

WHEN REVIVAL IS NEEDED
Revelation 2:1-7

Intro: At the present time we are considering the subject of revivals in Scripture. Revivals, as we have learned, are times of awakening for the people of God. They are initiated by God Himself in times appointed by Him. Thus, revivals are the result of fresh stirrings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Lord's people.

Both the OT and the NT speak of revivals. Church history gives us many examples of such movements of God. There have been many false revivals, but they must not make us ignore those times when God has done a special work in the hearts of His people.

But when is a revival needed?

Some would say, "When there is a departure from the doctrines of Scripture." And we would have to agree--such a time would be a time when revival is needed.

Others might say, "When some gross sin has been committed"--such as was the case in the Corinthian church. We would have to agree that a revival would be needed then.

And then others might point to those times when a spirit of indifference, of lethargy, has gripped the hearts of the people of God. A revival would be needed then without any doubt!

Other answers might be given.

But the question that I would like to raise today is, "Do we have to have such conditions before a child of God, or a church, would be in need of revival?" Or, could we say that there are other conditions that would call for a revival?

Our Scripture reading provides us with our answer. Look at verse 4 of Rev. 2. (Read.)

These are the words of the Lord Jesus.

What did He mean by "thy first love"?

There are two ideas in the word, "first."

- 1) It means first as concerning time. We could paraphrase it, "You do not love as you loved in the beginning." The reference would be to the way they loved when they were first saved.
- 2) The word also has to do with the order in which a person loves. The Lord did not mean that they were not loving, but He meant that the one they loved most of all at the beginning was no longer first in their affections.

But we still have a question that needs answering. It is this: "Who was it that they loved more than anyone else, or anything else, when they were first saved?"

There can only be one answer to that question: They had loved the Lord above all others, and the love that they had for Him was a fervent love, and a love which affected everything that they did.

So the Lord was saying that they did not love Him first of all, nor did they love Him as they once did. Thus, the Ephesian believers, the Ephesian church, was in need of revival.

"But," the Ephesian church might object, "look at all of the evidences that we love the Lord!" And, if we could have been in Ephesus, we might have agreed with them. From what the Lord had to say about the Ephesian church in this brief letter, it seems that it would have been hard to find anything wrong with that church.

However, in order to bring out what the Lord meant, He, first of all, gave them some words of commendation. But be sure to note that none of these things were substitutes for devotion to the Lord. They might be present when the Lord's people love Him pre-eminently, but any one of them, or all of them can exist without real love for the Lord.

I. THE LORD'S COMMENDATION.

Let me mention four things.

A. Their service--in v. 2.

Two words are used: "works" and "labour." These would show the intensity of their service.

B. Their faithfulness--in vv. 2, 3. This is brought out by the use of the word "patience" 2x, and by the fact that they had "not fainted."

C. Their concern for holiness--in vv. 2, 6.

"Thou canst not bear them which are evil." "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

The Nicolaitans were antinomian. They were encouraging the Ephesians to believe that they were free from any prohibitions against sin.

D. Orthodoxy--in v. 2b--" . . . and thou hast tried them which say that they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

Let me say again--wherever you have love for the Lord, you will have all of these. But you can have all of these, or any of one of them, without having love for the Lord.

Cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

But notice a second thing:

II. THE LORD'S WARNING.

It is in the last part of verse 5, but read the whole verse.

A church can be orthodox, hard-working, faithful, interested in the spiritual life. It can be evangelistic and missionary. But without a real, fervent love for the Lord, there will be no light!

But now let us turn to . . .

III. THE LORD'S MEANING.

If the things which the Lord mentioned are not sufficient to express our love for Him, then what is?

First of all, it means . . .

A. True devotion to the Lord as a Person.

We love to be with Him. We love to let Him speak to us, and we love to speak to Him. We love to hear about Him, to learn of Him. We want to please Him. We want to see Him. We want to be like Him. We delight even in hearing His Name. We want to speak to others about Him.

Note the first commandment in Matt. 22:34-38. Also Deut. 6:4, 5.

We need a revival in our hearts when we can be satisfied with Bible teaching which does not focus our attention upon Christ.

Secondly it means . . .

B. Love for the Word of God.

Cf. Deut. 6:6-9 where we see the first effect of loving the Lord. We will talk about the Word. We will teach the Word to our children. Our conversation at home will be about the Word of God.

Cf. Psa. 1. Also, Psa. 119:97.

We can preach the Word without really loving the Word.

We can even want to hear the Word without really loving it, or without being really devoted to the Lord. But we cannot love the Lord without loving His Word.

But our relationship to the Word does not stop there. Let me remind you of what the Lord Himself said about . . .

C. Obedience to the Word.

There are a lot of people who want to hear the Word who are not at all interested in obeying the Word.

Cf. John 14:21, 23.

Oh, how we need a revival here! We need to be not only hearers of the Word, but doers!

Much more could be said, but let me mention one other point:

D. Shepherding the people of God.

Here I must cite our Lord's words to Peter after Peter had denied that he even knew the Lord. See John 21:15-17.

There is a great difference between mere activity and service as compared with shepherding the people of God. And when we truly love the Lord, we will recognize what that difference is.

Note what the second commandment is the Law is: Matt. 22:39, 40.

But now we come to . . .

IV. THE REMEDY.

In verse 5 the Lord told the Ephesian church to do three things:

- A. Remember. God holds us responsible. The child of God is to be continually taking inventory on his life.

Remember what?

- B. Repent.

Have you ever repented because you do not love the Lord like you once loved Him? If you do not love the Lord supremely, you are guilty of the most serious sin of all.

- C. "Do the first works." Serve Him, but serve Him like you did when you had your first love.

Concl: Sometime soon read Jer. 2:1-13 and Exek. 16.

What causes our love to grow cold?

- 1) We lose sight of what the Lord has done for us.
- 2) We forget how much we need Him.
- 3) Our contact with the world seems to quench our love. Cf. Matt. 24:12.
- 4) Our busy-ness keeps us from really seeking the Lord when we read the Word, or hear the Word, or when we pray.

Do we need a revival here? May our hearts be responsive to the Word which we have been considering together today!