

REVIVAL

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*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall
make you free" (Jn. 8:32)*

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Who is Jesus?

From darkness to the light

The judgement seat of Christ

The Antichrist

Israel

The rapture

Revival

Hell - what the Bible says about it

Spiritual warfare

What is revival?

“O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2).

A revival of true Christianity presupposes a falling away. People are spiritually sluggish. So many things lead their minds away from God and oppose the influence of the Gospel that God must arouse excitement in them until the wave rises so high that it sweeps away all obstacles. Before they will obey God, people must be thoroughly awakened. Only then will they overcome counteracting forces.

Not that excited feeling is spirituality. It is not. But it is excited *worldly* desires, appetites, and feelings that prevent true Christianity. The human will is, in a sense, enslaved by fleshly and worldly desires. It is therefore necessary for God to awaken people to a sense of guilt and danger, and thus produce an opposite excitement of feeling and desire. This counter-feeling breaks the power of worldly desires and it leaves the will free to obey God.

Revival is the renewal of the first love of Christians, resulting in the awakening and conversion of sinners to God. A revival of true Christianity arouses, quickens and reclaims the backslidden church and awakens all classes, insuring attention to the claims of God. Revival presupposes that the church is mired in a backslidden state.

A revival always includes Christians being convicted of their sins. Those who claim to know God, yet are backslidden, cannot wake up to begin and serve God without deeply searching their hearts. The fountain of sin in their lives needs to be broken up. Like newly converted sinners they must take the first step of deep repentance – breaking the heart, getting down into the dust before God with deep humility and forsaking their sin.

It is very important that people act on their convictions. I knew a woman who was very convicted of sin. One day I

grieved to find her concern has disappeared, so I asked what she had been doing. She told me she had spent the afternoon with some lukewarm believers, not thinking that spending an afternoon with those who merely professed Christianity would destroy her convictions. Her companions were trivial and vain, and her convictions were lost. Those self-proclaimed Christians by foolishness destroyed a soul. Her resolve never returned.

Revival is nothing other than a new beginning of obedience to God. The faith of Christians is renewed. While they are backslidden, Christians are blind to the state of sinners. Their hearts are hard as marble and the truths of the Bible seem like a dream. They admit the words of Scripture are true, but their faith does not see the burning realities of eternity. But once awakened they no longer see people as trees walking; rather, a strong light reveals reality in a way that reignites the love of God in their hearts.

They now labour zealously to bring others to the Lord. They grieve that there are people who don't love God when they love Him so much. And they determine to persuade their neighbours to give Him their hearts. So their love for others is renewed. They are filled with a tender, burning love for souls. They agonise for individuals they want saved. They urge sinners to give their hearts to God and carry them to the throne of mercy in arms of faith. They long for the salvation of the whole world.

Revival also breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians. They obtain a new vision and foretaste of heaven and new desires of union with God. The charm of the world is broken, and the power of sin overcome.

When churches awake and reform in this way, the salvation of sinners follows, moving through the same states of conviction, repentance, and reformation. Sinners' hearts break down and change. Often the greatest prodigals come to Christ – prostitutes, alcoholics, and sceptics are awakened and converted. The worst part of society softens and is reclaimed, and made specimens of the beauty of holiness.

When do we need revival?

Where the following conditions prevail there is a need for revival:

- + When there is a lack of brotherly love and confidence among those who profess to be Christians, then revival is needed. Benevolent, selfless love may still be present, but the love that stems from delight in one another is not. God loves all people with benevolent love, but He doesn't feel delighted love toward any but those who live holy lives. Christians similarly cannot show delighted love toward one another except in proportion to their holiness. If Christian love is the love for the image of Christ in His people, then it can never be active except where that image exists. A person must reflect the image of Christ and show the Spirit of Christ before other Christians can love him with a delighted love. It is futile to tell Christians to delight in one another when they are unspiritual. They see nothing in each other to produce this love. How *could* they feel any different toward each other than they do toward sinners? Knowing that they belong to the church or seeing other believers once in a while at the communion table won't produce Christian love, unless they see the image of Christ.
- + When there are dissensions, jealousies, and backbiting among those who profess Christianity, there is a need of revival. These things show that Christians have strayed far from God, and it is time to earnestly desire revival. True Christianity cannot prosper with such things in the church, and nothing puts a halt to evil like a revival.
- + When there is a worldly spirit in the church, there is need of revival. The church is clearly backslidden when Christians conform to the world in dress and attitudes, seeking worldly entertainment, partying and reading novels and other books that lovers of the world read. It shows they are far from God and need awakening.

- + When church members fall into gross and scandalous sin, it is time for the church to awaken and cry to God for a revival of true Christianity. When things happen that give Christianity's enemies occasion to speak against Christians, it is time for the church to ask God, "What will become of Your great name?"
- + When there is a spirit of controversy in the church or in the land, a revival is needed. The spirit of true faith is not the spirit of controversy. Christianity can't prosper where arguments prevail.
- + When the wicked triumph over the church and revile it, spiritual darkness sets in. This deplorable situation can only be countered by a God-given revival.
- + When sinners are careless and stupid and sinking into hell unconcerned, it is time for the church to stir itself. It is as much the duty of the church to bolt from its sleep as it is for the fire fighters to awaken when a fire breaks out in the night. The church must put out the fires of hell laying hold of the wicked. But they sleep! If fire fighters slept and let the whole city burn down, what would be thought of them? And yet their guilt would be nothing in comparison to the guilt of Christians who sleep while sinners around them sink into the fires of hell.

How to promote a revival

"Break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12).

The Jews were a nation of farmers. Scripture commonly draws illustrations from that line of work, and from scenes farmers and shepherds would know well. So when the prophet Hosea addresses Israel as a nation of backsliders, reproving their idolatry and threatening them with the judgments of God, he uses fallow ground as his illustration. Fallow ground is ground once farmed but which now lies waste. It must be broken up again before it is ready to be planted.

To break up the fallow ground is to *break up your hearts*,

to prepare your minds to bring forth fruit to God. The Bible often compares the human mind to ground, and the Word of God to seed sown in it. The fruit represents the actions of those who receive it. To break up the fallow ground, then, is to bring the mind into a state where it is fitted to receive the Word of God. Sometimes your heart becomes matted down, hard and dry and fallen to waste. It will bear no fruit until it is broken up, readied to receive the Word of God. It is this softening of the heart, making it feel the truth, which the prophet calls "breaking up your fallow ground."

If you intend to break up the fallow ground of your hearts then begin by looking at your hearts. Examine the state of your mind to see where you are right now. Many never think about this! They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether or not they are doing well spiritually, whether they are gaining ground or going back, whether they are fruitful or lying waste. Shift your attention from everything else and look into this. Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts and see where you are, whether you daily walk with God or with the devil, whether you are under the lordship of the prince of darkness or of Jesus Christ. And to do all this you must determine to examine all the sins in your life.

Self-examination consists in looking at your life, considering your actions, remembering the past and learning its true character. Look back over your past. Examine your sins one by one. Don't just glance over your life, see that it has been full of sin, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession. That isn't the way. You must examine your sins one by one. Take a pen and paper and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as an accountant goes over his books, and whenever you remember a sin, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one, and as best as you can they should be reviewed and repented of one at a time.

Sins of omission

We first take up what is usually called the *sins of omission*:

◆ **Ingratitude.** Take this sin, for example, and write down under it all the times you can remember where you received kindness from God but never gave thanks. How many situations can you remember, some God-ordered events, that saved you from ruin? List the numerous mercies He has given you for which no gratitude was shown. Now go on your knees and confess these times one by one.

◆ **Lack of love to God.** Review all the times you can remember when you didn't give the blessed God the fervent love He deserves. Think how dismayed you would be if you discover even a slight wavering of affection for you among one of your loved ones; if you saw somebody else capturing their hearts, thoughts and time. You would nearly die with a righteous jealousy! In a far greater way God is a jealous God. Have you given your heart to other loves and infinitely offended Him with your adultery?

◆ **Neglect of the Bible.** Put down the spans when for days, even weeks or months, you disdained God's Word. You didn't read a chapter, or if you read you did it in a way that was more displeasing to God than not reading at all. Many people read a whole chapter in a way they couldn't tell you what they just read. The Word of God diagrams your duty. Do you regard it so lightly that you forget what you read? If that is the case, it is no wonder that you live so randomly and that your spiritual life is such a miserable failure.

◆ **Unbelief.** List the instances when you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying, by not believing His explicit promises and declarations. God promised to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. Have you believed this? Have you expected Him to answer when you asked for the Holy Spirit? Haven't you more or less said in your heart, "I don't believe"? Yet God has plainly promised His Spirit, and you charge Him with lying.

◆ **Neglecting prayer.** Think about all the times when you have skipped private prayer, family prayer, and prayer meetings, or have prayed in a way that you offended God more than by not praying at all.

◆ **Neglecting the means of grace.** When you used trivial excuses to keep you from attending meetings, or neglected and scorned the means of salvation, just because you dislike spiritual duties. The way you performed those duties – without feeling or faith and with an ungodly attitude – so that your words and deeds have no spiritual impact.

◆ **Your lack of care for the lost.** Look around you at your friends and relatives and remember how little compassion you have felt for them. You stood by and watched them go to hell, and it seemed you didn't care if they did. How many days have gone by when you didn't even think of their condition and pray a single fervent prayer for them, or even have a burning longing for their salvation? And what about the lost in the rest of the world? Do you pray for them, do you read missions magazines, and do you save something from month to month to give at special offerings for missionaries? If you don't do these things, and your soul does not agonise for the blinded unbelievers, why are you such a hypocrite? Why pretend to be a Christian? Your claim to be a Christian insults Jesus Christ!

◆ **Neglecting family duties.** How have you lived in front of your family members? How have you prayed? What example have you set for them? What direct efforts do you regularly make to enrich them spiritually? What duty *haven't* you neglected?

◆ **Neglecting watching over fellow believers.** How often have you broken your obligation to care for them in the Lord? What do you know about their spiritual lives? And yet God solemnly binds you to care about their spiritual welfare! What have you done to get to know them? How many times have you seen others grow cold toward Christ without saying

a word? You saw them lapse in one responsibility after another, but you didn't lovingly correct them. You saw them falling into sin, but you let them continue on. And still you pretend to love them. What a hypocrite! Could you watch your wife or child fall into a fire and keep silent? No! What do you think of yourself if you claim to love Christians and to love Christ, even though you can watch them slide into disgrace and say nothing to them?

◆ **Failing to practise self-denial.** Many who say they are Christians will do almost any act of faith that doesn't require self-denial. They aren't willing to forsake even one comfort or convenience for the sake of serving the Lord. They will not willingly be mocked for Christ's name, nor will they give up even the luxuries of life to save the world from hell. They are so far from remembering that self-denial is a condition of discipleship that they don't even know what self-denial is. How soon such hypocrites will be in hell!

Sins of commission

We now turn to sins of commission:

◆ **A mind set on the material things.** What is your heart's attitude toward your possessions? Do you think of them as really yours, as if you had a right to do with them whatever you want? If you do, write it down. If you have loved property and sought after it to satisfy lust or ambition or to save it for your families, you have sinned and need to repent.

◆ **Pride.** Recall all the times when you have been proud. Vanity is one form of pride. How many times have you been vain about how you look? How many times have you spent more time decorating your body to go to church than you have preparing your mind to worship God? You have gone to God's house caring more how you look on the outside to human beings than how your soul appears on the inside to the heart-searching God. You have exalted yourself to be worshipped by them, rather than preparing yourself to worship God.

◆ **Envy.** Look at the instances where you envied people you thought were above you. Maybe you envy those who seem to be more talented or useful than yourself. Haven't you envied some so much that it is hard to hear them praised? It makes you happier to think about their faults than their virtues, and about their failures than their successes. Be honest with yourself, and if you have given room to this spirit of hell, repent deeply before God or He will never forgive you.

◆ **Criticalness.** At times you had a bitter spirit and have spoken about Christians in a way entirely empty of grace and love. The love of Christ requires you to always hope for the best the situation will allow and to put the best construction on any ambiguous behaviour.

◆ **Slander.** The times you spoke behind people's backs about their faults, real or imagined, unnecessarily or without good reason. This is slander. You don't need to lie to be guilty of slander: to tell the truth to deliberately injure somebody is also slander.

◆ **Lack of appropriate seriousness.** How often have you acted lightly before God in a way you would not dare to act in front of an earthly king? You have either forgotten there is a God, or have had less respect for Him and His presence than you have for an earthly judge.

◆ **Lying.** Understand what lying is: any deliberate deception. If the deception isn't intentional, it isn't lying. But if you plot to give an impression different from the naked truth, you lie. Put down all the times you can recall. Don't call them anything less than what they are. God calls them lies and charges you with lying. You had better charge yourself correctly. How uncountable are the lies told every day in business and society by words, looks, and actions – each designed to leave an impression different from the truth.

◆ **Cheating.** Write down all the times you have done to someone something you wouldn't want done to you. That is

cheating. God has given a rule: "Do unto others as you want them to do to you." If you break that rule you are a cheat.

◆ **Hypocrisy** in your prayers and confessions to God. List the times you have prayed for things you didn't really want. How many times have you confessed sins you really didn't intend to quit?

◆ **Robbing God.** List all the hours God gave you to serve Him and lead people to Christ, hours you instead spent in trivial escapes, mindless conversations, reading or watching trash or doing nothing. Or cases where you wasted talents and intellect, where you threw away money on your lusts or spent on things you didn't need and which increased neither health, comfort, nor usefulness.

◆ **Bad temper.** Maybe you have abused your wife or children, or family, servants or neighbours.

◆ **Keeping others from being useful.** Perhaps you have weakened someone's influence by falsely criticising him. Then not only have you robbed God of your own talents, but you have tied the hands of another. What a sinful servant is the one who is lazy himself and hinders the rest! This is something done by wasting their time, sometimes by destroying confidence in them. You have played into Satan's hands and not only shown yourself to be lazy but kept others from working.

Make full use of your list of sins

If you have committed a fault against someone and that person is within your reach, go and confess your wrong immediately and get your sin out of the way. If the person you have injured is too far away to go and see him, sit down and write a letter and confess the injury. If you have cheated anyone, send the money, the full amount, with interest.

Work thoroughly in this. Do it *now*. Putting it off only makes things worse. Confess to God sins committed against God, and to man sins committed against man. Don't think of

getting off by skirting a difficult point. Take everything and put it out of the way. In breaking up your fallow ground, you must remove every stone and every matted clump of earth.

Don't leave things you think are only little things and then wonder why you don't feel committed to God. The reason will be that your pride has buried something God said you must confess and remove. Don't turn aside for little difficulties; drive the plough straight through them, plough deep and turn up all the ground so that it is soft and well broken up, fit to receive seed and bear fruit a hundredfold.

When you have reviewed your whole history in this way, *thoroughly*, then go over the ground a second time and give solemn, close attention to it. The things you have written down will suggest other things you have been guilty of. Then go over it a third time, and you will recall other things. And at the end you will remember an amount of your past – even particular actions – that you didn't think you could ever remember. Unless you examine your sins one by one, you can never grasp the amount of your sin. You should go over your life as thoroughly as you would prepare for judgement.

As you go over the lists of your sins, determine to make immediate and entire change. Wherever you find anything wrong, decide at once, by the strength of God, not to sin again in that way. It benefits nothing to examine yourself unless you resolve to change every single wrong you find in attitude or conduct.

If as you attempt to break up your fallow ground, you find your mind is dark, look around. You will find there is still some reason why God's Spirit departs from you. You haven't been faithful and thorough. In this process you must be ruthless toward yourself and apply your mind. With the Bible in front of you, examine your heart until you know the reasons for your misery. Don't expect God to work a miracle for you to break up your fallow ground. The labour is to be done by His appointed method.

Focus your attention on your sins. You can't look at your sins very long or very thoroughly and see how bad they are

without being deeply moved. Experience has abundantly proved the benefit of reviewing our lives in this way. Go to work now. Resolve that you won't stop until you find that you can pray. You won't ever have the spirit of prayer until you examine yourselves and confess your sins and break up your fallow ground. You won't ever have the spirit of God dwelling in you until you unravel your whole history of sin and spread it out in front of God.

If there is this deep work of repentance and full confession, this breaking down before God, you will then have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can withstand. Few Christians know anything about the spirit of prayer because they never painfully examine themselves, and so they never know what it means to be completely broken in this way.

It is easy to see that I have only begun to unfold this subject. In these discussions I want to give you strategies that when put to the test will as surely bring results as when the farmer breaks up the fallow field and sows his grain. It will come about if you just start in this way and hold on until your hardened and callous hearts break up completely.

Remarks

- It won't do any good to teach you while your hearts are hardened, wasted and fallow. The farmer could just as well sow his grain on the rock. It won't bear any fruit. That is why there are so many fruitless Christians in the church – so much external actions and so little deep, internal movement. Look at the Sunday schools, for example, and see how much more program there is than the power of godliness. If you go on in your present state, the Word of God will continue to harden you. You will grow worse and worse, just as the rain and snow on an old dormant field makes the turf thicker and the clods stronger.
- The reason why so much preaching is wasted is because people who profess Christ will not break up the fallow

ground. Preachers wear out their lives and achieve very little. There are so many hearers as hard as rock, who have never broken up their fallow ground. They are only half converted, and their faith is merely a change of opinion rather than a change of heart. There is abundant outward show, but very little inward reformation.

- People who say they are Christians should never be satisfied just to jolt out of their sleep, bluster about, make a noise and talk to sinners. Christians wanting to work for Christ must plough up their matted hearts. It is utterly irrational to expect to become committed to Christ by talking to unbelievers. If you *first* break up your fallow ground, *then* go out and speak with sinners and lead them to Christ, your spiritual feelings will increase. You might work up excitement or zeal, but your labours will be mechanical, and they won't last long. Your heart must be broken up.
- And now, finally, will you break up your fallow ground? Will you walk the path pointed out and persevere until you are thoroughly awake? If you fail here you can go no further with me. What I have to say further will only harden you more. If you still have an unbroken heart, don't expect to benefit from what I have left to say. If you don't begin on this task immediately, I will charge you with forsaking Christ, with refusing to repent and to do your first work. But if you will prepare to start the work, I will teach you how to pray, to live a holy life and how to bring sinners to Christ.

Prevailing prayer

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16)

Two types of means are essential to promoting revival: one to influence human beings, the other to influence God. People are influenced by the truth, and God by prayer.

When I speak of moving God, keep in mind that I don't mean that prayer changes God's mind, disposition or character. But prayer produces a change in *us* that makes it fitting for God to do what would not have been fitting otherwise. When a sinner repents, that state of heart makes it proper for God to forgive him. God is always ready to forgive the unbeliever on that condition, so when the unbeliever repents, it requires no change in God to pardon him. The sinner's repentance renders his forgiveness right, and it is the occasion of God acting as He does.

Likewise, when Christians offer prevailing prayer, their state of heart makes it fitting for God to answer them. He is always ready to give the blessing on the condition that their hearts are right and they offer the right kind of prayer. Whenever this change takes place in Christians and they offer the proper prayer, then God – without any change in Himself – can answer them. When we offer effective, fervent prayer for others, our prayer makes it fitting for God to answer that prayer when it otherwise wouldn't have been fitting.

Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to revival, just as much as truth is. Some Christians zealously use truth to convert non-Christians while giving little place to prayer. With fervour they preach, talk, and distribute tracts, but then wonder why they have so little success. Why? They forgot to use the other part of the means: prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth by itself never produces the effect without the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit is given in answer to earnest prayer.

Sometimes those who are the most busy at preaching truth aren't the most busy at prayer. This is unfortunate – for unless they or someone else has the spirit of prayer, the truth by itself will do nothing but harden people in unrepentance. I believe that on the judgement day we will find that nothing was ever done by the truth, though it was pushed ever so zealous, unless prayer was somewhere connected with the presentation of truth. To achieve the desired results prayer and preaching must go hand in hand.

The qualities of effective prayer

The following are some of the qualities of effective prayer:

- + If you expect prayer to be effective, it must be offered in the Name of Christ. You cannot come to God in your own name, pleading your own merits. But you can come in a name that is always acceptable. But you must pray in faith, expecting to obtain what you request.
- + You can't prevail in prayer without renouncing your sins. You must not only repent but forsake your sins forever in your deepest will, renouncing them forever.
- + You must pray for a definite object. Prevailing prayer is not random prayer. The person praying must have a distinct objective in mind. Every effective prayer in the Bible was like this; wherever you see that a desire sought in prayer was answered, the prayer was specific.
- + In order to prevail, prayer must agree with the revealed will of God. For our guidance in prayer, God reveals His will in three ways: (a) by plain Scripture promises to give or do certain things; (b) sometimes God reveals His will by His ordering of circumstances, making it clear that an event is ready to take place; and (c) by His Spirit. When God's people have no idea what to pray for, His Spirit often teaches them what would please God.
- + To be effective, prayer must always stem from the right motives. Prayer shouldn't be selfish, but supremely devoted to God's glory. Many prayers flow from selfishness. Women sometimes pray for husbands because they feel it would be nice to have their mate with them at church. They never think beyond themselves. They are blind to the way their husbands dishonour God by their sins and how God would be glorified in their conversion.
- + To prevail, prayer must be through the Spirit's intercession. Don't expect to pray according to God's will without the Spirit. Faith must be produced in peoples' hearts by the working of the Holy Spirit.

- + Prevailing prayer is persevering prayer. As a rule, Christians who have backslidden and lost the spirit of prayer don't immediately return to the habit of persevering prayer. They can't set their minds to hang on until the answer comes. They have to pray again and again because their thoughts wander from the goal. Unless you have an intense desire for a blessing, you don't offer effective prayer.

The prayer of faith

“Therefore I say unto you, Whatever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*” (Mk. 11:24).

In this discussion we will look at the prayer of faith. The following aspects are important:

The indispensable condition of prevailing prayer

That we need faith to prevail in prayer no one will seriously doubt. To prove that faith is indispensable to this prevailing prayer, we only need to repeat what James explicitly tells us:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all *men* liberally, and [without reproach]; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord” (Jas. 1:5-7).

We must believe in God's existence: “He that cometh to God must believe that He is” – and in His willingness to answer prayer – “and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Many believe in God's existence and yet don't believe prayer is effective. They claim to believe in God, but deny that we need prayer or that prayer influences God.

We must believe that we will receive the thing we request. When a parent asks for the conversion of his children, he must believe that they will be saved.

When must we pray in this way?

The prayer of faith must always be well founded in God and His Word, as in the following examples:

o Biblical promises

We can pray in faith when God specifically promises a thing. For example, God says He is more ready to give His Holy Spirit to those who ask than parents are to give bread to their children. Here we are obligated to believe we will receive the Holy Spirit when we pray for Him. You have no right to insert an “if” and say, “Lord, if it be your will, give us your Holy Spirit.”

Apart from the basic promises to all believers, there are also general Scripture promises that you can reasonably apply to your situation. If the verse discusses the thing you pray for, or has a principle you can apply to your situation, then you have evidence God wills to answer your prayer. Suppose in a time when sinfulness is rampant, you are led to pray for God’s intervention. What promise do you have? This one: “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Is. 59:19). Here we see a general promise describing a principle of God’s government, a promise you can apply to your situation as a reason for faith in prayer.

There are vast numbers of general promises and principles that Christians could use if they would only think. You are to use the promise or principle whenever you are in circumstances it applies to. A parent finds this promise:

“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His covenant and to those who remember His commandments to do them” (Ps. 103:17-18).

This promise is made to those who possess a certain character. If any parent knows this is his character, he has a right to apply it to himself and his family. If you have this character, you are expected to use this promise in prayer, and to believe it even for your children.

I could go from one end of the Bible to the other and assemble an astonishing variety of texts applicable as promises – enough to prove that no matter what the circumstances, God has provided his children with promises in Scripture exactly suited to their case. Many of God's promises are deliberately broad.

What praying Christian hasn't been surprised at the length, breadth, and fullness of God's promises when the Spirit has opened them to his heart? Who that lives a life of prayer hasn't been amazed at his inability to see the extent of those promises before the Spirit of God opens his eyes? Our ignorance is astonishing. The Spirit applies Bible declarations in a sense we never dreamed of before.

The apostles' applications of Old Testament promises, prophecies, and declarations fully display the fullness of God's Word. A dry professor of religion would never dream of applying promises to his own circumstances as does the one who is filled with God's Spirit as he should be.

o **Prophecies**

Where there is any prophetic declaration that the thing prayed for is agreeable to God's will, it can be accepted in faith. When Scripture makes it plain that an event is certain to come, you are obliged to believe the prophecy and make it grounds for your prayer of faith. If the Bible doesn't specify the time and no evidence comes from other sources, you aren't bound to believe the prophecy will be fulfilled either now or immediately. But if the time is specified or if the time can be discovered from studying prophecies – and the time appears to have come – then we are mandated to understand and apply the prophecy by offering the prayer of faith.

Take the case of Daniel, for example, regarding the return of the Jews from captivity. He learned from the Bible that the Captivity was to last seventy years (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25: 12). Daniel did not argue that the matter was prophesied and would at any rate come to pass. He prayed in faith that the Lord would fulfil the promises. There are many unful-

filled prophetic promises in the Bible and Christians need to pray prayers of faith for its fulfilment.

o **Signs of the times**

When the signs of the times or God's ordering of events indicate a specific gift of God is ready to be given, we are obliged to believe it. Christ called the Jews hypocrites because they didn't understand God's providential ordering of their times. They understood nature and knew when it was about to rain or when it would be dry, but they couldn't see from the signs of the times that it was time for the coming of the Messiah (Lk. 12:54-56).

Many people who claim to serve Christ stumble and hang back whenever any action is proposed. They always say that the time hasn't come. But others pay attention to events and have spiritual discernment to understand the time. They pray in faith for the blessing and it comes.

o **The influence of God's Spirit**

When God's Spirit is on you and kindles strong desires for a specific blessing, you are bound to pray for it in faith. You are obligated to infer that the desires are the work of the Spirit, based on the fact that you desire such a thing out of holy affections produced by the Spirit of God. People aren't likely to desire with the right kind of desires unless God's Spirit moves them. Paul refers to these longings stimulated by the Spirit, when he says:

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Rom. 8:26-27).

From this then, you see that if you find yourself longing for good things, then you are to take it as an indication that God wants to give that particular blessing.

Unanswered prayers

Some people think Paul's prayer against the "thorn in the flesh" is troublesome. He says, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." And God answered him: "My grace is sufficient for thee." However, this case doesn't prove to be an exception to the prayer of faith. The very way God answered Paul showed that his prayer *was not* from faith. God more or less told him, "That thorn is necessary for your sanctification, to keep you from exalting yourself. I sent it in love, in faithfulness, and it isn't your business to ask Me to take it away. **Let it alone.**"

Not only is there no evidence Paul prayed in faith, but the text implies he did not. From the account it seems he had nothing on which to base his faith – no explicit promise, no applicable general promise, no indication from God's ordering of events, no prophecy, no intimation by the Spirit that God would remove the thorn. The presumption was, then, that God would *not* remove it. God had given it to him for a particular purpose.

Paul's prayer appears to be a selfish request against a personal inconvenience. This wasn't some personal suffering that curtailed his usefulness; on the contrary, it was given to him to increase his usefulness by keeping him humble. Because he found the thorn inconvenient, he prayed from his own heart, evidently without being so led by God's Spirit. Paul couldn't pray in faith without the Holy Spirit any more than any other Christian.

Praying in faith

† You must find evidence that God wants to bestow the blessing. How did Daniel prepare to pray the prayer of faith? He searched the Scriptures. If you let your Bible lie on a shelf, don't expect God to reveal His promises to you. Search the Scriptures and see if you discover a general or special promise or a prophecy to stand on when you pray.

- † Entire consecration to God is indispensable to the prayer of faith. You must live a holy life, giving everything to God – time, talents, influence – all you have and all you are. Read the life histories of godly men and women and you will be struck by one fact: they all set apart times to renew their covenant and to freshly dedicate themselves to God. Whenever they did, a blessing always followed.
- † If you want to pray in faith, walk every day with God. If you do, He will tell you what to pray for. Be filled with His Spirit and He will give you more than enough goals to pray for. He will give you as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can bear.

Remarks

There is great reason to doubt the spirituality of people who do not understand from experience this prayer of faith. To say this is not unloving. Let them examine themselves. I fear that they understand prayer as Nicodemus did the new birth: they haven't walked with God, and you can't describe it to them any more than you can describe a beautiful painting to a blind man.

Millions are in hell because people who profess to be Christians have not offered the prayer of faith. When they had promises right in front of them, they didn't have enough faith to use them. Parents let their children, even baptised children, go to hell because they disbelieved God's promises. Many husbands have gone to hell when wives could have prevailed with God in prayer and saved them. You say, "This puts the church under a monstrous load of guilt." Indeed it does. No doubt multitudes will stand before God covered with the blood of souls lost through their lack of faith. The promises of God still unpacked from their Bibles will stare them in the face and drag them down to hell.

I want to ask the people who say they know Christ a few questions. Do you know what it means to pray in faith? Have you ever prayed in this way? Have you ever prayed

until you were certain the blessing would come – until you rested in God as perfectly as if you saw God come down from heaven and hand it to you? If you haven't you need to examine your foundation. How can you live without praying in faith at all? How do you live in sight of your children while you have no assurance that they will be converted? I would think you would go crazy.

I knew a father out west. He was a good man but he had wrong views about the prayer of faith. All of his children had grown up and not one was a Christian. After a while his son became deathly sick. The father prayed but the son grew worse, and seemed to sink into death without hope. The father prayed until his anguish was unspeakable. At last he went again and prayed – by that time there was no chance his son would live. He prayed until he received assurance his son would not only live but be converted – and not only this one but his whole family would come to God.

He went home and told his family his son would live. They were astonished. "He won't die," he said. "And no child of mine will ever die in his sins." In time his children all became Christians.

Was that fanaticism? If you think so you know nothing. Do you pray in this way? Do you live in a way where you *can* pray such prayers for your children? I know that the children of professing Christians can be converted because someone else prayed. But should you expect that? Do you dare entrust to others' prayers what God calls *you* to uphold?

Finally, note what all-out effort is made to dispose of the Bible! Unbelievers throw out the threats and the church the promises. What is left? They leave the Bible blank. I say it in love: What are our Bibles good for if we don't lay hold of their precious promises and use them to ground our faith when we ask for God's blessings? You should send your Bibles to the unsaved – where they would do some good – if you aren't going to believe and use them. Few offer this prayer. And what will become of it? What will become of your children? Your neighbours? The unsaved?

The Spirit-filled life

“...be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

In our text, God commands you to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God’s command to do a thing is the best evidence that we *can* do it. Having the Spirit is your duty because of the following reasons:

- ◆ You have a promise of it.
- ◆ God has commanded it.
- ◆ Being filled with the Spirit is essential to your growth in grace.
- ◆ It is as important as your sanctification.
- ◆ It is as necessary as being useful.
- ◆ Without it you will dishonour God and be a disgrace to the church.

Results of having the Spirit

The Spirit-filled life has certain characteristics as well as a number of implications of which we must be fully aware. Among them are the power to witness for Christ, increased conflict with the carnal believers, with the unsaved world and with the kingdom of Satan:

○ **You will be called eccentric**

People who are filled by the Spirit act from different influences, have different views, are moved by different motives, and are led by a different spirit. Expect remarks such as, “He’s a good man, but a little off.” I sometimes ask about the eccentricity. I hear the list, and it amounts to a summary of spiritual maturity. Paul was accused of being unbalanced by those who didn’t understand the views that moved his actions. Festus said to him, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” But Paul replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness” (Acts 26:24-25). Paul’s wishes and rationale were so novel that Festus completely misunderstood it. It made no sense to him.

○ **Feelings of distress**

If you have the Spirit, expect to feel great distress over the church and the world. Some spiritual hedonists seek the Spirit because they think He will make them content. Some people think mature Christians are gloriously happy, and for ever free from sorrows. They couldn't make a greater mistake. Read your Bible! See how the prophets and apostles always groaned at the condition of God's people and the world. Paul said he always bore in his body the dying of the Lord. He said he died daily.

The Christian will know what it means to sympathise with Christ and to be baptised with the baptism with which He was baptised. How He agonised when He saw the state of sinners! How He was tortured in heart for their salvation! The more you have of His Spirit the more clearly you see the peril of sinners, and the more clearly you will be distressed over them. Many times you will feel as if you will die because you have seen their situation; your distress will be too deep for words.

○ **Grieve over the clergy**

You will often grieve over the clergy. Some years ago I met a woman who belonged to a church in New York City. I asked about spirituality there. She made a few general comments and then choked. Her eyes filled with tears and she said, "Oh, our pastor seems so dead." Spiritual Christians often feel this and weep. Christians weep and groan in secret over the deadness of their spiritual leaders – their worldliness and fear of man. These spiritual Christians don't dare to talk for fear they would be denounced and possibly kicked out of the church.

I don't say these things with a critical heart to condemn my fellow pastors. But they should know that nothing is more common than for mature Christians to feel distress at the pastorate. This is one of the most prominent, deplorable evils of our day. The devotion of the pastor is often so superficial that he is a spiritual infant compared to some

members of his church. Ministers lack enough deep Christian experience to know how to search and wake the church, and how to help those feeling tempted, how to support the weak, direct the strong and lead them all through the maze that hides their path.

When a pastor has brought a congregation as far as his own spiritual experience goes, there he stops; and until he has a renewed experience of brokenness and launches forward in Christian life, he will never help them again. He might preach sound doctrine; so can an unconverted pastor. His preaching will still lack searching pungency, practical bearing and unction that alone can reach the spiritual Christian. The church groans at how it suffers from young ministers who are intellectually well trained, but they are spiritual babes. They can never feed God's church when they themselves need to be nursed.

o **Fierce opposition**

If you have much of the Spirit, decide to expect opposition both in and out of the church. The leaders of the church will probably fight you, which was true even for Christ. If you are far above their state of heart, other members will attack you, for anyone who lives a godly life in Christ Jesus must expect persecution. Elders and even the pastor will fight against you if you are filled with the Spirit of God.

o **Conflicts with Satan**

Expect frequent and agonising conflicts with Satan. He has little trouble with unspiritual Christians – the lukewarm, lazy and worldly-minded. They don't understand spiritual conflict. They just smile when the more mature talk about such things. And so Satan leaves them alone. They don't bother him nor he them. But he knows well that spiritual Christians severely injure him, so he kicks against them. Alive Christians often have terrible conflicts. They face temptations that never even occurred to them before: blasphemous thoughts, atheism, suggestions to do evil things and even to kill themselves. If you are spiritual, expect these conflicts.

o **Greater inner conflicts**

You will face greater struggles within yourself than ever before. Sometimes your own corruptions will make unexpected headway against the Spirit. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to one another: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

One US Navy commodore was a spiritual man. His pastor told me the commodore frequently lay on the floor and groaned much of the night, fighting to overcome temptation. It seemed the devil wanted to destroy him, and that his own heart was almost on Satan's side.

o **Peace with God**

Despite the distress and conflicts, you will have peace with God. Even in the church, sinners and Satan hate you, there will be One with whom you will have peace. If you face these trials, if you groan, pray and weep, remember this: your peace with God will flow like a river.

o **A peaceful conscience**

If you are led by the Spirit, you will also have a peaceful conscience. Your heart won't torture you on the rack. It will be unruffled as a summer lake. You will be calm during trials, settled even when you see a storm blowing around you. Your cheerfulness under severe afflictions will astonish people who don't understand who supports your inner heart. You will be peaceful in death. You will always feel ready to die, and you will be proportionately more happy in heaven forever.

o **You will be useful**

You can't help being useful. Even if you were sick and unable to leave your room and you never spoke with anyone, you would still be ten times more useful than a hundred immature Christians. I know of an instance where one sick man's fervent prayers of faith led to the salvation of various key persons who, through their dedication, were instrumental in bringing revival to their town.

o **Undisturbed by criticism**

If you are filled by the Spirit, you won't be distressed when people talk about you. When people rankle at the smallest thing that touches them, they clearly don't have Christ's Spirit. People flung at Christ every imaginable form of malice, yet He wasn't disturbed. If you want to be meek under persecution and to exemplify the Saviour's temper, you need to be filled with the Spirit.

o **You will lead souls to Christ**

You will know how to use tools and strategies to convert unbelievers. The Holy Spirit in you will lead you to use means wisely. You will adapt them well, avoid hurting people, and apply the truth to the fullest advantage.

When will *all* who claim Christ's name get to work, filled with the Holy Spirit?

Power from on high

“[Jesus] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Lk. 24:46-49).

We need the enduement of power from on high. Christ had previously informed the disciples that without Him they could do nothing. When He gave them the commission to convert the world, He added, “But tarry ye in Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Behold, I send upon you the promise of My Father.” This enduement with power is an indispensable condition of performing the work which Christ has set before us.

How shall we get it? Christ expressly promised it to the whole church, and to every individual whose duty it is to la-

bour for the conversion of the world. He admonished the first disciples not to undertake the work until they had received this enduement of power from on high. Both the promise and the admonition apply equally to all Christians of every age and nation. No one has, at any time, any right to expect success without it.

The example of the first disciples teaches us how to secure this enduement. They first *consecrated themselves* to this work, and continued in prayer and supplication until the Holy Ghost fell upon them. The text informs us that it is infinitely easy to obtain the Holy Spirit, or this enduement of power. The Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than we are to give good gifts to our children (Lk. 11:13).

There is a great difference between the *peace* and the *power* of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The disciples were *Christians* before the day of Pentecost, and, as such, they had a measure of the Holy Spirit. They must have had the peace of sins forgiven, and of a justified state, but they had not the enduement of power necessary to the accomplishment of the work assigned to them. They had the *peace* which Christ had *given* them, but not the *power* which He had *promised*.

This may be true of all Christians, and right here is, I think, the great mistake of the church, and of the ministry. They rest in conversion, and do not seek until they obtain this enduement of power from on high. Hence so many professors have no power with either God or man. They prevail with neither. They cling to a hope in Christ, and even enter the ministry, overlooking the admonition to wait until they are endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let anyone lay all upon the altar and prove God herewith, and he shall find that God will open the windows of heaven, and pour him out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

To the honour of God alone I will say a little of my own experience in this matter. I was powerfully converted on the morning of the 10th of October. In the evening of the same day, and on the morning of the following day, I received

overwhelming baptisms of the Holy Ghost, that went through me, as it seemed to me, body and soul. I immediately found myself endued with such power from on high that a few words dropped here and there to individuals were the means of their immediate conversion. My words seemed to fasten like barbed arrows in the souls of men. They cut like a sword. They broke the heart like a hammer. Multitudes can attest to this. Oftentimes a word dropped, without my remembering it, would fasten conviction, and often result in almost immediate conversions.

Sometimes I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power. I would go out and visit, and find that I made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray, with the same result. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would inquire anxiously after the reason of this apparent emptiness. After humbling myself, and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness. This has been the experience of my life.

The want of an enduement of power from on high should be deemed a disqualification for a pastor, a deacon or elder, a Sunday school superintendent, a professor in a Christian college, and especially for a professor in a theological seminary. Is this a hard saying? Suppose any of the apostles had failed, through apathy, selfishness, unbelief, indolence, or ignorance, to obtain this enduement of power, would that not have disqualified them to work for Christ?

Shall the church of God be burdened with teachers and leaders who lack this fundamental qualification, when their failing to possess it must be their own fault? They are inexcusable. With such a command to convert the world ringing in our ears; with such an injunction to wait in constant, wrestling prayer till we receive the power; with such a promise made by such a Saviour of all the help we need from Christ Himself, what excuse can we offer for being powerless in this great work? What an awful responsibility rests upon the whole church, upon every Christian!

There is a need of a great reformation in the church on this particular point. The churches should wake up to the facts in the case, and take a firm stand in regard to the qualifications of ministers and church officers. They should refuse to settle a man as pastor of whose qualifications for the office in this respect they are not well satisfied. Whatever else he may have to recommend him, if his record does not show that he has this endowment of power to win souls to Christ, they should deem him unqualified to serve as pastor.

The churches should hold the theological seminaries to strict account in this matter; and until they do, I fear that the seminaries will never wake up to their responsibility. A seminary that aims mainly at the culture of the intellect, and sends out learned men who lack the endowment of power from on high, is a snare and a stumbling-block to the church of Christ. What really matters is the heart culture of theological candidates: What do they know of the power of Christ to save from sin, what do they know of the power of prayer, and to what extent are they endued with power from on high to win souls to Christ? Oh! that it were different and we were all agreed, now and forever, to hold fast to the promise of Christ, and never think ourselves or anybody else to be fit for the great work of the church till we have received the rich endowment of the power of God through His Holy Spirit.

I beg the churches, I beg the seminaries, to receive a word of exhortation from an old man, who has had some experience in these things, and one whose heart mourns and is weighed down in view of the shortcomings of the church, the ministers, and the seminaries, on this subject. Brethren, I beseech you to more thoroughly consider this matter, to wake up and lay it to heart, and rest not till this subject of the endowment of power from on high is brought forward into its proper place, and takes that prominent and practical position in view of the whole church that Christ designed it should.