

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

REVIVAL

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Song of Solomon 4:16

As I was a boy, growing up in a local Baptist church when the term "revival" was mentioned it was generally used to describe a week long meeting that occurred in the fall or spring. The church generally looked forward to these meetings with great anticipation as the "evangelist" who was chosen to preach was usually selected for his ability to stimulate a crowd, and the music was just a little more lively than one could expect in a regular Sunday meeting. One could look forward to laughing at the visiting preacher's jokes and to seeing the altar full at the conclusion of the meeting with folks "rededicating" their lives to the LORD and others seeking to escape the fire and brimstone they were warned about during the preaching. To sum it all up it was a time of great excitement. The amazing thing was that when the meeting was over and the excitement wore off one could expect that things would soon return to normal and those that had recently "rededicated" their lives would cool in their ardor. Every now and then some of the folks that "got saved" to escape hellfire would even come to church for a few Sundays before losing interest as the fire cooled. "Revival" is still a "big business". Numerous "full time evangelists" crisscross the country with a full schedule of meetings designed to touch the emotions of the hearers. A man's ability to "perform" in this setting is judged on the basis of the number of people he can get down to the front after a meeting. What he preaches takes a second seat to how well he gets the job, of producing "decisions", done. Top dollar is waiting for the man that can "shell the corn".

Because of the power of sin that still remains in these mortal bodies, from time to time the LORD's people find themselves in a state of spiritual coldness as the LORD for their benefit hides himself from their view. The remedy for such a condition is a visitation from the LORD. Sometimes the LORD revives HIS people individually and sometimes HE is blessed to visit them in the assembly of the saints and to bring revival to a whole church at once. True revival has nothing to do with meetings, preachers, or the amount of excitement that can be generated. True revival depends on the sovereign mercy of GOD being poured out on his people.

The beginning of true revival is usually not easily recognized, because the work of GOD in HIS people is often very subtle. Just like the small cloud that Elijah sent his servant to look for (see I Kings 18:44); the beginnings of true revival are not easy to see. The LORD begins to stir HIS people up to clearly see how cold and indifferent they have grown to HIS overtures of love. HE causes them to become dissatisfied with their current state of heart. Then HE moves upon them to begin praying for deliverance from this listless state even as Habakkuk of old who prayed, "O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab 3:2) As the bride says in our text, "Awake O north wind---blow upon my garden", so the children of GOD thus stirred begin to long for HIS presence. They are made aware of their own inability to procure HIS presence or to produce a sweet savor unto the LORD.

The Psalmist was aware of this when he said *"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation."* (Ps.85:6-7)

The LORD has commanded HIS people to worship HIM but sometimes our worship grows cold and the only thing that can cause those "spices to flow out" and become a sweet savor in the nostrils of GOD is a reviving work of HIS spirit upon us. The FATHER seeketh such as worship HIM in spirit and truth. It is the genuine desire of the true sons of GOD to live in the presence of their REDEEMER and enjoy HIS company, and when something interrupts that fellowship they will desire to have it back. David is an example of that when he prayed *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."* (Ps.51:10-12) David desired a restoration back to a place where he once was. The man who has never known the joy of walking in the LORD's presence cannot begin to desire its restoration nor recognize its absence. As the old preacher said, "you can't re-vive something that ain't ever be vived in the first place."

So revival is the work of GOD in stirring up HIS people to seek that which HE has already given them a desire for. You can't give a man a desire to seek the LORD nor can you cause a man who has never enjoyed the LORD's fellowship to desire a restoration to it anymore than you can come back from somewhere you've never been.

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exilist hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people. " (Isa.51:9-16)

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