

Revival: Is There Anything We Can Do?



by [DAN JUSTER](#) FEBRUARY 28, 2021

Those who are following the American situation in regard to Christianity, politics, the Trump administration and the election of Joe Biden, recognize the upheaval, controversy, the prophetic questions and disappointments, and so much more. I have addressed some of this in the past and always noted that progress for righteousness in society and through politics can only be lasting in a context of a revived and growing Body of Believers in a nation that is producing quality discipling communities that change the culture of the nation. Revival is the center of my hope whether or not we enter into a period of respite and restoration in the United States or whether the revival prepares us for the soon coming great tribulation.

I have argued theologically, along with a stream of Bible interpreters, from Puritans, Lutheran Pietists, to the revivalists in the 17th to 20th centuries, that there will be massive world revival that will enable the completion of world evangelism on this side of the Millennium. That revival will be in Israel as well and a key to Israel's salvation. Acts 2, in this view, was a great first installment of Joel 2, but the ultimate fulfillment is just before the return of the Lord and includes the final signs described there. I have good historical consensus and scholarly support for this view. However, there have been revivals in the interim.

In 1968, J. Edwin Orr, of Fuller Theological Seminary, the historian of revival spoke at Wheaton College. He presented the case that great progress for the Gospel was an outworking of outpourings of the Spirit. His writings give great detail on this. Richard Lovelace of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, in his Dynamics of Spiritual Renewal argued similarly.

In my own limited experience, I saw how an outpouring at Wheaton college in my wife's junior year transformed the campus in 1969 and again in the 1990s. Beth Messiah, my congregation, was touched and influenced by the revivals and renewals in Pensacola, Florida, and Toronto, Canada. We had many visiting leaders connected to the outpourings of those days. The effect was that a large contingent gave themselves radically to Gospel ministry. We sent dozens into full time ministry. It was amazing.

But again, is there anything we can do to foster revival, an outpouring even if it is not the final and great one for which we pray and hope? Charles Finney, the great evangelist of the mid 19th century, argued in his Lectures on Revival, that if the conditions are met, there will be revival. Lovelace, a more Calvinist historian, did argue that concerts of prayer were keys to revival but the sovereignty of God was much more in view, and people cannot make a revival happen. Okay, but can we make it more likely.

Here are my gleanings from my studies on revival and from my experiences.

1. Revival is much more likely when a people are prepared to long for revival. How does this happen? By preaching that centers on revival, first the biblical texts and then the stories of revivals and what happened and can happen again. Fostering this longing in a growing group of prayer partners and in congregations often precedes the revival.
2. Revival preachers are keys to revival. They are able to call people to repentance and dedication. This does happen as a product of revival, but there is also a pre-revival preparation. I think that having revival and ministers that moved in the power of the Spirit was a key to what was produced in the 1990s in our midst. We encouraged people to visit where such outpourings were taking place and also sought to bring it to our community. We would not make our desire for Jewish indigeneity and identity be a barrier to this. We also embraced manifestations that some would question as really normal historically. We did not shut down what made us uncomfortable. We prepared out people for this. (See psychiatrist John White, *When the Spirit Falls in Power*.)
3. Then, we have to know and prepare for revival so the fruits of revival will not be lost. I am sure many think they would like to see a revival but are not aware that the revival will upend their lives if they submit to what God wants to do during such times. Evenings will be taken up in power evangelism with signs and wonders and gatherings in meetings together. Some people will be so touched by the Lord that they will spend hours in his presence, sometimes on the floor and not able to move. Signs and wonders will be part of the meetings. We see this in the ministries of Jonathan Edwards, Ludwig Von Zinzendorf and the Moravians, John Wesley and the Methodist revivals, Peter Cartwright, Evan Roberts and the Welsh revival, Azusa Street and the Pentecostal revival and movement, the Latter Rain movement from Canada, and so on. Randy Clark in his book, *There is More*, gives a good summary. The parallels in all these revivals are quite amazing.
4. I think God is more likely to send such a revival when there is preparation for stewarding it. This includes the fact that we will have to teach large groups of new believers. Teaching them the Bible and how to walk as believers can take place in larger meetings, but will also be in small groups like the Methodist Bands. This was the Acts 2:42 model. Maybe God does not send the revival because He knows that people will not pay the price that receiving the Glory will entail.

Yes, the greatest revivals did produce social transformation. More than that, however, they ended making great gains for the spread of the Gospel and the multiplication of congregations.