

3 Things the Church Must Do if America's Going to Experience Another Great Awakening

In 2010, God dramatically restored my hope that America could see another great, national spiritual awakening that would alter the course of the nation. This was significant, for I had lost all hope for such a revival. My hope had been robbed after seeing so many superficial revivals and celebrity revivalists who seemed to be more concerned for their name than God's name.

Revival was in my blood. I had been called into the ministry during a powerful northeast Texas revival in the 1970s. As God led me into higher education, I directed my studies toward outpourings of the Holy Spirit in church history. Out of a seven-year research and writing project came the book, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, first published in 1996, but still used in Bible colleges and seminaries around the world.

My wife, Dr. Susan Hyatt, and I experienced some powerful moves of the Holy Spirit in the 1970s-80s, which encouraged us to continue. We lived through the revivals out of Toronto and Pensacola in the 1990s but were disappointed in the lack of cultural transformation and the direction that revival in general seemed to take at the time.

Revival, it seemed, degenerated into a hyped, man-made, religious event rather than a divine visitation from heaven. I could identify with the words of R. A. Torrey who, almost a century ago, had said:

The most fundamental trouble with most of our present-day, so-

called revivals is that they are man-made and not God sent. They are worked up (I almost said faked up) by man's cunningly devised machinery—not prayed down.

God Restores My Hope

By 2010, I had given up hope of America ever experiencing another Great Awakening that would renew the nation's churches, impact the culture and stem the tide of secularism, immorality and false religion that is flooding our land.

But one hot summer day, as I began a leisure drive to speak the following day at a church in another city, I was unexpectedly apprehended by the Holy Spirit, and everything changed.

I had barely pulled onto the highway when, without any thought or expectation of such a thing, I felt I was suddenly enveloped in God's presence. For the next two hours, I was hardly aware of my surroundings as my mind was continually flooded with thoughts of hope and faith that America "could" see another Great Awakening.

By the time I reached my hotel, I was so excited I could hardly wait to get settled in with my notebook and begin writing and articulating the new hope for America I had just received. That experience continued far into the night, as I sat on the hotel bed and wrote from an overflowing heart. Out of that experience came my book, *Pilgrims and Patriots*.

Three Things that Lingered from that Experience

There were three things that left an indelible impression on my mind and heart. First of all, as already mentioned, my hope was restored for another great, national spiritual awakening.

Second, for the first time I saw that there was a direct bearing of the First Great Awakening on the founding of America. I had studied the Great Awakening and written about

it, but now I saw that it played a primary role in the birthing of this nation. Spiritual awakening, we might say, is in our national DNA.

Third, it was clear that the Lord was saying that America “could” (not “would”) see another Great Awakening. It was a reminder that many of God’s promises are conditional. The great promise of a national healing in 2 Chronicles 7:14 begins with the phrase, “If My people.”

There are things in life that will happen because of God’s sovereign will. There are other things, however, that He has placed in our hands and how things turn out depends on us.

Necessary Keys for Revival

As you can see, I am not a fatalist, determinist, or hyper-Calvinist. It is not set in stone whether or not America will have another Great Awakening. It depends on us. Here are three things I want to suggest are necessary for the American church if we are to see another Great Awakening across our land.

1. Stop seeking revival and seek God.

Revival is too often pursued for all the wrong reasons. The revivalist may be looking for personal success and importance, or a pastor may want to see numbers added to his congregation or larger offerings with which to build a more impressive church building.

Charles Finney told of receiving a “multitude” of letters and requests from pastors and church leaders asking him to come and promote a revival in their city. He then said, “But when I came to weigh their reasons, I have sometimes found every one of them to be selfish. And God would look upon every one with abhorrence.”

In 2006, I was commissioned by Charisma House to produce an edit of the old Azusa Street papers, which was published under

the title *Fire on the Earth*. As I read and reread the Apostolic Faith publications, as they were called, it dawned on me that they did not seek revival. They wanted God. They wanted to live as New Testament believers, in love, humility and the power of the Holy Spirit.

True revivals in history have been birthed out of a jealousy for God's honor and a distress at the spiritual apathy and disregard for His truth. Jonathan Edwards, for example, was distressed for New England. Before reading his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to the congregation in Enloe, Connecticut, Edwards had spent 18 hours pouring out his soul to God, and his prayer was, "O God, visit New England or let me die."

Edwards was not a great preacher (he read his sermons), and there is no record of any great singing. There was, however, great praying. The windows of heaven were opened and entire towns began to repent and turn to God.

2. Repent of a spirit of pride and an elitist attitude

I was standing on the front row of a "revival" church waiting to be introduced to speak that morning. The worship was very festive with people jumping, shouting, running and waving swords and banners. I was not into their style of worship, but as I stood and communed with the Lord, I heard the Holy Spirit say, "The stronghold of deception is pride." I knew immediately that that was to be the theme of my message.

When the service was turned to me, I announced my theme and then proceeded to show how so many revivals and revivalists have been destroyed because of pride. I gave examples of how during times of revival the participants often get proud of "their" revival and take on an inflated idea of their importance because of God's blessing. The pride then becomes an opening for demonic deception.

At the end of my message, the festive atmosphere had changed

to one of somberness and quietness. Even after the benediction it seemed that people were almost afraid to speak as they moved quietly from the pews and filed out the door of the church. When I later expressed concern about squelching their enthusiasm, the pastor assured me that I had “nailed it” and given them exactly what they had needed to hear.

The middle letter of pride is “I,” which in Greek is ego. The “self” or ego must be dealt with if there is to be a pure flow of genuine revival. Martin Luther said, “I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, ‘Self.’”

3. Pray the promises.

There have been great revivals without great preaching. There have been great revivals without great singing. But there has never been a great revival without great praying. And to be effective our prayers must be based on God’s word for as Romans 10:17 says, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

There is a wealth of biblical promises one can pray concerning revival. In the Old Testament, there is 2 Chronicles 7:14. If someone objects that this promise was given to Israel, I will point them to 2 Corinthians 1:20. Referring to the Old Testament promises, Paul said, “For all the promises of God in Him are ‘Yes,’ and in Him ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God through us.”

There are New Testament promises such Mark 11:22-24 and Acts 2:17. The great Hebrides revival of the 1950s was birthed out of the desperate prayers of two elderly women who took Isaiah 44:3 and prayed that promise for their village. The promise reads, “For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring.”

Great revivalists such as Wesley, Whitfield, Finney and Moody

based their prayers on the promises of God's word. R.A. Torrey, associate of D.L. Moody and a successful revivalist in his own right, wrote,

That is the kind of revival I am longing to see here in our city; yes, throughout the whole land; yes, throughout the whole world. Not a revival where there is great preaching and marvelous singing and all kinds of bewildering antics by preachers or singers, or skillful managers or manipulators; but a revival where there is mighty praying and wonderful displays of the convicting and converting and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer.

I say "Amen." Do it, Lord! Come, Holy Spirit!