

Why Isn't the American Church Growing?

by Kevin Turner

Revival is not when the top blows off but rather when the bottom falls out." Those words were spoken to me several years ago when I asked the late Leonard Ravenhill to define revival. According to him, most religious activity in the United States does not resemble true revival.

We know only a cheap imitation.

We schedule popular speakers and the best musicians and set aside a week for special meetings. We call that revival. Our meetings are set up by organizers, not agonizers.

We have reduced a move of God to a method. Yet the Bible says God is looking for a man.

John Knox, the founder of the Presbyterian Church, prayed continually, "God, give me Scotland or I die!" He said this while he was chained deep inside the hull of a French ship off the coast of his country. He prayed desperately for seven years that God would send revival to his beloved Scotland.

God works only within those who are desperate. Ravenhill also used to say, in reference to revival, that we would either "end up with prison camps or with Pentecost in the prison camps." The apostle Paul

either had riots or revival, and at times both. Yet the American gospel does not seem to produce either.

A Chinese Christian recently visited the United States and toured churches here. At the end of the trip he was asked what he thought about American spirituality. He answered, "I am amazed at how much the church in America can accomplish without the Holy Spirit."

We have large buildings and many programs but still no move of God. We have more trained ministers and more Bible colleges than any other nation but no revival. We have seminars on revivals and huge campaigns to promote our meetings. But where is the revival?

We have spotless theology but no doxology. We have no song in our hearts. We have replaced true experience with hyperactivity. Our theologians sit in swivel chairs in ivory towers and hand out edicts to those down below.

As a church we are power-hungry and covet top positions as if we are climbing a corporate ladder. We place value on large churches with even larger programs and budgets. Those who are invited into leadership positions are the rich and the influential. We forget that spiritual authority is not given to the savvy businessman or the sports hero but to those who have carried the burden of the Lord.

Where are the brokenhearted believers who weep through the

night over our spiritual bankruptcy?

A true move of God makes you utterly dependent upon Him. The touch of the Father was never designed to touch you just once. It was designed to leave you feeling helpless unless you receive the daily infilling of the Holy Spirit.

A true revival brings us to the end of ourselves. It takes us to the foot of the cross where we lay down our hopes, dreams and ambitions. History is replete with those who have given their all to see God move.