



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 1

## Vision For Revival

When this ministry began, I sensed that one of its purposes was to encourage prayer for genuine revival. God established this ministry to encourage and equip believers to seek Him for true revival. In the past ten years, we have labored to be faithful to this calling. Through a variety of materials and conferences, we have sought to help believers seek God for revival.

For some time now, I have had a burden. This burden has resulted from a variety of sources. This burden began when I served in churches before I went into an itinerant ministry. As an evangelist, I have taught in conferences on preparation for revival. I have preached in meetings for the purpose of seeking God for revival. Through these things, I have developed this burden – that something is missing. What is missing is a vision for revival.

You may wonder what I mean by a "vision" for revival. By this, I mean that we must develop a conviction and hunger for revival. I just don't sense these things in our churches. We can have meetings called "revivals." However, we don't have the conviction that revival can happen or the hunger for this work of God. There is much talk about revival. Yet, where is the hunger and conviction for revival?

I have encountered two mindsets concerning revival. One mindset is that revival

is not a possibility. People might not say this openly, yet they do not believe that genuine revival will occur. I grew up in and minister in the Southern Baptist tradition where one has "revival meetings." Even in this tradition, people may go through the motions of these revival services; they may participate in revival meetings. Yet, in their heart, they do not believe in an extraordinary work of God that will change them, their church, or their nation. They do not believe it has any practical bearing on their lives.

At the same time, many churches do not even have set times for seeking God for revival. There is no mention of revival from the pulpit or in the small groups. There are no calls to plead with God for revival. Some tell me that "revival" is a dinosaur no longer relevant or needed in our day. Large numbers, big budgets, and comfortable facilities have replaced the need for revival. We have substituted our numbers, budgets, and buildings for God's sovereign work of revival. This is the outgrowth of unbelief concerning revival. It flows from the fact that we do not have a conviction or hunger for revival.

The other mindset is complacency with what I call the "mercy drops." This comes from

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the hymn "Showers Of Blessing" In this hymn, the writer declares, "Mercy drops 'round us are falling, but for the showers of blessing we plead." We see the mercy drops – God does work and bless our lives and churches. We acknowledge that God is doing a good work in us and around us. There is no doubt concerning this.

However, we must desire the "showers" of blessing. As much as God is doing now, He can do much more. In revival, God can do more in one day, one week, or one month than can be accomplished in years of faithful ministry. Too many believers and churches are content with the mercy drops. We need a longing for those showers of blessing – genuine revival that transforms everything.

I certainly don't claim infallibility nor do I pretend to have all the answers for this situation. In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, I want to offer what it takes to have a vision for revival. It is my hope and prayer that this issue will encourage believers to think more deeply about revival, hunger more intensely for it, and to seek God more fervently for it.

I don't speak as an expert; I'm simply a brokenhearted, hungering believer who longs to see genuine revival flow into our churches and lives. The words of Nancy Leigh DeMoss sum up my heart, "Revival is not just another emphasis that we must add to our already overcrowded agendas. It's not an option. It's not just a nice idea. A meeting with God in genuine revival is our only hope; our church's only hope, our nation's only hope."

## What Is Revival?

A vision for revival begins with understanding what revival is. Believers must be instructed in what revival is. If they do not know what revival is, how can they pray for it? How will they know what to look for when it comes?

A number of definitions have been offered for revival. I offer this definition: revival is a period of sudden, unusual stirring of God's Spirit among His people in which He heightens and intensifies our walk with Him. It is a sovereign work of God done according to His

own prerogative. Notice a couple of points about this definition of revival:

- ✓ *Revival is the work of the Spirit.* The Spirit is the Agent in unleashing revival. He is the Author of revival according to God's sovereign purpose (**Acts 1-2**).
- ✓ *Revival is a work among God's people (**Acts 2, 12:26, 13:1-3; Revelation 2-3**).* The conversion of sinners often takes place in revival. Yet, it is primarily a work among His people, renewing their spiritual lives.
- ✓ *Revival is the sovereign work of God (**Psalms 80**).* It takes place in His time and way. We do not manipulate or coerce the Spirit's work of revival.
- ✓ *Revival heightens and intensifies our walk with God (**Revelation 2-3**).* In revival, the Holy Spirit renews our relationship with God. He breathes new life into our practice of the spiritual disciplines. He leads us to new levels of growth and commitment. Revival transforms us; we are never the same after this work of the Spirit.
- ✓ *Revival takes place in a definite period (**Ecclesiastes 3:1**).* Revival has a starting point, a climax, and an ending point. It is a distinct time of the extraordinary work of the Spirit in His people and church.

Why is it important to develop an understanding of revival? First, we must forsake all false notions of revival. False notions of revival will hinder us from experiencing the true work of God. We will accept and have contentment with something less than God's amazing work. Second, it humbles us. When you understand that revival is God's work according to His own sovereign purpose, it drives you to your knees. If God alone grants revival, we therefore must seek Him for it. If God alone pours out revival, we have to humble ourselves before Him and seek Him.

## Is Revival A Possibility?

The second aspect of developing a vision for revival is genuine conviction

concerning revival. A vision for revival means trusting God for revival. It is the conviction that God can and will send revival in His time and day.

Revival must be a conviction in the heart of the believer. Until this issue is settled, you will not be able to pray powerfully or enthusiastically for revival. You will not also join with other believers in activities designed to seek God for revival. We can mouth the words that we believe in revival. We can admit that God revives. Yet, we must believe this for our own lives and for our churches.

Is revival possible? What biblical reasons do we have for believing that God does revive His people? The following are some biblical reasons for knowing that revival is possible:

- *The glory of God (Habakkuk 2:14)*. God desires to make His greatness known. He loves to reveal His greatness to people through His works and His Word. In revival, God does an extraordinary work in which He receives the glory; the church and the world is shown His greatness. Because of God's desire to make His glory known, we can believe and seek God for revival.
- *God's sovereignty (Luke 1:37)*. God's sovereignty anchors our hope and faith for revival. It is within God's ability to grant revival to His people. The fact that God conceived the eternal Son of God in the womb of the virgin Mary shows that He truly can do the impossible. Revival is not impossible; it can become a reality because of God's awesome sovereignty.
- *God's mercy (Lamentations 3:22-23)*. The hope for revival is firmly grounded in God's mercy. He is full of mercy; His compassion for His people never fails. We have sinned against God. We have failed to seek Him and obey Him. Yet, there is still hope. God's abundant and abiding mercy shows us that there is still hope for revival even in the darkest hours of the church.
- *The fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)*. God has called the church to fulfill the Great Commission – to proclaim the gospel, to baptize, and to make disciples. A backslidden, powerless

church will not have the ability to do this. Revival is the powerful renewal of the church that it might shatter the powers of darkness and draw numbers of people into the kingdom through the gospel. In revival, God powerfully stirs His church and it accomplishes more in a shorter period than in years of faithful ministry.

- *The reality of backsliding (Proverbs 14:14)*. Backsliding can take place in the lives of genuine believers. Backsliding occurs when a person is filled with self and simply goes through the motions of service to and worship of God. The world and the flesh take precedence over God and His Word. Backsliding is often imperceptible; it overtakes a believer in gradual steps. **Proverbs 14:4** speaks of the backslider "in heart." The believer may be faithful in church and to the things of God, yet his or her heart is far from God. Believers need to experience revival to stir them out of their backslidden condition back into a fervent and intense pursuit of God and His Word.
- *Christ's call for repentance in His church (Revelation 2 and 3)*. In **Revelation 2** and **3**, we see the church, just years after Christ's resurrection and ascension, in need of revival. They had left their passionate love for Christ and fellowship with Him. Christ calls on His church to repent and experience genuine revival (**Revelation 2:2-4, 14-16; 3:1, 3, 15-16, 19**). Christ always calls His church to repent when they turn from Him and His Word. Christ's call to repentance shows us that revival is a need and a genuine possibility.
- *God's gracious invitation (Matthew 7:7)*. In **Matthew 7:7**, Jesus grants to His people a gracious invitation, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Christ teaches us that our Father wants us to seek Him with our desires. He longs for us to pour out our longings before Him. This certainly includes a desire for revival. We have the gracious invitation to seek Him for His reviving grace. God delights in this prayer and He will answer in His time. Christ tells us to ask, seek, and knock; this ought to strengthen and encourage our

willingness to trust and seek God for revival.

- *Examples of God's reviving work in the past* (**Habakkuk 3:1-2**). God has revived His people in the past. In both the Old and New Testaments, God's people departed from Him and then responded to His call to return:

**Jacob's household** – Genesis 35:1-15

**Asa** – 2 Chronicles 15:1-15

**Joash** – 2 Kings 11-12; 2 Chronicles 23-24

**Hezekiah** – 2 Kings 18:4-7; 2 Chronicles 29-31

**Josiah** – 2 Kings 22-23

**Zerubbabel** – Ezra 5-6

**Nehemiah** – Nehemiah 9-12

**New Testament church** – Revelation 2 – 3  
God has sent revival to His people in both the Old and New Testaments and throughout the history of the church. God's work of revival in the past gives us hope for today, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (**Malachi 3:6**).

- *The power of the Holy Spirit* (**Zechariah 4:6; Acts 2**). Whether in the Old or the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the Author of revival. By His power, He stirs and renews God's people. He has the power to revive the church of Christ. He has the ability to return His people to a place of passion and hungering for God and His Word. He can empower to church to advance in huge strides. The Holy Spirit's power ought to inflame our faith and hope for revival in the present day and hour of the church.

## Preparing For Revival

While we cannot produce revival, we can prepare for it. The church cannot birth revival; this is the work of our God. It is God's sovereign work. Yet, God uses means to prepare the way for revival.

God's work of revival often begins with a few people who begin to seek Him and prepare for revival. The showers of blessing often begin with a drizzle in the lives of a few who begin to pray and prepare for revival.

The following is a 30-day prayer guide to help you begin preparing for revival. This guide is designed to help you prepare for your heart for God's reviving work. Each day you are given a verse or verses of Scripture. Read the verse or verses and meditate on them. Record any insights that the Spirit gives you. Then work through the guidelines for that day.

### Day 1

Read and meditate on **Psalm 80**, particularly **verses 3, 7, 19**. Revival is God's work. He alone can revive us. Humble yourself before Him and confess this truth to God. Pray that a spirit of brokenness will fill your church and you. Ask that your church and you will become desperate for God's reviving grace.

### Day 2

Read and meditate on **Psalm 86:4-7**. The psalmist calls on God to revive His people. Revival and prayer go hand in hand. Prayer is crucial to receiving the revival we need. Plead that God will unleash a spirit of prayer in your church for genuine revival.

### Day 3

Read and meditate on **Revelation 3:14-22**. Do you believe that you need revival? Does your church need revival? Pray that God will shatter your church's and your own complacency and self-righteousness. Plead that your church and you will see the need for revival and that you will seek God for His reviving grace.

### Day 4

Read and meditate on **Hebrews 11:6**. When you seek God for revival, you must approach God with faith. You must believe Him for revival in your church and in your life. Plead with Him to create within you the faith to receive revival. Call on Him to stir your church's faith to seek Him and receive revival from Him.

### Day 5

Read and meditate on **Matthew 13:58**. Unbelief hinders us from receiving God's mighty works in our lives. Today confess any unbelief that you have about God's work of