

# Revival!

## *What are the Hallmarks of Revival?*

(preached 2/19/23)

<sup>7</sup> <sup>o</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, <sup>3</sup> <sup>p</sup>reviving the soul; (Psalm 19:7, NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> I will <sup>v</sup>praise the name of God with a song;  
I will <sup>w</sup>magnify him with <sup>x</sup>thanksgiving.

<sup>31</sup> This will <sup>v</sup>please the LORD more than an ox  
or a bull <sup>z</sup>with horns and hoofs.

<sup>32</sup> When <sup>o</sup>the humble see it they will be glad;  
you who seek God, <sup>o</sup>let your hearts revive. (Psalm 69:30-32, ESV)

<sup>6</sup> Will you not <sup>v</sup>revive us again,  
that your people may <sup>v</sup>rejoice in you? (Psalm 85:4, ESV)

The word “revive” and “revival” translates “to live, to cause to live” and points to restoration and rebuilding. The context that it’s used most often in Scripture is that God’s people have been defeated and enslaved by both their sins and the fallen world, and they’re at the lowest point...usually being literal slaves to a foreign nation. They cry out to God in humility and repentance and the Lord responds with a move of His Spirit.

- Restores love for the Lord in the people’s hearts.
- Restores a zeal/passion for the Lord’s covenant, whether old or new, resulting in a deep repentance & radical lifestyle change from worldly living to holy living.
- Inspires massive action on the part of God’s people whether rebuilding the Temple in the days of Ezra, the wall in Nehemiah’s time, or massive conversions & healings in early days of the Apostles after the Ascension of Christ.

As of right now, there seems to be an outpouring at Asbury Seminary in KY that’s been going on for days. Students gathered one morning for a worship service before classes began, and it hasn’t stopped! It’s gotten national attention from well-known Christians and ministries, and some main stream media outlets have covered it.

Is it a true revival? Is it just a bunch of young Christians indulging in emotionalism? What are the hallmarks of a revival and do the Scriptures show us? How should we respond to events like this?

How you respond to Asbury in particular is up to you, and this sermon series will look what the Bible says about revival and what’s happened in past revivals.

Let's start out with major hallmarks of both what a revival is and what tends to result from one and keep in mind: some of the results are both good and bad, and from both believers and unbelievers.

What "brings about" a revival?

Is it completely a sovereign act of God? In other words, does God appoint a specific time for revival and bring it about, and His people had nothing to do with it except ride the wave of this massive tsunami?

Or do we partner with God for revival? Does He respond to faith and broken hearts truly starving for a move of God? Does He "hear" and respond to the cries of His people and then revive them?

My study of the Biblical record is that it's some of both...but even during the times when it seems to be a time selected by the Lord, His people ARE crying out to Him, pleading with Him in both faith and brokenness for the Holy Spirit to move.

After 400 years of slavery and captivity in Egypt, the people were at their lowest point. Their hearts were broken and dead, far away from the Lord, and there seemed to be no end to their oppression. They cried out to God and He responded. Spoke to Moses first, partnered him with Aaron, sent him to Pharaoh, then the miracles started. The whole thing ended in the Hebrew people not just being freed from slavery, but their hearts burned with zeal for the Lord and His ways and ended up in a radical lifestyle change.

Again: God is the One Who chose when to finally begin acting on their behalf, yet He made it clear that "He heard the cries of His people" and responded. It was a partnership.

Centuries later after God's people fell away from the faith, Babylon invaded and crushed them like a grape. 70 years later the Medes & Persians defeat Babylon and open the gates for the people to return to land of Israel. Some do, some don't. Yet the ones who did cried out to God with broken and repentant hearts for God to restore their love for God zeal for His ways.

The Prophet Ezra led a group of fiery believers back to Jerusalem and they rebuilt the Temple. A few years later Nehemiah led a second group of invigorated believers to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Centuries after this Jesus stood, in His resurrected form, at the summit of the Mt. of Olives and told them the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was coming. Further reading from Acts shows there absolutely was an appointed time when this was to happen. That being said, Jesus didn't just say go about normal business and wait for this sovereign act. He inspired the disciples to participate.

Indeed, 120 of them crowded into “the upper room” and fasted and prayed for 10 days until the Holy Spirit moved.

Here's where we're at so far:

- There are certain times that God appoints for a revival.
- Those times tend to be when His believers have been brought low, to their knees, due to the consequences of the own sins and the evil of the world.
- Even at “the appointed time” the hearts of the people have been made ready and they cry out to God in repentance and desperation.
- The Lord “responds” with a move of His Spirit that has the following result:
- Love for the Lord is restored.
- Passion for holy living is reignited.
- Any revival after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus inspires evangelism.

Charles Finney was one of the leaders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening and I like him in particular because his calling was New York State! There were tens of thousands of conversions under Finney, and the move of the Holy Spirit through his meetings caused people to call our state “the burnt over district” because the Holy Spirit moved more mightily here than in any other state in the Union! NEW YORK!!!

I quote now what Finney wrote about when and how revival could be expected:

**1. When the providence of God indicates that a revival is at hand.** The indications of God's providence are sometimes so plain as to amount to a revelation of His will. There is a conspiring of events to open the way, a preparation of circumstances to favor a revival, so that those who are looking out can see that a revival is at hand, just as plainly as if it had been revealed from heaven. Cases have occurred in this country where the providential manifestations were so plain that those who were careful observers felt no hesitation in saying that God was coming to pour out His Spirit and grant a revival. There are various ways for God so to indicate His will to a people; sometimes by giving them peculiar means, sometimes by peculiar and alarming events, sometimes by remarkably favoring the employment of means, or by the state of the public health.

So in other words, certain “events” going on in the world favor a revival that make the Church “ripe” for it. Finney also links this ripeness with God's will. Let's see what some of these “events” might be:

**2. When the wickedness of the wicked grieves and humbles and distresses Christians.**

Sometimes Christians do not seem to mind anything about the wickedness around them. Or, if they do talk about it, it is in a cold, and callous, and unfeeling way, as if they despaired of a reformation: they are disposed to scold sinners - not to feel the compassion of the Son of God for them. But sometimes the conduct of the wicked drives Christians to prayer, breaks them down, and makes them sorrowful and tender-hearted, so that they can weep day and night,

and instead of scolding the wicked they pray earnestly for them. **Then you may expect a revival. Indeed, it is begun already.** Sometimes the wicked will get up an opposition to religion. And when this drives Christians to their knees in prayer to God, with strong crying and tears, you may be certain there is going to be a revival. The prevalence of wickedness is no evidence at all that there is not going to be a revival. That is often God's time to work. When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.

Often the first indication of a revival is that the devil gets up something new in opposition. This will invariably have one of two effects. It will either drive Christians to God, or it will drive them farther away from God, to some carnal policy or other that will only make things worse. **Frequently the most outrageous wickedness of the ungodly is followed by a revival.**

**If Christians are made to feel that they have no hope but in God,** and if they have sufficient feeling left to care for the honor of God and the salvation of the souls of the impenitent, there will certainly be a revival. Let hell boil over if it will, and spew out as many devils as there are stones in the pavement, if it only drives Christians to God in prayer - it cannot hinder a revival. Let Satan "get up a row," and sound his horn as loud as he pleases; if Christians will only be humbled and pray, they shall soon see God's naked arm in a revival of religion. I have known instances where a revival has broken in upon the ranks of the enemy, almost as suddenly as a clap of thunder, and scattered them, taken the ringleaders as trophies, and broken up their party in an instant

I read this over the weekend and if I didn't know it was Finney, who lived in the 1800's, I would have thought he wrote it yesterday! It's like he prophetically knows the state of America and the Church right now in 2023!

Have not things gone crazy in America? Doesn't it seem like Satan is casting a darker and darker shadow over our country and is even now, out in the open? Doesn't it seem like the Church is losing "the culture war" and that there's no hope? Have we been reduced to merely wagging our fingers at unbelievers and perhaps even hoping God's judgment would rain down to finally make things right? Haven't churches and entire denominations fallen away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons? The latter is the most heartbreaking of all, in my opinion.

Things are certainly far worse now than they were when Finney wrote this! If he's right, then the Church is ready for a nation sweeping revival!

**3. A revival may be expected when Christians have a spirit of prayer for a revival.** That is, when they pray as if their hearts were set upon it. Sometimes Christians are not engaged in definite prayer for a revival, not even when they are warm in prayer. Their minds are upon something else; they are praying for something else - the salvation of the heathen and the like - and not for a revival among themselves.

**But when they feel the want of a revival, they pray for it;** they feel for their own families and neighborhoods; they pray for them as if they could not be denied. What constitutes a spirit of prayer? Is it many prayers and warm words? No. Prayer is the state of the heart. The spirit of prayer is a state of continual desire and anxiety of mind for the salvation of sinners. It is something that weighs them down. It is the same, so far as the philosophy of mind is concerned, as when a man is anxious for some worldly interest. A Christian who has this spirit of prayer feels anxious for souls. It is the subject of his thoughts all the time, and makes him look and act as if he had a load on his mind. He thinks of it by day, and dreams of it by night. This is properly “praying without ceasing.” His prayers seem to flow from his heart liquid as water: “O Lord, revive Thy work.” Sometimes this feeling is very deep; persons have been bowed down so that they could neither stand nor sit.

I can name men in this State, of firm nerves, who stand high in character, who have been absolutely crushed with grief for the state of sinners. The feeling is not always so great as this, but such things are much more common than is supposed. In the great revivals in 1826, they were common. This is by no means enthusiasm. It is just what Paul felt when he said: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth.” This travail of soul is that deep agony which persons feel when they lay hold on God for such a blessing, and will not let Him go till they receive it. I do not mean to be understood that it is essential to a spirit of prayer that the distress should be so great as this. But this deep, continual, earnest desire for the salvation of sinners is what constitutes the spirit of prayer for a revival. When this feeling exists in a Church, unless the Spirit is grieved away by sin, there will infallibly be a revival of Christians generally, and it will involve the conversion of sinners to God.

A clergyman once told me of a revival among his people, which commenced with a zealous and devoted woman in the Church. She became anxious about sinners, and gave herself to praying for them; she prayed, and her distress increased; and she finally came to her minister and talked with him asking him to appoint an anxious inquirers’ meeting, for she felt that one was needed. The minister put her off, for he felt nothing of any such need. The next week she came again, and besought him again to appoint such a meeting. She knew there would be somebody to come, for she felt as if God was going to pour out His Spirit. The minister once more put her off. And finally she said to him: “If you do not appoint the meeting I shall die, for there is certainly going to be a revival.” The next Sabbath he appointed a meeting, and said that if there were any who wished to converse with him about the salvation of their souls, he would meet them on such an evening. He did not know of one, but when he went to the place, to his astonishment he found a large number of anxious inquirers. Now, do not you think that woman knew there was going to be a revival? Call it what you please, a new revelation or an old revelation, or anything else. I say it was the Spirit of God that taught that praying woman there was going to be a revival. “The secret of the Lord” was with her, and she knew it. She knew God had been in her heart, and filled it so full that she could contain no longer

Church, we must partner with God and cry out for a revival! I think we've spent too long waiting for a sovereign act on His part. Are we broken by the wickedness of our country, especially NY which seems to be the worst of the worst? Are we grieved that more and more people, especially the younger generation, are walking away from Christ and the Church? Have our prayers truly been pleading with God to bring about a reawakening of God's people?

**5. A revival of religion may be expected when Christians begin to confess their sins to one another.** At other times they confess in a general manner, as if they are only half in earnest. They may do it in eloquent language, but it does not mean anything. But when there is an ingenuous breaking down, and a pouring out of the heart in confession of sin, the flood-gates will soon burst open, and salvation will flow over the place.

I came down here for about an hour Thursday to spend alone time with the Lord. I brought a notebook and wrote down everything I felt He was saying to me, and one of those things was "the spirits of My Church look just like me—they've been cleansed by My blood and reborn into My image. But I want all of my Bride. I'm after her heart and mind as well as her spirit."

Not only do we still commit sins, Church, but some of them are habitual—things we do, lifestyles we live, on a long term basis even though our conscience tells us we need to repent. We don't need to get Saved again, thank God, and neither have we lost or been kicked out of covenant with God.

Yet the Biblical history and that of revivals which have taken place in America show a common denominator—the people of God coming to a place of Godly sorrow about their own sins as well as those of unbelievers or the world in general.

Finney goes on to advise exactly the OPPOSITE of what modern day charismatic preachers say: he says we should write down the sins we struggle with, one by one, and address them directly!

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts: examine and note the state of your minds, and see where you are. Many never seem to think about this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in religion or not; whether they are gaining ground or going back; whether they are fruitful, or lying waste. Now you must draw off your attention from other things, and look into this. Make a business of it. Do not be in a hurry. Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are: whether you are walking with God every day, or with the devil; whether you are serving God or serving the devil most; whether you are under the dominion of the prince of darkness, or of the Lord Jesus Christ. To do all this, you must set yourself to work to consider your sins. You must examine yourselves. And by this I do not mean that you must stop and look directly within to see what is the present state of your feelings.

**Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character.** Look back over your past history. Take up your

individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. You must take them up one by one. It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one.

I honestly believe that were I to quote this to some modern day “everything is awesome” preachers, they would scream “heresy!” They would claim this is to bring Christians back under the Law and only inspire shame and self-condemnation. Yet it’s not just Finney who says we should examine and confess to each other, but the Lord in His Bible:

<sup>2</sup> <sup>d</sup>Examine me, O LORD, and <sup>1</sup>prove me;  
Try my mind and my heart.  
<sup>3</sup> For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes,  
And <sup>e</sup>I have walked in Your truth. (Psalm 26:2-3)

<sup>6,1</sup>Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. <sup>5</sup>The effective, <sup>2</sup>fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

When the Holy Spirit is leading and partnering a self-exam, it won’t come result in condemnation because we’re doing so from the standpoint of already being in covenant with God, already being His son or daughter. It’s not Father giving us a beat down, but us sitting on His lap as He brings a gentle correction or rebuke for the sake of our character. Our spirit looks just like Jesus, praise God! But do our hearts and minds? Mine don’t and I’m your pastor. There are areas in my life that I haven’t yet turned from, even though the Holy Spirit, my conscience, and my wife want me too!

I’m still walking out and working out my Sanctification! Funny thing is this: the classic “revival” verse is 2 Chronicles 7:14...let’s read it now:

“if My people who are <sup>u</sup>called by My name will <sup>h</sup>humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, <sup>u</sup>then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

He’s not addressing the unbelievers, He’s talking to us. This famous verse doesn’t call upon us to focus solely on our righteousness and ignore our sins. The Lord isn’t saying that we’re all a bunch of really good people who just mess up now and then. He’s saying that we still have some wicked ways and that we need to turn from them.

Before that He calls upon us to “humble OURSELVES” and not just wait for some bad thing to happen to us that humbles us. All the calls to humble oneself in the Scripture is self-examination, to search out any wicked way within us and turn from it. Now let’s read verses 15-16 to see the result of doing so:

<sup>15</sup> Now <sup>א</sup>My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place. <sup>16</sup> For now <sup>א</sup>I have chosen and <sup>א</sup>sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and <sup>א</sup>My eyes and <sup>א</sup>My heart will be there perpetually.

Isn’t that what Finney just said that I quoted to you? Doesn’t that also follow the Biblical record of revival? When we humble ourselves, God hears and is ATTENTIVE to the prayers we make! His eyes are upon us and His burning, loving, zealous heart is there with us perpetually. Sounds like revival to me!