

Definition of Revival, II: An Effusion Of The Spirit

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: Judges 2:14-19

In essence, fallacies of revival almost entirely set aside the agency of the Holy Spirit in revival. They represent revival as an article of manufacture. You only have to set the machinery in motion, raise the steam of excitement, and you have revival. Charles Finney popularized this fallacy.

They take no account of the fuel used to make it happen.

1. Artifices catch attention.
2. Devices entrap the careless.
3. Representations create impressions.
4. An exaggerated style of preaching produces alarm, shakes suspicious hopes, and
raises a state of general excitement, no matter what kind.

It doesn't seem to matter. It brings people to hear, and converts result, proponents say. Truth, reverence, humility, and faith weep over such machinations.

But, God has given clear evidence in the Bible for the true meaning of revival. Its setting occurred during the time of King Solomon. Early in his reign, he built the Temple that his father David longed to build. (See 2 Chronicles 1-6.)

At the conclusion of construction, God's glory filled the Temple. He came with such glory and power that all of the people bowed their faces to the ground. None dared enter the Temple because of the His awesome presence.

In the midst of the celebration, Solomon had great fears. He feared that the people would sin against God and incur His promised judgment: God would withdraw His glorious presence from among His people.

In 2 Chronicles 6:22-42, we find recorded Solomon's prayer to God. Solomon beseeched God to return His presence to His people, if they departed from Him into sin but then repented of their sin.

Solomon sought God's promise to forgive His people and restore His glorious presence upon Israel's repentance for their sin.

We find God's promise to Solomon revealed in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14:

"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; {14} If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

God included several elements in this promise. It outlined the promise of restoration and revival for His people. In addition, He gave its requirements, too. His promise defined revival and its effects.

To cover all of its conditions would exceed the scope of this brief article. I will concentrate instead upon the proper definition of revival and its pertinent parts.

From this passage, I want to examine with you certain sure truths about the meaning of revival and how it applies to the Church of Jesus Christ and your life today.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will clarify for you the truth, convict you of its application in your life, and correct you to bring about true Biblical revival in you that will revolutionize and transform your life.

The current condition of the Church requires an accurate, Biblical definition of revival. The many fallacies of revival cause confusion within the Church.

In addition, the spiritual decline of the Church and individual believers demands a clear statement to give proper direction for its solution.

Biblical revival describes an evangelical spiritual experience when God pours out His presence upon the child(ren) of God through an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit that produces extraordinary effects in the child(ren) of God and in the world.

In essence, this sentence definition identifies three critical, fundamental areas that call for more detailed explanation. They are: the origin of revival, the objects of revival, and the outcome of revival.

Origin of revival

The stated definition says, in part, "...God pours out His presence..." That phrase describes one of the conditions established in the text, the sovereignty of God in revival. Recall, if you will, that the text fits into the context of Solomon's prayer.

His prayer requested a promise from God for revival upon the loss of God's presence because of Israel's sin. In so doing, Solomon recognized his reliance upon the sovereignty of God for relief.

No king, ruler, or prophet could bring it. Although they might desire it, they had no power to produce it.

In fact, in His answer, God instructed His people with the requirements of revival. But, meeting them still left the people in the hands of God to work as He willed and when He willed.

The promise did not remove God's control.

The sovereignty of God would permeate the whole situation. God sovereignly would inflict divine judgment upon Israel for their sin. Similarly, He would bestow divine favor upon them to revive them again.

Both actions fall within the divine exercise of God's sovereign will. God acts sovereignly in revival for at least four reasons.

1. First, it demonstrated that the true nature of mankind, which is too weak in the flesh to attain God's righteous demands, requires God's sovereign work.
2. Second, it reveals the attributes of God, loving, just, gracious, and merciful, to name a few aspects.
3. Third, it shows mankind's complete dependence upon God.
4. Finally, it exposes the futility of formulas to produce it.

In other words, revival begins and ends with God. He maintains complete control over every aspect of it.

Scripture confirms this conclusion. One book of the Bible, Judges, chronicles the ebb and flow of the spiritual condition of Israel between Joshua and Israel's first king, Saul. It gives an evidence of God's ways in spiritual revival.

One particular passage unmistakably illustrates these facts and the sovereignty of God. Notice them in this record from Judges 2:14-19:

“And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. {15} Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. {16} Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. {17} And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. {18} And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. {19} And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.”

Mark the sovereign works of God toward His people Israel:

1. He acted against them in judgment for their sin.
2. He raised up judges to deliver them from their enemies.
3. He enabled the judges to release them from their oppressions.

This reference graphically reveals God's sovereignty in the affairs of His people to bring revival to them.

Again, the Psalms give further proof that God works sovereignly in revival. You will recognize in this one example the reliance upon God's sovereignty to bring revival. See the evidence in this sample from Psalms 80:18-19:

“So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. {19} Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

The psalmist prays to God for relief, but he shows his utter reliance upon God for it. God must quicken His people even before they will seek Him. He must turn His people and cause His face to shine upon them. Then they will experience revival at God's hand.

In contrast, Charles Finney believed that any one could produce revival simply by following stated means. In his writings, Finney outlined the specific steps that would culminate in revival.

Numerous Godly men and women faithfully followed them, including many today. Yet, they have failed to experience revival.

He neglected the sovereignty of God in revival.

On the other hand, in his book, *Revival*, Richard Owen Roberts states the work of God in revival in these terms:

“When Christians are fully persuaded that the God of all mercies is the God of revival and refuse to let God go until He blesses, then they may take hope that the heavens will soon be opened and God Himself will pour out such blessings that the whole world will scarcely be able to contain them.”¹

God holds revival in His hand to dispense as He wills, when He wills, where He wills. Objects of revival

The definition of revival identifies the objects of revival, the child(ren) of God. It simply confirms what the text obviously says, “If my people, which are called by my name...” The phrase literally means ‘called out ones.’ It describes those called by the name of God.

They contrast with the world. The world of the unsaved needs regeneration, not revival. They require the new birth, which the Holy Spirit gives to God's chosen ones.

The secular definition of the word ‘revival’ also emphasizes this. It means ‘to bring back to life or consciousness.’ A preexisting life dwells in someone and reached a low ebb.

To revive it imparts new health, vigor, or spirit to it. The one revived has spiritual life restored to use. Since unbelievers have no existing spiritual life, they need that life, not a revival of one that has waned.

Further, the context of the text itself, besides the obvious statement, establishes this truth, too. It describes a condition when the children of God have turned away from God into sin.

Because of their sin, God sent punishment and judgment upon them. They needed spiritual revival to impart new health to that preexisting life which had decayed.

Numerous Scripture references establish this truth, too. For example, the previously quoted reference in Judges 2.14-19 proves it. In addition, Ezra 9.8-9, Psalm 79, and Psalm 80.1-3 also verify it.

But one reference ties the origin of revival together with the objects of revival. It is found in Psalm 85:6:

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

It shows the sovereignty of God as the source of revival as well as the people of God as its object.

Church history records it in application as well. In this regard, many examples exist to substantiate it.

Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, documented it in his ministry. God sent continuous revival to Spurgeon's work in London for many years. He said very simply:

*“A true revival is to be looked for in the Church of God.”*²

When God sends revival to His people, it always affects the world. But, revival comes only to God's people.

Outcome of revival

As declared in the simple definition, revival comes with

“...(an) extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit that produces extraordinary effects in the child(ren) of God and in the world.”

In revival, God manifests His great power and His glorious presence. The limited space and scope of this article prevent a full disclosure of this evidence. I pray that those selected will affirm it to you.

The text declares that God will heal their land. To what condition will He heal it?

As mention earlier, the awesome, glorious presence of God at the completion of the Temple overwhelmed the people. They fell on their knees in worship, fear, and adoration.

None dared enter the Temple because of His presence there.

Duncan Campbell, God's instrument in revival in the western islands of Scotland, de- scribed revival as "...a people saturated with God." God's presence permeated all of life.

In similar fashion Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones described the manifest presence of God in revival. He characterized it in this fashion.

*"It is a consciousness of the presence of God the Holy Spirit literally in the midst of the people. Probably most of us...have never known that, but that is exactly what is meant by a visitation of God's Spirit. It is all above and beyond the highest experiences in the normal life and working of the Church. Suddenly those present in the meeting become aware that some- one has come amongst them, they are aware of a glory, they are aware of a presence. They can not define it, they can not describe it, they can not put it into words. they just know that they have never known anything like this before. Sometimes they describe it as 'days of heaven on earth.' They really feel that they are in heaven, they have forgotten time; they are be- yond that, time has no longer any meaning for them, nor any real exis- tence, they are in a spiritual realm. God has come down amongst them and has filled the place and the people with a sense of His glorious presence."*³

Christians and nonChristians alike note His presence. They feel Him. He reveals Himself in unmistakable fashion.

His awesome presence brings a wonder and amazement all of its own. It is clearly Him and not a manufactured or manipulated feeling.

In revival, God also exhibits His great power. For example, he displays it in believers' changed lives.

1. Holiness and separation from the world mark the believer's life.
2. Christians increase their faithfulness to God.
3. Sorrow and repentance from long forgotten sins characterize everyday life in revival.

The world receives the impact of His power, too.

1. Flocks of unbelievers feel a deep sense of conviction for sin and come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The holiness of believers together with the salvation of nonChristians frequently changes society.
3. The blatant immorality, drunkenness, and debauchery of life ceases in great measure.

Church history repeatedly records these same effects in revivals.

Why does God send revival? He does it for one reason, His honor and glory. Mark well the statement in Isaiah 64:1-2:

“Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. {2} As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!”

No more pressing need has ever existed for God to display His presence and power in revival than today.

I pray that the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes and clarified these truths to you so that they will correct you from error.

Has the Spirit convicted you of your failure to apply them in your life? Or does your life conform to them?

What correction does He need to bring into your life today because of these truths?

1. a realization of the fallacies that prevent revival?
2. A recognition of God’s requirements and your obligation to them?
3. a repentance from sin?

I pray that the Spirit has shown you your true condition before God and the need of His supernatural work to apply them to you.

May He come to you today in grace and bring a spiritual transformation in your life that will lead you to spiritual revival.

References

1. Roberts, Richard Owen. Revival (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, IL; 1982) p. 22.
2. Edwards, Brian. Revival! A People Saturated With God (Evangelical Press: Durham, EN; 1990) p. 27.
3. Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn, M.D. Revival (Crossway Books: Westchester, IL; 1987) p. 306.