

The Difference Between True Revival and False Fire

As believers, we are to discern truth from error, light from darkness and right from wrong, but how? Jeremiah 23:17 offers one answer, "They still say to those who despise Me, 'The Lord has said, "You will have peace"'; and they say to everyone who walks after the imagination of his own heart, 'No evil will come upon you.'" False teachers often don't warn, confront or convict. They offer comfortable messages and a false sense of peace, or they encourage very odd behavior. Many mislead with rules and regulations as found in 1 Timothy 4:2-3—"speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

Jesus said in Matthew 24:24 that "false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." Deception comes in many forms but centers on false hope or legalism. Not all leaders in experience-oriented movements are false and misleading. Many are sincere and open to the work of the Holy Spirit, but when they "toke the Holy Ghost," kick people in the stomach for healing and act very bizarre, it should raise a huge red flag.

What is true revival then? Simply stated: a genuine revival is God reviving His people—"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:6). Repentance is often a mark of true revival as what was reflected in the life of Griffith Jones, who preached during the Welsh revivals of the 18th century: "The tears [of the congregation] began to flow in streams down their cheeks. Soon, they wept openly and cried out, 'What shall we do to be saved?'"

Further, it was not uncommon for people to tremble and weep or shout for joy under the anointed preaching of George Whitefield. Whitefield was the primary evangelist during the Great Awakening that occurred in the mid-1700s. During this time, old grudges and debts were forgiven, morality improved, many were added to the church, and there was a greater sense of the fear of the Lord.

Those who use past revivals to in an attempt to validate odd events today perhaps have not truly researched revivals. In reading charismatics and Calvinists, Pentecostals and Puritans, Acts and Azusa, as well as countless biographies of leaders such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Charles Spurgeon and D.L. Moody, and Puritans such as Thomas Goodwin, John Bunyan, John Owen and Richard Baxter, nowhere do these leaders encourage the hysteria or the outright weirdness that we sometimes see today. God's Word is the foundation on which all truth stands (1 Tim. 3:15).

Granted, there were times of strong conviction such as when people held on to trees thinking that they were falling into the abyss of hell during the famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards. And people did cry out to God and/or fall on the ground under the strong conviction of sin during the Revivals of George Whitefield, John Wesley and Evan Roberts, but this is because sin, righteousness and holiness were preached—"falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1 Cor. 14:25). This is true revival.

Perhaps a balanced end to this is found in an excerpt from Duncan Campbell's book, *The Price and Power of Revival*: "How is it that while we make such great claims for the power of the gospel, we see so little of the supernatural in operation? Is there any reason why the church today cannot everywhere equal the church at Pentecost? I feel this is a question we ought to face with open minds and honest hearts. What did the

early church have that we do not possess today? Nothing but the Holy Spirit; nothing but the power of God. Here I would suggest that one of the main secrets of success in the early church lay in the fact that the early believers believed in unction from on high and not entertainment from men. ... How did the early church get the people? By publicity projects, by bills, by posters, by parades, by pictures? No! The people were arrested and drawn together and brought into vital relationship with God, not by sounds from men, but by sounds from heaven. ... The early church cried for unction and not for entertainment. Uction is the dire and desperate need of the ministry today."

There is a desperate need to preach and proclaim God's Word with genuine power if we are to experience true revival. Without God's authority and power, words are lifeless. Where are those with uncompromising power and authority in the pulpits today? The one thing that all of the great revivals in church history had is the one thing that we often lack—the genuine power of the Holy Spirit. The very thing that we need is the very thing that we are afraid of. Many do not truly want revival because of fear of what it may involve.

A few years ago, I prayed, "Lord, bring revival to the churches"—I was not ready for the response that followed. I felt impressed with these words: "You don't want revival—it will ruin your schedule, your dignity, your image and your reputation as a person who is 'well-balanced.' Men will weep throughout the congregation. Women will wail because of the travail of their own souls. Young adults will cry like children at the magnitude of their sin. With the strength of My presence, the worship team will cease playing. Time will seem to stand still. You won't be able to preach because of the emotions flooding your own soul. You'll struggle to find words, but only find tears. Even the most dignified and reserved among you will be broken and humbled as little children. The proud and self-righteous will not be able to

stand in My presence. The doubter and unbeliever will either run for fear or fall on their knees and worship Me—there can be no middle ground. The church will never be the same again.”

Do you really want revival?