

## Send a Revival, Start the Work in Me

Written by David Wise

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During the early 1800's it was a time of great outpouring of God's Spirit and additions to the Baptist Church. From 1801 to 1802 AD in the churches of Kentucky, about 6,000 persons were baptized within about an 8 month period. During the same two-year period in the Kehukee Association in North Carolina, about 1,500 members were baptized into their churches. Within 18 months beginning in 1812, Elder Wilson Thompson baptized some 400 to 500 persons into Bethel Church in Missouri. In 1829, Elder John Leland wrote, "In the south part of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, there are more than a thousand Baptist churches, now existing, which arose from that beginning" (referring to the constitution of Sandy Creek Church in North Carolina by Elders Daniel Marshall and Shubal Stearns in 1755.) This period of growth continued for many years until, unfortunately, in response to the great number of additions and baptisms, the unscriptural necessity of "missions" to continue to convert men to the church was introduced. This caused the division between the Old School, Primitive Baptists, and the New School, Missionary Baptist in the 1830's. (numbers and quotes above are taken from Hassell's History)

Here we see an amazing time of revival among the Baptist churches in America where sinners were baptized literally by "the hundreds" and even by "the thousands" within just a few years' time, resulting in over 1,000 Baptist churches in a six-state region before the Baptist split. This should make us sincerely question, what's the problem today where we do not see these results? Why are church memberships decreasing and churches closing their doors instead of seeing new converts to the truth and new churches being planted? The problem does not lie with the Holy Spirit Who blessed with such a profound revival during those times. God and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is just as powerful and abundantly able to manifest such revival today as He was during this period of the 1800's and able to bless such a revival as we read in scripture in the early days of the church (where they were also baptizing 3,000 and 5,000 people at a time, see Acts 2 & 4). God is "just the same today" and just as able as He has ever been. Therefore, the problem clearly does not lie with the God's end of the equation but the problem lies with the church.

When we speak of revival in America, first of all, we need to understand that God is not calling upon the nation as a whole for repentance, but the call to repentance is to God's people, particularly the church. In speaking of the need for a change of attitude and culture in America,

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2 Chron. 7:14 is often quoted, *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”* This

verse is not calling upon all the Gentile nations of the world to repent when this was written during Solomon’s time, but it was calling upon “God’s people, which are called by God’s name” (in the immediate context, the united kingdom of Israel) to consider their ways and repent. Therefore, this verse and the corresponding promise of healing and forgiveness is not given to “America” but it’s given to “my people, which are called by my name”, i.e. the church. The effect of God’s people who name the name of Christ assuming a posture of repentance will certainly have a cascading effect – a “salt and light effect” – on the nation as a whole, hopefully producing a better sense of morality in the culture as a whole. However, the most substantial results will be found in the church, where repentance on a personal level will certainly lead to persons confessing their sins, confessing Christ as Lord, and requesting baptism into the Lord’s church.

When we initially hear this call to repentance, I fear our first inclination is to list off a number of celebrities, politicians, or other people who are definitely in need of repentance. I have done that myself before. If this nation, is going to get better, than Mr. So & So needs to definitely repent from so & so activity. If the church is going to grow, revive, and get better, then Brother So & So really needs to get his act together. Brethren, if your first thought in regards of repentance is to immediately name off other people who definitely need to repent, then that is symptom #1 that you are in need of repentance!

It’s easy to look at the lives of others and determine in our own minds what areas they are failing in and how they need to change. However, it’s downright uncomfortable and maybe even scary to sincerely and honestly examine and evaluate ourselves to see what areas of our lives need change, repentance, and revival. Somehow, we think we can see perfectly well to denote and critique the mote (literally a “speck of sawdust”) in the eyes of others, while we are looking at them with a beam (literally a 2x4) sticking out of our own eyes! What is the remedy? Get the beam out of your own eye first; fix your own problems; repent of your own sins; remove the 2x4 plank jutting out of your own eye. Then, and only then, can you actually see clearly enough to judge anyone else accurately (see Matt. 7:1-5 for full “mote and beam” context introduced by Jesus).

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It's easy in our fallen, sinful nature to identify the shortcomings of others, but the call to repentance is given to each of us individually. I need to honestly examine my own life through the lens of the Holy Spirit and the lens of the word of God to see what areas need purging. Don't think you have a beam in your own eye? Pray this prayer unto God, and you might find a different diagnosis. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

(Ps. 139:23-24) If God shows you areas in your life that you need to change and repent of, then pray the same prayer David did when he was confronted by Nathan for his egregious sins of adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder. He didn't run from his sin or deny it, but he begged God to purge him of his sins.

*"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."*

(Psalm 51, read full chapter for the full sentiment, these are just excerpted verses). There is no true repentance without confession. The first step to fixing the beam is accepting and acknowledging that there is a beam. David acknowledged that he sinned against God, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned", and simply threw himself down at the feet of God begging for mercy. The promise of scripture is that God will forgive His people who are called by His name when they repent, but God does not look too kindly upon the willful rejection of His calls to repentance. Simply put, personal repentance is the first step to any true, sincere revival.

I would encourage you to read the full account in the *Autobiography of Elder Wilson Thompson* of the atmosphere in and around the churches that experienced such great revivals under his preaching in the 1800's. There was a solemn sense of the Holy Spirit's presence in the entire community, not just in the church house on Sunday. Then in every worship service, the abundant presence of the convicting Holy Spirit was manifested by men, women, and many young children coming down weeping and confessing their sins almost every single church service. When's the last time we saw anyone in the church "weeping" (not just shedding a stray tear but straight up "weeping") over their sins? Speaking from personal experience, I don't know if I've ever seen that deep of conviction of sin manifested by others in the worship service. It might be possible that is the reason I have never seen the type of revival that occurred in Elder

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Wilson's Thompson's day either.

Of course, Sister Debbie Downer might say that we're in a different time. We are in the period of "falling away" in the church, and we'll never see that type of revival in the church again. Now, I'll concede that I believe we are in a period of falling away, the numbers won't allow for any other conclusion. I'm pretty sure we don't have anywhere near to 1,000 churches in those six states that they did in 1829. However, the idea that we can't see a similar and even a greater revival here today is simply discounting the power of God and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. As we've already stated, God is just the same today, and furthermore, don't ever forget that God is *"able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."* (Eph. 3:21) I'm certain we won't see that type or an even greater revival until we see more genuine repentance in our lives, but I do truly believe that God is able to do even more and even add more to our churches in just as short of a time period as we saw among the Primitive Baptist churches in the early 1800's.

Then, Brother Peter Pessimist might say that our culture is just so wicked and getting worse nowadays that I don't how we could see such a great revival in our country today. I would encourage Brother Peter to go read a history book sometime. I present for your consideration that there was probably no more wicked nation and culture in the history of the world than the Roman Empire that ruled the world during the apostles' days. We might think America is a "crooked and perverse nation", but the Holy Spirit actually ascribed that title to the Roman Empire (Phil. 2:15) in Paul's Philippian epistle, probably penned around 60 AD. Let's not forget, it was in the "midst of that crooked and perverse nation" that the church grew exponentially, baptizing 3,000 and 5,000 at a time, and were accused by their enemies of "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). To say that we can't see that type of moving of the Holy Spirit today is dangerously close to quenching the Holy Spirit. God is just as able today to move in the wicked culture of America as he was in the Roman Empire or any other nation in the world.

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Will we see a profound moving of the Holy Spirit among the Lord's church today? I don't know. Any growth in the church is according to the Lord's will because it's God that ultimately gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-7). However, I feel confident by saying that we won't see any great revival until we see great repentance. Not repentance from Hollywood and Washington, but from "my people which are called by my name", from the pews and pulpits of the Lord's church. If I hope to be among God's people, then that revival starts with me. If I'm a member of the Lord's church, and I am praying for revival in the church, then that revival needs to start with me. Not pointing fingers at others who need to get their act right, but acknowledging and making the necessary changes for me to get my act right. Simply put, any great revival starts in my heart. Only then, can we hope to see the cascading effect that others might be brought to repentance as well.

Search me, O God, and know my heart today,

Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray;

See if there be some wicked way in me;

Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.

I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin;

Fulfill Thy word and make me pure within;

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Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame;

Grant my desire to magnify Thy name.

Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine;

Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;

Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;

I now surrender, Lord, in me abide.

O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee;

Send a revival, start the work in me;

Thy Word declares Thou wilt supply our need;

For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead.