

The Humiliation of the Church and the Coming National Revival

It has been a very difficult season for conservative Christians in America. There have been countless scandals, minor and major, sexual and financial, rocking all different sectors of the church. There have been prominent leaders who have renounced their faith. There have been well-publicized, failed prophecies about Trump's reelection. The list goes on and on, and we have egg on our face. Lots of it.

And what about the extreme politicization of so many Christians in the last five years, to the point that some of us became better known for our support of a political leader than for our allegiance to Jesus?

This is time of humiliation, of confusion, of dishonor, a time to get low before the Lord rather than a time to strut.

Worst of all, we have brought reproach to the name of Jesus and disrepute to the reputation of the gospel. We have driven people away from the Lord more than drawn people to Him.

Yet all is not lost. To the contrary, the humbling of the church is actually a good sign. As believers, we are being purified by God's refining fire (see Mal. 3:1-5). As the body of Christ, we are being disciplined and judged (not condemned) by the Lord (see Heb. 12:3-13, 1 Pet. 4:17-18).

We are being pruned—a painful yet necessary process—so that we can bring forth more and better fruit (see John 15:1-2).

We are being rebuked and corrected so that God can bring us to a better place (see the messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Rev. 2-3).

We are being humbled so we can be lifted up (see 1 Pet. 5:6, James 4:6).

In fact, the lower we will go—confessing our sins, acknowledging our faults, turning away from the bad and turning to the good—the higher the Lord will lift us, meaning, the higher we will go in receiving God's grace and mercy.

Of course, it would have been better if we did not need to be refined. Or pruned. Or rebuked. Or corrected. Or humbled.

But that is not the case. Instead, for many years now, rather than the church changing the world, the world has changed the church. And rather than our light penetrating the darkness, the darkness has dimmed our light.

We have watered down our message to make it acceptable to the world, thereby robbing it of its convicting and transforming power.

We have lowered our standards so as not to offend, leaving us stuck in the miserable middle, half-worldly and half-Christian, worthy of mockery and derision from both the lost and the saved.

The sins of the world are the sins of the church, from porn to no-fault divorce, and from abortion to hate-filled social media posts. (Really now, aside from Scripture memes and gospel videos, are our social media pages much better than those of nonbelievers?)

Is it any wonder that so many young people today who have been raised in the church are not following in the faith of their parents? Is it any wonder that they are questioning the veracity of the Bible and the reality of God? And when we preach a nonexperiential gospel, is it any surprise when they conclude that our message is one of words only? Can we fault them for never experiencing God's power when we have not introduced them to that very real power, the same power that

raised Jesus from the dead?

But, to repeat, this is not all bad news.

Something is stirring across the nation. There is a fresh spiritual hunger. There is a rising, holy desperation. Many Christian leaders, who, just a few years ago were boasting about how healthy their churches and ministries were, are now on their faces, crying out for mercy, asking God for a fresh visitation. Many now recognize the urgent need for revival, resonating with the title of this forthcoming book: *Revival Or We Die: A Great Awakening Is Our Only Hope*.

The truth is that the Lord only fills the hungry, and it is to the degree of our hunger that we will be filled. How hungry are we? How thirsty? How desperate? How determined to see a radical, national awakening—or else? How much room is there in our lives, in our churches, in our ministries, for a great outpouring of the Spirit?

The humbling and pruning are painful. Very painful. And it is a terrible shame that we have so dishonored our Master and Savior.

Yet out of the pain God is building something great, and out of the humbling, something glorious will arise, something for which people cannot take credit. It will be something from above, not limited to one place or one ministry. It will be a truly national (and, likely, international) revival. Are we ready?

But the good news doesn't stop there.

America itself is ready. The nation is reeling, hardly knowing which way is up and which way is down.

The chaos and upheaval of 2020—from the day and night controversies surrounding Trump to COVID; and from the racial divisions, protests and riots to the contested elections—have

been replaced by the chaos and upheaval of 2021—from the storming of the Capitol to the second wave of COVID; from financial turmoil to a seemingly unstable government.

People are at their wits' end. They fear for their lives. They fear for the well-being of their children. They don't know whom to trust. They are lonely. They are hurting. And they are ready for the gospel.

And so, I urge every follower of Jesus: Get low, seek God earnestly, receive correction where needed in your life, and then share the gospel and love your neighbor. The harvest is ripe for gathering.

And I urge every leader: Go through the refining fire, let God purify your life and ministry, then pursue the Lord earnestly, determine to preach the gospel without compromise, and make room for the Holy Spirit.

Something big—very big, bigger than we have seen in our lifetimes—is at the door.

I ask again: Are we ready? {eoa}

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