

What Saith the Scripture?

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Revival- No. 2

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Text.--Psa. 85:6: "Wilt Thou not receive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

IV. I will mention a few of the indications of a revival approaching, or already commenced.

- 1. A conviction and feeling of the necessity of a revival on the part of the church, is an indication that the work as already begun in the church.

It often happens that a backsliding church have no real sense of their state. They have no such conviction as to produce action. They have no such feeling of its existence as really to make any effort to bring about a different state of things.

- 2. But when a revival is approaching, and in fact is really begun in some hearts, this conviction ripens into action. There is a prevailing sense of the necessity of a revival; and Christians begin to talk and to pray about it, and to bestir themselves to bring about a different state of things. They will call meetings for that purpose; inquire what shall be done, and take up the subject and act upon it. A spirit of prayer will be seen to prevail for a revival of religion. Christians begin to confess their sins, and to be in earnest about it -- the prayer meetings begin to fill up -- and a spirit of humiliation appears, and brethren do not spend their time in cold praying; they break down, and confess, and a new spirit is seen to be taking possession of them.

The expectation that a revival is coming, and the feeling that it has commenced, manifests itself; and a new order of things is manifestly about to be inaugurated. It is found that professors of religion are greatly searched; and are perhaps going to their minister and to each other to make inquires, and to request to be prayed for. Christians request the prayers of each other in their meetings or in private, and sinners are beginning to inquire what they shall do to be saved.

A solemnity prevails in the congregation and in the community. Professors of religion can more easily attend weekly prayer meetings, and are more ready for every good word and work. In short, it is seen that the subject of religion is beginning to take hold of the public

mind -- that people are becoming interested and excited. The congregations on the Sabbath are more solemn; prayer meetings take on a different type; secret prayer begins to be more generally practiced, and in a different spirit; the general tone of morals is elevated; there is less running after pleasure, less censoriousness, less self-indulgence and extravagance. The church are beginning to put on strength, and the ungodly are beginning to notice it. These and such like things, are indications of a revival already commenced.

V. I will now notice some of the conditions upon which a revival may be expected to become general in a community.

- 1. It must be remembered that a revival -- what we call a revival of religion -- is commonly the revival of a great number of persons at the same time. It is an individual matter, and there can be a general revival only as the number of individuals is multiplied that are revived. Christians must first make it an individual matter to be revived individually, for there can be a revival no further than it is made an individual concern, each one securing a revival in his own soul.
- 2. This being the case, the hearts of the people must be laid open to the searching of the Spirit, and the searching of the word of God.

While people are afraid of being searched, afraid of having their hopes tried, afraid of laying their hearts open to the truth, they will never be revived.

- 3. Another condition of a revival's becoming general is, everything must be arranged in subordination to the progress of the work -- everything must be made to bend to this. I have sometimes seen that churches had prearranged a number of things to be attended to that were really of a worldly nature.

They had their machinery all in motion. They had their sewing meetings, their church social meetings, and a multitude of things that interfered greatly with holding religious meetings for prayer and effort. Now when the Holy Ghost is poured out, everything should be made to yield to His influences; everything should be given up. For if only the same meetings are to be held, and the same course is to be pursued that has been pursued while the church was cold and formal, there is no hope of a general revival of religion. Every change must be made that is necessary to accommodate yourselves to the movements of the Holy Ghost.

Your sociables must be given up; your sewing societies and all these things that stand in the way of your giving an earnest and thorough attention to the work of revival, must be laid aside. It is often grievous to see that leading professors of religion in churches, who do not want to be revived, will try, if possible, to keep up all their pre-arrangements. And even ministers sometimes have so little sense of what are the real conditions of a general revival, that they will favor the keeping and carrying out of all their pre-arrangements, that were arranged when the church was cold, and dead, and worldly. I have often seen such obstacles as this thrown in the way, and kept in the way of a revival of religion.

I could state things that have come under my own observation that were greatly

distressing. The first I would know, I would find that something was right in the way of the progress of the work. The time had come for some festival, for some Sabbath School concert -- some church frolic. The female members could not attend the female prayer meeting because they had a sewing society, and in short their stiff arrangements, made and pre-arranged when the church was cold and dead, must all be carried out; no innovation must be allowed. And yet they profess to want a revival of religion.

I myself labored in one field, where the ministers invited me, and professed to want a revival of religion, and pledged themselves to take hold of the work. But I soon found that they had pre-arranged a multitude of things that were totally incompatible with the progress of the work; and these they must carry out. One thing that they had arranged was a pleasure excursion among themselves. The first I knew, they were all off on a pleasure excursion, and I was left to promote the revival. In short, I soon found that they had no idea of making anything and everything to bend to the promotion of the work. With the exception of my meetings, they were to have everything else go on as they had pre-arranged it; and my meetings must take care of themselves, while the church and minister were just going on attending to those things which they had pre-arranged when the churches were not in a revival state.

Now it is plain that if the church is ever to repent really, and wake up, means must be used, and if the means are to be used, other things must give way. The revival meetings must be attended, and must be attended by the mass of the church. The church must give themselves to the work, not only of attending themselves, but they must interest themselves to get others, the ungodly, to attend. They must make efforts to interest each other, and to interest the whole community in the work, if the work is expected to be general. They should canvass the town, as politicians would canvass a town to see every voter. The whole community should be visited.

It is sometimes absurdly said, that if the work is a work of God; it will go on; it will not be interfered with by this and that and the other meeting. But the fact is, the Holy Spirit converts and sanctifies men by means of the truth. Now if such is to be the result, the truth must be attended to, it must be listened to; people must give their individual attention till their convictions are deepened, and their hearts are broken.

A multitude of things must be so arranged as that the attention of the people can be given, and shall be given, to the meetings and to the means that shall be used by the Holy Spirit. Arrangements in the families should be of such a nature as to give the female members, and all classes, as much time as possible for directing their whole attention to the salvation of their own souls and the souls of those around them. Social parties and gatherings should be suspended, and laid aside; and the time of the people should be occupied with religious meetings, religious conversation and efforts. It is absurd to say, if it is the work of God it will go on in a sovereign manner, whatever course people may take in respect to giving their attention to it.

It cannot go on unless the attention of the people can be secured, and the attention of the

people cannot be secured unless they make it a point to lay aside everything that would interfere with giving their full attention to the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to the truths which He presents.

The people must yield themselves up to His influences, to His teachings; they must be diligent and persevering in the use of all the means to promote their own spiritual interests, and the spiritual interests of those around them. They must give themselves to much prayer; and they must plan nothing, execute nothing, carry out no purpose that will draw people off from prayer-meetings, from preaching meetings, from their closets, and from the use of every means of grace. Let necessary business be done; for that which is strictly necessary will not ordinarily much interfere with a revival movement. But let there be no pleasure excursions; no parties of pleasure; no neighborhood, or city, or church gossip; no running hither and thither to concerts, to lectures on various subjects -- or anything of the kind. It has come to be customary in many cities and towns, as winter approaches, the season when the evenings are long and meetings can be held to advantage, to secure lecturers to deliver lectures -- popular men that will interest and please the people, and perhaps introduce a great many light, unnecessary, and foolish things.

It is doubtless the policy of Satan to absorb the public mind with these lectures; and he often gets members of the church to purchase season tickets for such a course of lectures. I have sometimes found when I entered a field of labor, that many of the members of the church were pre-engaged to attend a course of lectures. They had bought their tickets, and therefore they must attend. There is surely nothing unlawful or improper in it, they would say, by way of excuse; it will do no harm.

Now if it does no other harm than to direct attention from the work of God, that will be harm enough. And the more popular the lecturer, the more fascinating, and if you please, the more important his lecturers, provided they do not fall in with the work of the Holy Spirit in converting souls, they are all the more dangerous, and should be avoided with all the more care.

Salvation is the supreme concern of life; and when the Holy Ghost descends to work among the people in order to secure their salvation, He expects their attention. He has a right to expect it; and He cannot work unless He can secure their attention. But in attempting to secure their attention He will not violate the law of liberty of will. They must consent to be influenced, to listen, to attend to the means; and they must avoid whatever will divert attention. There is no other way; and if they will not do this, they cannot have a revival; if they will not do this they cannot be saved.

The reckless manner in which people often interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit; the manner in which they slight His presence among them; the thoughtlessness with which many persons under such circumstances will plan and execute things that are calculated in the highest degree to divert attention, is really shocking and monstrous. The first you know, someone has, perhaps, a picnic, a party, a ride, a lecture, a discussion -- a

something to engage the attention of the people, and forthwith the people are drawn, like silly sheep, right into it. I say again and again, a condition, and an unalterable condition of a general revival of religion, is this: the people must give their attention to it; they must listen to the voice of God; they must avoid, as they would avoid damnation, whatever will turn them away from listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit in applying the word of God.

The minister must avoid, and resist everything that would divert attention; the church must make up their mind to introduce nothing, to countenance nothing, to allow nothing that will divert attention and draw the people off from attending to the salvation of their souls.

I was once called to labor in a revival of religion, and after our meetings had begun, I observed that a leading elder of the church was not present at one of our important meetings. I afterwards learned that he had planned a party, a large party at his house, in which they introduced dancing as a recreation; thus forsaking the meeting himself, and drawing off as many members of the church and of the congregation as he could get to attend his party. This movement immediately brought a blight upon his own soul, and was a great stumbling-block to the church. It introduced a state of bad feeling, and greatly hindered the general progress of the revival. The elder himself did not get into the work; and it was amazing to see what a blight there was upon him during the whole course of the revival. He was really well worthy of church censure, if not of excommunication. But he was a man of so much influence that they let it pass without church action; and this all the more grieved the Holy Spirit.

I can hardly lay too much stress upon this point, I have so often found when I have been called to labor in a place for the promotion of a revival of religion -- when I arrived on the ground and gave out the programme of my meetings that I wished to hold, I would find that for days, and weeks, and even months, there were certain evenings pre-occupied. Some had arranged to have a party; others had arranged to attend secular lectures. Then they had their Sunday School concerts, or other concerts for what they call charitable purposes; they had their Sewing Societies, and perhaps some pleasure excursion or something equivalent to that. The young people had arranged to have picnics; and then, perhaps, there was two or three times a week, a singing school; and besides these, perhaps one or two of what they call donation parties; and altogether they had an arrangement entirely incompatible with any hope of a successful revival effort. If, when they came to attend the meetings, they willingly relinquished all these arrangements; if they made up their mind to give themselves up to the teachings and guidance of the Holy Spirit; if, in short, they treated God's presence, when it came to be manifested among them with the respect and awe, and attention that they ought; if they had made up their minds to make everything yield to the great movements of the Holy Ghost -- if such was the course which they adopted and pursued, they were sure to have a general revival of religion.

But if they did not take this course, but persisted in acting according to their previous

plans in spite of the influences of the Holy Spirit, the revival would be curtailed just in proportion as they refused to give the Holy Ghost their whole attention.

There is a strange infatuation, it would seem, resting in many minds, on the subject of revivals, which is this: they assume that a revival of religion is altogether a miraculous affair.

It has been for a long time very common to see in the newspapers, revivals of religion reported, and great stress laid upon the fact that it came upon them without the use of means; that it came they know not how, in a sovereign manner, like a shower. And it would seem that this assumption is in the mind of the writer -- that just in proportion as it appeared to be disconnected with the use of any appropriate means, there was evidence of its being of God. Hence pains would be taken to show that it was disconnected with any appropriate means; and then it was supposed that it was surely the work of God.

But now let me say that this assumption is directly opposed to the Bible-teaching, and to the nature of things. God works by means, and through love, always observing in His works the laws of His own ordaining. In all the kingdom of nature, He uses means to accomplish His ends; and so also, in all the kingdom of grace, He uses means to accomplish His ends.

Now He converts the world by means of truth, by means of preaching the gospel, by means of religious meetings, and books, and tracts. Now who does not know this? And if this is the law of His operations, then it might be expected that a real work of God could be seen to be connected with the use of the appropriate means. This is the order in which God does everything, so far as we can see.

To assume, therefore, that if it be the work of God it will be disconnected with means, is an assumption directly opposite to the truth. If it is a work of God it may be expected that it will be by means of religious effort, as it was in the days of the apostles, by external preaching of the gospel, by the multiplying of religious efforts and means -- prayer, and every means that can arouse and fix the attention. This has surely always been, under the old dispensation and under the new, the history of God's dealings and of God's workings, both among His people and among the impenitent. The few cases of interposition, such as the conversion of Paul, without the employment of any human instrumentality, are only exceptional -- they are but exceptions to God's mode of dealing in all time. We are therefore no more to expect that God will work without means in the kingdom of grace, than in the kingdom of nature. And as long as this assumption is in the mind of the church, that just in proportion as a thing is apart, is separated from appropriate means, there is evidence that it is the work of God -- I say just as long as this assumption is in the minds of men, they will listlessly neglect the use of appropriate means, while scores of thousands of souls go down to hell. The assumption also, that the sovereignty of God will carry on the work whatever men do to divert attention from it, is as mischievous an assumption as possible. Nothing is farther from the truth, nothing bears on its face more the impress of the teachings of the devil than teachings that represent the sovereignty of

God as of such a nature that He will carry on a revival of religion whether people give their attention to Him or not.

And here I wish to make a special remark. A certain class of theologians, both in this country and in Europe, have spoken of the recent great revival as being surely the work of God, because, as they say, it was not introduced and carried forward by any human getting up, through the use of means.

Now the first remark I would make here is, that it is not true in a great many places, that the appropriate means were not used to arouse public attention, and to fix it, and to save the people.

Yet I suppose it is true that in many instances the people have become excited, and there has been a great movement where very little pains were taken to use the appropriate means. But observe, it is yet to be demonstrated that such a state of things has resulted, and is to result in a permanently healthful state of religion. I have myself been watching this movement, with its results, with the greatest interest. I have known how many persons have felt, and how a certain school of theologians have talked and written, claiming this to be peculiarly a work of God, on account, they say, of the sovereign manner in which it had been introduced and carried on. Now I could say much to show, that in most places there had been a great effort, and a great deal of prayer, and a great many looking with expectation for a revival; that this recent work had been introduced through the labors of evangelists, and pastors, and things have been culminating to that point, and there has been a general expectation among the most praying people that there was to be a great and general outpouring of the Holy Ghost; so that it is a great mistake for that class of theologians to maintain that their revival came without the use of any appropriate means. But this I admit, that when it did so increase as to be carried, to human appearance, beyond the reach of human effort, and spread beyond ministerial influence, and beyond church influence, that then it took on a peculiar type; and it was that state of things that led these certain theologians to triumph as if this was really a work of God because it was carried by such manifest sovereignty. Now by this time some judgment can be formed of the comparative results of this revival and of those revivals that have manifestly been brought about by human instrumentality and by the use of appropriate means.

And now I appeal to those who have seen both kinds of revivals, the ministers and churches throughout this country. Which revivals have produced the most intelligent and stable converts, this last great movement that has been carried on so much apart from ministerial and church influence, or those revivals of religion that you have formerly had, in which every way was taken to promote an intelligent, thorough, deep work of grace among you?

Take the converts that you have received to your churches. Compare in your own minds the converts of this last wide-spread revival, with the converts of those revivals which you have had on former occasions, in which the greatest pains have been taken to instruct

the people, to guard against deception, and to promote a revival of religion. Will not the ministers and churches throughout this country look at this? Will they not make up their minds whether there is any more evidence that this last revival is the work of God, than that those former revivals were the work of God?

At least in our field where there has been a great movement of this latter kind, a member of one of the churches told me, a few months since, that the results could not be seen. But I have no doubt that a great many have been converted, thousands and hundreds of thousands; and a great many, also, have been deceived. But the inquiry that I wish to put is this: looking at the converts of former revivals which were brought about by the diligent and persevering use of means, and at the converts of this last revival so far as it was brought about without any such use of means, which class of converts give the highest evidence of being truly the children of God? Of being useful, intelligent, and stable Christians? I think it of great importance that the church should raise this inquiry, should settle this question; for I greatly fear that many ministers and many churches are in danger of passing into the delusion that revivals will come whether they use the means or not; and that a revival is more desirable when it comes without pains being taken, special pains to instruct and enlighten the people, than when such pains are taken. I beg the churches to look at this, and the ministers to look at this. I know it is not fully time yet for them to come to an enlightened decision in regard to the results in many cases, yet will the churches keep this before their minds; for in the course of a very few years it will be made manifest to observers what has been the result of this great general movement, compared with those movements that have covered less extent of territory, but have been the immediate results of efforts designed to promote revivals.

But here let us say again, lest I should be misunderstood, it is not true that this late great revival was in its beginnings disconnected with means, so that it came upon the country like a shower of rain, nobody expecting it and nobody having any agency in promoting it.

I know full well that human agency was concerned, on a very large scale, in introducing the great movement and in promoting it; and up to a certain point it was confined to those localities where such exertions were made. Such prayer was offered as seemed to rend the heavens; and such a crying out for a general revival as perhaps this country never saw, prevailed in connection with powerful revivals of religion, for some two years before the revival broke out in the cities of New York, and Philadelphia, and Boston, and other places throughout the country.

But there was a point where an influence was manifestly shed forth upon the land far and wide, that rolled over the land like the waves of the sea; and that no doubt converted, as I have said, hundreds of thousands, and in some cases, at least, with comparatively little human effort being expended to promote it. But just in proportion as this revival was in fact disconnected with the intelligent use of appropriate means, I fear it will be found to have been disastrous in its results. I beg that this may be examined into, and the question fairly dealt with. I know myself that many good ministers stood confounded for a time. They did not know what to say. The movement seemed to be very much beyond the reach

of their influence, and very much beyond the influence of the most pious members of the church -- at least this was the case in many localities.

Now the question that I ask is: what are the results, so far as it took on that type? What are the results of the movement in those cases where so much stress was laid upon its being the result of the sovereignty of God? Will the ministers and churches where the revival was of that character, that great stress was laid upon it as being the sovereign work of God without the interposition of man -- will you say, as in view of the solemn judgment, what has been the result of that type of this movement? I mean, what are the results, compared with the results of those revivals that have so long blessed this land; and that were conducted on gospel principles, through the instrumentality of preaching, prayer meetings, and the diligent use of all the means of grace?

Which form of revival appears to be most desirable from the results? This is a fair question, and I hope the church may be able intelligently to answer it.

- 4. Too much stress cannot be laid upon prayer in the promotion of revivals of religion. There has been a great deal of prayer connected with the recent movement; and there has always been a great deal of prayer connected with those revivals that have been promoted by the diligent use of the means of grace.

Prayer has been the watchword. There has been a great deal of secret prayer, a great deal of social prayer, a great deal of public prayer. In short, men and women have given themselves to prayer, and in many instances they have prayed all night in their closets; and sometimes in social circles their minds have been exceedingly filled with prayer, and they have cried mightily to God.

But nevertheless, if the church has been thoroughly refreshed and revived, they have got a blessing that they will not lose. It will work out permanent results and reformation among them.

- (1.) It will be seen, after days and years, that they know more of God; are more holy and more useful. In many cases, I have known ministers to say, "My church is a new church. They are a very different people from what they used to be -- more ready to every good word and work, more watchful, more prayerful, more humble, more united, more self-denying, more ready to use means for a revival of religion than at any other time; in short, they are altogether a different and a better people."
- (2.) The same will be true of the world. That is, if the work becomes general, it will be seen that there is a great reformation in the community.,

Those who live through it and harden themselves, and remain unconverted, will wax worse and worse; and perhaps behave worse afterwards than before. But if the revival has been general, a large number have been converted; and it will be seen that it has produced its effect upon the whole community. Sabbath desecration, drunkenness, and every form of vice have been made in

a measure to hide their head. The public sentiment has been formed; the public conscience has been aroused; the fear of God has pervaded the community; and for a generation the influence of that revival will be seen in that community.

Many more things I might say under this head, but I must pause here for the present.

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of

moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.

7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.