

Revivals And Church History :: Revival â€“ Overcoming The Drift Away From God By Arnold L. Cook**Revival â€“ Overcoming The Drift Away From God By Arnold L. Cook - posted by EAGLEFLYING (), on: 2018/3/19 21:2**

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By Arnold L. Cook

Revival falls into the category of issues like prayer, humility, missions and evangelism. But, perhaps surprisingly to so me, the opponents of revival are legion. Chief among them, of course, is Satan. In fact, it is difficult to separate his influence from all the respectable antagonists of renewal. What do we know about his diabolical agenda?

Well, we know heâ€™s been a deceiver from the beginning in the garden (Gen. 3:1-7). His basic strategy is to question Godâ€™s Word; for example, "Did God really say, â€“You must not eat from any tree in the gardenâ€“?" Applying his strategy to revival he would question: "Did God really say, â€“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spiritâ€“?" (Zech. 4:6). "Jesus didnâ€™t really tell the Ephesians, â€“You have forsaken your first love,â€“ did He?" (Rev. 2:4).

In his temptation of Jesus, Satan offered Him "all the kingdoms of the world" without the suffering the cross would demand (Matt. 4:8). He is a master tempter. Later, he used Peter to tempt Christ to once again bypass the cross (Matt. 16:22-23). This satanic strategy makes sense when we understand that revival takes the Christian back to the cross, and it involves death to self followed by the fullness of the Spirit. Satan would love to dupe us into a spiritual experience that voids the cross. Beware. Pseudo forms of revival abound.

There is much that Satan doesnâ€™t know. He didnâ€™t know that when he used Judas to betray Christ he facilitated Godâ€™s plan for world redemption and his own ultimate destruction (1 John 3:8). But he did know two things about Paul â€“ that if he kept him powerless, bound by self and sin (Rom. 7:7-24), he would never be a threat to his dark kingdom. Satan also knew that if Paul was set free from self and empowered by the Holy Spirit he would charge into Asia Minor and literally tear down his strongholds. Thatâ€™s why Satan works overtime to keep Christians away from genuine revivals.

The Self-Life

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I doâ€“. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it outâ€“. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me" (Rom. 7:15-21).

Who is this speaking here? A non-Christian? Some believe that this is Paul speaking during his pre-conversion state. However, the immediate context links this pitiful lament to Paul already having a new nature but struggling with the issue of full surrender (7:25). Throughout his letters he exhorts believers, using an assortment of terms, about this inner battle with self:

â€“Get rid of the old yeastâ€“ (1 Cor. 5:7).

â€“Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16).

â€“Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires" (Eph. 4:22).

â€“You have taken off your old self with its practices" (Col. 3:9).

Regarding self, A. W. Tozer noted: "Every man with moral intelligence must be aware of the curse that afflicts him inwardly; he must be conscious of the thing we call ego, by the Bible called flesh or self, but by whatever name called, a cruel master and a deadly foe."

Self is a vital issue in the theology of revival. David Needham describes the struggle as an "intense battle. At times, an overwhelming battle. Our flesh is constantly receiving independent â€“meaning possibilitiesâ€“ from its vast, computerized brain reservoir. It is also almost incessantly bombarded with counterfeit meanings from the world and the devil. So we war (Gal. 5:17)."

Whatever the source of the conflict, Godâ€™s answer to self is death â€“ death to self â€“ what I call making your second trip to the cross. Christ modeled death to self (Phil. 2:6-11); He taught it (John 12:24); He asked His followers to den

y themselves (Luke 9:23). Paul also testifies to God's provision for dying to self: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Revival starts with death to self. Resistance to revival teaching should not surprise us. The self-life, left unchallenged, explains the nominal level of the evangelical church. But those who make the second trip to the cross and experience the filling of the Spirit are released for true worship and powerful witness.

Church Leaders

Senior pastors are rightfully described as the "conduit to the hearts of their people." Leadership, like natural birth, must be headfirst. What the pastor models, what he prioritizes, what he teaches "all send a powerful message to his people. This is also true in the essential areas of prayer and revival which are inseparable in God's economy.

I was doing the final interview for two missionary candidate couples. Since our previous interview, they both had served two years in the same church. I asked each couple independently my stock question: "Tell me, what do you believe today more emphatically than you did two years ago?" Each gave the same answer: "The importance of the truths of the deeper life, death to self and the fullness of the Holy Spirit."

I was curious. "Why?" I asked.

The same basic response came from each couple.

"Because for the past two years we have worked with Christians who were struggling in their spiritual lives. They desperately needed this truth. And secondly, our senior pastor not only preached this truth, but regularly called his people to experience death to self and the filling of the Holy Spirit."

Few evangelical leaders would openly confess to a lack of commitment to renewal. But even in denominations with rich heritages of revival and a well-developed theology of renewal, pastors rarely preach or teach or lead their people in renewal. Such leaders become barriers to revival as they designate it as unimportant by benign neglect. They say nothing negative, but their silence shouts down revival as being irrelevant for our day. They send two dangerous messages to their people: First, that the dominant theme of God's Book "that He is constantly calling His people back to Himself" is no longer valid today. The second covert message is that our cozy, comfortable and cultured North American Christianity is normal Christianity.

What's Important in Academia?

Donald McGavran, in his passion for the growth of the church worldwide, provided a strong platform for revival. He invited J. Edwin Orr to join the faculty at the School of World Mission. Having given his life to researching revivals throughout the world, Orr now had the opportunity to teach revival to missionaries and national leaders from around the world. His extensive research combined with a passion for his subject impacted two decades of international leaders until his death in 1987.

But that was then, and this is now. What's important in the world of academia today?

Ninety-five Christian universities, colleges and seminaries promoted their institutions in the October 5th, 1998 edition of Christianity Today. Assuming that they utilize this costly space to highlight their strengths, here is what they consider important: counseling, psychology, theology, tradition, Christian education and music. None of the ninety-five made reference to missions or cross-cultural studies. Only five mention renewal. Just two made reference to Spiritual Life Formation.

What kind of workers will this new millennium need?

True Christianity remains always only one slim generation from extinction. The tendency is for the fire to go out. Nominalism becomes the growing edge of Christianity unless frequent times of renewal are experienced. Denominations, even those planting new churches, are dismayed by the growing number of closures. If Christianity is to have a future into the 21st century, it will need an army of leaders who have been revitalized through revival and who have a passion to preach it and teach it to the next generation.

Missions that continue to send missionaries armed for spiritual warfare but uninitiated in revival are derelict in their duty. One of two justifiable reasons for missionaries to continue working with an established national church is to see national workers raised up as evangelists to the church with a message of revival.

Two of the plenary speakers at the 1998 Evangelical Theological Society addressed the theme: "Training the Next Generation of Evangelical Pastors and Missionaries." John Piper, formerly a professor at Bethel Seminary, chose to bypass the expected theological discourse to focus exclusively on the spiritual preparation of workers. His thesis: "The greatest need of the pastorate and the greatest need of missionaries in every generation, including this one and the next, is to know God better than we know anything, to delight in God more than in anything else."

It is becoming apparent in our broken society that the most important criterion for the Christian leader is brokenness of spirit. A spirit of brokenness is the very essence of revival. My expanded expectation of revival defines it as "a time when God comes down. When the Word comes alive. When sin is revealed. Where brokenness abounds. Where confessions are made. Where forgiveness is granted and broken relationships are restored."

In our present culture, we refer to brokenness in terms of human relationships. There's the brokenness which people bring to our churches, for example, broken marriages, broken families, broken health, broken hearts, etc. Then there's the spiritual brokenness that commends us to God: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise" (Psa. 51:17).

This is our greatest need, prayerfully exemplified by Bob Pierce, founder of Samaritan's Purse: "O God, break my heart with that which breaks Your heart." Professional counseling can be helpful in dealing with brokenness, but the counselor must have more than empathy. He or she must be prepared to lead the person into an experience with God in a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit. The gates of hell cannot prevail against those who have a restored relationship with Christ, a renewed passion for God's glory and a spirit of brokenness for lost people.

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