

Revival Power- a Warning for the Church

by J.O. Peck

The Church needs more divine power, not more machinery, to achieve true growth and revival.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 4:33, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 3:20, 2 Timothy 1:7, James 5:16

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Revival Power"

Description

J.O. Peck emphasizes the importance of the Church relying on divine power rather than machinery, drawing from the examples of Jesus and the early Christians who operated with minimal means but maximum power. Christ's ministry and teachings reveal that the key to success in spreading the Gospel lies in being empowered by the Holy Spirit. Throughout history, periods of maximum spiritual power in the Church have been marked by a minimum of machinery, as seen in genuine reformations that discarded complicated mechanisms. The chief peril facing the Church today is forsaking divine power for human agencies, highlighting the need for believers to seek power from on high through consecration, prayer, and direct evangelism.

Transcript

"The Church needs more power and not more machinery. It is a tragic paradox of church history that, as power declines, machinery increases." From the patient study of the subject of revival power in Christian history the conviction will strengthen that the Church is tending in the wrong direction when it multiplies and depends so much upon machinery, and seems to realize so little its absolute helplessness without divine power. Ask of Christ the secret of His ability to shake Judea and undermine the heathen philosophies and religions. What machinery did he use? Means with Him were at a minimum, but power was at a maximum. His words were almost wholly the means employed. But what force was in those utterances! Men stood astonished at His marvelous speech. He employed the same speech used by other men, but they were surcharged with a power that the words of others never possessed. "What a word is this!" men cried. When he anoints the blind eyes of the beggar with clay it is His command, "Go, wash," which opens a ravishing vision of beauty before that once sightless man. It is His words that heal the lepers and raise the dead. Machinery had little place in His ministry. Divine power was supreme; and when the Lord commissioned and sent forth the apostles for the extension of the Church, he still bore in mind this great principle of Christian conquest.

If it be argued that Christ's ministry was exceptional and not designed to indicate the methods of Church activities for future ages, we make a twofold reply: His ministry was at least typical and illustrative of the secret of greatest success in the effort to bring the world to accept Him as Lord and Savior. In His instructions to His apostles during the critical epoch of the establishment of the new faith, is found the essential and perpetual condition of success. If Christ did not secure this supreme possession to His Church in His own teachings and in the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, then He did not give us a complete and perfected system of faith. Yet the author cannot believe this. One must hold, who accepts the adequacy of Christianity to effect the world's redemption, that Christ has revealed the whole secret in the New Testament. And what was His supreme teaching to those nearest Him as to the source of unflinching success? Is there a word about careful attention to organization and ecclesiastical machinery? Nay, he refers only casually to these. But everywhere the recurring idea is that of power. The seventy went forth without scrip or wallet, but were clothed with power over diseases and devils and poisonous reptiles. And as Christ neared the hour of His departure, leaving His followers to do greater works than He had done, what was His confidential disclosure as to the means of their great success? Did He speak of perfect machinery or the invention of mechanisms? He uttered not a syllable on this modern craze; but simply said, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." An empowered ministry and Church were His only thought for that day and for all subsequent ages.

The early Christians also went forth, turning the world "upside down," because of their endowment of power. Poor in all else, they were rich in the heavenly gift. They had no alms to give a crippled beggar, but they had authority to say to him, "Rise up and walk!" Even the shadow of one of the apostles had more potency to heal the sick than has all the machinery of modern Church organization. And all the early disciples had power after the Holy Ghost came upon them. They appointed no committees and formed no organizations to do the work of evangelization, but, individually empowered, proceeded to accomplish their holy mission. The era of the least divine power in the Church was the period of her greatest dependence on machinery. Myths were made dogmas; the baseless inventions of priestcraft were exalted into canons of faith; pagan superstitions were organized into Christian truths.

In all subsequent ages the period of maximum spiritual power has been characterized by the minimum of machinery. Every genuine reformation in the history of God's Church has witnessed the discarding of a vast amount of complicated mechanism invented in a corrupt period. Did not the sixteenth century reformations in Germany and England break into fragments much of the old Roman Catholic machinery? Yet did not these very reformations fail to realize the fullest expectations because they retained too much of the worn-out and worthless machinery of Rome? Have not elaborate organizations, stately ecclesiastical forms, and imposing cathedrals always tended to formalism and feebleness of spiritual power? Have not baptismal regeneration, sacramentalism, ritualism, and churchism largely displaced the simple, sublime dependence of men on the power of God in the Holy Ghost? Machinery is not power, but the means through which power accomplishes results. In mechanics it is estimated (as the writer believes) that one third of the power is consumed or lost by friction. To multiply machinery without additional power is, therefore, to multiply weakness. Is not the pronounced tendency to multiply agencies rather a confession of conscious lack of power? When they are on their knees, men do not feel the need of more machinery, but of more divine strength. The heart and conscience, in the presence of God, are safer guides to the sources of power and efficiency than the intellect in the study.

One thing should not be left unsaid. No one doubts concerning this invention and multiplication of agencies that all are proposed by good men and women, and under the best of motives. These workers

know the lamentable needs of the Master's vineyard, and are moved by burdened hearts to provide for such urgent needs. But the conviction grows that the Church is moving in the wrong direction as it increases machinery. The overwhelming need is more divine power outpoured on her present agencies. She can get this quicker, easier, surer, than she can devise new machinery. The gift is free to all. It is suited to all. It makes effective all classes, and without this power from on high, all machinery is useless.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Steele says that the chief peril of the Church today is the ancient sin of forsaking God, the living fountain, and the hewing out of broken cisterns, with the substitution of human agencies for divine power. Or, to quote the precise words given by him in another paragraph: "The trend of modern Protestantism is toward a growing feebleness of grasp upon the Holy Spirit as a reality and a practical disuse of this source of spiritual life and power. What is needed on the part of every Christian is "a mind to work," and then a long audience with God until they receive power from on high. In seeking revivals many seek new machinery. But the need is more divine power. If all the time and thought that are spent in planning new machinery were devoted wholly to consecration, believing prayer, and direct work for the conversion of men, one million souls would be yearly added, may God send us more power!

"Ye receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Our methods and machinery are useless until we are endued with might from on high. All grace is with our Christ for His people. We may have it for the seeking. It is a gift. All our arrangements and methods can produce but a spurious revival without this divine bestowment. One breath of the Holy Ghost will make a revival genuine! Oh, for power from on high!

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