



WHY NO REVIVAL?

by Bro. June Gentry

“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.”

- II Chronicles 7:14

Part I COMMITMENT AND OBEDIENCE

As far back as I can remember, as a Christian, I have heard people claim II Chronicles 7:14 to try to get God to bring a mighty revival. There have even been times when I have preached and have made the same claim to this promise of God. Yet, after many years as a Believer, hearing all the preaching on the subject, and reading books on revival, there is still no revival on the grand scale which we are always claiming. I find a problem here for which our Lord has an answer - if we really will be honest and diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

As I have seen and heard the many prayers, and apparent humility on the part of many, I have wondered and asked the Lord, “Why no revival?” I do believe God wants to send the mightiest move of the Spirit of all time. I also believe He is, right now, in the process of bringing it about as He awakens the saints to the real reason why we have not had an awakening in many years. In the past, I thought we simply needed to pray more. Yes, prayer is an important key; however, prayer, without knowing true humility, will never get the job done.

It is at this point that we need to come to an understanding of true humility. Part of the conflict comes because we think humility is simply being meek, talking soft, or being the person who always stays in the background and never makes any waves. Humility, my friends, is not weakness of the flesh, but strength of the Spirit of God in you to cause you to live by the Faith of Christ (Galatians 2:20). Humility is, in reality, the obedient side of the coin of faith. Faith is the variable that allows you to perform that which you are believing God for - successful obedience of practical Christianity.

This, then, brings us to “why” we are not having revival. We have not been obedient to the most important command Almighty God has given to His people, and that is to learn how to love as Christ loved and gave Himself (John 13:34-35; Ephesians 5:25). We have tried every kind of program and ritual to have revival, but to no avail. Even whole groups have dedicated themselves to prayer for revival, yet, nothing happens. Therefore, I submit to you that prayer is not the sole answer to this question, but only a part. Obedience to the Word God has already given us (II Chronicles 7:14) is the essential element for revival.

I believe our Lord has shown me and others in our day that we must settle this issue of obedience and commit to learning about the matter of love. God will then bring about a sovereign move of His Spirit, and we will not have to pretend God came - He will come. It is amazing that God told us to love our wives, our brethren, our neighbor - yes, even our enemies, and yet, our Christian community is torn by strife. People cannot get along with one another on the pew, and the government, instead of the church, is helping the poor. The standard *is* found in God's Word, in Acts 4:31-37, when material possessions were not as important as helping and caring for one another, and when there was unity and boldness to tell others about Jesus.

My friends, prayer - true, humble, obedient prayer - will change us. It is the key that will unlock the door of love and let us into the room of revival. Prayer without obedience to His Word is like faith without works (James 2:26). You can pray until you die, but if you are not walking in the Light, which God has already given in His Word, then there will not be any revival for you. Therefore, seek the Lord while He may be found - for judgment is around the corner. Isaiah 1:19-20 says, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*." The starting place for revival is learning what the Word of God says about the quality of love which our Lord displayed. We must confess our inabilities, so God can do through us what we cannot do on our own: love as He loves.

God, please forgive us and teach us how to love. Show us, dear Lord, that the standard for revival is not doing better than the next church by having bigger buildings, more people, or higher offerings.

Amen

Part II THE NORMAL CHURCH

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

- Acts 4:31-37

For many years now, I have had to struggle with these questions: What is a "normal" church, and What is a "normal" Christian? I have been amazed to find so much confusion on this issue, especially when the Word of God is so clear on it and full of examples of normal Christians. Vance Havner, that great old saint of God, once said, "The average Christian is so sub-normal that when he sees someone that is normal, he thinks he is abnormal!" What a commentary on Christianity, but so very true!

In preaching the message of "Practical Christianity" in several hundred churches over the past few decades, I find there are very few people who can get a hold of what "normal" is for the Christian. The question of "normal" for the church can only be answered from God's Word.

In the book of Acts, we find the church at the beginning - before corruption had a chance to creep in and get a foothold.

The early church is the only illustration of what the church should be today, but we do not want to see this. We would rather interpret “normal” according to our modern-day vision from our culture - especially television. If the standard for the church, as found in the Bible, goes against what we would like, then we must trash what we like and go with God. Some of the marks of the “first” church are these: great power of God manifested; boldness to witness; all of one heart and soul; great grace; and all things held in common, as their possessions were not as important as the welfare of the church and its people. Remember, at this point the church was still in its infancy, yet with a better understanding than most of us have today.

The fruit of the early church was that it changed the face of the known world in one generation - something that we are not doing with all our technology today. Now understand, there is nothing wrong with technology, for God can, and does, use it. The problem is that, in our immaturity, we use it to build monuments to man instead of being consecrated to our Lord, so that He can work through us to do His good will and pleasure.

To see by faith what I am writing, I had to work with the poor, thus my family and I have lived in a rescue mission - GODTEL - since 1977. The norm for the church is to give spiritually and physically, without any reward from man, to those who are in need. Instead, we have believed the devil’s lie that we should have all the material possessions the rest of the world has. As a result, we spend our lives getting and holding things, so we can retire and be comfortable.

Hebrews 11 tells us of Christians who were destitute. For Christ’s sake, they were martyred and persecuted, yet God smiled and said the world was not worthy of them (verse 38). How different the Christian concept of the twentieth century! Beloved, this is the norm for the church, not bigger and nicer buildings (which, many times, we will not even let non-members use for fear they will hurt “our” facility). The norm for the church can never be realized until we get our eyes back on God’s command to build a church - not Christian country clubs.

Whether we like it or not, God did not call us to build schools and family life centers for recreation, or sponsor ski trips to Colorado. He told us to build a Church. These might be all right in their place, but we have hinder us from doing the job God called us to do. We are to “Go and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19); to help the poor (Matthew 11:5); to get into the streets and let the Light of practical Christianity shine into a lost and dying world.

If you have ears to hear, then hear. Make a commitment to use whatever resources are at your disposal to reach the world, even if it costs you all that you have. Only then will you be shut up to faith and start learning how to trust God. Get out on the limb where the Lord is and quit organizing your life so that all is well. You are taken care of just like the rest of the heathen world.

We have been living what we were taught, and we are continuing to live as we are learning. From day to day, we do not have the Lord Jesus, who can and will meet our needs, as He is our source. Follow Christ and dare to be normal (I Peter 2:21). As a result, the world will once again know what the church is all about.

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