

What if Revival Does Not Come?

by Tim King

Tim King's sermon explores the challenges of seeking revival amidst spiritual barrenness and the importance of authentic faithfulness to God's will.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:8, Romans 6:17, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 3:17

Topics: "Heart Obedience", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

The preacher delves into the significance of the heart (kardia) in Scripture, emphasizing that it symbolizes the center of human life, controlling intellect, emotions, and will. Outward obedience holds no value unless the heart turns to God, highlighting the importance of guarding our spiritual heart for eternal impact. Various Bible scholars and writers provide insights into the heart's role as the seat of principles, actions, and spiritual life, underscoring the need for heartfelt obedience to Christ and His Word.

Transcript

If you are an individual who has a passion for revival, a yearning to see a genuine outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, then may I put these questions before you? Which of you has diligently sought revival only to feel the torment of seeing the land remain spiritually barren after many years? Have you experienced the heartache of faithfully spreading the gospel, petitioning the Lord in prayer, and fervently contending for the faith, only to find that the majority of the people around you remain unconverted and unrepentant? After many seasons of cultivating, sowing, watering, and weeding, still only a mere handful of decent fruit can be taken to the storehouse.

Is it not difficult to watch those who compromise the preaching of the Word and use the wisdom of this age drawing multitudes of followers while just a few seek the pure milk of the Word? How many times have you read accounts of revival, eagerly drinking in the stories of abundance poured out from above, and not wondered, What's wrong with me that God doesn't do that here? You hope to see revival, but all around you are signs of divine judgment.

Because questions like these naturally arise, it is important to remember that God sometimes calls His servants to faithfully work for revival during sovereignly appointed periods of judgment. Jeremiah was called the "weeping prophet" because his task was to thunder the word of the Lord as the doom of the nation slowly approached. Throughout the history of the church, godly men have labored in obscurity as champions for revivals that have not come during their lifetimes.

There is no doubt that this is one of the most difficult truths in the Word of God. How can we who long to see God pour out His grace again upon sinful America bear to contemplate that we might never see it? May I offer some principles that might guide and encourage us?

1. Be sure that your brokenness before God is authentic and not simply a technique to obtain revival. The doctrine of brokenness is fundamental to any teaching that promotes revival. Yet, do we sin by seeking brokenness to the end that we will be used in a great awakening, rather than to be broken simply because this is the sacrifice that God desires? True brokenness means that we embrace God's will no matter where His will might lead us.

He may direct us to a field ready to be harvested. However, the Lord may also choose a barren, rock and weed-infested plot of the mission field where we will plow and dig, weed and water, fertilize and sow, only to die on that field without ever picking the fruit. Shall we negotiate the will of the Almighty? Should we say, "Lord, not my will but Thine be done--as long as I get to pick the fruit"? May it never be!

Why do you want to preach with unction? A man can seek revival for motives that are self serving. Jonathan Edwards was mightily used of God in the Great Awakening, and as a result, his name is widely known. Movements of revival often make the men and women associated with them very famous. For a man who prefers a name for himself above the glory of God, revival is an effective vehicle. Beware of this! The broken heart cries, "I want to preach with unction because my God calls me to do so regardless of whether He blesses me with revival or not!"

2. We must esteem the ministry of plowing and sowing as being just as essential in the quest for revival as the ministry of the harvest. There are seasons when much fallow ground needs to be broken up. It may be a time for sowing, but the reaping will take place at some point far in the future. What kind of fruit would the harvesters be picking if those who were to plow, sow, and cultivate did a shoddy job? There would be little indeed.

Could it be that one of the reasons we see so little genuine revival today is that there was slothfulness in spiritual harrowing in the past? When the hard work of making the "soil" of the hearts of men fertile, dealing with the "weeds" of sin, and extracting the "rocks" that promote spiritual shallowness is neglected, gospel seed bears no fruit.

There has been such a carnal lust for quick results and increasing numbers that careful preparation for God's workings has become passe'. Revival preparations today consist of a couple of seminar sessions on counseling those who come forward during the altar call. It has nothing to do with the careful application of biblical truth to souls.

But what of the promises of God? Would God let His Word go forth and nothing come of it? No, God will not withhold His promises from faithful labors. Consider the words from Galatians 6:9: "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary" (NASB).

First, note that the very nature of gospel labors can bring us to a point of growing weary. Exhaustion and fatigue are common by-products of service to Christ. Second, note that we reap "in due time." That is the time of God's own choosing, not our own. Sow diligently, water faithfully, but the timing of the increase is in God's hands.

Have you lacked discernment regarding the need to break up the ground before attempting the harvest? Are you looking for fruit where the ground remains hard, littered with stones and infested with weeds? In our hunger for revival, we can make a fatal mistake in our relationship with the Lord if we are not careful. We can be so hungry for an abundant ministry that we ignore the pursuit of a faithful ministry. We can be so desirous to reap widely that we forget to plow deeply.

3. Models for revival can be dangerously misused and bring carnal pressure and guilt upon pastors to produce results rather than to live holy lives. Even outside the realm of those who believe revival comes on the basis of the right use of means, a subtle pressure to reproduce the results of revivals can arise. When there is no stirring on the part of people, we begin to blame ourselves for the lack of revival. To be sure, we could find in ourselves impurity that could be hindering the workings of the Spirit. But is that always the case?

True revival is a sovereign act of God. He visits a people with revival when He so chooses. During the times of history when there were no great outpourings of God's Spirit, was this an indication that there was a total absence of godly saints? No, they were quite present, continuing to pray, petition, and plead at the throne of grace. Faithful preaching of the gospel was taking place. Men and women were being offered up in the fires of martyrdom by the thousands without any divine intervention except the grace to die with a good testimony for Christ. Where was the presence of God?

During these times, God was not manifesting Himself in a great awakening. He was not pouring out His Spirit with abundant conversions. Still, the promise of the Father was being poured out from heaven. The unction then was for His saints to testify to a hostile, hateful world by dying with grace. The results of a faithful life was a fiery death. This is consistent with God's Word. To be sure, some who walked by faith "conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection" (Heb. 11:33-35).

But is that all that happened to those who walked by faith? Let the record continue: "Others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground" (vss. 35-38). No, these did not see a great outpouring of God's Spirit even though they walked by faith as truly as those who did see it. "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised" (vs. 39).

Clearly, then, it is possible to gain approval for our faith and still not see revival. In our hunger for revival, we can be in danger of becoming narrow and myopic in God's dealings with us. It was said of the apostle Paul that, wherever he went, there was either a revival or a riot. True brokenness before God is being as willing to have the riot as the revival. It is being just as willing to have the response to the sermon that Peter had at Pentecost (many conversions) as Stephen had to his preaching (martyrdom). Perhaps we would be more sobered if we took Foxe's Book of Martyrs as seriously as we take good books on revival.

4. The reality of God's ways is that there does come a time when He determines to bring a harsh, remedial judgment. Take note of these chilling words that the Lord gave to Jeremiah concerning his prayer life for the

nation of Judah:

"Do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer before them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you." (Jer. 7:16)

"Do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster." (11:14)

"Do not pray for the welfare of this people." (14:11)

No less terrifying toward the nation is the revelation given to Ezekiel:

"'Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it, and cut off from it both man and beast, even though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves,' declares the Lord God." (Ezek. 14:13-16)

I am in no way suggesting that this word applies to America today. Neither am I saying that we should cease interceding for this nation. The point is that God has gained every bit as much honor for His holy name in the past by sending judgment in His wrath than He has by sending revival in His mercy. The question is, "Are we ready to boldly hold forth the truth of God even if God, in His infinite wisdom, decides to withhold a revival and instead send a judgment?"

In Jeremiah's case, his ministry was not even over after the days of judgment. After the Babylonian invasion, he was left behind to live in the ruins and tend the land of Judah. A few were left behind with him. These few, we might note, were no more compliant to the word of the Lord at this time than they were before the invasion (read chapters 42 and 43 of Jeremiah). Yet, the Lord continued to speak through Jeremiah, and the prophet continued to preach to these obstinate people even though there was no revival, no brokenness, and no outpouring.

Jeremiah's words of hope are scattered throughout the prophecy that bears his name. But Jeremiah himself never saw the fulfillment of those prophecies. They were to benefit those who came after him, and the fulfillment was witnessed by those who lived six hundred years later. He persevered with a people who experienced judgment, then died never having seen the hope that God had promised to His people.

Dear saints who hunger for revival, the glory is ahead of us! Christ will be victorious! The glory will descend! But it may not happen in the way we pray or envision. It may not be the glory as it fell upon the congregations in the First and Second Great Awakenings, the revival of 1858-59, or the Welsh revivals. It may be the glory that is preceded by the last trumpet. In any case, should we not seek a baptism of Holy Ghost power that will give us unction to preach as fervently in judgment as in revival?

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