

Revival in the Christian Body

by Norman Grubb

Revival is a continuous, community experience that spreads through testimony and confession, resulting in new sensitiveness to sin and new revival fellowship among believers.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:30, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Corporate Revival", "Personal Sanctification"

Description

A. W. Tozer discusses the importance of continuous revival, both individually and corporately, emphasizing the need for a constant fellowship-life centered on Jesus. He shares his experience in Central Africa, where he witnessed a community living in fellowship, constantly confessing and cleansing sin, and sharing the power of testimony. Tozer highlights the significance of daily confession before men, as it seals the reality of inner attitudes and fosters genuine brokenness, openness, and fellowship, leading to a continuous flow of revival.

Transcript

Taken from the Alliance Weekly - February 17, 1951

Two weeks ago, in our issue for January 27, Mr. Grubb discussed the possibility and necessity of a continuous revival, both individual and corporate. A. W. Tozer

In my previous article I told you something of what the Lord has been teaching me recently about continuous, community revival, with the emphasis on both "continuous" and "community."

It might be helpful now to illustrate this from experience. I have recently returned from a visit to my old field in Central Africa. I there saw the field white for the revival harvest, with thousands of church members, many of them, I believe, truly born again and some sanctified and Spirit-filled, just ready for the match to be applied and the fire started (and a small fire was started here and there), but I did not know how to lead them into a fellowship-life where the fire would not only be started, but kept burning.

Then at the end of my visit, I went on to spend a short time in another Central African field where the fires are burning and spreading, and have been for fifteen years. Here I learned the secret. No new thing. Nothing could be simpler. No special person; only Jesus in the midst. No profound "principle," but just walking with Him. Not even the word "revival" used, lest it should divert attention from Christ to a "doctrine." Sin, repentance, the precious blood, cleansing, joy, witness--this was the language spoken.

It was the meetings which caught my attention. I had met individuals from this "revival" area in England, both missionaries and Africans, and learned of the Lord's constant "breaking" work in their lives, and saw and felt the power of their testimony, so simple yet so revolutionary. But here were revived companies living in fellowship--a living community, not just living individuals. It was a two-way walking in the light, with God and with one another. In the fellowship meetings (I am not talking of the more official Sunday preaching service) there hardly seemed to be a human leader, although I suppose the senior missionary or African present at least acted as time-keeper to announce when the meeting should break up! But the point is, everybody seemed to have their bit to contribute, not some clever, polished, or prepared saying, but the word of experience hot from the heart, that went straight to the hearts of those who heard.

Most testimonies were costly, and that was doubtless why they hit home and loosed songs of praise and streams of joy among us; they told of the Lord's heart-dealings that day or week, maybe, or that very moment. One would say that he had come to the meeting with a cold heart, but had repented of that sin and put it under the blood. Up went the chorus of praise. Another, that desire for advancement in the world had entered his heart that week, but that sin had also been repented of and cleansed in the blood. Another, that jealousy had got hold of him when the missionary seemed to give preference to another brother, but that had gone under the blood; in another's heart there had been impure thoughts; in others, hardness towards wife or husband; and after each word the song of praise came from the whole congregation. Words of the same kind came from the missionaries as well as from the Africans, for one of the great features of this mighty work of grace has been the utter obliteration of "class distinction" and "color bar." All have found themselves fellow-sinners being constantly cleansed and kept by the same glorious Saviour. All touch bottom and all live on top together!

Nor let it be thought that this means companies of people sinning and being forgiven, and then sinning and being forgiven again. We speak here not of the grosser falls of the flesh, though of course we know that in all companies of God's people Satan does get in here and there in violent ways. There are companies of folk so sensitive to the light of God that they hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh." Any chance seeds of sin sown in their purified hearts are recognized, repented of, confessed, cleansed, and the experience shared with the brethren.

Thus, where we have known many an African brother in Christ to hide the growth of covetousness and worldly ambition in his heart till it bore sudden and evil fruit and carried him away into the world, among these, the first hidden desires for the world are exposed and judged and cleansed. The same with the awful pull of lust so powerful in all of us, but especially in those just dug out of the pit where they had been "working all uncleanness with greediness." How the African churches are devastated with these sudden falls into adultery, fornication and polygamy. But actually no such fall is sudden; it results from a hidden putrid growth in the eye, the mind and the heart. Here among these simple folk those first unseen seeds are vigorously uprooted at the Cross by inward confession and outward testimony.

Does any of us know a sanctification where no daily washings of the feet are needed, even though the initial bathing of the whole man may have taken place long ago? No, I found in myself the hidden pride that did not want to "break" and witness to my brethren where I had hardness in my heart toward another brother. My sight of that sin of hardness and dislike was not so terrible to me that it broke me, as it broke my Lord on Calvary. He was publicly exposed for me there, but I wanted to get through without publicly exposing that sin in my heart. Like Saul, I said in my heart, "I have sinned; yet honour me now before the elders of my people" (1 Sam. 15:30). I saw what they meant when they said that a soul can be bent, but not broken. I did "break" after two days, and of course as I brought the thing to the light, the blood totally

cleansed. But it taught me a deeply-needed lesson on the necessity of keeping my pride on the cross daily.

I saw also a little more clearly why in the Scriptures such great emphasis is put on confession before men. It commits us. It seals the reality of our inner attitudes. Our hearts are so subtle that we can deceive ourselves into thinking we have love to God or faith in Him, or are broken about our sins, when it is in reality but a comfortable imagination. It costs us very little to take a humble heart attitude toward a God whom we know to be one of love and mercy and patience. But get that same faith or love or brokenness down to earth. Declare the faith publicly about something God is certainly going to do or has done, with no "ifs" and "buts"; show the love by the same love to the brethren and to all mankind; demonstrate the brokenness and repentance by telling the brethren about the Lord's dealings--that makes it real and also seals the fact to our own hearts.

But why should I tell the brethren about something which happened only in my own heart or home, or which concerned only my attitude to one other person, and not to all? Because I am no longer a lone individual. I am part of a body, and my contribution to that body is to share with the other members the Lord's dealings with me down where I live. My personal revival (sin seen, repented of and cleansed, and joy restored) is to spread to the whole body by being shared. Let no man think that this means sin-confessing orgies. That is seeing such fellowship meetings in a distorted mirror. I do not confess sin to my brethren, as if the confession must be made to them. Our confession one to another is the joyful witnessing to the blessed light of God which has revealed a black spot in me, which I have brought to Him in repentance, and which the precious blood has cleansed. The emphasis is not on the sin, but on the blood which cleanses it, and where the blood is magnified, the glory of God enters our souls and the song of praise to the Lord begins.

I want to learn much more of brokenness, openness, fellowship and challenge. God has already begun to do much in our own ranks; there have been movings of revival recently, but not yet the continuous flow I saw in Africa. In our own family life also, where revival always must start and continue, God has been much at work with my wife and myself and our children, but still there's more to follow. And as for such a broken walk in the light resulting in an "up and down" experience, I find the opposite true; never before have I been able so clearly to lay hold of and experience full salvation in Christ. Yet coupled with this is a new sensitiveness to the least touch of sin, new facing and breaking and walking in the light with my brethren, with consequent new revival fellowship among us.

I cannot say more. Any reader who would like to read more of the Lord's dealings may send for the little book called "Calvary Road" by Roy Hession, an English evangelist whose own life has been transformed by contact with these same brethren in Africa.

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