

Why the Church Must Not Miss This Revival Opportunity

Many are looking at what is occurring in this country and around the world at this time and are dismayed. As the church and as a prophetic people, we are often very late in recognizing when God is beginning to move.

The reason is, we are more familiar and comfortable with the word of God than we are in discerning the ways of God. But both are important. Moses did not just ask God to teach him His word, he asked God to teach him His ways (Ex. 33:13). God often moves in ways we are not expecting, and when He does, it frequently causes us to stumble.

What we are now experiencing is a move of God and the beginning of the revival we have long prayed for. The problem for many is that it is not coming in the form that was expected. Because this time, re-formation is proceeding the revival.

This is a moment of great light, the elevation of truth and the confronting of oppression. One reason that many are struggling is what is being brought to light strikes too close to home. As students of church history, how is it that we do not recognize these very characteristics of revival? One of the characteristics and requirements that God established regarding Jubilee is the removal of oppression. In the Jubilee passages in Leviticus 25 it is so important that God says it twice. In verse 14 and again in verse 17 God directs, " You shall not therefore oppress one another, but you shall fear your God. For I am the Lord your God.

The Scriptures are full of passages concerning God's view of oppression, injustice, truth and light. In fact, when Jesus began His public ministry, the very passages that He read

proclaimed the characteristics of His ministry and specifically focused upon the poor and the oppressed. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19).

John the Baptist, whom Jesus described as the greatest of all the prophets, even struggled with this specific focus of Jesus's ministry, so much so that while he was imprisoned, John sent two disciples to inquire of Jesus, "'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (Matt 11:3, NKJV). Jesus reiterated His commission and replied, "'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: *The* blind see and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised up and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me'" (Matt 11:4-6). You see, even those with prophetic sight can miss when God is moving if He is emphasizing something we do not prefer or are not accustomed to.

Since dealing with oppression was such an integral part of Jesus' ministry, it really should not surprise us that a greater level of the outpouring of His Spirit, in what we call revival today, would include these very characteristics of His presence and ministry. These characteristics of God's moving and dealing with oppression are not new and have occurred many times before. A review of global history will remind us of two well-known examples: the dismantling of the oppressive Roman Empire and the defeat of Nazi Germany through the combined forces of the allied countries. In the United States, the Azusa Street revival, which began in 1906, was a forerunner and decades ahead of secular society regarding dealing with issues of race and ethnicity. Eyewitness and historian Frank Bartleman noted famously, "The color line was washed away in

the blood" (Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles*, 54).

Was that specific aspect of God's moving in Azusa Street just a coincidence? Or, was it intentional by God and the beginning of something He was initiating and building toward? That beginning in a small group of people was not without resistance or controversy, due in part to the racial unity that was being established. Over the decades, additional waves and moves of God have followed: the healing revival of 1946, the latter rain revival of 1948 and then the Jesus movement of 1967. It is important to recognize that these God-initiated waves advanced, grew and reached a moment in time when the consciousness of a generation was ignited and began to speak out against racism and institutional oppression. The movement of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born in that moment. The Freedom Riders were born in that moment. The Civil Rights and voting rights movements were born in that moment. Reformation was occurring, and revival was its partner.

Now, looking back, we clearly see it was indeed God moving, but at the time, the majority of the Caucasian church and society did not see it nor embrace it. In fact, most opposed it, sometimes violently. That reluctance and opposition not only kept the work of God from fully changing the society of the United States, but it kept God from fully changing the church.

God moved globally again in the 1990s, dealing with oppression when sweeping changes manifested against communism with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the tearing down of the Berlin wall and the demolition of the racist apartheid systems in Australia and South Africa. All established, entrenched, seemingly immovable systems and symbols of oppression were torn down in what seemed like a split second. And now God is moving once again.

This is not a move of God that someone wants to be on the wrong side of. It is one thing to oppose man, but it is

dangerous to oppose God. Destinies of men are being determined, and leadership mantles are being gained and lost in this season. Along with our hearts, God is weighing governmental leadership, national leadership, local leadership and church leadership. Our sensitivity and responses to Him regarding this issue, in this moment, are revealing whether we are usable by Him, in His work, in this move, in the future and to what degree.

We must both recognize and acknowledge that every new move of God comes with some level of error. There can be error in clarity while looking for complete understanding. There can be some error in the way that it is walked out. Since we, “see as through a glass, dimly” (1 Cor 13:12b, MEV) and “know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor 13:9), it can affect our accuracy. In the bright light of truth and revelation, while our eyes are adjusting, and in each new move of God, the response of the church causes the pendulum of our understanding and actions to swing back and forth before reaching equilibrium, first over to one edge, then back to the other. When we recognize that the pendulum swung too far, it will swing back the other way, most often in overcorrection. We continue this process until the swings get smaller, and we finally get comprehensive clarity so the purpose of God can be established truthfully, accurately and purely.

This process does not mean the move of God is invalid; it means we are acclimating to it. As charismatics, if we are willing to be honest with ourselves, we have seen this many times related to moves of God, operations of the gifts and demonstrations of God’s power within the church. As with previous moves of God, the more recent Toronto Blessing and Brownsville Revival were not without their error or controversy, but we did not reject those movements.

With that kind of historical experience, why would we be so blind as to not be able to identify a move of God or the foundations of a revival? Why would we be so intolerant with

the process of “fee[ling] after him [God]” (Acts 17:27 b, KJV) that is presently occurring or the possible error in some that is occurring with it? We could learn from the heart of the Lord in Isaiah 42:3- 4, “A bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench; he shall bring forth justice faithfully. He shall not be disheartened nor be discouraged, until he has set justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for his law.”

Two things can dangerously affect the establishment and longevity of God’s movements among His people. One is those who stand against it or reject it because it is unfamiliar to them, unpopular or requires them to change and move on from a previous glory. Another is the lack of the presence of spiritual fathers to confirm the genuineness of the new move of Go, so it will be embraced and can be established. These seasoned leaders must be in place with the forerunning experience and wisdom to guide the new generation correctly in it. These are critical so that a solid foundation is set to elevate God’s work, His glory and His church that He may build upon it.

This is one of those moves, and we are in one of those moments. We have an opportunity to usher in the transforming unity that Jesus prayed so passionately for in John 17. We have an opportunity to have it established in the church of the United States in ways we have never, ever seen before. But a unified church cannot manifest with this demonic sin of racism separating us.

This is a watershed moment in the history of this country. The church cannot reject this work of God against oppression and injustice. Neither can we allow the secular society to recognize, embrace and lead in this call to racial equity, as we have sadly done historically. This can be the bedrock of the revival we have prayed for, for generations if we will listen, genuinely repent, embrace the moment and guide rather

than reject the process.

For authentic unity to occur, we cannot ignore the things that keep us separated. We must intentionally address and remove them.

Historically, in this country, nothing has separated the church or society like the sin of racial division. All sin requires repentance, which is why all revival movements are characterized by it.

This is not just a revival moment for the people of God; it is also our repentance moment. This is a reformation moment regarding racial relations in the church. This is not a move of God that someone wants to be on the wrong side of.

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