

# Rallying Prayers

*for*

# Authentic Revivals

*“Wilt Thou not revive us again:  
that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?”  
(Psalm 85:6)*

*Elijah Thomas Chacko*

*The contents hereof served as  
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The theme of the Convocation was  
“Revival: Biblical & Historical  
Perspectives”.*

ALL God's works arising from the communication and application of the merits of the atoning death and the sprinkled blood of His dear Son, in comparison to every other work (including those that the men of this world are wont to call as wonders), are exceptional, unusual and extraordinary. If we can perceive this with illumined understanding, then, we can define Revival as the exceptional of the exceptional, the unusual of the unusual, the extraordinary of the extraordinary. The true essence of revival is God granting forgiveness of sins to His people corporately (Psalm 85:1,2) and it is all based and founded upon the redemptive work of Christ. It is mercy and truth meeting together and righteousness and peace kissing each other (Psalm 85:10). Every Christian conversion experience is a real miracle. It is the intervention of God in the affairs of men when the Sovereign God interposes to bring the effects of His Son's death upon the soul of a man through the executory work of His Spirit. But when this happens in a mammoth scale in that a multitude of conversions transpire in somewhat the same time at somewhat the same place, we can safely say that a revival has taken place. However the blessings of revival are not merely confined to the unregenerate, who all of a sudden find themselves passed from death to life, from the region of darkness to the ambit of God's marvellous light, but they are also conferred on those who are already regenerated. While all true Christians are bound to experience in their life of faith continual fresh infusions of the Blessed Spirit in varying measures, in revival these experiences are immensely enlarged, so that the increase in magnitude in the supply of the Spirit is said to be effusions, baptisms, gales and afflatus. Most of these terms are not exactly biblical, nevertheless they approximately convey the idea of a phenomenon which is biblical. But then again revival is a phenomenal phenomenon.

Now, while the phenomena of revival are commonly reported at scattered intervals in the course of church history, there are many sceptics, even among those who embrace evangelical and Reformed convictions, who find it difficult to ascertain any New Testament authenticity for the occurrence extraordinary. This is a great pity because such people, for one thing, do not pray in earnest expectation for a revival. To them the vision of revival is a delusion because in their notion, regardless of what history declares, revival is

scripturally untenable. For another thing, these people do not give glory to God for all His exceptional visitations hitherto at glorious intervals to His people and His saints and His churches. Can their unbelief be part of the reason why God has not granted a revival for a long, long spell? It is true the phenomenon has been something rarely reported of in almost the whole sweep of the 20th Century. I say rarely because there might have been some occurrences which may deserve the designation of a revival in the sense as that most eminent saint Jonathan Edwards has had understood. In this connection, I commend for your profit and edification the reading of the following excellent treatises which Mr Edwards had produced: "Narrative Of Surprising Conversions" (1736), "The Distinguishing Marks Of A Work Of The Spirit Of God" (1741), "Thoughts On The Revival Of Religion In New England" (1742) and "Religious Affections" (1746). These works when diligently read will afford clarity on the biblical concept of revival. In stark contrast to these wonderful theses stands Brian H Edwards' book on revival, "Revival: A People Saturated With God" (1990, Evangelical Press) which is actually saturated with obliquity and confusion. It fails to sift and distinguish true revivals from strange fires. To those who are spiritual, reading Brian's book may prove to be a stultifying experience. When we attempt to discover incidents which may be justly labelled as revivals over the last century or so, we traumatically find in them such a lacking in depth, character and genuineness. I cannot share the same enthusiasm with some who try to project some commotions and rattles as equivalent to what we have seen as revivals in the yester-centuries. At least certainly not the Billy Graham and the Billy Sunday rallies: these, I say, are no revivals; no, no, they are awful distortions of the true phenomenon. I am certain enough to judge these (without fear of grieving the Blessed Spirit of God) as simulated furores. I attribute this to the awful consequences of the nefarious legacy bequeathed by Charles G Finney and D L Moody. Man's great organizational abilities, the people-drawing clout and the feverish level of excitement they can generate, I do not deny. But I have equally seen these in political rallies, football stadiums and boxing rings. But for all their clamorous claims and for all the patriotic sentiments that American Fundamentalists and Evangelists have tried to whip up concerning their legends, I stand in great doubt that there could have been any

real conversions and God-glorifying feats in these "made in America" showpieces.

My postulation and submission is that the 20th Century has been virtually devoid of true revival. It has been a prolonged duration of drought. "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste" (Isaiah 64:10,11). When I scan the ruins and heaps in Christendom, I cannot but be compelled to stir up myself to adopt Isaiah's plaintive spirit and take hold of the great God and cry until His own bowels are stirred and His mercies are granted for His own cause. Or for that matter, I cannot erase the impression of the cry of Habakkuk, the prophet in the throes of agony for the promotion of the glory of God, "O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy". Then there is the entreaty of the Psalmist: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Shew us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psalm 85:6,7).

I certainly would not succumb to the wicked trap of the fatal misconception of the Pentecostalists and Charismatics. I do not deny that there is potency in the spirit that energizes both movements (to me they both are one and the same) but I am again certain of their diabolical character and origin. It is another spirit and we seek no such baptism from their quarters. We speak of revivals that came in the mould in the days of Reformation, in the days of the Puritans, in the time of those great instruments of revivals, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowlands, and in the days of Ashael Nettleton, Thomas Chalmers and William Chalmer Burns.

But is there a new testament mandate for revival? I say the people who enquire in this manner are already poisoned by the Plymouth Brethren and their Dispensational heresy. (Yea, Dispensationalism is one reason why true revival has never been seen for an excruciatingly protracted period.) I believe that Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37), Habakkuk's prayer (Habakkuk 3) and the Psalmist's ode in Psalm 85 all hold good even in these golden days of the Gospel age. I believe the promise given to Solomon, "If My people, which are called by My Name, shall humble them-

selves, 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" (II Chronicles 7:14) is still applicable and most relevant to the praying and waiting church. I would not deprive myself of the instructions and benefits of the sacred pages of the Old Testament (II Timothy 3:16,17) which establish the possibility and the vision for revival.

Pentecost is the New Testament paragon for revival. While Joel's prophecy was primarily fulfilled at Pentecost, there is little doubt that the prophecy also gives provision for subsequent revivals in the age of the new covenant. Hence Peter's words: "And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." (Acts 2:17a). We are now still in the last days and Joel's prophecy predicts the prospect of revivals at any time in this era. Peter reiterated this salient point again in another significant occasion, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, Which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21). And until the consummation of age, which is what Peter meant exactly when he referred to the times of restitution of all things, I believe from time to time, in the course of the remaining span of time, God will send from His presence seasons of refreshing. Blessed are those who have had experienced such pleasant seasons in the days bygone; these are what Peter called "times of refreshing". To me, this is the perfect endorsement that Pentecost is the blueprint for all subsequent revivals. The greatest demonstration of this promise is the 16th Century Reformation that was spearheaded by Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox. From my eschatological understanding, there will never be another revival as colossal as Reformation. But more significant, the essence of Reformation is revival. Reformation was not so much a movement fomented by historical, political and social events. To quote an unforgettable statement made in an address rendered at the Westminster Conference in 1973 by Mr David Boorman, "(John) Wycliffe may have struck the spark and (John) Hus kindled the coals but, without divine intervention and grace, Luther would never have brandished

the lighted torch of Truth". There would have been no Reformation without the right hand of God intervening and that, suddenly. Read the accounts of Reformation again and again and those who are honest and sane must conclude that Reformation was not engineered and schemed by men. Rather it was nothing short of a divine phenomenon. Although the limited and truncated success of Rome's Counter-Reformation suggests that there could have been other factors that contributed to foment Reformation yet its durable character proves that it was a work ignited and sustained of God. Hence the unabated blessings of Reformation have transcended not only the frontiers of national and geographical demarcations but also the bounds of time; for the flame that begat Reformation lives on till this day; whereof we, like many others throughout the whole world, rejoice and speak. Our contention is that Reformation was the swift omnipotent act wrought of Almighty God as He had predicted in the prophecy of the book of The Revelation. This He undertook to demolish the work of the Antichrist and to revive His own holy church. It was a revival, the greatest since Pentecost, that triggered off Reformation.

We can never have another Pentecost, neither can there be another Reformation, but we certainly need another revival. Both history and the correct understanding of Scriptures constrain and induce such a vision and quest. They must invariably evoke in us a longing to recapture something of that bygone glory when throngs came under the conviction of the great awakenings and sought for the Balm of Gilead, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore let all those who believe in revival incessantly beseech the Sovereign God that He be pleased to show us His mercy and grant us His exceptional visitation so that Jerusalem may once again be made a praise in the earth. Would not the utter and desperate need of the church rally us to pray more earnestly — to take hold of God and to press upon Him until the Lord God would make bare His mighty arm for His own glory? Is He not "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"? □



Publishing Abroad And Shunning Not To Declare All The Counsel Of God

<https://www.westminstertradition.com> | [tw@westminstertradition.com](mailto:tw@westminstertradition.com)

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