

# Revival- No. 1

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Text.--Psa. 85:6: "Wilt Thou not receive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

In speaking from these words, I remark,

*I. That a religious revival implies a previous religious declension.*

*II. Show when a revival of religion is needed in any church or place.*

*III. Some of the characteristics of a true revival of religion.*

*IV. A few of the indications of a revival approaching, or already commenced.*

*V. Some of the conditions upon which a revival may be expected to become general in a community.*

*VII. Some objections that are sometimes urged to revivals of religion.*

## **I. A religious revival implies a previous religious declension.**

- 1. A religious revival consists in the renewing of the love and grace of God's people, and a consequent conversion of sinners to Christ.
- 2. All Christians know what it is to have seasons, at least, of comparative declension and revival in their own experience. When a great many Christians are at the same time quickened and revived in their graces, this is what is called a revival of religion in the church, or among the professed people of God.
- 3. Such a state of things, perhaps universally, is instrumental in promoting a greater or less inquiry among the impenitent, and the conversion of many of them to Christ.

## **II. I will endeavor to show when a revival of religion is needed in any church or place.**

- 1. It is needed when Christians have left their first love; have lost their loving zeal for Christ, and are no longer mellow and earnest, loving and zealous, as real wakeful and quickened Christians always are.
- 2. When Christians have become worldly-minded; are minding the things of this world, and have become engrossed with them.

Their conversation is worldly. They talk about politics; they talk about business and the news of the day; and are engrossed with other than the immediate work to which Christ has called them, the sanctification of their own souls, and the conversion of the world to Christ. There is sometimes a state of things in a church in which little is said among them about the conversions of souls, or about spiritual religion. They have little to say of their own experience; they have little to say to each other about Christ; in short, they have lost their interest in spiritual religion, and have become excited about, and interested in, the affairs of this world to such an extent that they may be said to be conformed to this world.

- 3. A revival of religion is needed when Christians are in reproach in consequence of their worldly-mindedness. When professed Christians become worldly-minded, lose their zeal for Christ and become zealous about worldly matters -- enter with zeal into politics, and business, and amusements, and have little to say about Christ and His religion, it is always noticed by the worldly.

They always feel this inconsistency on the part of Christians, and are prone to speak about it. In their estimation, Christians are disgraced. They are despised for their inconsistency; and it will come to be a common thing for the impenitent to speak reproachfully of the church in such circumstances. They will not unfrequently ridicule their pretensions to piety, brand them as hypocrites, and speak of them in a manner that indicates they have no respect for their profession of godliness. When such a state of things as this exists, there is great need of a revival of religion.

- 4. When a church has fallen into a state of formality in their religious services, there is need of a revival of religion. It sometimes happens that churches become very formal and dull. Their meetings are thinly attended, and all their professed worship and prayers are exceedingly formal and lifeless. They seem to be in a state in which they are not moved to religious services by any inward impulse, or fire of love within them; but they resort to a formal round of what they call duty, and everybody can see that they have no heart in it. In such circumstances, a revival of religion is greatly needed.
- 5. A revival is greatly needed when Christians become slothful servants in religious duty. They are very neglectful of their duty to Christ, of their duty to each other, and of their duty to the impenitent. They make little or no effort to secure the great end for which the church is living, or ought to live. They are possessed with the spirit of religious indolence and laziness. They have no energy, or life, or power of godliness in them. They do everything lazily, indolently. I

mean, they perform all religious duties in a slothful manner, and do not even attempt the performance of many things that they know to be their duty. They are literally slothful servants, idling away Christ's time, and seeming not even to aim at bringing anything of importance to pass in the kingdom of Christ.

- 6. A revival of religion is needed when Christians have lost their spirit of compassion for the unconverted.

When Christians are in the exercise of the Christian graces, they are compassionate; they feel for the impenitent, and they manifest this feeling. They realize their guilt and their danger, and are greatly exercised concerning them. This compassion they manifest in many ways; which manifestations greatly impress the ungodly.

But when Christians have left their first love, they lose their compassionate zeal for souls; and they manifest very little compassion even for their own children and friends. This inconsistency is noticed by the ungodly; and if professing parents or friends manifest no compassion for their unconverted children and relatives, these unconverted ones are not stirred up to feel for themselves. They sleep on in spiritual death, because no one around them manifests any care for their souls. In such a state of things a revival of religion is imperatively demanded.

- 7. A revival of religion is needed when there is little or no earnest prayer for the conversion of souls.

When the church gets into the state of which I have been speaking, you will hear very little prayer among them for the conversion of the ungodly. If they pray, you will observe that they pray only for themselves, and scarcely at all for the impenitent; and when they do pray for them, they offer but a few short requests, perhaps, that are heartless, meaningless, without fervor, without confession, without earnestness.

It is surprising to see, sometimes, how unnatural it is for professors of religion in their prayer meetings to pray for the impenitent. The fact is, you ask one, and another, and another to pray, and they will scarcely remember to pray for the impenitent at all. You can see that they pray around, and around, for themselves, and in a way that shows that they are purely selfish, in a way that shows that they care very little even for their own souls; and you can scarcely get them to pray for the ungodly, for in fact they are in such an ungodly state themselves that they cannot pray for them. Now, in such a state of things as this, a revival is greatly needed, of course.

- 8. A revival of religion is greatly needed when secret and family prayer are neglected; when prayer-meetings are neglected; when the members really dread to attend prayer-meetings, lest they should be obliged to take a part, and be called upon to lead in prayer; when they have so far backslidden that to be called upon to pray, is a trial to them. They have no heart to pray; their prayers are cold and forced; and they stay away from meetings, either because they do not like to be called upon to pray themselves, or perhaps they do not like to listen to the cold and formal prayers of their brethren.

- 9. A revival of religion is greatly needed when sectarian prejudices prevail among Christians, so far as to prevent their taking an interest in each other's experience and progress. Party walls are built up and strengthened, and great stress is laid upon the peculiarities that distinguish them as sectarians. They exalt these peculiarities into matters of such great importance, that they lose their interest in, and charity for, their brethren of other denominations. In this state they cannot pray and prevail for themselves or others; and the ungodly see it, and are shocked and stumbled by it.
- 10. A revival of religion is needed when brotherly love is so low, and so nearly extinct, that it is not natural for Christians to call each other brethren; when, in fact, it seems to them silly, and to sound like cant, to call a Christian brother, Brother. In this state they take very little interest in Christians, as such; they have very little special regard for those that are Christians because they are Christians. They do not feel for them as belonging to the same family; they do not take that fraternal interest in them that really belongs to the Christian religion.
- 11. A revival of religion is greatly needed when Christians have so far lost their brotherly love that they can speak against their brethren; speak of their faults before others; when they become censorious, instead of being tender of the reputation of their brethren, and of the cause of Christ which they represent; publish their faults endlessly to the world, speak reproachfully of them, censure them, and seem disposed to judge uncharitably of them in almost every respect. Thus they help forward the devil's work, by shaking the confidence of the ungodly in Christians. Sometimes professors of religion do more to injure the church and the cause of Christ, to shake the confidence of the world in Christianity -- far more than it is in the power of ungodly men to do.

When professors of religion get away from God, they almost always become censorious. They speak against the church; they speak against Christians, publishing their real faults and imputing to them faults of which they are perhaps not guilty; and thus they take the most direct way to bring religion into contempt. In this state of things a revival of religion is always greatly needed.

- 12. A revival of religion is needed when professors of religion are self-indulgent.

Selfishness consists in a disposition to indulge self -- to indulge the appetites, desires, and propensities. We sometimes see professors of religion giving themselves up, like the world, to indulge themselves in a great many ways. They are pleasure-seekers; they run hither and thither just to please themselves. They will run and spend Christ's money for this object and that; they will run to this concert and that amusement; they will make this journey and that; purchase this article and that; and in a great variety of ways they will manifest a self-indulgent spirit -- in eating and drinking; in short in most of the ways in which ungodly men indulge themselves. They seem to lose sight of the fact that selfishness and self-indulgence is sin. They no longer deny themselves, and take up their cross daily and follow Christ. They have ceased to deny themselves; they have ceased to bear Christ's cross; and self-indulgence has come to be the habit of their lives. Instead of being devoted to Christ and doing all things for Him, they do everything directly or

indirectly to please themselves. You see them engaging in a multitude of things which it is impossible to suppose they were doing to please Christ. It must be that they were doing these things to please themselves. It cannot be that they were running hither and thither, running to this concert and that amusement -- they cannot do this to please Christ; it must be that this is a self-pleasing spirit, the very opposite of the Christian religion. In this state of things you will often see, with all their self-indulgence, that they attend meeting on the Sabbath, and in various ways keep up the form of godliness while they deny its power. The ungodly are astonished at them, and they inquire, "Wherein do they differ from us? They seem as fond of pleasure; they seem as self-indulgent; they seem as little in earnest about religion, and as much in earnest about the world as we are." They spend their time, they spend their money, to please themselves.

Now, in such a dreadful state as this, a revival of religion is greatly needed. The church, in this state, is neglecting Christ's work, and seeking their own pleasure and their own profit.

All religious efforts in such a state as this, drag heavily. If money is needed for a Sabbath School library, for missionary purposes, or for any religious object, it is not easily obtained. The brethren do not feel like taking hold of such objects, and everything in that direction is discouraging.

- 13. A revival of religion is needed, when, as a consequence of their declension, Christians are involved in doubt in regard to their religious state.

Of course, when such is the case, they have lost the witness of the Spirit. They are aware that they have no present religious enjoyment or power. They have many doubts and misgivings whether they are really in a safe condition; and will often express these doubts, to the stumbling of the ungodly.

It is amazing to see, that sometimes professors of religion get into such a state as to think such doubts are inevitable; and that all professors of religion have them, or ought to have them.

And even ministers so far backslide, as to have such doubts habitually themselves, and preach in such a way as to encourage others in having them. Now it is always true that when religious doubts come to be the order of the day in any church, a revival of religion is greatly needed.

- 14. When Christians fall into condemnation and religious bondage, all their religious duties are up-hill and a burden to them. There is no spontaneous love service rendered by them, but everything is constrained by their consciences; and such language as this is natural to them:

"Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,

And all her words approve;

But still I find it hard t' obey,

And harder still to love."

It is natural for them to sing backsliders' hymns, such as --

"Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

Where is that soul-reviving view

Of Jesus and His word?"

Sometimes professors of religion get into a state in which the hymns that they naturally sing, show that they are backsliders; indicate a low, groveling, earthly state of mind; show that they are not growing in grace, but are backslidden, and are still backsliding from God. Their prayers show that they are under condemnation; their whole Christian life is one of bondage; and their religion is an up-hill affair. In such a state as this, a revival of religion is much, very much needed.

- 15. A revival of religion is very much needed, when, as a consequence of the backsliding of the church, the preaching of the word of God is powerless. There is little or no prayer for its success; and perhaps the minister himself feels the drag and weight of his cold church hanging upon him. He goes into the pulpit in a discouraged state of mind; feels as if he were living among icebergs; and he languidly, perhaps, holds forth the word of life, but in an atmosphere so void of the Spirit of God, that the word is powerless and falls to the ground. Sinners are careless; and either stay away from meeting or attend carelessly, and perhaps sleep during the exercises. If they do not sleep, they are carelessly gazing about, very little interested in what is said, or if they are interested, it is perhaps a wordly interest which they take in the sermon, as an intellectual treat, peradventure, or a literary essay, or some other interest than a spiritual interest in what they hear.

Thus sinners are stumbled; do not know what to think of religion; and strongly doubt whether there is anything in it. They are watching professors of religion, and often musing upon their state, and endeavoring to interpret their worldly conduct in such a way as to justify themselves in their neglect of religion. They are beginning to feel a contempt for a profession of religion; and often feel irritated in their dealings with professors of religion who are in a worldly state. They thus become greatly prejudiced against religion and against the church. They have lost confidence in the sincerity of those who belong to the church, and are disposed to regard them as hypocrites. They perceive that there are alienations and dissensions among professors of religion; and such are their surroundings, and such is the conduct of professors of religion, that the ungodly generally are exceedingly careless, and hardened, and skeptical. The youth are not interested in religion; and they seldom attend the prayer-meetings, because there is nothing in the prayer-meetings to interest them. They do not feel that they need to be prayed for

themselves; and if they did, they have very little confidence in the church, and would not feel that it was of any importance to say to them, "Pray for us." And thus the great mass of the young people are negligent about religion, and are given up to their frivolous, gay pursuits; the ways of Zion do mourn, and from one communion to another very few if any are coming to her solemn feasts. There are very few additions to the church; and those that do occasionally unite, perhaps unite by letter from other churches, or are doubtful cases of hopeful conversion. Now there is great need of a revival of religion in all such cases.

### **III. I will next notice some of the characteristics of a true revival of religion.**

- 1. I said that a religious revival implies a previous religious declension. Of course, then, one of the characteristics of a true revival of religion will be, a great conviction of sin among professors of religion. They are in a very wicked state; and one of the first things that will be observed in a true revival of religion, will be a conviction of the great sin of their departure from God.

A sense of condemnation or remorse will take hold upon these backsliders; their mouths are shut, and they feel so condemned they can scarcely look up. They feel as if their sins were vastly greater from the fact that they are professors of religion. They look upon their backslidings as almost unpardonable; and oftentimes their conviction, in these circumstances, will be vastly deeper than when they were first converted.

- 2. Great humiliation will be another characteristic of a revival of religion. By humiliation I mean a getting down low before God; and disposition to confess much to God, and to their brethren; to confess in secret, to confess in public; a spontaneous getting down and humbling themselves before God and before the world. They feel as if they had been stumbling-blocks; and they wish to take the stumbling-blocks up. They feel as if they had dishonored Christianity; and they wish all men to know that they are ashamed of it, that they are sorry for it. They wish to take away the reproach, as far as possible, that they have brought upon the cause of Christ.
- 3. Another characteristic of a true revival, in such circumstances, will be, not merely confession but restitution. If in their worldly state they have been hard and oppressive in their dealings; if they have taken too high interest for money; if they have been guilty of any extortion or over-reaching in any way; if they have in any wise injured anyone, they will not rest till they have made restitution. If they are truly revived, they have now become benevolent; they now love their neighbors as themselves. They will not keep their ill-gotten gains, for they love all men now as their brethren; and they will spontaneously make restitution to them where they have done them wrong. If they have created prejudices against anyone by slander, or by censorious speeches, they will be sure to go and take up the stumbling-block. They will try to set everything right as far as they can, and undo the heavy burdens which they have put upon others.
- 4. Another characteristic of a true revival will be the giving up of false hopes on the part of those who have been deceived.

Perhaps in every church there are some who are self-deceived, supposing themselves to be Christians when they are not; and a revival of religion among those that have been really converted, tends naturally to arouse those that have been self-deceived, and to make them see and understand their delusion. In a revival of religion, there are always great searchings of heart. The Spirit of God is poured out, and all classes of persons in the church are greatly searched, and their old hopes tried. Christ comes with His fan in His hand to thoroughly purge His floor; and even sound hopes will be greatly tried; and false hopes, often in multitudes, will be swept away.

- 5. Another characteristic of a true revival will be the adjustment of difficulties.

When churches are backslidden in heart, one of the results will always be, that difficulties will arise among brethren in their business transactions; and in the various relations of life there will arise difficulties of greater or less consequence among many of the members of the church.

Difficulties also will arise between the members of the church and the world outside of the church. There will be heart-burnings and alienations, more or less, and sometimes of long standing and of great extent; but a true revival of religion is sure to bring these matters to an issue, and so far as it prevails, to lead to an adjustment of all such difficulties. The hearts of the brethren become softened, and they come to see things in a different light. They are now willing to come together and make mutual confessions; they are now willing to set everything right; they are now anxious to have all these things put away, and to wash their hands of wrong.

- 6. Another characteristic of a true revival is a disposition on the part of the church to take up the stumbling-blocks that they have laid in the way of the ungodly.

They are aware that they have stumbled the ungodly in every way -- by their worldly-mindedness, their pleasure-seeking and their money-loving ways. But now they are anxious for the conversion of sinners; and therefore they wish to remove from before them all the occasion of stumbling which they have laid in their way. Now if they are really revived, they are sure to bestir themselves in taking up these stumbling-blocks. You must not believe that any one is really revived who is not willing to take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of sinners. You must never have any confidence in a church, or in any members of a church, that they are truly revived in religion, while they are too proud or too negligent to take the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the impenitent.

- 7. Another characteristic of a true revival will be, the anointing of the ministry, as the chief instruments in the hand of God to carry on the work. It will be seen that there is a freshness and an unction poured upon those who are the instruments of the work.

Indeed, the characteristics of a true revival are such as will reverse the state of things that existed before, as far as the revival prevails. It will be seen that a state of things the opposite of religious declension exists both in and out of the church. Sinners will become

interested and excited, will repent, will make restitution -- will, in short, become Christians.

## GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or

would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.

8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.