



Network for Revival 16 January 2020

How to pray for Revival: We're in a battle

In the last three issues I have been dealing with major foundations for prayer for Revival:

- *Praying in Holiness* (<http://networkforrevival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Prepare-13-August-2019.pdf>),
- *Praying in Faith* (<http://networkforrevival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Prepare-14-September-2019.pdf>).
- *In-depth Intercession*. <http://networkforrevival.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Prepare-15-November-2019.pdf>

In this issue I add to “Praying in Faith” in the context of the spiritual battle going on in the church at present.

I know of a church which has prayed for this New Year to be a time of 20:20 spiritual vision and I believe we need that in Network for Revival. We need to see the bigger vision, to see what's going on spiritually. One of the important things taking place is a major spiritual battle and part of its aim is to undermine our prayer for revival. It is a fairly new, very widespread and powerful attack on the attitude of Christians to Scripture. I'll give the specifics below. I wasn't intending to write on this but a few days ago I believe the Lord, out of the blue, spoke clearly to me about it.

I am not someone who “sees demons everywhere” but the New Testament does teach that we are in a battle. It has 212 references to the devil or demonic forces. Peter warns “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Paul writes “Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:11-12). Prayer for revival includes such spiritual warfare. But what are the battles we are currently facing? I note 3 major attacks. The first two are:

- **Destroying the church's reputation and seriously undermining its witness.** You may have seen two very shocking recent TV documentaries about the Church of England bishop who sexually abused teenagers and young men. It also accused the church hierarchy of a serious cover-up. This will do huge damage to the church. (*The C of E Daily Media Digest for the day of the second documentary also referred to a TV programme on a former deputy churchwarden who committed murder, a vicar who stole £60,000 of wedding fees and an 81 year old former priest convicted of sex offences*).
- **Removing freedom to convey some vital Christian truths** (this is developing but not yet established). The legitimate concern about religious extremism is moving towards banning Christians from communicating publicly about biblical teaching on sexuality or difficult subjects such as hell and possibly the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Saviour. (Such restrictions will cause great difficulty to conservative Christians but we must remember that full-scale persecution of Christians throughout the world is worse than it has ever been).

However it is the third one I want to major on in this letter. Amongst conservative Christians there is a spectrum of views of the Bible. Some are very fundamentalist, others are not, but they all firmly believe (as the Evangelical Alliance puts it) in “The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.”

It is absolutely crucial in Network for Revival that we firmly believe in the promises of Jesus to answer prayer and that we take our stand in prayer on those promises:

“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Mt 21:22).

“Everything is possible to the one who believes” (Mk 9:23).

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive it and it will be yours (Mk 11:24).

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Mt 7:7).

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven” (Mt 18:19).

“You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (Jn 14:14).

“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).

Because it is so vital, it is only to be expected that there would be a strong spiritual attack on trust in God's Word, encouraging Christians to ‘sit loose’ to Scripture or to denigrate it. What the Lord impressed on me the other day was that this spiritual attack is currently based upon the same-sex marriage, homosexual practice, transgender issue. I am

used to the controversy over homosexual practice because it was my private member's motion on the Church of England General Synod in 1987 which led to the synod voting by a 98% majority that "homosexual genital acts ... are ... to be met by a call to repentance and the exercise of compassion." That is still the official position of the Church of England.

How things have changed in the last 30 years! It is extraordinary. We live in a different world where, first, homosexual practice and now same-sex marriage are widely accepted – including amongst Christians. During that period disapproval in society of homosexual practice has fallen by 27%. Now only 13% of British people think it is wrong. But this letter is not about homosexuality as such. It is about the damage being done in the church through the discussions about it. Christians, including evangelicals and others who are conservative in their theology, are being challenged to take a liberal approach to Scripture in order to justify homosexual practice, same-sex marriage and transgender issues. But they may not be fully aware of what is going on.

The arguments that the Bible accepts homosexual practice are, in my view, very weak – and invalid. Currently, our Methodist friends are discussing them, and being encouraged to accept same-sex marriage. The literature (study guide) being circulated to and discussed with all Methodists over the next few months includes asking all of them to live and let live with various views of Scripture – some conservative, some in-between and some very liberal. If you want my response to those arguments from the Methodist Conference see [Critique of Methodist study guide on same sex-marriage report](#). It also is a cause of deep concern that a significant group of evangelicals on the Church of England General Synod have come out as supporting same-sex relationships.

Those Christians in favour of same sex marriage use the following arguments: "The Bible was written by people living long ago who didn't have the scientific knowledge about sexuality we have. They didn't know, for example, about *faithful, loving* same-sex relationships. What we read in the Bible about same sex relationships is in the context of idolatry and ancient ceremonials. The New Testament is all about loving each other, not rules and regulations about sexual behaviour." These are all inaccurate comments and I respond to them briefly in the attached paper and more extensively in [Critique of Methodist report on homosexual relationships](#) .

If we let such arguments convince us they can undermine our view of Scripture in other ways: Some Christians may wonder: "Maybe the amazing New Testament promise that God will grant salvation to all who believe is from a different age and is simplistic." In addition, some may think: "Maybe the amazing New Testament promises that God will answer prayer are from a different age and are simplistic."

So the most important battle is not over sexuality but over the authority of the Bible in our lives and, in particular, for Christians on this Network, over our attitude towards Jesus' amazing promises to answer prayer. Yes, there are conditions to him answering our prayers: praying in faith, perseverance in prayer, agreeing in prayer, 'remaining' in Jesus and his word remaining in us, ensuring the petition is biblical. But if these are fulfilled **Jesus PROMISES to answer**.

If we let reason or experience rule (the liberal approach) we will think God may not answer such petitionary prayers (and that will undermine the prayer). Some people will say "Oh, God won't always answer prayer so he might not bring revival." If we approach the situation in faith, the Lord promises to answer. The Lord has challenged me about this recently and I've reached the point where I'd rather have a problem with God apparently not answering a prayer because I firmly believe his promises, than I would allow myself to doubt his promises, toning them down rationally.

As Paul puts it, our faith should "not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2:5). The battle is between faith (based on trust in God's Word) and rationalism. Choose faith!

Having fulfilled the biblical conditions listed above, we need to pray boldly and persistently for revival on the basis of the seven promises above, without being deflected by rationalism. When the Lord grants revival he will bring spiritual cleansing to the church and call people back to His Word in Scripture (including on the sexuality issue).

So, let's be aware of what is really going on in the church at present and remain true to the authority of the inspired Word of God, and let us also pray that God will intervene powerfully in revival and restore those who have compromised over their view of Scripture. *[In the enclosed paper I give further details about this attack.]*

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.