

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
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Revival! Why Desire It?

Selected Passages

Keywords: Revival, revivalism, Holy Spirit, Laodecia, Sardis, Worldliness, Perseverance.

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: I believe there is a massive need for revival in America, but I also believe that we have little clue what that looks like. On one side we have people grasping after the most silly and extreme words of charlatans while the other side yawns and scratches itself. What is revival? How do we know if it occurs? And why should we desire it? These are the questions I will seek to explain over the next two messages.

Dismiss

I. Introduction.

- A. Two weeks ago we watched a video in which Francis Chan made an appeal to seek the work of the Spirit in a powerful way.
 - 1. I sought to correct several theological errors in the video.
 - 2. Last week I then tried to establish how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians.
 - a. He is the medium through which Jesus brings us into the Church.
 - b. He uniquely empowers people (even those who do not believe in or follow God) for special situations.
 - c. He also is to be relied upon and submitted to in our day to day life. This is through an obedience to His Word that is exhibited by praise, worship, mutual submission to one another.
- B. One point though that Chan made was good, a desire to see the power of the Holy Spirit today.
 - 1. He did not use the word, but what he was describing is what is commonly known as ‘revival.’
 - 2. Something that is good and worthy to desire. Even sigh over.
- C. My goal for the next two weeks:
 - 1. Not to exhaustively study this idea.

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2. Today, it is to suggest why it is good and right to desire that God bring revival to our land.
3. Next week I want to then do three things:
 - a. Offer some corrective thoughts that are commonly held within the Christian Community.
 - b. Offer a basic sense of what true revival is.
 - c. Offer what we are to do until revival occurs.
- D. I desire that God might move in our land. Not just here at MDF, but in our land.
 1. I see us standing on a crumbling precipice and we stare out at the vast drop-off with vacant, uncomprehending eyes.
 2. “And justice is turned back, And righteousness stands far away; For truth has stumbled in the street, And uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey” (Isa 59:14-15a).
 - a. The prophets in the Old Testament spoke of the great evils that were in Israel. Hear them and ask how often this is true in Christ’s church today—even more so in our land.
 - b. Dishonesty and false witnesses protecting themselves at the cost of others.
 - c. Overlooking sin because the financial cost to themselves or the church.
 - d. Exploitation of those who are powerless while showing favoritism to those with money and power.
 - e. Depriving the needy from justice and robbing the widow.
 - f. They are fat from their deceitfulness and lies, shamelessly taking without a true concern for those who have nothing.
 - g. Twisting what is straight and calling evil good and good evil.
 - h. Lusting after everything but God Himself. Having an appearance of worship and praise, but their hearts are truly far from Him.
- E. Today I want to give us a glance at two churches that our Lord speaks to and have you ask, which of these best describes the Church today in America?

II. Sardis—Revelation 3:1-6:

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A. Basic background:

1. This city that was on a slow decline. It used to be a capital city but that is now past by the time of the writing of the letter.
2. There was still much wealth but not growth.
3. There was a large synagogue there and apparently the Jews were well tolerated in spite of their monotheistic views. This, in turn, protected the Christians as well.
4. But just as the city was past its prime, so too was the church.
 - a. It was not like the Laodicean church, boasting in its riches.
 - b. Rather, it was simply a very comfortable church in a very comfortable and safe place.
 - c. The result was an indifference to truth and spiritual things.

B. The text:

1. What Jesus knows:
 - a. Their reputation is one of being alive. But their reality is that of being dead.
 - b. What is meant by this?
 - (1) It is spiritual life and death.
 - (2) There is an external appearance of life but there is not the reality of that life.
 - (3) How does something like this happen?
 - (a) Best to start with an understanding of what makes a 'Church.'
 - i) The preaching of the Gospel.
 - ii) The external witness of the Ordinances.
 - iii) The proper practice of church discipline.
 - (b) But these can have the appearance and not the reality in various ways. Along with these three things there are many other things that take place that give the sense of "church."
 - i) Creeds.

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- a) Augsburg Confession is a great document of the Lutheran church.
 - b) Westminster Confession is the same for the Presbyterian.
 - c) 1689 London Baptist Confession .
 - d) All of these and many others exist and are stated to be the confession of many churches. But many of those churches are dead.
 - ii) Certain types of buildings.
 - iii) Hymns or worship songs, pews, giving plates.
 - iv) Prayer.
 - v) Or in the Charismatic/Pentecostal realm there can be the expression of unique experiences and events that all claim to be of God without considering the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:22.
- (4) On an aside, in both this church and the one in Laodicea there is no mention of foes. It is possible that peace with the world lends itself to this spiritual deadness.
2. Jesus's command.
- a. Wake up.
 - (1) Literally mean to be watchful and alert.
 - (2) Image here is of a watchman who is falling asleep and is unaware of impending danger.
 - (3) When a church becomes complacent it is ready for destruction.
 - b. Strengthen what remains (2).
 - (1) This is a word of warning and one of hope.

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- (2) It is sad to consider for it speaks of the fact that much of the spiritual life of the church was gone, but there was a bit that still remained. It is like a dying fire that needs to be fanned into fulness again.
- (3) Notice that these things are about to die FOR the reason that they were not completed.
 - (a) This is the classic starting but not finishing that is so common today.
 - (b) The idea here is that these deeds have merely the external appearance of life and religion.
 - (c) But before the eyes of the Lord they were not true nor the type that stood the test of time.
 - (d) This type of faith is not the kind that fails under persecution; rather, it is the kind that fails in peaceful times.
- c. Remember (3a).
 - (1) They are to reflect and contemplate what once was versus what is.
 - (2) Other places in the New Testament has this idea of remembering as well:
 - (a) You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (Galatians 5:7)
 - (b) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude” (Colossians 2:6-7)
 - (c) They need to go back to the basics, the gospel which they had heard and received.
- d. Keep (3b).
 - (1) The keeping is a call to go back to those few things that remain and start there.

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- (2) Capture them again in their hearts. Treasure them and gather them close to their souls.
- (3) Then begin the process of rebuilding them again.
- e. Repent (3c).
 - (1) This is simply the turning away from one direction and belief system to follow another.
 - (2) In this context it is an awareness that they have lost the path of eternal life. They have forgotten Jesus.
 - (3) They must shake off the slumber and turn again to what is true.
- 3. What Jesus warns:
 - a. If you don't wake, I shall come as a thief. An image of a sudden, unexpected act.
 - b. The fool says "tomorrow" but only because he assumes there is a tomorrow.
 - c. They will not have eternal life like those in the church who have remained, kept, remembered, et.
- 4. What Jesus promises:
 - a. The one who overcomes shall have white garments—a symbol of life and righteousness.
 - b. The one who overcomes shall remain in the book of life.
 - c. The one who overcomes shall have his name confessed before the Father and the angels.

III. Laodicea—Revelation 3:14:

- A. Laodicea was the chief city of Phrygia in the Lycus valley, strategically located where three highways converged
 - 1. It was thereby a highly commercial and wealthy city. It was a city of wealthy bankers and financiers.
 - 2. The many millionaires combined to build theaters, a huge stadium, lavish public baths, and fabulous shopping centers.

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- B. An example of the extreme wealth of the city is in A.D. 60 there was a great earthquake that destroyed the city along with others around it.
1. The Roman government offered to give financial aid to help it rebuild.
 2. Though the other cities took the aid, Laodicea turned it down, for their wealth was far that sufficient to have them rebuild the entire city.
 3. Along with that fact, this city also helped the other cities rebuild, all out of its own wealth.
- C. In addition to being a banking center, it was a manufacturing center for a special type of soft, black woolen garments and medicinal eye salve and powders.(3:17-18).
- D. The letter starts out the same as the others, with specific terms that Jesus attaches to Himself.
1. “The Amen.”
 - a. It is actually not a title, but a name for Jesus.
 - b. There is a meaning within this name, just as other names are attributed to Him. Example would be “Emmanuel.”
 - c. What does it mean?
 - (1) First, it is a statement of deity once again—Isaiah 65:16 “Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth. . . .” (God of truth, literally, of Amen).
 - (2) Second, it means that which is fixed, true or unchangeable, established and trustworthy.
 - (3) **So why is this name used here?**
 - (a) Here, we find Jesus looking at a church that is messed up, though it thinks it is fine and He is about to speak truth into their situation.
 - (b) It also speaks of the certainty of what He says is true and that it shall be accomplished. This is both a blessing and a warning.

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- (c) As used of Christ, it points to Him as the end, the finality and certainty of all things. With Him one needs no substitutes, no subtractions or additions. With Jesus there is no further search needed for truth for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).
- 2. “Faithful and True Witness.”
 - a. This clause actually is modifying/explaining the “Amen.”
 - b. But more importantly it is contrasting itself with something said later—vs. 17.
 - c. It goes again to the idea of the final judgment as well, where all things shall be made plain.
- 3. “The Beginning of the creation of God.”
 - a. This means “the one with whom a process or event begins.”
 - b. This emphasizes the quality of Jesus as being primary, or preeminent over Creation. It is not interested in time as much as preeminence.
 - (1) “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17).
 - (2) Or more simply put, “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3).
 - (3) If there is a concern over this, then take them to the following verses: John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 1:8; 21:6.
 - c. **What is the relation of this title with what is to come?**
 - (1) As with the world today and many, many believers, Laodicea was occupied with and trusting in the things of this fallen creation that is now passing away and slated for

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destruction. They were trusting in the details of this life rather than in the Creator and in heavenly treasures.

(2) They were guilty of Romans 1:18ff.

E. Jesus's observations regarding that church (15-17).

1. No commendation for this church.
2. Two key problems described: lukewarm and believing that they have no need.
3. Their spiritual temperature.
 - a. What is the issue between these terms “hot,” “cold,” and “lukewarm?”
 - b. Hot.
 - (1) *zestos*, we get the word zest from it.
 - (2) It refers to boiling hot.
 - c. Cold—two views.
 - (1) First is that it refers to openly rejecting Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. The point is that you know where they stand and they know they stand. There is more hope to see one who rejects Christianity later come to faith than those who are vaguely warm to it.
 - (2) The second is to see it as a good thing, just as being hot is. The point is that both hot and cold accomplish something in the sense of refreshment.
 - (3) I think the second is better in this context.
 - d. Lukewarm.
 - (1) The term is such that it is something that is disgusting to Jesus.
 - (2) The term “spit” is actually to vomit. There is nothing about this church that commends itself to Jesus, the Head of the Church! It makes Him sick to consider it.

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C. S. Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.” (Preaching Today Citation: “C. S. Lewis,” Christian History (65.19.1), 27).

4. What does it mean to be lukewarm? The answer is the second problem (17).
 - a. It refers to Christians who are indifferent or apathetic because they are self-sufficient and self-satisfied. Christians who are trusting in themselves and their wealth or what they thought their wealth could buy them. Note their threefold claim:
 - (1) “I am rich”—they had an over abundance of material blessings, but by this statement, it shows they were proud and trusting in that richness as though wealth had the power to give them security and happiness.
 - (2) “... and have become wealthy”—they continued to add to their wealth. Not only was wealth a sign of security, happiness, and success, but the truth is, it never really satisfies and people want more.
 - (3) “... and have need of nothing”—They were so well off they thought they needed help from neither man nor God. They had bought into the satanic delusion that money can buy anything. They didn’t need to trust God. They could simply go out and buy whatever they needed or desired. There was no need to wait on the Lord, no need to put Him first.
 - (4) It is my opinion that in many ways this is the greatest danger to the church in America today. It is not persecution, it is wealth and comfort.
 - (5) The current recession has been interesting to watch.
 - b. Before you dismiss this as yourself, remember a few sermons ago on the nature of true, Gospel-centered generosity. We are a rich people who merely lie to ourselves that we are poor.
 - c. Notice Jesus’ description of them (17b).
- F. Jesus’s Counsel (18-22).

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1. He advises true wealth and true garments. “ Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live. . . .” (Isa 55:1-3)
 2. The call is to repent and to act as those who truly believe.
 - a. Question: Are these believers or unbelievers?
 - b. I see it as a mix but they seem to be believers, notice vs19.
 - (1) Part of loving discipline is the honest description of a person’s situation.
 - (2) The goal is to bring about zeal (be hot) and repentance.
 3. The invitation to open the door is not one of salvation, but of true, intimate fellowship (cf. Ephesians 3:14-21 and Christ dwelling in the heart of the believer).
 4. Then a final call of true perseverance. Only those who continue in faith shall be found to be truly His.
 - a. There is a battle and we are either on the sidelines sipping wine and making bets on it.
 - b. Or we are in it, resisting by the Spirit the sin that remains in us, contending for the truth of the Gospel in a land that tolerates everything but truth.
 - c. Resisting the temptations of money and comfort.
- G. And I contend that in all of this, revival is something we must ache for, yearn for and weep after.
- H. But. . . we need to look beyond and consider what we are called to do and be if it doesn’t come.

-----Next Week-----

IV. Corrective–Revivalism.

A.

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V. Revival.

- A. What is revival?
- B. What are some of the marks of true revival?
 1. There is an awareness of God's presence.
 - a. Not that silly stuff you see on TV, but rather it is often an awful sense of His holiness and our sinfulness.
 - (1) Isaiah 6.
 2. A response to God's Word.
 3. A heightened awareness of sin.
 4. A liveliness in the community.
 5. A fruitfulness in testimony.
- C. What to do until revival occurs.
 1. First, we must acknowledge that God may never move again among us.
 - a. This is painful to consider.
 - b. This is wise to consider.
 2. Second, we must remember that we cannot cause real revival, or somehow 'help' God along in the process.
 - 3.

VI. Conclusion.

- A.

Small Group Questions

- **Which of these churches do you believe represents the Church in America today?**
- **As a local church, what are the challenges you see we face in light of these two described by Jesus?**