

# FOUR MAJOR HINDRANCES TO REVIVAL

#4 IN SERIES OF ARTICLES ON REVIVAL

BY DON STANTON

## “Quench not the Spirit”

(1 Thessalonians 5:19)

IN THE MASTER’S messages to the seven Asian Churches (Revelation 2 - 3), we see widespread sins hindering revival and God’s blessing – the sins of departure from first love, worldliness, spiritual idolatry, compromise, tolerance of evil, resting on past reputation, as well as complacency, pride and lukewarmness. (See our booklet, *“Personal to the Churches.”*)

Let us now consider four of the other major hindrances to revival.

Much of the Church is sorely in need of revival today, and sins that are preventing revival should be exposed.

We may all feel that we are getting tired of **hearing** about sin. But my reader, we should be getting to utterly **deplore** the presence of sin – not only in the world, but in the church, and in our own lives.

We need to have every sin in our lives exposed by the Light of the Word of God, so that we may flee with our sin-sick souls to the Saviour, for His deliverance and renewal.

We sing rather glibly, “Search me, O God, and know my thoughts I pray,” but immediately put up the wall of self-defence and self-righteousness. We need to declare war on sin - **firstly in our own lives.**

Today we see a sin-sick Church, and a sin-sodden world. Why? Because of a long history of sin-tolerance. And one of the great sins we tolerate is called **Enmity!**

### 1. RIGHT WITH GOD BUT WRONG WITH MAN?

We talk about our standing and our relationship with the Master – we’re justified, sanctified, temples of the Holy Spirit, and seated with the Messiah in Heavenly Places, but at the same time we tolerate enmity in our hearts against our brother or sister. We’re “right with God” but wrong with man! Is that possible? We fool ourselves! What type of Christianity is this? When we hold a controversy against another person, God holds a controversy against us!

Again we sing, rather weakly, “I surrender all - all to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give.” But the Holy One replies, “I will not receive an offering at your hand - your hands are full of blood - full of hatred, bitterness, wrath, anger, unforgiveness, evil-speaking, murmuring, gossip, slander, malice, envy, and faction!”

The Psalmist asks:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.”  
(Psalm 24:4)

For this reason, we are commanded:

“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”  
(James 4:8)

We say murder is terrible. Y’shua says:

“But I say to you that whoever nurses any anger against his brother will be subject to judgment.” (Matthew 5:22)

One reason for the Church’s powerlessness and emptiness today, is the enmity that exists amongst the believers. Today hatred is not only in the world, but in the interaction of “believers.”

Again, our Master has definite teaching on this:

“If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

This will mean humility - dropping of the pride - especially if you think there is more fault on the other side. But our relationships must be put right - relationships in the family, in the Church, in our work, in the town, or wherever they are not right. What a disgrace - how unbiblical it is when Christians hold grudges against each other.

How about looking around the meeting next Sunday morning and seeing if there is ill-feeling when you view each saint! And the believers to whom you are never very friendly, why not go out of your way to show concern – Christian love? And don’t forget the strangers!

The great revivalist, JONATHAN EDWARDS, wrote!

“Abundance has been lately done at making up differences, confessing faults one to another, and to making restitution; probably more within these two years, than was done in 30 years before.”

As the prophet Hosea said, it is time to break up our fallow ground - our stony hearts - and to seek YHWH until He comes to rain righteousness on us. (Hosea 10:12). It is time our hatred turned to love; our bitterness changed to joy; our wrath to blessing; and our evil speaking to prayer.

“Let the peace of the Messiah rule in your hearts.” (Colossians 3:15)

## **2. THE SELF-LIFE**

Yes, we need to make war on sin. It is time we sleepy Christians woke up and saw what sin is doing! We should take stock of what is happening around us - the utter ruin that sin is causing.

We should also see what sin does in our own lives – it robs us of spiritual strength; robs the Father of His glory; robs the Son of His fruit, and robs the Holy Spirit of vessels He could use.

We know for sure that Satan is not half-hearted in his war on the saints (1 Peter 5:8-9). Just take a look into the church, or perhaps even into your own life, and see what havoc the evil one has done. But look at the church again, and see how half-hearted it is in the war against sin, the flesh and the devil.

It seems that many of us Christians adopt a policy of peaceful co-existence with sin and the devil. Let us not be deceived; peaceful co-existence in the devil’s vocabulary means surrender of righteousness and holiness. We must never compromise and seek to “come to terms” with sin!

Our war against sin may mean that we ourselves will get hurt. It will definitely mean that our flesh – our self-life – will receive strong blows. But should we not welcome that? Our self-life needs to be “put to death” – that is, rendered inoperative by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Self is one of our great enemies – probably the worst – and pandering to it is a great hindrance to revival. We may make excuses for it, but our selfishness, our self-centredness, and our self-gratification is grieving God. We may not regard ourselves as selfish, but self is evident in many ways.

**Self-preservation.** How we protect ourselves! We often forget that we are to die daily. We are not called to preserve our carnal life but to render it inoperative. It is to be, “not I, but Christ who lives in me.”

**Self-centredness.** Have you noticed that often the world seems to revolve around “me?” I seem to be the one who matters most. We say, “Oh that’s only natural.” But the Master needs to be the centre of our lives. Every moment needs to revolve around **Him**.

**Self-defence.** “It is God that justifies. Who is he who condemns?” The self-life would vindicate and justify itself, but the spiritual man, even though he may be accounted as a sheep for the slaughter, rests on the Word of God. “It is God that justifies.”

**Self-will.** Oh that stubborn will that we have! How reluctant it is to yield everything to God. It may yield in many things - maybe 95% of things, but it will resist in some areas. It will obey on certain conditions – on the provision that it can have some say in the matter.

Many Christians are not willing for God’s greater blessing (and they may never have it!) Many want revival to come in the Church, but they are not willing to be revived in their own personal lives.

The Sovereign Yahweh says, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the best of the land.” (Isaiah 1:19)

We need to surrender our wills to God – to be willing to obey Him at any cost; willing to see Him work in any way He chooses; willing to suffer shame and loss; willing to take that humble place as a bond-servant of Christ.

“Do you not know that ... you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

**Self-comfort.** “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,” cries the prophet Amos (6:1). Today we are an ease-loving generation. It’s not only in the world; we Christians are often allured by the lust for comfort. There is nothing wrong with being comfortable, except that we are supposed to be on a battlefield.

There is nothing wrong with comforts, except that we spend too much of our Master’s resources in getting them for ourselves, and use too much of His time in enjoying the comforts. We hate being discomforted!

It is a great pity that we are not as concerned with taking up the armour of God as we are of taking to the arm-chair for “the old man.”

**Self-pity.** When things go wrong we are inclined to pity ourselves. In all circumstances, however, we have the assurance of the Heavenly Father, “I have loved you,” and, “All things work together for good,” etc. What excuse then is there for self-pity?

Yes, we have self-pity over our small, or big, troubles, but consider others around us who are sliding into Hell daily. Are we such Jonahs that we have such pity for our “own little bush,” but we have little pity for those perishing all around us?

**Touchiness.** An exhibition of the self-life is our touchiness. Praise the LORD if you are free from this sin. It is a sin that plagues many, and that grieves the Holy Spirit. We often justify touchiness with, “that’s just a part of my temperament.” But from this sin springs many others - bitterness, hatred, strife, division, gossip, and evil thoughts. We need to humble ourselves before the Holy One or our pride will yet ruin us.

The Word of God says that in the last days, men will be lovers of themselves. (2 Timothy 2:3). That is not surprising seeing the natural man is naturally egotistical. But what a disgrace, how unscriptural it is, when followers of Y’shua the Messiah, who loved not His own life, can be called “lovers of themselves.”

“He who claims that he lives *and* remains in Him (*the Messiah*), should himself walk *in the same manner* as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

### 3. WRONG MOTIVES

Revival is the great need in the 21st century lukewarm “Laodicean church.” Praise the LORD, many believers are feeling the burden and are praying earnestly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this our day.

But let us consider the motive for our praying for and desiring revival. James tells us that sometimes we do not receive the answer to our pleas because we “ask amiss.” (James 4:3). If our motive is wrong, we need not expect anything of the Lord.

Our motive is something that we should think about, and ask, “Is it pure or impure?” for we are exhorted in Hebrews 10:22 to, “Draw near with a true heart.”

A wrong motive is often the reason why God holds back His blessing. Let us stop and ask, “Why do I want revival?” Is it so that we may consume the blessing on our own pleasures? Or for such reasons as ...

**Personal gain.** Is our prayer for revival motivated by selfishness? Is there any thought of personal gain or advancement? Is there a hope that revival will fulfil my personal schemes?

**Publicity and fame.** This is a trap especially for Christian leaders. We may seem to be praying and working for revival for the Lord’s glory but underneath there may be a subtle desire for our own approval or spiritual reputation. We may test ourselves by asking, “Would I be happy to remain in the background and unseen in a time of revival?”

**Church reputation.** Some would seek revival for the sake of church reputation. The assembly may be known as spiritual, and there is a concern that it should not lose its reputation.

**Membership.** To seek revival simply to build up our church roll and attendance is also an impure motive, as is also seeking revival for the sake of filling the church treasury or building fund.

**Denominationalism.** Some are so concerned for the advance of their own denomination that this becomes the motive in praying for revival. Any group seeking revival only in its own denomination needs to check its motives. The Church, the Body of Christ, is not a denomination, but it comprises all true born again believers, irrespective of “label.” And it is not God’s will to revive just one section of the Church. And be sure, it would be hard to find one assembly where revival is not needed!

Revival can not be “owned” by one group, just as rain will not fall only on one field. Woe to that group who would seek to control and own the fire of God. So each one needs to test his motive; if revival began in another group, a different denomination, which is “not as Biblical and spiritual as mine,” would I be as thankful as if revival started with my group?

Alas, many would be offended and would oppose or doubt a work of God in another group. But if our motives are pure, we will yearn to see genuine revival everywhere, and we’ll genuinely praise the LORD wherever we see the work of His mighty Arm.

These wrong motives, and all others, need to be guarded against lest we “pray amiss.” It is so easy to pray for a right thing with a wrong motive. The only true motive for seeking revival is that Yahweh-Y’shua may be glorified, His Name honoured, and His purpose fulfilled.

To desire one’s spiritual growth, the increase in the church, the evangelization of the town or the world, and the salvation of sinners, is right and good. We should long for these, but these desires, in themselves, are not the highest and pure motive for revival. These are secondary motives.

We usually think of the desperate need of unsaved souls. But most important is **the Name of Yahweh and of His Anointed One**. It is the LORD’s Glory that is at stake. Any prayer that does not have as its prime motive, the **Glory of God**, is a prayer that “asks” amiss.

Remember, man was made for God's Glory (Isa. 43:7, 21, 25 Eph. 1:12); God promised Israel blessing "for My holy Name's sake" (Ezek. 36:21-22. Isa. 48:9); "that I may be glorified." (Isa. 60:21). So we need to see beyond our spiritual needs and the salvation of souls, and see the Glory of God.

Oh, just look around and see how the Name of Christ is blasphemed; how His gracious mercy is mocked and rejected; how His Word is torn asunder – and not just by the world, but also by some calling themselves "Christians" (modernists). See how His Spirit is grieved; His love is despised; and His truth is turned into a lie. Oh how God's Glory is spurned!

This is the thing that should set us praying for revival. We should be concerned for the LORD's Name and His Glory, and our prayers should take on more of the plea; "Father, remember Your Name and Your Glory. Hallowed be Your Name. For Your Holy Name's sake revive us. Let not Your people profane Your Name, and let Your Name be great among the heathen. Oh Yahweh have pity upon Your Holy Name, and let Your Glory be revealed."

Of course Yahweh glorifies Himself in the salvation of souls, and in the revival of believers, but let us always have a passion for His Glory.

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My *Name* be profaned? And My Glory I will not give to another." (Isaiah 48:11)

#### 4. UNBELIEF

Another reason why revival is hindered is plain unbelief. It may be covered by various excuses or arguments, but underneath there is this God-dishonouring, soul-damning sin.

In the world, unbelief is the greatest sin, for amongst those who have heard the Gospel, this is the primary sin that consigns them to Hell.

In the Church also, unbelief is one of the greatest sins because it destroys or hinders the spiritual life and vitality of the Body of Christ.

The Word of God is very definite about the necessity of belief - faith. We enter the Way through faith, and we walk in the Way by faith. So the Christian life has no place for unbelief!

Some Christians do not believe revival is possible - and for them, except for the grace of God, it will be impossible.

The Scripture says: "Let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man should not presume that he will receive anything from the Master, *being* a double-minded man, *and* unstable in all his ways." (James 1:6-8)

Unbelieving believers! They will tell the world to believe, but they themselves cannot believe. Faith is not just for the beginning of the Christian life, but for the whole of the life. By faith we sit, by faith we walk, stand, and conquer; by faith we see the windows of Heaven opened.

The Heavens may seem as iron, the difficulties around us may be very great, the mountains unassailable, the rivers uncrossable, but what have these things to do with the Christian? They are things that exist for faith to conquer.

**"With God all things are possible."** (Mark 10:27)

D. L. MOODY faced an impossible task. One Monday night during his great London Campaign, Moody preached to 5,000 men who professed to be atheists, sceptics, and free-thinkers. But of that meeting, and of the rest of that week, we read:

"In an instant the Holy Spirit seemed to have broken loose upon that great crowd of enemies of Jesus Christ, and 500 men sprang to their feet, tears running down their faces, shouting, **"I will, I will** (come to Christ)."

“Quickly the meeting was closed in order that personal work might begin. From that night until the end of the week nearly 2,000 men were won from the ranks of Satan into the army of the Lord. The permanency of that work of God was well attested. Those evil clubs never recovered their footing. God swept them away in His mercy, by His Gospel.”

## UNBELIEF IS AN INSULT TO GOD!

How the Head of the Body must be grieved at our modern, materialistic, unbelieving Church. Look at the average prayer meeting and the few who gather, and then dare to suggest the Church is believing.

Unbelief says, “What is the use of prayer meetings - they are wearisome? What is the use of praying - nothing will happen?” The inward attitude may be such, although the stated excuse may be, “I get home too late - I have so much to do,” and a hundred and one other excuses. If we really believed, on the other hand, prayer would take a high priority.

But even the few of us who do gather for prayer - do we pray in faith? Do we really believe we are bringing petitions to the King? Do we expect anything to happen? Prayer is so often formal, and a kind of superstitious observance. We feel we should pray (and so we should) but if our prayers are not in faith, our words are as useless, for ...

“Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God (*YHWH the eternally-existing One*) must believe that He exists, and *that* He is a Rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him out.” (Hebrews 11:6)

God responds to, and rewards, believing prayer. In May, 1860, a special day of prayer was called for the second Sunday in July by the Presbyterian Church. In Edinburgh, Glasgow, and as far afield as Aberdeen, intercessions took place seeking an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Interest in revival was quickened, and there was a marked increase in corporate prayer.

Approximately 20,000 gathered on Glasgow Green at the commencement of the movement, whilst in September a report indicated that similar size crowds were gathering there. An adjoining theatre was opened where enquirers were dealt with. Richard Weaver was one of the speakers on those occasions, and so heavy was the work that he, with the other two speakers, collapsed with fatigue.

Unbelief is a heart condition. It is a sign that the heart is not right with God, a sign of heart departure from God. This, of course, is a natural tendency and as we detect it, we must turn our eyes to our Master, Y’shua, where they should always be. If we look around us, unbelief will creep in as it did with Peter, when he started walking on the sea.

But some will argue that we can’t expect revival now, as these are the last days. Foolish philosophy! The disciples believed they were in the last days, but that only urged them on more. What if Whitfield and Wesley sat down and said, “It is too late; we are in the last days?” But often this is just an excuse to cover complacency and carnality.

Do you mean to say that we can’t expect greater blessing than we are having today? Do you mean that God is content for His people to live below the New Testament standard? Unbelief be removed! As long as the Holy Spirit lives and works on the earth, revival is a very real possibility.

Some believers catch a vision of what the Almighty can do, but then they give it up. The answer may be delayed, and so they lose faith, and again are filled with unbelief.

In Hebrews 10:35 we read:

“Do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward; for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

Faith is persistent. Unbelief is a highway robber that robs us of God’s blessing.

## FAILURE TO ENTER

We read that the Israelites could not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. (Heb. 3:16). And the church, likewise, fails to enter into the richest blessing of God today because of the same sin.

During the Messiah's life on earth, He could not - did not - do many mighty works in certain places because of the people's unbelief. (Matt. 13:58. Mk. 6:5). The Master marveled at their unbelief! How much more He must marvel at the unbelief of His own blood-bought body - people who have been given His many promises, all of which are 'yea and amen.' Do His tremendous promises mean so little to us?

"Whatever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*." (Mark 11:24 also Matthew 17:20).

If "whatever" does not include revival, then what does the word mean? But the promise must be appropriated by faith. Faith is daring.

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees  
And looks to God alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, 'It shall be done!'*

DUNCAN CAMPBELL tells of praying with a group of believers in the Hebrides Islands in 1949:

"I found myself battling and getting nowhere as the hours passed. After midnight, between 12 and 1 a.m., I turned to a young man in the meeting and said, 'I feel led of God to ask you to pray.' And that dear man rose to his feet and prayed, and in his prayer he uttered words such as I had never heard in a prayer before. He said:

'Lord, You made a promise; are You going to fulfil it? God, will You be true to Your covenant? You have said that You would pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I do not know how others stand in Your presence, but if I know my own heart, I know where I stand, and I tell You now that I am thirsty. Oh, I am thirsty for a manifestation of the man of Your right hand.'

"And then he said this: 'Lord, before I sit down, I want to tell You that Your honour is at stake'."

Have you ever prayed like that? Here is a man praying the prayer of faith. I love to believe that angels and archangels were looking over the battlements of Glory and saying to one another: "This is a man who believes God. There is a man who dares to stand solid on the promise of God and take from the throne what the throne has promised."

Believe it, or disbelieve it - and you can verify this if you like - **the house shook like a leaf**. The dishes rattled on the sideboard, and an elder standing beside me said, "Mr. Campbell, an earth tremor." I said, "Yes!" Then I pronounced the benediction immediately and walked out to find the community alive with an awareness of God.

*"Come, let us return to YHWH.  
He has torn us to pieces, but He will heal us;  
He has injured us, but He will bind up our wounds.  
He will revive us after two days;  
He will raise us up on the third day  
that we may live before Him.*

“So let us know, let us press on to know YHWH.  
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;  
and He will come to us like the *heavy* rain,  
like the late rain, watering the earth.” (Hosea 6:1-3)