

Revival Possible and Actual

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The 52nd chapter of Isaiah's prophecy and verse 10. "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."¹

God is never on the defensive. God is always on the offensive.

In the Old Testament Scriptures and in Old Testament history when a man went to battle he covered over his arm with armor. Not so with the Lord. The Lord when he goes to battle uncovers his arm. For no one can do anything against the Lord. The Lord doesn't need to defend himself. So the Lord is always on the offensive.

Of course, when men go to do a task they strip from off themselves, oh, cumbersome garments. And we have also a picture in this text of God in business with his arm being bare with all the energy of omnipotence loosed to achieve the purpose and plan of almighty God. And the purpose and plan of almighty of God is the reviving of his church, the reviving of his work and the reviving of his people.

This text repairs to the great revivals that God has given to the Church in the days that are past. It also repairs to the great revivals that God is going to give to his church in the future because of false doctrine, misinterpretation of the Word, a jaundiced view of the power of God.

We have in every hand today, declared even in evangelical circles, that the age of revival is over, that God cannot revive his work today and that God will not revive his work today.

I come back to my text. "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."²

The Church in its history has had times of great barrenness, times when the whole energies of the Church were fat, that the Church was in a paralytic condition. It had no strength, no fire, no zeal, no enthusiasm and no outreach, a barrenness prevailed. The

¹ Isaiah 52:10.

² Ibid.

water of God didn't seem to run. The blessing of God didn't seem to be about. The presence of God was not manifested. It was a severe winter time in the Church. There was a frostiness about the Church's services. There was a chilling in the hearts. There was an iciness about the whole structure and condition of the Church. It was wintertime indeed and there was a bleakness and a barrenness that comes with intensive cold.

And then, suddenly, Spring time came. Suddenly the hardest hearts were melted. Suddenly, the Church that was dead left off the grave clothes and came forth in stride. Suddenly, the singing of birds were heard and the wilderness blossomed like the rose and that which was barren became a fruitful field?

What happened? God had made bare his arm in revival.

There is such a thing, my brethren, as genuine revival. Revival has been in the Church and I believe and am confident will be in the Church again.

I want to speak about some things that have to do with revival. First of all, I want to speak about the origin of revival. Have you read Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost? It would not be held up as a classical sermon in any good class teaching preaching and teaching homiletics of hermeneutics. It was a very plain statement, this statement of Peter. There was nothing clever about Peter's presentation. There was nothing clever about Peter's sermon. There was nothing clever about the way Peter addressed the multitude on the day of Pentecost. It was simple. It was plain. It was easy to be understood. But you couldn't call it a classic sermon. It couldn't call it something to be held up as a model for preaching.

And yet what happened? The great revival that ushered in the New Testament Church took place and 3000 souls were converted.

I am not talking about numbers, I am talking about genuine conversions. I am not talking about estimating this revival by a computer. I am talking about 3000 souls passing from death to life from the power of sin and Satan unto God.

Who counted them? God the Holy Ghost counted them. That's who counted them.

Of course, that day of Pentecost had its prophecy, you know, in the Old Testament. And if you search far into the Old Testament—there is no use me searching for you—you will find about 3000 being slain on the day of Pentecost in the Old Testament and thank God 3000 were slain in the New Testament day of Pentecost and God started that great movement, the New Testament Church which in a few years had removed the temples of idolatry and spread like wildfire through the whole Roman world.

We are talking about the mosques that are in England. If Christianity in England was what Christianity was in the first century, the mosques would fall before the power of the gospel. It used to be that we sent missionaries to Islamic countries. Now Islam is send

missionaries to England and England is becoming a prey to Mohammedanism. What an indictment of the Christian Church.

But what was it that made Peter's sermon so powerful? It wasn't his expertise. It wasn't his language. It wasn't his ability. It wasn't his presentation. It wasn't his eloquence. It wasn't [?]. It wasn't his promotion. All these things we are told today by the modern Church are all important to revival. Revival has to be promoted. You must get a clever scholar, a great preacher, a man who can play on words, a man who is well received. And until you get that you can't have revival.

I will tell you, friend, the origin of revival rests not in man, but rests in God the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God alone can originate revival. We need to invite the Spirit of God back into the Church. We need to invite the Spirit of God back into our lives. We need to invite the Spirit of God back into the pulpit. We need to invite the Spirit of God back into our towns and our countryside. Only the blessed Spirit of God can originate revival. And when the Spirit of God originates revival, then the simplest message, the simplest statement becomes a burning flame that burns its way to victory in the hearts of sinners who for years have slept in their sin unmoved, unconcerned, unconvicted. The blessed Spirit of God alone can originate revival.

And when he commences his work he commences it in the hearts of God's people and he stirs them up to pray. The first sign of revival is a stirring of the hearts of God's people to pray. You need to pray today that God will pour upon you the Spirit of prayer and the Spirit of supplication.

Let me say a word about the operation of revival. Revival operates in God's divinely ordained way. God does not work contrary to his Word. He always works in unison and in absolute conformity to his own Word. For his Word is his will and God's will is uncovered in his Word.

God has ordained that by the Word of God preached men shall be saved Old, plain, homely preaching of the Word of God is God's method to the salvation of souls.

You see, the Church doesn't like the plain preaching of the gospel.

Prophecy unto us smooth things.³

I wish our preacher didn't stick to that old, plain gospel. It is embarrassing when we bring our friends to church.

The Church of Jesus Christ is largely sleeping. It is like a great bedroom and you have all the Christians in bed and they are all sleeping. And they are saying, "Please don't wake me up. I want to sleep on."

³ See Isaiah 30:10.

And, of course, when God starts to operate a revival, people cannot sleep. You can't sleep in church when the Spirit of God awakes the people.

Look at the first verse of this 52nd chapter. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength."⁴

Wake up, you sleepy Christians. Awake, thou that sleepest. Arise from the dead. Christ will give you life.

If ever there was a time God's people needed to be awakened, it is today. The Spirit of God operates by awaking people. And then when they are awakened, when God's people are awakened, this fire of prayer starts to burn.

Oh, what a wonderful thing it is when you go in to a prayer meeting where the fire of God is burning. There is nothing so dead as a dead prayer meeting. There is nothing more alive than a live prayer meeting.

If you want to feel light in your soul, then get into an old fashioned white hot prayer meeting where men are praying and they are not stringing sentences together and they are not saying the old things that you are sick hearing in prayer meetings. Oh, no. They are praying. They are pleading with God. They are crying to God. Sometimes it is a groan. Sometimes it is a tear. Sometimes it is a broken sentence. Sometimes it is a sigh, but it is prayer.

It is the way the Lord operates revival.

Now I want to say a word about the offensiveness of revival. People are offended when revival comes. When the preacher gets stirred up, my, they don't like it. They say, "Couldn't we go back to the old days where we came to church and the service was just for 60 minutes, not a minute less, not a minute more, where the preacher never exhorted us to pray, where he preached such a nice sermon that we went out and we used with our own happiness and complacency?"

All was well. But, boy, when the Lord starts working in a church, then this apathy, this complacency has to go. There is nothing like God breaking the dignity of the Church and writing on men's hearts the destiny of their souls. And that is what happens when a revival comes.

It is a privilege to go into a dead church and start preaching this living gospel. I had that experience over in the Isle of Man as a young preacher. I was asked to go and preach in two Methodist Churches in Port Aaron and Port Saint Mary in the tip of the island, the south part of the island by a godly Methodist preacher. When the conference came he was changed and when I got there, there was an old pipe smoking, tobacco spitting rascal and he had been appointed. So I was in trouble.

⁴ Isaiah 52:1.

I remember sending a message home to the church at home and saying, "You had better pray for me. I am going to have a riot or a revival."

And when I went into the pulpit and started to preach people woke up all right. And they woke up in anger and they said, "This is a disgrace. Who is this man? Whoever invited him here? Why did he come here?"

And then the Sunday school superintendent got converted. I tell you, the day he was converted it was like a bang going off in the church. He walked up and knelt down and asked God to save him. I tell you, there was trouble then.

And then more people got saved, choir members, stewards, circuit stewards, a whole of them. God started to save them.

And one old man came up one night I was preaching and he says, "What are you doing?"

Says I, "Go back to your place, sir, you ain't seen anything yet."

And that night I think those 14 people got converted. And, oh my, there was trouble. Thank God they had all sense. When they got converted they left the old dead hen. They didn't stay there. They got out.

When I was praying that old minister he was outside smoking. I said, "We have got the fire inside. He has got the smoke outside. And it is not holy smoke he has."

Yes, there is always an offensiveness when the gospel is preached, yes.

The staidness has to place to earnestness. Did you come to church today with earnestness? Did you come to church asking God to prepare your heart that he might stir you to the depths of your soul? The pulpit wine gives place to rich pulpit wine. The people drink it up and they are blessed in their souls. They go away with rejoicing spirits.

Yes, there is always an offensiveness with a revival. When God blessed me and filled me with the Holy Spirit many years ago down in the old church, the first morning I preached we had a riot. Some man got up and he said, he said, "Paisley has gone mad."

He never came back. I said, "Hallelujah, a seat for a sinner." And, thank God, many sinners got those seats and took those seats and came to Jesus Christ."

What happens if revival comes? Oh, my friend, when revival comes there is an offensiveness. The offense of the cross has not ceased. Unsaved people, ungodly people will not understand. They will not understand why you are concerned for their soul, why you shed tears for their soul, why you are in agony for their soul, not understand.

Parents come to me and say, "I long to see my children saved."

I understand that, mother. I understand that, father. There is only one way to get them saved and that is to melt their hard hearts with your warm tears. You have got to learn what it is to sob for souls as those that give account. We have got to learn what it is to plead with God and not take no for an answer. We have got to learn what it is to lay hold upon the horns of the altar of God. And that brings offensiveness. There is always offensiveness where revival is.

Let me say a word about the ordering of revival. When man interferes in God's work, God's Spirit is always grieved and quenched away. God is sovereign in his choice of instruments. In revival God chooses most unusual people to do his work.

In the 59 revival God didn't go to the pulpits of Ulster and choose a minister. God didn't go to the moderator of the General Assembly or the bishops in the Church of Ireland or the president of the Methodist Church. God saved a young man in the Ballymena district. God saved another young man in the Ballymena district. God saved two other young men. And they decided to go to an old school house and to pray. And the people laughed at them.

Jerry Menides said, "They told us God couldn't send revival." Said, "Revivals are all the things of the past. There will never be another revival."

That encourages me because people are saying the very same thing today. And then there was a breaking down and those young men went out to tell what God had done for their soul and God took them and used them and a revival was spread by the testimony of those converts.

Of course, they were raw. They weren't theologians. They weren't clever. They weren't pulpit orators. They weren't preachers. They were living witnesses. That is what they were.

If you ever read that verse in the book of the Acts, let's just turn to it. What a verse it is, Acts chapter one. The last promise that Jesus gave before he ascended up to heaven to sit with his Father in his throne, carry on his great intercessory ministry for and on behalf of his Church. And in verse eight of Acts one he said, "But ye shall receive power."⁵ That's what the Church needs. "...after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be [preachers]."⁶ It never said that. Ye shall be scholars. No. Ye shall be clever orators. Ye shall be evangelists. Not a word of it. It says, "Ye shall be witnesses."⁷

Do you know what a witness is? It is a fellow who tells what he himself has seen. That is what a witness is. If you have an accident there is no use bringing a professor with all his cleverness to be a witness for you if he didn't see the accident. But if there was some

⁵ Acts 1:8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

clodhopper standing by the side of the road and saw it, he is the best witness you can get. He is going to tell what he actually saw.

And that is what God is looking for, people that have an up to date experience and they can tell what they have seen. Of course, if you have no up to date experience you can't witness.

People tell me it is hard to witness. It is not hard to witness if your Christian experience is up to date. Of course if it is blue molded, if it is as dry as the dust and Pharaoh's money it will be no good. But, oh, if you are filled with the Spirit of God, if you have touched God in the morning before you left your room, if you have filled your heart with God's Word before you did anything else, then you go out. You will find it easy to witness. You will want to witness.

D.L. Moody said, "I am going to witness to one person every day about the Lord Jesus." And that is what he did.

But one day he forgot to do it and he went to bed and God spoke to him and said to him, "You didn't witness today."

He says, "Lord, it is too dark now."

God says, "Get out of your bed. Keep your word."

So he got out of bed and he said he opened the door and he said it was raining cats and dogs. And he stood there. And suddenly he saw a man walking down the street with an umbrella and he walked over to the man. He says, "Can I share your umbrella?"

He said, "Certainly."

And he not only shared his umbrella, but he shared Christ with the man.

Moody had an up to date experience of Christ. That is why he witnessed. And he was zealous in his witness.

R.A. Torrey has a little book called *Why God Used DL Moody* and he tells in that book how Moody had a great Sunday school. This will appeal to those who are in Sunday school work here in this church. And Moody was intent to build the largest Sunday school he could have and he had almost 2000 kids in his Sunday school and he knew all about it.

And one day he was walking down a road in Chicago and there was a nice little girl about five years of age and she was standing there, a very sweet, wee girl. And Moody said, "Would you like to come to my Sunday school?"

And she said, "I would. I would."

So he explained where it was and she says, "I'll come next Sunday."

And Moody stood at the door of that auditorium and he saw them all in, but the little girl didn't come. And Moody's heart was broken. And he looked everywhere. Every day he went out and he looked for that girl.

And one day he was in a street car and he saw the wee girl standing by the side of the road. And he jumped off the street car and ran over to her. And when she saw him coming she took to her heels and she started to run. So Moody ran after her and she ran down one street and Moody after her. She ran up another street and Moody after her. She ran up another street and Moody still after her. And she ran down a lane way and Moody still after her. And she ran into a house and Moody went after her into the house. And he ran upstairs and dived under the bed and Moody went up the stairs and dived under the bed and pulled her out and he said, "They day I pulled that girl out I pulled not only her, but her father and her mother and her whole family into the kingdom of God." And her father was a well built publican liquor man. And a man of God pulled her father out of that liquor shop into Christ the day he pulled that child out from under the bed.

There is an offensiveness about revival. There is an ordering that is God's ordering about revival. And he orders it when we are prepared to be witnesses to Jesus Christ.

Did you witness to one soul this week that you are a child of God? Come on, now, did you? Did you speak to one person and tell them the need of Christ? Did you give out one gospel tract or invite one soul to come and hear the gospel? Come on, now. Let's face up to it.

Do you believe in hell? Do you? Do you believe that every man and every woman in this city that are not saved by grace will be in hell forever? Do you? Do you believe that? Do you believe that your neighbors whom you know and talk to, that if they are not saved they will be in hell? Do you really believe it? Well, if you really believed it, friend, you would be on the job to pluck them out of the fire. You would be on the job to see them saved. Oh, may God awaken us to the reality of hell. May God awaken us to the reality of our responsibility to win souls for Christ. May every one of us this morning say, "Lord, make bare your mighty arm."

The final word I want to bring today is the onus of revival. There is an onus in every one of us not to resist the Spirit of God as he speaks to us. I find today there is a resistance, a resistance among God's people. They don't want to be pressurized by the Holy Spirit to fulfill their responsibility as children of God. They don't want to have to go the second mile. They don't want to have to make the sacrifice. They don't want to be put in the place where they have to put God first. The onus is upon you, child of God. The onus is on you to respond to the spirit of God, to be a willing people, an obedient people, a diligent people, to have done with sloth and to make Christianity not something that is sewed on to our lives, but our whole life.

To many Christians Christianity is an appendices, it is an extra. Christianity shouldn't be an extra. Christianity should be our whole life. We should be living epistles, read of all men.

Your life is either a Bible or a libel. What is it today, a Bible or a libel?

Oh, my friend, God wants to make bare his arm. May God speak to our hearts today and may God burn this text into our hearts that the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Revival is possible. Revival can become an actuality. May God hasten his reviving purposes amongst us for Jesus' sake.