teachers were amazed when some students returned books they had stolen. They said they know now that it is wrong to steal."

"What?" gasped Festo. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," answered his friend. "Quite sure. Why, even my own brother has changed. You remember how he hated singing hymns in church? Well, now he keeps bursting out in song all over the place! Even when he's in the cow pasture! He is so happy, Festo."

"I don't like it," Festo replied with a dark face. "It's all a lot of stupid religious stuff. I don't want to have anything to do with it!"

Hark, being an angel, could clearly read people's minds. He wrote in his report that Festo looked very sure of himself on the outside. But Hark knew he was really quite unhappy.

And Hark was right. Festo laughed and made fun of the joyful Christians. But deep inside, an uneasy feeling was filling his heart.

Festo sensed that something big was about to happen to him.

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