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WHAT IS REVIVAL?

By George Curry

We need revival. And we need it urgently. But what is revival? And how can we recognise it? We shall answer each question in turn.

What is Revival?

Revival is best described as a season during which God works in the hearts of men in a deeper way than he ordinarily does. It is a season of refreshing (Acts 3.19). On such occasions the Holy Spirit works powerfully in large numbers of people. As a result believers are revived. Some unbelievers are converted. Whilst others, although not converted, are taught to respect the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to fear God. During seasons of revival many become deeply concerned about their spiritual state and God's will for them.

Revival cannot be whipped up. Seasons of refreshing are sovereignly given by God. We can and should pray that God will revive his people and awaken unbelievers. But we must never forget that we are completely dependent upon him. Without him we can do nothing.

What are the features of revival?

To answer this question we can do little better than turn to the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards was an American who lived from 1705 - 1758. For some 23 years he ministered in a church in Northampton, New England. During those years he saw revival twice. Once in 1735 and then again in 1740. This was the time of the 'Great Evangelical Awakening.'

Edwards carefully observed and noted all that took place. He assessed everything by Scripture. From his writings we are able to learn a great deal about what happens when God the Holy Spirit comes down on people in power. In fact from what he tells us we can say that when the Spirit comes in seasons of refreshing he does the following.

1. *He makes men aware of how great and majestic God is.* The experience of some is so deep that they are affected physically. For example they may experience loss of strength.
2. *He convinces men that God is perfectly holy.* That is, that unlike us, God is pure through and through.
3. *He impresses upon men that God hates sin.* It displeases him. It incurs his wrath.
4. *He shows and convinces us that we are sinners.*
5. *He encourages us to detest sin.*
6. *He teaches us to be deeply sorry for our sin(s).* Sometimes this sorrow is very intense. Some have been known to weep and mourn for days.
7. *He causes men to see that the message of the Bible is true.*
8. *He overwhelms men with the realisation that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour.* And that there is no way to God except through faith in Christ.

9. *The spirit impresses upon us that the Lord Jesus has done all that is necessary for our salvation.*
10. *The Spirit reveals himself to believers as the great comforter.*
11. *He fills us with an intense desire to live for God.*
12. *He teaches us to live by faith and not by sight.*
13. *He teaches us not to trust ourselves but to depend upon God at all times.*
14. *He fills us with a longing that all Christians will prove both loving and faithful.*
15. *The Spirit teaches us to deny ourselves.*
16. *He makes us tender-hearted towards and deeply concerned for those who don't know Christ.*
17. *He encourages us to pray that God will do yet greater things.*
18. *He causes believers to delight in heaven.*
19. *He fills them with an intense love for other Christians.*
20. *He teaches us to pray that others will love God better than we do.*
21. *He makes spiritual things delightful to us.*
22. *He makes us deeply aware of the importance of doing good to all men.*
23. *He fills Christians with an assurance that God loves them.*
24. *He teaches us to love, and makes us ready to obey, all that God commands.*
25. *He fills men with a desire to read the Bible and to hear his Word taught and preached.*

This is what happens in seasons of revival. Individuals and groups of people enjoy deep and lasting experiences of God. He comes down in power. God has been pleased to do this in the past. This is what we need today.

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