

A Continuous Revival

by Norman Grubb

Revival is a personal, daily experience that happens within us when we recognize and repent of sin and are restored to living relationship with God, and it can be experienced corporately when we lead a fellowship in the light and in the Word.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, John 13:10, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 4:13, Hebrews 3:13, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Personal Revival", "Communal Sanctification"

Description

Norman P. Grubb emphasizes the importance of personal and communal revival, highlighting the need for constant confession of sins and openness about struggles in order to experience true revival. He stresses the significance of maintaining both a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with fellow believers, as revival is not just an individual experience but a communal one. Grubb challenges Christians to live authentically, confessing faults to one another, sharing God's dealings in their lives, and provoking each other to love and good works, ultimately leading to personal, family, and community revival.

Transcript

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We present here the first of two remarkable articles on revival by Norman P. Grubb . . . Mr. Grubb is successor to C. T. Studd us director of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, and as such has sought to maintain the same spirit that has made that society dear to the hearts of countless thousands of revival-minded Christians throughout the world . . . We are in complete accord with the truth set forth in these articles. . . . May we of The Christian and Missionary Alliance have the humility to learn from this missionary brother the way into a new place of revival and power. Our world-girdling movement had its birth in just such an atmosphere as is here described. . . . May God help us to recapture this glory--at any cost. - A. W. Tozer

by Norman P. Grubb

There is nothing God's people everywhere seek more earnestly or speak about more frequently than revival. But always we look at it as something outside of ourselves, a longed for ideal, something whose realization we can only contribute to by prayer, but which, as an actual experience, is beyond our immediate reach and only comes as a visitation from on High. But God has been teaching some of us

differently.

What is revival in its essence? The revitalizing of someone gone dead. And who goes dead? Anyone infected with sin unconfessed and uncleansed. In other words, a constantly "vivid" soul is a person living in unbroken union with God; a revived soul is one in whom sin has obtained lodgment but who has then recognized it, repented of it and been restored to living relationship again.

That is personal, daily revival. But take it farther as a Christian. I am no longer an individual; I am no longer even an individual united to Christ. I am a member of a body, which consists of Head and body the "perfect man" of Ephesians 4:13. I no longer live unto myself. I know my relationship with Christ. I know the rules of the abiding life: faith, obedience, the daily feet washing of John 13:10 (confession and cleansing) after there has been the initial bathing. I know thus how to walk with Him. But that is not enough.

Perhaps the biggest delusion of us evangelicals is that we have so consecrated on maintaining a right vertical relationship with Christ, the Head, that we have failed to recognize the same necessity to maintain the right horizontal relationship with the body, the brethren. We seek to walk in the light with Him, but we scarcely think of walking in the same light with our brethren. Thus the best we can know of "revival" is the individual experience of the movings of the Spirit in our own hearts as we go deeper in grace, deeper into the death, resurrection and ascension of Him to whom we are joined. This is revival in a personal sense, whenever sin is seen to be sin in some area of our lives, and the power of the cleansing blood experienced, or new light is revealed; it is revival with the roof off, but too often with the walls still up.

But that is not the kind of revival to which the Spirit can fully bear witness, because, as we have already said, we are no longer individuals walking with God; we are a body, and He dwells in a body. Therefore the individual transactions of heart faith must be accompanied with mouth-confessions (Rom. 10:9, 10); the vertical must be accompanied by the horizontal.

How is this done? The answer is, by giving as frank personal witness to the Lord's daily dealings in our lives as we gave to His first dealings with us at our conversion. We know that the horizontal mouth-confession of the Saviour to others is as essential to the initial experience of salvation as is the vertical heart-believing before God. We also know that such "confessions" of Christ bring revival to a meeting. When one soul gets gloriously saved and says so with "the shout of a king" then there is the horizontal flow of life between the members who hear the witness, as the joy is shared and the Lord magnified by many hearts; and there is also the flow of life-giving conviction to the unsaved.

Is not the absence of the permanent flow of revival among us the result of our failure to maintain this constant flow of life-renewing witness to God's personal dealings with us? We shut ourselves up. We tell of the great experiences of our lives. We do not mind speaking of our sins and failures so long as they are a safe distance in the past and long "under the blood." Perhaps we tell of a present-day experience which brings glory to God and maybe a little reflected glory to ourselves--an answer to prayer, a soul saved. But what if we really laid bare our inner strivings, our failures in holy living experienced in our home and business, our feelings and thoughts about one another?

Occasionally in the experience of a local church we do this, and we rightly call it a revival. A "break" comes. Hard thoughts, barriers between one and another, even personal sins and backslidings come out into the open, and all rejoice as the fresh plunge is taken into the fountain. God has come down into the midst. But then, back we go into the old position--nice services, nice addresses, good fellowship on a

certain level. But the inner center of each one of us has closed up; those inner battles, often failures, problems, even victories, go behind closed doors marked, "Strictly private." Why? Partly because we have not learned and are not taught to live as the members of the early church lived--confessing their faults one to another, sharing the Lord's dealings, exhorting one another daily, provoking one another to love and good works; but very largely also because we have a thing we cherish which we call reserve, but if given its proper name, is at least ninety per cent straight pride. We just don't want other people to know what God knows only too well, that we are not nearly the saints in our homes and hearts that we appear to be from our pulpits and in our pews.

We are saved by His grace, we have been and are sanctified by the blood and the Spirit; but Satan still assaults, the deeds of our body have still to be daily mortified, we do not easily learn to discern between what proceeds from the soul, and what from the Spirit. The consequence is that we get soiled by sins so refined and subtle that we often have other and nicer names for them, such as temperament, nerves, pressure of circumstances, difficult people, and so on: such "little" sins as hard feelings, criticism, dislike, resentment, self-pity, worry and anxiety, unbelief, pride, or the unclean look and thought. These are all sins, because all are "short of the glory of God," and less than His perfections. Suppose we begin to face squarely up to anything that arises in our hearts less than His perfections. Suppose we immediately name it sin. Suppose we do what the Word tells us in First John 1, that when walking in the light, as He is in the light, we confess our sins in order that the blood of Jesus Christ may cleanse us from all sin. Supposing then that having done this, and recognizing ourselves as members of His body, we witness to those nearest to us, husband or wife or children, of the sin that entered and the blood that gloriously cleansed--we share the revival! The cup of joy in our own hearts at the renewed mercies of God runs over to the others. We are real, and the others know we are real. We decrease, but He increases; the joy is shared by those likeminded; conviction may well reach others who would never "take" our preaching at them, and reality is recognized even by those who sneer at or oppose such frank and guileless living.

But then it goes further, much further. Because we slur over the "little" sins in our home or business lives, do not call sin sin, do not admit it to others (who probably have seen the sin in our bitter word, or hard or angry look), we have those heart-breaking situations in nearly all our homes: barriers, arguments, ill will, disturbed peace. But suppose we begin this "broken" (Psalm 51:17) way of living one with another--starting with myself in relation to my nearest--what will be the result? Frank talking, the opening out of deep-seated antagonisms between husband and wife, parents and children, the clearing of misunderstandings, a renewed walk. In other words, family revival, not for a special occasion, but as a way of living!

Take that one step further--to our church life. Suppose a pastor sees that his first job is not to preach sermons to a passive congregation, but to lead a fellowship in the light and in the Word. Suppose that not preaching services, but fellowship meetings of the New Testament pattern become the center of his church life, where the point of interest is not one paid and polished preacher, but a community who are learning to hear God's voice for themselves down in the dust of daily life, and who are ready to share with others in humility those spots in their hearts and lives where He has dealt with them that week and where He has spoken the word of light from His Word. And suppose this starts with the preacher, and his wife! Then you have community revival.

But there is yet more. There is not only telling of the Lord's dealings with ourselves, but challenging others to the highest--a fellowship of witness and mutual challenge, the modern version of the "exhorting one another" and "(provoking) one another" (Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25).

And my last word must be that this is not idle theorizing. I have had the privilege of seeing community revival of this kind in action, continuing through fifteen years, reaching now to tens of thousands (although I personally only had contact with it quite recently), and of learning very much from them. For our humbling, I may say that I have not seen it among us highly-taught white's, but among our Christian brethren of Central Africa. It will be a great day when a revival team of Africans and missionaries from that area comes to the United States as they have been to Britain, living, sleeping, witnessing together, with the churches and in the homes of God's people. I am praying for this to happen very soon.

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