

A Manifesto on Revival

By Michael Duncan

There are many clamoring for revival – that God would send His power among us and do what He did in the past. Reminders of ancient and contemporary revivals echo across the airwaves, from the great move of God in the book of Acts, to the days when Evan Roberts proclaimed God’s message to the nation of Wales in the early 1900’s. What will it take to see revival again?

One thing that it WON’T take is *showmanship*.

There are some who seem to think that what is needed is a charismatic presenter who can orate a message with such flare that it will rock the gathered crowds with irresistible conviction and a revival is destined to break out. It’s a farce. But still they try. With lights blazing and music blaring and the show-stopping presenter blasting a message to try and reach an audience, the valiant effort takes place, much celebration happens, and no one is changed.

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The problem: you’ll never be able to out “*showmanship*” the world. Barnum and Bailey touted themselves as “The Greatest Show on Earth!” And though for a circus they were quite remarkable, they do not hold a candle to the greatest showman of all time. The enemy of God, the Devil himself, is the greatest showman around. He is the epitome of evil, the pinnacle of hate, the very prince of darkness. And he is such a showman that he can “masquerade as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). And do not forget that the servants of the enemy disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:15).

Another thing that it WON’T take is *salesmanship*.

Products and services are being bought and sold at an alarming rate these days. With online marketing, television advertising and a host of other media catering to the consumer, there are some who believe that what needs to take place in the church is a better marketing campaign. “We have to sell people on revival!” said the salesman who shared his “vision” for the church. And in this consumer driven society it’s no wonder that there are many who believe it.

They think the best way to bring revival is to package it as a needed and necessary product and then find the best pitchman to promote it.

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But do not be quick to forget that the best salesman around is the one who sold Adam and Eve a lie. There in the garden, God established the parameters for mankind's experience. Simple obedience to a singular command and liberty to enjoy the blessing and provision of creation was God's offer. The Devil had a counter offer. With a winning smile and warm words, the enemy, that ancient serpent, deceived the man and woman to buy into his lie (see Genesis 3).

Though mankind lived in harmony with God and His creation, the Devil sold them on the idea that they were "missing out." Satan is the master marketer. All you need to do is look at how sinful society has become, and all with the idea that such sinful behavior is the best thing for us! What a sales job! And, if you think I'm overstating the case, just read Revelation 20:7-8. Even after a thousand years of Christ reigning on the earth, the enemy is able to persuade multitudes that Jesus is wrong.

What about Jesus?

I hope you understand that Jesus wasn't a showman. He didn't try to "bring down the house" with His power and glory. In fact, just the opposite was true. When the crowds grew so large at the signs of His power, He often left the region. When He determined to reveal His glory, He only invited three to attend the unveiling (Mark 9:2).

And, Jesus wasn't a salesman. He spoke the truth. He never tried to convince people with any marketing tricks or sales gimmicks. He communicated the ways of God with absolute clarity to those who were willing to listen.

This I know is true: When we use the methods of the world to bring about the mission of God we will invariably end up with a mess.

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Let's look at 2 Chronicles 7:14. It's a familiar passage, and one oft quoted in the call for revival.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

What will it take to bring about revival? Two things...

It will take genuine *humility*.

The boastful, proud, arrogant Christian will never find revival. It takes a humbleness that is only found in brokenness before God. I have heard prayers lifted up to heaven with such arrogance that it's a wonder if that prayer was heard at all. I've heard people voice their "commands" to God, demanding that He send revival—as if God is beholden to them in the least. Such haughtiness is reprehensible!

Powerful words do not come from boastful men and real revival does not flow through prideful hearts. Remember: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). Hear the words of James, "Humble yourselves before the LORD, and he will exalt you" (James 4:10). Consider this warning from Paul in Colossians 2:18. "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism [*false humility*] and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind."

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The LORD Jesus points out a clear example of real humility:

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts

himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” ~ Luke 18:9-14

If we are God’s people, called by His name, and we desire to see a real revival in our land, let us do as He commands and humble ourselves in His presence and leave off our prideful disposition before His throne.

It will take real *repentance*.

Being sorry for your sin is one thing – saying goodbye to them, that’s something else. But it will take a real repentance for revival to come. The simple gesture of turning away from sin and turning toward the Living God is essential in the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Repentance is about seeking God. But to seek God demands that you turn away from sin. God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel and called His people to repentance: “Say to them, As I live, declares the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11).

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But there is a difference between remorse and repentance. Many people do feel bad that they had committed a sin against God and others. They grieve the pain and bear sorrow for their actions—all the while never turning aside from their wickedness. The drunkard apologizes to his family, but continues to pursue alcohol. The violent man weeps for having caused pain, but goes on a rampage the next moment. The sexually immoral churns with remorse, but habitually returns to his sin. All of these feel sorry, but lack real repentance.

This was the singular message of John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:2). This was the foundational message of the church (see Acts 2:38). This was the inaugural message of Jesus (see Mark 1:15). And repentance was the hallmark message of the Apostle Paul.

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.” ~ Acts 26:19-21

Remorse is not enough. It takes real repentance to bring forth revival. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

Genuine humility and real repentance bring forth a response from God that is the core of true revival.

So, even now, I am calling on all churches, on all Christians, to be humble and repent. Leave off the showmanship. Leave off the salesmanship. None of the worldly strategies will ever bring about godly results. Turn away from all the hype and hysteria that is the modern methods of revival and humbly seek the LORD in repentance. Let us do as God commands through the prophet Isaiah:

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” ~ Isaiah 55:6-7

Genuine humility and real repentance bring forth a response from God that is the core of true revival. In essence, when humility and repentance are the experience of the church, God says, “I’ll take it from here.” You offer God your brokenness and He will come through with blazing glory, with powerful promise to forgive all your sins and heal your land! And, isn’t that what we want?

The Final Charge

Pastor, I lay this charge to you. If you do not call your people to brokenness before God, with genuine humility and real repentance, I say to you: you have no heart for revival. Political activism, social engineering and philanthropic efforts will never bring about the spiritual transformation of our land. All the hype and hysteria you can muster will never prompt the people to rend their hearts before the LORD. All the programs and plans of men will never empower the church or bring about God’s restoration. You: humble yourself and repent. And then, when you do, call upon your people to do the same.

Fellow Christian, I say this to you. For far too long you have remained dormant, slumbering in the comfort of a passive faith. It’s time to wake up and realize the LORD is calling you. Humble yourself. Repent. Turn from all waywardness and trust Christ. If you’re already saved, then act like it. Don’t

wait for anyone else to start the process. You, right now, stand before the LORD Jesus Christ and confess your sins, repenting of all that you know is wrong.

If you're not saved, then surrender to Christ right now and receive His mercy and pardon. Unsaved, you stand condemned before God already. Unsaved, you have no hope of eternal life or any share in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. He will freely pardon you from all your sin if you call upon him in believing faith and trust Him for your eternal life. The trial is over. The verdict is passed. You will either receive the full punishment for your rebellion against God or you will receive the mercy of the LORD Jesus Christ who took your punishment upon Himself. What are you waiting for? Act now... trust now... there is no tomorrow promised.

Who am I to say this?

I am nobody. I am a man of no reputation that longs for revival in his own heart and in his church. I am a simple pastor in a far-off church who believes that God's word holds the key to everything. I was a man once lost and now am found. I am a sinner, saved by grace; a sojourner on this road of life who was found by Jesus and given the gracious gift of salvation.

The question is not who am I but who is Jesus. If He is the Sovereign and LORD of all creation, the King of kings and Savior of all who believe, then we must follow His word if we are ever to see His work in this world.

Does God want revival? I believe He does. But He will not send revival on our terms, only on His. Let us then be faithful to yield ourselves to Him in humility and repentance, trusting in Him to bring about the restoration of our land.

Your Servant in Christ,

Michael

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