

Revive Us: Remember Your First Love – Revelation 2:1-4

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Revival is to live again, to receive again a life which has almost expired, to rekindle into a flame the vital spark which was nearly extinguished.”

Whether we want to admit it or not, there are some Christians who feel the way Spurgeon explains here. It is like a candle when it nears the end of its wax. The wick still burns, but the light slowly fades to the point where you can see a tiny glimmer of flame hanging on to the last little bit of wick. Many Christians have fallen away from their faith, they are dimming, like this candle, reading their Bible less, sleeping in on Sunday mornings. Growing colder and further away from God and closer to the world. Perhaps many of you are sitting here this morning feeling like this or feeling something like this? Don't beat yourself up over it though. None of us are immune to feeling like we are about to expire. Every follower of Christ has become a bit stagnate at some point and time. The key is to recognize this and then be willing to do something about it.

Revival begins first in the desire to keep the fire burning and ends with the Spirit of God revitalizing and restoring the spiritual vigor of the believer. Spurgeon said, “Revival is to live again.” He's referring to the spiritual life and not the physical one. It is a sad thought to think that we can reach such a point, but it is also a real thought. It happens. To individuals and to churches. When you hear a message begin with words such as these, you probably wonder, why? Does the preacher think we are fading out? Does he think we are dying? The answer to this is NO! The preacher just recognizes the danger in allowing you to slowly get to this point and desperately wants to encourage you to not sit by and let it happen. It is important to teach and preach about revival because it helps us understand our need to be awakened and our need to from time to time be renewed by God. Sometimes we just need a breath of fresh air. Direct from the Holy Spirit.

Today, we are going to look at a couple of instances where God's people found themselves far away from where they started. Let's begin with Exodus 33. The words found in this chapter describe for us an interaction between Moses and God just after the golden calf incident, which as you know, was a bad period in the history of Israel. As Aaron put it to Moses, “*You know the people, that they are set on evil.*” (**Exodus 32:22**) The people of God had turned their backs on Him. **Read Exodus 33:1-3.**

Notice in these verses that God informed Moses He would not be going with them into the promised land. Instead, God was sending an angel before them. Because of their sin and as we see here, their “stiff necks,” God was removing Himself from their presence. Moses, however, recognized the danger in this. He understood that life apart from God was not real life at all and he pleaded with God and asked Him to return to His people. **Read Exodus 33:12-17.** Look at verse 15. Moses said, and I am putting this in my words... God, please don't leave us. If so, then just leave us here. Because without you, we are nothing. You see... We need God's presence in our lives. When we seek revival, we are asking God to return to us. To draw closer to

us. His presence is essential to who we are. Without Him, we are nothing. God never intended for us to live life or be a church without Him. We absolutely must have Him present! When He is present, life is different. It is powerful. It is refreshing. Peter said in his sermon at Solomon's portico, "*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*" (*Acts 3:19-20a*) Peter understood that God's presence could refresh and renew the hearts of His people. These times of refreshment are what we know as moments of revival.

The second example today comes from Revelation. It is no coincidence that Jesus' exhortations to the seven churches in the Roman Empire begins with the letter to the church in Ephesus. Jesus commends them for their dedication to the church and for their many good and hard works. Rightfully so. But coupled with the commendation also came a condemnation. Let's have a look at **Revelation 2:1-7**. Here, we see that they succeeded in figuring out whether teachers were genuine or not. They endured and persevered without getting weary along the way. But, Jesus said, "they lost their first love." (**vs.4**) A love that gave them zeal and fervor as they embraced their salvation in and through Christ, just as John says in **1 John 4:19**. "*We love because he first loved us.*" Even though the Christians in Ephesus lived in a corrupt culture, it was their understanding of Christ's love for them that originally motivated them and filled them with a desire to speak about Jesus and to show what it was like to live for Him. Look at what is recorded about them in **Ephesians 2:1-5**, paying special attention to verses 4 and 5. The Ephesians loved Jesus because He made them "alive together with Him." Is this where you are today? Are you alive with Christ, or have you forgotten your first love?

The church at Ephesus had cooled off. They had become stagnate and stale. Their light was beginning to dim, like that of a candle at the end of its wax. Because of this, they were in danger of falling away from Christ completely. It breaks my heart to hear about so many of our churches today that find themselves in a similar place. Jesus warned the Ephesians and encouraged them to repent and return to Him with the same passion they once had. When is the best time to bring up such a warning? Is it when things are going pretty well, or when it's too late? Very few Christians and very few churches are immune to the dangers associated with "forgetting one's first love." In this case, forgetting about why it is you love Jesus in the first place.

When we seek revival, we are asking God to remind us of our first love. To restore us to a place that may be further away than we originally thought. We are pleading, just as Moses did, for the presence of God in our lives. Once again, we are praying and trusting in the words of **Psalm 51:10-12**.