

The One Thing the Church Won't Do – and It's Stopping Revival

The sound came suddenly. It descended upon the chapel like thunder rolling over the hills growing louder and louder upon its approach. It came like a violent wind entering the room and overwhelming the 60 young people who had gathered that evening. The effect was instantaneous. Everyone fell upon their faces and began crying out in deep groaning. This was an experience unlike anything anyone had ever felt before. No one could stand; they could only kneel or prostrate themselves before the Lord. Something powerful and indescribable took hold of every soul that night. The following week it took hold of the city!

This was how revival came to the Cape Colony in South Africa in 1860. This fire burned for two years. The Cape was considered a spiritual wilderness before this outpouring—afterward it was a spiritual oasis. It was noted that after just a few short months, you would be hard pressed to find a single home that had not been touched by revival. The religious apathy that once marked the churches had given way to a renewal. Even the critics and skeptics had to note that the conduct of the inhabitants of the Cape had changed dramatically. The sound of revival changed everything!

The first time I read the account of the night revival broke out in the Cape, I became jealous. I've heard sounds of revival. I've been in services where thousands of people roared in prayer, or sang in the spirit with a harmony that only heaven could have directed. However, I have not yet heard that sound that comes with such force it shakes not just a church but a community. I long to hear it now!

What will it take to bring the Earth-shaking sound of revival back to our land? I believe the heavens will shout the moment we are no longer silent!

Revival always comes as a response. It is heaven's answer to the sustained cries and petitions of God's people who have firmly made up their minds that a move of God is the only solution. This is the promise we claim in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." If heaven is to answer with the sound of revival, then someone must first ask for it!

In *Trail of Fire* I share 10 stories from 10 great moves of God, including this account of the Cape Colony Revival. When you read about each of these nation-shaking moves of God or study any other spiritual awakening that has affected history you find a common tread. Every spiritual awakening has always been preceded by a marked time of prayer.

This was certainly true for the revival that transformed the Cape. It came not only as an answer to a pastor's prayers, but even more as an answer to the cries of a people who refused to take no for an answer. God answered with a sound, and it humbled an entire country in a matter of months. The First and Second Great Awakenings came on the heels of prayer. The Welsh Revival started with a group of praying young people. The Azusa Street Revival came out of a prayer service in a home. The Brownsville Revival came at the end of one-and-a-half years of prayer. Revival always comes as a response to prayer. There is no other way—period! Prayer creates an atmosphere for revival.

I am convinced that the sound of revival is not heard today because the modern church has lost her ability to pray. The prayer meeting is now absent or considered obsolete. Its presence on the church calendar, if it is there at all, is an

afterthought. Consider the effort and energy exerted to ensure that Sunday morning's service is executed with excellence. Musicians spend hours in practice each week in order to perform four songs for the people. The minister devotes hours to study and preparation to preach a word that is likely forgotten by that evening. Yet how much time is devoted as a staff and body to pray? Is it not telling how much time we spend in preparation to speak to God's people, yet how little time we spend speaking to God? It's no wonder we don't hear a sound from heaven; we are too busy making a noise of our own!

When was the last time the prayer meeting was on the agenda for the weekly staff meeting? How is continual prayer cultivated in your congregation? Is your prayer meeting even listed on your website? Are the leaders, deacons or pastors expected to attend? Has your prayer meeting grown in attendance and fervency over the years or is it barely functioning on a religious routine? Is it a true priority? How can heaven answer if we are not asking? If we fail here, we fail everywhere!

I have heard it said if you want to know how popular the church is, come on Sunday morning. If you want to know how popular the pastor is, come on Sunday night (assuming the church still has Sunday night services). If you want to know how popular God is, come to the prayer meeting. That is both telling and true. Sunday morning services primarily speak to the people, but the prayer service speaks to God. With that being the case, is it any wonder the sound of revival is absent within the church? The modern church prioritizes speaking to man while minimizes speaking to God.

Let's not forget that the first Pentecostal revival came two thousand years ago upon a prayer meeting. There one hundred twenty people waited upon the Lord, not for ten minutes, but ten days. That revival came with the sound of a mighty wind, and a flame for every seeker. Do we expect to find that same fire or maintain that flame any other way?

I have a good friend who was struggling to grow his ministry. The attendance had diminished and there was no fire in the services. Worldly-minded leaders suggested employing different strategies to target his demographic. They felt he should tailor the services to cater to the needs of the people he wanted to reach. Thankfully he chose something a bit more radical. He canceled everything and started a prayer meeting. That prayer meeting produced what he couldn't. The people began to hear a sound! His attendance began to multiply as people were saved, set free and healed on a weekly basis.

My friend, the sound of revival cannot be found in a place; it is found in a position. That position is on your knees in full humility before the Lord in prayer. James writes that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much" (James 5:16). If you believe that to be true, then it is up to us to fall on our face before the Lord and persist in prayer until the answer comes. That is effective, fervent prayer.

Not long ago, I was in a meeting with several pastors, and the discussion was about revival. Within minutes it became evident that there was a great deal of disagreement. Some contended that revival was unnecessary and unwelcome. They said it created disorder in the church and was proven to be more trouble than it was worth. Others sought to define it in terms that kept it comfortable, controllable and containable. My response was simple, "What is the alternative?" Their answer was silence.

Do you long to hear the sound of revival? Then it is time to return to a place of prayer! Position yourself before the Lord and invite Him to come visit that position with revival. Ask Him to come and consume everything. Refuse to move until heaven responds with the sound of revival. It's true, as long as we are content to live without revival, we will continue to remain without revival. I'm discontent with the status quo! I pray you are as well.