

XX. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“Patches, Wineskins and Revival”

Matthew 9:14–17

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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This study will conduct us to the Lord’s Supper so let’s start by looking at Matthew 9. Matthew 9:14–17 says [14] *Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”* [15] *And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.* [16] *No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made.* [17] *Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We are in the context of the 20th sermon dealing with revival as we come to this Communion study. Looking at the various texts that deal with revival we have come up with a basic definition of revival. There are at least 28 identifiable revivals in the Bible and we’ve looked at a number of them. As we have studied them we have walked away with a number of principles, axioms and takeaways but one thing that we have seen is what the Bible teaches that revival is. Revival is an extraordinary work of God’s grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God’s glory.

Remember that revival is not evangelism. Revival produces two things – worship and evangelism. But revival goes to work on believers for they have already been ‘vived’ and that’s why they have been revived. They are being brought back from what seems to be a decent into a deathlike existence and the same God who brings us from death unto life in our conversion (an extraordinary work), also does an extraordinary work in revival when He revives His people personally or churches, which results in Gospel awakenings, evangelism and Gospel God-centered worship.

So it’s an extraordinary work of God’s grace but He does it through ordinary people and He does it in ordinary places. How does He do it? He does it thorough ordinary means with an extraordinary consequence of praise and proclamation. The ordinary means He uses can be the Lord’s Supper, preaching, worship, prayer, fellowship for it’s all those means that He has appointed whereby He brings His grace to bear in power upon His people, not only to convert those who have not yet come to Christ who died on the cross to save sinners and rose again declaring His victory, but also to revive His people when they have by their faithlessness, indolence or whatever has led them into the compromise position of being like a death trance.

As I thought about how the Lord uses the Lord’s Supper I could not help but think of in light of our Impact Weekend with our high school students and the revival places I recently visited in Scotland. One of those revival places was in Portmahomack, a little sea village, during the Communion season. In the Presbyterian history we believe Communion is very important in the church, not to celebrate it every Sunday but when we celebrate it we do it with intentionality. Our forbearers would have Communion seasons in which they would gather from Wednesday to Friday to preach and worship and then Saturday they would spend time in personal examination

to prepare for the Lord's Supper on that Sunday Lord's Day, having heard the preaching of the Word to plow up their hearts. Then they would come before the elders to share that which is going on in their lives so they could come to the Lord's Supper, not worthy for only Jesus is worthy, but coming in a manner worthy. It was in those moments that revivals would break out.

Time and time again in my study of revivals in Scotland they broke out during Communion season which is an ordinary means that God has appointed for our better to renew us and revive us. One of the most profound as I stood on the edge a few weeks ago of the Firth of Moray and looked out across it there was Portmahomack, a little sea village. When the Communion season had gone and they had been preaching for days, not only was the church revived but many were being swept into the Kingdom of God, having been converted by the grace of God. This was literally hundreds and hundreds but 92 young men between the ages of 15 and 18 which were all the young men in the village, came to Christ and they had rode over that body of water known as the Moray Firth to get to that Communion service. It was noted that the tears were streaming down their faces and the people rejoiced.

Two months later all 92 young men were dead as cholera had swept through the village but as they gathered all gave praise to God for they remembered the tears of joy at the Communion Table where weeks before they had demonstrated in their love to Christ. It's ordinary means with ordinary people in ordinary places where He does these extraordinary works. God does a new work within us. This text we are going to look at deserves so much more study than what I can give it in this time we have as we prepare for the Lord's Supper but I want to give you some things to think about as we prepare our hearts.

I want to start by setting this text in its context. Jesus has just led a tax collector to Himself and there is nothing more despised than tax collectors because that was a Jewish person who had sold out to the Romans to steal money from other Jewish people. They would give the money to the Romans and keep some off the top for themselves. As some of the Jews were doing this one of them gets converted and his name is Levi, Matthew. Matthew decided to have a dinner party to tell everyone how much he loved Jesus and he called all his friends. It was a dinner party for evangelistic purposes and I think these kinds of events are extraordinary instruments to use. So Jesus and His disciples came to this party.

After the party the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus about fasting. They were telling Jesus that not only do they fast but the Pharisees fast as well but that Jesus and His Disciples don't fast. R.C. Sproul says about this, 'Do you not know what time it is?' So where is that in the text? The disciples of John the Baptist fasted because John's ministry was the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah and to prepare the way so John called everyone to fasting, this aesthetic way of life to prepare for the coming of the Savior. So in essence Jesus says to them 'Do you not know what time it is? I'm here. You don't need to fast. It's time to feast.' The wedding guests don't fast when the Bridegroom shows up. So now it's time to feast, not fast.

As for the Pharisees, they are legalists. They weren't like John's disciples who fasted in anticipation of the coming Messiah for they saw it as a way to merit God's love so they would make people fast two times every week and that was not what the Bible taught about fasting. The Bible only commands one fast in the Old Testament and that was on the Day of Atonement. It allowed other fasts if you were personally persuaded that you needed to. There were three reasons to fast personally or as a congregation, a group of people. One reason to fast was to ask God for guidance. Number two you'd fast because of the adversity that had come upon you or the people. Thirdly, you would fast when you'd confess your sins, mourning over them as you

sought the Lord for His grace and mercy. Other than that there was only one fast commanded. So the Pharisees were fasting to control people with their legalism telling people that to get God's grace they had to fast which would earn them that grace and yet that would get them no grace at all.

So in essence Jesus says 'Do you not know what time it is? In the unfolding of the clock of redemption I'm here. There will be a time when you will fast and that will be when I go away from you. There will be reasons to fast then but not now for I'm here so there is no reason to fast or mourn. Now it's time for celebration. The New Covenant has come upon you. The new work of grace has come into your midst. No longer the types and shadows of the Old Testament for now the Fulfillment is here. So let's rejoice!'

Then two illustrations are given. No one who has a shirt or pair of pants who has a hole in them takes a piece of unshrunk cloth to patch it with. Why? You would need to wash the patch and then stitch it to the hole because if you patched it without shrinking/washing the patch first then when you washed the pants the patch would shrink while on the pants and would cause a bigger tear in them, when it shrinks and pulls on the tear. Today that would probably mean it would be worth more money. I don't quite get it yet for today we actually spend money for the jeans that my mother would have told me to throw away because of the holes in them. So for some this could be a tough illustration here but the idea was that the unshrunk patch when used to cover the hole would create a bigger hole when washed due to the patch shrinking in the wash.

Then Jesus gave another illustration for this as well. You run out of wine and so you get some new wine. New wine would have very little fermentation to it, very little alcohol to it and if you put it in an old wine skin that had already accommodated new wine then as it would ferment it would expand. The old wine skin isn't going to expand so as the new wine expands in the old wine skin then it will burst so you not only lose the wine skin but you also lose the new wine. You will lose both. So when you get new wine you need to get a new wine skin otherwise you lose the new wine.

Do you see the picture Jesus is using with the wine, its fermentation and its expansion? When the blessings of the Gospel in its fulfillment of the New Covenant flows into your life with the power of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit, it ferments, it expands, it enlarges, it penetrates, it permeates and it keeps growing. Now I have chosen in my life to be an abstainer from alcoholic beverages, all but one and that is the new wine of the Gospel. I want the new wine of the Gospel to ferment in my life but I also need a new wine skin or I lose all the effects of it. In other words, I not only need the blessing of what God has done for me (the forgiveness of sins) but I need the blessing of what God does to me, the liberating of the power of sin in my life.

So as the New Covenant came Jesus is telling them that those Old Testament signs, prophecies, types, shadows and symbols are done away with. They are now fulfilled in Christ and they will not accommodate the power of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. So now the ceremonial law is fulfilled and done away with. Now circumcision is fulfilled in Christ and now He gives us baptism. A bloody sign will be replaced with a bloodless sign to mark our His people and their households. Here is an Old Covenant meal where sacrifices are being made time and time again at the Passover but not in the New Covenant meal for that will remember the Sacrifice that was once and for all. The Sabbath was anticipating the coming of the Lord of the Sabbath and now it will be the Lord's Day proclaiming that the Lord of the Sabbath is risen and we have rest in Him. His people were drawn out of one nation and now they are being drawn out of all the nations.

This New Covenant will be different but what is true on the broad scale of the Old Covenant framework has been done away with in the fulfillment of Christ and now in this New Covenant and what is seen in that is true personally in my life. In other words, if God's blessings have come to you through the Gospel on your behalf then it has also come to you in your heart and your life. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he not only has a new status but he is a new creation for the old has passed away and the new has come (II Corinthians 5:17). He has given you a new mind and He is renewing your mind. He has given you a new heart, a new Spirit, a new home, a new family and He will give you a new heavens and a new earth. He has done something new for you and in you.

Here is the takeaway. When the unvarnished power of the Gospel and power of the Holy Spirit is sent in conversion or revival, it is not just our status before God that changes but everything changes and keeps on changing. Your mind is not only renewed but it's being renewed. You are not only changed as all things are passing away but all things are becoming new. You have the new blessings of a status with God for you are right with God but you also have another blessing and that is He is right within you. When He comes to live in you everything changes, begins to change and continues to change.

I have an attraction, not an addiction, to one reality show in life and that is Fixer Upper with Chip and Joanna Gaines. I could take over their show tomorrow because I know exactly what happens and their goal in each show. I would walk in and know there would need to be an open concept, an island and shiplap. It's a done deal. I've got it down pat. So one would probably say that I'm into extreme makeovers and I would say that I am. I love to watch that program about renovation because that is what God does when He converts you and that's what God does when He revives you. Everything changes.

Do you know why it's an extreme makeover? It is because it's an extreme takeover. Galatians 2:20 says [20] *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Come and live for we have a New Covenant meal. It's not like the old one for that one couldn't contain the Gospel. That is still killing the lambs. We have the Lamb of God. Once and for all He gave Himself to pay for your sins. The biggest decision you will ever make in your life is will you go to Him who paid for your sins or will you bear them all the way to the Judgment Seat. But He has paid for them and will set you free. Then He will come to live in you and you will know what it means to be free indeed.

Jesus says "Behold I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5) and that's you and me. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Come and minister to us as we come to Your Table. Dear Redeemer, speak to our hearts for Your Word has been preached. Now Your Word is displayed. Fill us to overflowing, in Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Power Point

Revival

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

Takeaway

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