



REVIVAL, THE NEED OF THE TIMES

BY DON STANTON

CHAPTER 5

AGREEING FOR REVIVAL

“IF TWO OF YOU SHALL AGREE”

(Matthew 18:19)

MATTHEW 18:19 is a wonderful promise given by the Lord to His people.

“If two of you shall agree on earth concerning anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.”

Let these words sink into our minds. If words mean anything, this promise means something great. The Lord promises that God will do anything that we shall ask if we are agreed.

We know full well that “anything” does not include something that it is not in accord with the will of God, The interpretation of the promise lies in the importance of the word **agree**. If we are to receive what we unitedly ask for, we need to consider the word, agree.

To agree means more than to simply say “we both (or all) want this thing.” It is more than outward unity. Two may agree that they want revival, but may greatly differ in motive for wanting it. Another two may agree in motive for revival, but disagree as to when they want revival.

Another two “agreeing” for revival may have different ideas as to how to prepare, or how to expect revival. You may have 100 people all wanting revival but for as many personalities, there may be disagreements.

It does not mean that we all need to be clones, exactly agreeing on every detail about everything. But it does mean a unity of the Spirit - a unity in pursuing the will of God.

Agreement in prayer is a unity brought about by the Holy Spirit. It is the harmony of the Spirit. Have you heard an orchestra tuning up? It sounds like chaos, but then the conductor comes, and with one plunge of his baton, he produces harmony.

Without the baton - the direction of the Holy Spirit - an assembly of saints can meet together for prayer, but accomplish nothing, because the harmony of the Heavenly Master is not known.

We need to open our minds and hearts for the Spirit to create His unity amongst us. We need to come in one accord. No doubt it is for this reason that prior to and in times of revival, the Spirit gathers the Lord's people together very often. It is not uncommon in such times for believers to pray together for several hours a day.

Often it seems that we go to prayer meetings in a dutiful type of way, with no particular requests in our mind, or burden on our hearts. Then by the time the preliminaries — the hymns, remarks, message, etc. (not that these are useless) are over, there is hardly 15 minutes for prayer before the hour is up and we are on the way home. We don't give the Spirit a chance. Nor is there any real desire to **wait** before the Lord.

In their committee meetings, elders should not merely "commit things to the Lord," but should **wait** in prayer. In our prayer gatherings we should not merely repeat the "points for prayer," but should **wait** on the Lord. We are usually more keen to be finished and on the way home, than to **wait**, but **wait** we should!

"Wait for YHWH! Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for YHWH!" (Psalm 27:14)

I am not talking about "tarrying meetings" where people wait to receive the Holy Spirit. We don't need to wait to receive the Spirit - we have received Him already if we are born again believers - but we wait for the mind of the Spirit - the unity of the Spirit.

I often wonder how much we grieve the Spirit by hastening through prayer, and by not waiting for His mind and direction. 15 minute prayer meetings once a month are not going to produce a burden, and the harmony of the Spirit we need to seek the LORD for revival.

The Holy Spirit is seeking to bring us to a unity in prayer where our **hearts are prepared**, and when we can **pray with one mind**, asking in faith for His mighty work. This is what happened at Pentecost.

"They continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

(Acts 1:16)

Meeting often for prayer does not necessarily mean full-size church meetings. We should meet in small groups whenever and wherever possible. We need not wait for the elders to start extra meetings, but we should pray in twos or threes, whenever we meet. Isn't it true that so often we will spend an hour or two chit-chatting, but don't spend even one or two minutes in prayer?

When we visit Christian friends - let us pray with them. We must get over our shyness and reluctance to pray with others.

If we determined today to pray with people whenever possible, that itself could be the beginning of revival in our lives. Selah! (Think about it!)

1859 - THE REVIVAL IN IRELAND

BURDENED for revival, four young men in Ulster, Ireland, met together for prayer. This, led to the holding of a meeting in Ahoghill on 14th March, 1859, and such numbers attended that it was deemed prudent to transfer the gathering to the open air owing to the danger of the galleries caving in.

Expectation ran high as 3,000 people stood in chilling rain, where, moved by fervor reminiscent of apostolic days, hundreds fell on their knees in the mud of the streets.

So began a movement of the Spirit which gathered momentum and manifested itself in remarkable demonstrations. Prayer meetings sprang up all hours of the day and night, the evangelical Churches being opened at all times to meet the spontaneous interest generated. On one occasion a crowd of about 5,000 met in the unlikely and uncongenial precincts of a quarry!

From Ballymena, the movement spread in May of that year to Belfast, the capital of the northern provinces, at that time having a population of 120,000. Here Churches were crowded, and united Prayer Gatherings were held, at the first of which the Mayor was in the chair. A new, dynamic and purposefulness characterised Christians and "people were added daily to the Lord."

Out of the Belfast Revival mass open-air Prayer Meetings were held in the city's beautiful Botanical Gardens, the first of such meetings attracting a company of 15,000 people.

As the weeks sped by the Awakening showed no sign of abating, and there was an atmosphere of expectation and fervor existing on every hand. People of all ages and in various walks of life were wrought upon by the Spirit.

AMAZING SCENES

In Coleraine in County Derry some of the most amazing scenes in the whole God-created movement were witnessed. A school boy came under such deep conviction of sin as to be quite incapable of continuing his studies. The kindly teacher sent him away in the company of another boy, already converted.

On their way home the boys noticed an empty house, which they entered in order to pray. Here the boy under conviction entered into peace, and returned to the classroom to tell his teacher: "I am so happy; I have the Lord Jesus in my heart."

The effect was electric, and the boys, one by one, slipped quietly outside and knelt in prayer, each one apart. The Spirit was so manifest in convicting power that the master asked the converted boys to go out-side and comfort those that were spiritually distraught.

In a few moments the whole school was upon its knees and the wail of distress was heard in the street outside. Neighbours and passers-by came flocking in.

Every room was filled with men, women, and children, seeking God. The ministers of the town, and prayerful men were sent for, and the whole day was spent in directing these mourners to the Lord Jesus. That school proved to be, for many, the House of God and the very Gate of Heaven.

So the flame spread, and schoolgirls, teachers, parents and neighbours all felt the spiritual movement, and remained together until eleven o'clock.

"SO MIGHTILY GREW THE WORD OF GOD"

Stories of blessing could be multiplied many times in other towns in widely separated areas.

Nor was the movement confined to predominantly Protestant areas, for even in towns where Roman Catholicism was strongly entrenched, the Breath of God was felt. The City of Dublin was specially visited by those who had experienced blessing in the Northern Counties. Seekers after salvation appeared in every meeting. Prayer Gatherings marked by deep fervency were held and unity of purpose was felt in all directions.

It was said concerning the Revival that some were suddenly pierced as by a sharp sword, and their agonized cry for help was heard in the streets and in the fields.

A farmer returning from the market in Ballymena with his mind wholly intent on the day's bargain. He pauses, takes out some money and begins to count it. Suddenly an awful Presence envelops him. In a moment his only thought is that he is a sinner standing on the brink of hell. His silver is scattered, and he falls upon the dust of the highway, crying out for mercy.

TIME FOR REVIVAL

“It is time to seek the LORD till He comes and rains righteousness upon you.”

(Hosea 10:12)

IN OUR last chapter we considered various hindrances to revival. And here is another hindrance; many Christians don't want revival **NOW**.

But when is the time for revival, I ask, if it is not now? Revival is needed when any spiritual decline has begun. Hosea has a word on the subject.

“It is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness upon you.”

(Hosea 10:12)

The Lord says, "It **is** time!" Not, it **will** be time, but it **is** time **now**. We may look for revival in the future, but we have not been given the future, and we may not have it. But we do have the present. If we don't want revival now, will we ever want it?

YHWH says, “ ‘At the acceptable time I heard you, and in the Day of Salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, **now** is ‘the well-accepted time’; **now is ‘The Day of Salvation’**.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Often the expecting of revival in the future is simply an excuse for not wanting it now. Sometimes it is not convenient to have revival now. There is something else to attend to at present; some worldly object which needs to be gained; some business to attend to; just this “something” that must be finished first. But revival will never be convenient for our carnal plans.

Another excuse for not expecting (and probably not wanting) revival now is: “It's the Lord's work, and you can't force God to work until it is His time.” That's true, but it may be that our passive attitude does not hunger for God's blessing. True, revival is God's work, but there is a human element. We are called upon to prepare the ground for revival. Again Hosea says ...

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; **break up your fallow ground: for is time to seek the LORD.**” (Hosea 10:12)

Psalm 110:3, sheds some light on the subject:

“Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.”

When God is moving He finds willing people. And I believe it is true to say that when God's people are willing, they will find God moving.

Now is the time to seek the Master's Face if there is any spiritual decline in our lives. If we *do* not love the Saviour as much as we once did, now is the time for us to be revived. If our witness and service for Him has grown weak at all, it is time to seek His fullness. And if we admit there is a need for a deeper experience of the Lord, it is sin to continue in a state where we are not seeking the Lord.

Whenever we see a need for revival in the church, or for awakening in the world, it is sin to continue in an uncaring attitude. We should set about bringing revival through the means and principles which God has established - especially prayer.

There is one more thing that we need to agree on for revival - it is **the time** for revival. I suggest that the present time would be a good time for revival! In individual and collective prayer, we should seek the Lord's blessing **now**, and expect His reviving work to begin in the days and months ahead.

What a difference it would make in our own lives, if we prayed sincerely, "Lord, revive me now - today. Not tomorrow, Lord, right **now!** Master, I can't go on another day without Your blessing."

This praying would show some real thirst for God. Jacob came to this stage when he wrestled with the Lord in Genesis 32, and cried out in desperation,

"I will not let You go unless You bless me."

JOHN KNOX the Scottish Reformer was a mighty man of prayer, he also prayed in desperation:

"O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die!"

After a time of stillness again the cry,

"O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die !"

Once more deep silence. Then again the cry with more intense pathos,

"O Lord, give me Scotland, or I die!"

God gave him Scotland!

If ever the man and the hour struck together it was when John Knox landed in Scotland in 1559, and commenced his history-changing tour, preaching "root and branch reform." His trumpet-like call sounded over mountain and moor, and within a few weeks the chief centres of Scotland were won for the Protestant faith.

But how do we pray these days? So often I fear we pray with an attitude that says, "Lord, bless me. Lord, send us revival - send it tomorrow, or the next day, or next week, next month, or next year. And if the blessing doesn't come, well, Lord, You know best. Of course I know I need revival, and the church needs revival, but to be candid, Lord, I am contented to go on as I am; and I really don't have time for anything extra these days. So Lord, I'll just leave it up to You."

Let us examine our prayers and attitudes. Now - today is the day for revival. We urge sinners to repent now - in case they are in Hell tomorrow. We say,

"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation."

(2 Corinthians 6:2)

But when it comes to ourselves we say, "**tomorrow** is the accepted time, **tomorrow** is the day of revival."

May the Lord awaken us to this vital matter, so that we may be able to say,

"But NOW have I kept Your Word." (Psalm 119:67)