



Network for Revival June 2019

Important Note: Many people on the Network mailing list are Ministers, Christian leaders or people with considerable spiritual experience (but others are most welcome). They will not have difficulty responding to the fairly deep challenges I put out. If you are not so experienced, don't be discouraged. When I first started serious prayer for Revival I felt out of my depth and challenged. But the Lord has done an immense amount to help me beyond that since then – although challenges continue. He'll do the same with you as you pray. He'll meet you where you're at.

We need to seek a personal revival of holiness

If we are praying for revival we need to remember that *revival begins at home – with me*. We need to allow the Lord to transform our lives. It may not be as spectacular as full corporate revival can be but it should be just as transforming. Revival centres on repentance.

However, longing for revival is not the prime motive for seeking deeper personal holiness. The first motive is for God's sake.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the deep way God has been dealing with me since I started in-depth prayer for revival is his taking a passage of Scripture I've known for decades and causing it to affect me as if I'd never read it before. This happened recently over one thing Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was utterly horrified at the prospect of bearing the judgment of God against all human sin. He said "*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*" (Matt 26:38). The intensity of his grief, in itself, could have killed him as he contemplated bearing the enormous load of human guilt, the unutterable weight of our sins and transgressions, and being 'made a curse for us.' He was bearing a hideous burden which is beyond our imagination, especially to one who had from eternity lived in the most intimate and unbroken communion with his Father. Just think about it.

This verse had the most profound effect on me. Yes, I can apply it to the sins of the church or society for which we urgently need revival. But before doing that I must apply it to my own sins, which he bore. Knowing what he went through in the Garden of Gethsemane, how can we tolerate sin in our lives?

It was, of course, followed by the ultimate agony of "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" This is the most painful statement in the whole of human history. This is Jesus experiencing the full horror of bearing human sin. He is experiencing a real separation from God his Father (and yet, paradoxically, the unity of the Trinity was, of course, unaffected). His words were an expression of ultimate pain and horror. He asked "Why?" but he knew the answer. Following the tradition of the psalmist, he expressed his excruciating agony in the question "Why?"

This is why we must search our hearts and examine our lives, then repent in depth for whatever we find – however 'small' – which is dishonouring to the Lord. That is as much a part of preparation for revival as persistent, in-depth intercession. After all, one of the great promises of Jesus to answer prayer is "*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*" (Jn 15:7). Deep commitment (which, of course, includes in-depth repentance) is the condition for receiving the answer to our prayers which we strongly desire.

As we allow the Lord to deal with our own sins then we can focus on the fact that the intense suffering of our Lord Jesus is a powerful motive for praying for revival. He did this for the church, which so often fails and tolerates sin. He did this for the society, which, in the West, largely ignores him. The suffering (the blood) of Christ is ignored and trampled underfoot. I recommend meditating at length on this.

We must pray for revival for Christ's sake.

The methods God uses to work out his purposes

I have majored on holiness above, as one vital aspect of preparing for revival. So now I am focusing again on the other vital aspect – prayer. God wants us to learn how to:

- intercede in greater depth than we have experienced before
- to persevere in prayer.
- To pray in faith

If we are seeking to pray in depth for revival we need to remember that one of the main ways God will train us in such intercession is through difficulty, disappointment and delay which test our faith. Obviously, the devil will also step up attacks on us and recognising what is going on is an important part of fighting back. The devil doesn't want revival!

We need to react positively to such experiences. Paul says *"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Rom 5:3-4). Similarly James writes *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"* (Jas 1:2-40).

I attach a paper I have written recently about this. The purpose of this paper is to show the biblical backing for believing that God often works out his purposes through disappointments, (sometimes very threatening) hindrances and human failings. These experiences are not unusual or apparently unfair exceptions inflicted on a few people. They are a fairly normal way in which God works out his purposes. Most important, however difficult to understand, in no way do they imply a lack of love, compassion and faithfulness on God's part. Nor should they deflect us from praying in faith on the basis of the Lord's remarkable promises to answer prayer.

The paper covers the following points

- God allows temporary, even long-term, hindrances to his purposes
- God fulfils his purposes through the (sometimes sinful) human behaviour
- God fulfils his purposes through negative events
- God works out his beneficial purposes through delayed answer to prayer of others
- God allows good people to face difficult experiences
- God wants us to pray in faith (and what that means in practice).
- Appendix: Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane about the cup of suffering (which some people mistakenly think means we should always pray an "if it be thy will" prayer rather than claiming God's promises to answer our prayers and believing he will do so – including for revival).

Quotations about revival

An experience of Revival in Arnol, Lewis "A wonderful thing happened. It was near the end of the meeting. My brother and I heard heavenly music as if it came out from the closet under the stairs. It seemed that a heavenly choir was passing through! It was somehow not like voices but like an orchestra, yet more wonderful. It was simply a marvellous sound. It was heavenly! It wafted through from under the stairs and moved slowly across the foyer and out through the front door. We looked at each other. I leaned across and whispered, 'Calum, did you hear that?' He nodded. Mrs MacFarlane, the minister's wife, was sitting in the doorway. She heard it too. She looked at us and saw that we were amazed for we had heard the heavenly music. She rose, tip-toed across to us and said, 'Did you hear that too?'"

A similar experience in Lemreway, Lewis "Just after this period of refreshing in Lemreway, there were about twelve people in the manse one night after a meeting. Having filled their cups with tea I walked from the dining-room to the kitchen and between the doors I heard wonderful singing. I stood in the doorway and said, 'Where is that singing coming from?' It seemed to be like heavenly singing. I had never heard anything like it. Another of the ladies heard it as well and said, 'I heard it when you were in the dining-room filling the cups.!"' (*Colin & Mary Peckham, Sounds from Heaven, p. 215, 230*)

Be assured of my prayers for you.

God bless you,

Tony

Revival is a supernatural event in the church and society. It is a work of the Holy Spirit which brings: an overpowering sense of God's presence leading to uplifting, inspired worship; an awesome sense of God's holiness leading to a deep conviction of sin, even amongst those outside the church; a supernatural drawing of people together and an outpouring of love for one another, all of which leads to a huge number coming to faith. People's lives and whole communities are transformed.