

Revival—Its Roots and Fruits

Text: Psalm 1:3

Introduction

Genuine revival finds its source and sustaining force in the Spirit of God. Revival is the work of the Spirit of God in, and expressed through, yielded and cooperative human channels. The imagery of the psalmist will serve as a basis to portray this truth.

Message

1. “He shall be like a tree.”

a. Nature of the trees of the Lord’s planting.

The godly are compared to fruit trees.

- (1) Negatively: This is the blessed man of Psalm 1:1 who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful.
- (2) Positively: The delight of this man is in the law of the Lord, in which he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:2). Isaiah 61:3 states such shall be called “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.”
- (3) A personal analogy: “He shall be like a tree.” Real revival is not in mass movements as such, but in one’s individual and personal relationship to Christ. It is men who make up the masses.
- (4) The fate of those who are not of the Lord’s planting: When Jesus knew the Pharisees were offended at His teaching, He said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13). This rooting up could happen in life, but it most surely will happen at the judgment.

b. Rooted in the soil.

- (1) Those who are of the Lord’s planting are rooted in good soil and will not be easily uprooted.
- (2) The soil is the tree’s food source. Disturb the roots and you endanger its life. Our roots are in God.
- (3) We are exhorted to be rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith (Colossians 2:7). The Word sustains the life of the planted seed and enables it to grow following its germination.
- (4) In Ephesians 3:17 Paul expressed a desire for the Ephesian Christians that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith and that, being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend the immeasurable love of Christ which passes knowledge.
- (5) This is the tree’s hidden resource, the secret of the flourishing of that which is visible above ground. Here is where meditation upon the truth and the Christian’s prayer life are contributory to the “tree” which we behold.
- (6) In the Parable of the Sower, our Lord referred to some who receive the Word with joy but who, because of lack of depth of earth and insufficient roots, wither and die when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word (Matthew 13:5,6,20,21). This is a warning to all. At the same time, we should observe that the storm can be beneficial if it causes the tree to send its roots deeper.

c. Drawing water from subterranean streams.

- (1) Water is a symbol of the Spirit of God. Whether in the form of rain, dew, springs, or rivers, it speaks of life and refreshment.
- (2) Speaking metaphorically, Job referred to a physical renewal in 19:19,20: “My root was spread out by the waters and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.”
- (3) It is the spiritual application of the figure with which we should be most concerned. The total man—mental, physical, and spiritual—is generally benefited when priority is placed here.
- (4) We are all aware of the element of mystery in that the wind “bloweth where it listeth” and we cannot tell “whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” Jesus compared the new birth by the Spirit to this (John 3:8).

But there is also an element of deep mystery in the diffusion of water, caught up from the sea through evaporation, and precipitated in dew and rain to bring life and renewal to plant and animal (Ecclesiastes 1:7).

(5) The Scriptures refer to the diffusion of the Holy Spirit as the rain:

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring” (Isaiah 44:3).

“He [the Lord] shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:3).

We are to ask of the Lord “rain in the time of the latter rain” (Zechariah 10:1).

“I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

- (6) The external application of water to the plant in the form of rain or dew may have some temporary value, but the lasting value comes when the rain penetrates the soil and is absorbed through the root system.

In the context of the Ephesians passage previously referred to, Paul prayed that they might be “strengthened with might by [God’s] Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). The roots thirstily reach out to find the water source. In like manner, the soul that is alive unto God craves the water of the Spirit and sends his spiritual roots ever deeper to find the subterranean streams of living water.

d. Full of sap-living.

We read in Psalm 104:16 that “the trees of the Lord are full of sap.”

- (1) Sap is the life substance of the tree. It is more than water; it is water plus food from the soil in which it is rooted. Water is the medium by which the food from the soil contributes to the life and growth of the tree. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the means by which the food of the Word of God is assimilated and contributes to the life and growth of the child of God.
- (2) The sap comes up from the roots. Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).
- (3) There is a great mystery in the ability of a tree, through the process known as osmosis, to lift the liquid from deep down in its root structure up to its highest branches, defying the law of gravity in nature. Likewise, the Spirit of God works contrary to man’s inclination in his natural state.
- (4) Just as the tree is full of sap, so we are to “be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). We link with this Paul’s exhortation to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).
- (5) The sap only flows where there is life, and it in turn contributes to that life.

e. “His leaf also shall not wither.”

This is the external evidence of a healthy living state.

- (1) The prophet said: “Blessed is the man whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7,8).
- (2) This tree is an evergreen, not affected by the changing of the seasons or times of drought. Because the believer draws from an unfailing stream of spiritual resources, he is unaffected by eternal circumstances.

f. Growing to maturity.

“Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3).

The Amplified Bible appends to this statement, in parentheses, the words “and come to maturity.”

This is the promise to the “blessed man” of Psalm 1:1, who habitually chooses to walk with God rather than in the counsel of the ungodly, and who meditates on His Word, which he desires and in which he delights.

2. He brings forth “his fruit in his season.”

a. Some general considerations:

This could be looked upon as only one point of analogy among the others previously considered, but fruit bearing is important and deserves emphasis.

- (1) It is not enough for the tree to look beautiful. Japanese cherry trees are beautiful, but fruitless. In Jesus’ Parable of the Barren Fig Tree the verdict was, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” (Luke 13:7).
- (2) This is the end for which the tree exists, the fulfillment of its function. It is designed by its Creator to reproduce itself through its fruit. Christians are to reproduce themselves. Christians will not continue on in their present state forever; but after they are gone, they can leave fruit that will “remain” (John 15:16). The fruit contains a seed that, when planted and exposed to conducive influences, will become a fruit-producing tree.
- (3) But there is another purpose in fruit-bearing. By bearing we bring nourishment and pleasure to others. This is not merely the fruit of the tree. It is the fruit of the Spirit within the tree. To eat thereof is to receive pleasure, satisfaction, and sustenance.
- (4) The kind of fruit the tree bears corresponds with the nature of the tree. It is not something attached from without but is produced from within.
“Make the tree good, and his fruit good” (Matthew 12:33).
- (5) The fruit is borne “in his season.”

- “The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isaiah 50:4). We are to “be instant [meaning: ‘to stand by, be present, be at hand’] in season, out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2).
- (6) Out of fullness the tree becomes fruitful. “The branch will not become fruitful until it has been filled to overflowing with the sustaining sap.” But to be filled is not enough, for we can be filled with the fullness of God without allowing God to make us fruitful.
- b. Some specific applications of fruit to revival.
- (1) Revival sources. The fruit-producing tree owes its existence and value to two things:
- The gospel (Colossians 1:6). This is the gospel that Paul referred to as the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).
 - The Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:9). This is that Spirit of whom all who are begotten of God are partakers (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Hebrews 6:4).
- (2) Revival evidences. The term “fruit of the Spirit” is specifically applied to qualities developed by the Spirit of God in the Christian’s character. In its broadest aspect it can properly be applied to every thing the Spirit produces in and through us.
- If it is the nature of a tree to bear fruit, and if it has proper soil, food, water, light, and heat, that tree cannot help but produce fruit, if it is healthy.
- Our particular emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit in revival. There is revival under the following circumstances:
- When the Holy Spirit gives life and understanding to the letter of the Word (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 John 2:27; Revelation 3:18). This is the fruit of the engrafted or assimilated Word (James 1:21).
 - When the Holy Spirit brings conviction (John 16:7–11) with the resulting repentance. We are to bring forth fruits meet for (literally, “befitting”) repentance (Matthew 3:8,10).
 - When the Holy Spirit regenerates and renews (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
 - When the Holy Spirit gives freedom from sin and spiritual bondage and gives victory over every foe (Isaiah 59:19; 61:1; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:16).
 - When the Holy Spirit motivates to character development and holiness of life (Romans 6:22; 2 Corinthians 9:10; Galatians 5:16–25).
 - When the Holy Spirit empowers for witnessing, evangelism, and service (Acts 1:8; 4:8). Note how the preaching of the gospel is linked to the ministry of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:12).
 - When the Holy Spirit inspires to spiritual worship (John 4:24; Ephesians 5:18–20) and helps in prayer (Romans 8:26,27). Praise is the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:15).
 - When the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts severally as He will through yielded and cooperative channels who dare to believe God to use them as instruments in His hands (1 Corinthians 12:1–11,31; 14:1,12; Romans 12:3,6).
- (3) Revival results. If we do what we should and let God use us as He wills, we can leave the results to Him.

Conclusion

- A tree is known by its fruits (Matthew 7:16–20). A genuine revival will bear spiritual fruit.
 - Regardless of how hopeless things may appear, we should believe God for renewal and revival.

“For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again ... yet through the scent of water it will bud” (Job 14:7–9).
 - Fruit is to the ultimate glory of God.

“Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8).
 - The long-suffering Lord waits to reap the harvest at His coming: “The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth ... until he receive the early and latter rain” (James 5:7).
- Joseph R. Flower