

Need for the Revival: Lord, Give me New Life!

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リバイバルの必要性 — 主よ、私を新たに生かしてください!
主は生きておられる 17 号
ゴットホルド・ベック

Wherever believers of the Lord come into one place, there is a “gathering of joy,” because they all have a chance to repent in there.

“Repentance is the most wonderful thing to do,” said Martin Luther, who led the Protestant Reformation. While those who have been led to repentance bring joy to others, those who refuse to repent will bring nothing but pain to people.

In his letter to the churches of his time, Paul referred to some believers and mentioned, “We always thank God for all of you when we mention you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2). But in the same letter, he had to write about other kinds of believers whom he was troubled by and worried about. We can see here that there are two kinds of believers.

For example, some of the believers consider that “the second coming of the Lord is still a long way off and we do not have to be seriously prepared for that day now,” while other believers joyfully live in the expectation that “the Lord may come today.”

Some believers live just for themselves and pursue their self-realization, while other believers live for the Lord Jesus, desiring sincerely to “please the Lord” deep in their hearts.

Some believers desire to play important roles and take the lead in their missionary activities. They feel displeased when things do not work out the way they want. Other believers are willing for only the Lord Jesus to be increased and place no importance on themselves. They desire to give all glory to the Lord Jesus alone as they continue their lives of faith. While some believers make others stumble in their faith and cause the disintegration of the assembly, other believers desperately seek the unification of the assembly even at the price of their lives.

In other words, some believers live in the “darkness” while others walk in the “light of the Lord.” The latter are those who step in front of the Lord Jesus, put their head down and from the heart humbly confess all things without holding back anything, just like the

woman who had been suffering from chronic bleeding for 12 years who appeared in the Gospel according to Mark, Chapter 5.

The Bible recorded the prayer that David cried out to the Lord and sought from his heart in the times of the Old Testament.

“Examine me, Lord, and inspect me! Test my heart and mind” (Psalms 26:2).

We too, just like David need to pray to and sincerely ask the Lord to illuminate us with His light and examine inside us. When we are illuminated by the light of the Lord, it makes us realize how insignificant our existence is. Within the light of the Lord, we feel so ashamed of ourselves that we can’t help but hang our heads; we do not know what to do other than getting down on our knees in front of the Lord. It was not until Saul was illuminated by the light of the Lord that he realized how his life had been absolutely meaningless and evil (see Acts 9.3).

“Come to me” calls the Lord Jesus always. He is telling us, “I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”(John 8:12). However, the innate nature of humans keeps them from moving into the light. They refuse to come into the light because they want to keep their sins covered and they are afraid to sincerely confess. When people avoid the light, refuse to obey the Lord, but keep walking in the darkness, they are moving toward nothing but their destruction.

In this article, I would like to discuss the “Importance of the Revival.” Now, I used this English word “revival” in this Japanese periodical, which is generally translated as “spiritual awakening,” “reconstruction of faith,” or “resurrection of faith.” Spiritually “dormant believers” need the “revival,” which is the “reconstruction of their faith.” It is absolutely necessary through a vibrant fellowship with the Lord to be renewed spiritually and to begin to live a new life.

When I was a student in divinity school, there was a group of prayers, who desperately sought the revival to begin. Before this group of people began their prayers, they used to sing this song, which went: “Lord, send us your strength. Just like the high tide of the ocean, please send us the revival. And make us awake from inside.” Revival has to start from inside each one of us as a personal experience. Now, is each one of us prepared for that?

As we see the record of revivals that actually occurred in world history, we always find the existence of the invisible “warriors of prayers” there. There always was

a man of prayer who prayed to the Lord, “Lord Jesus, please start the revival among us, or put me to death.” Even now at this moment, Jesus is looking for the “warriors of prayer” among us. He seeks the man of prayer, who is willing to stand in the “breach” and intervene for the people.

The Lord once said to Ezekiel, the prophet, “I sought for a man among them to build the wall and stand in the breach in my presence on behalf of the land so that it won’t be destroyed, but I found no one”(Ezekiel 22:30).

Now, are we the ones who satisfy the will of the Lord, the ones who stand in the breach? Or, are we just one of those who made the Lord lament, “When I looked for him, he could not be found” and made Him upset?

Do we realize that the revival is absolutely necessary deep in our hearts? Do we sense serious problems hidden inside us?

Unfortunately, the attitude of many believers toward the revival is not serious enough. They may pray and seek for the revival to occur, but somewhere in their hearts they feel, “Nothing would actually happen until the time the Lord comes anyway. All we can do is just to wait until that time.” They do not face the Lord with a sincere attitude. Will this kind of apathetic and miserable faith please the Lord Jesus?

However, if we fulfill the requirements that the Lord sets for revival, it will occur at that very moment and begin to spread. The revival refers to the “newly awakened life.” It is important here that only true believers have “the life that is to be newly awakened.” In other words, the revival would never occur to non-believers. Non-believers must first be born into new life. It is for this reason that the revival is especially required for “dormant believers,” so to speak. At this present time, there are so many “dormant believers.” Now, the time has come when they all have to wake up from their sleep. In order to wake up, we first need to admit that we are in the state of dormancy and are spiritually dead, then, confess it to the Lord. It will be a wonderful blessing if the Lord Jesus stays with us and helps each one of us to realize the importance of this revival.

Then, how will this much-awaited revival occur? It requires that first, “we are examined by the Lord” and then that, “we examine the Lord” for the revival to occur. Both of these are necessary. Now in the next part, I would like to discuss what it means “for us to be examined by the Lord?”

Being Examined by the Lord.

It is a good sign if the Lord Jesus examines us. It is absolutely pointless, no matter how serious we are to examine our own hearts. What is important is to have our mind examined by the Lord Jesus. However, it requires that we have an attitude like David had when he said:

“Examine me, God, and know my mind, test me, and know my thoughts. See if there is any offensive tendency in me, and lead me in the eternal way” (Psalms 139:23,24).

“Cause me to understand your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me; for you are the God who delivers me. All day long I have waited for you” (Psalms 25:4,5).

“In the morning let me hear of your gracious love, for in you I trust. Cause me to know the way I should take, because I have set my hope on you. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground” (Psalms 143:8,10).

Hosea too exclaimed.

“Sow in righteousness in your own interest, reap in gracious love, break up your own unprepared ground; It is now time to inquire of the Lord, until he comes to pour out righteousness for you” (Hosea 10:12)

In another edition of Japanese language (Colloquial Japanese Bible), this verse is translated as “the Lord comes to pour out for you just like rains of salvation.” It is telling us that the Spirit of the Lord is poured onto us just like rain, and we are renewed by the Spirit of the Lord. Let us pay attention to the fact that we are commanded to “break up our own unprepared ground” before He comes to pour His spirit on us. In order for our hearts to be awakened by the spirit of the Lord, our hearts first have to be broken up. How can our hearts be like a broken up ground? When we sincerely wish to be illuminated inside by the light of the Lord and be examined by Him, our hearts begin to be broken up. As an answer to our prayers, the Lord Jesus exposes our sins. Please note here that repentance for sins is meaningless unless it is decisive and clear enough. For we have certainly committed sins; they need to be exposed and repented of one at a time.

Sins of the “dormant believers” are exposed by being examined by the Lord. These sins are generally divided into two kinds. One is the “sin of negligence” and the other is the sin called “desire.” Now, what kind of sins are the sins of negligence? It is plainly

explained in these words from the Epistle of James, chapter 4, verse 17; “Anyone who knows what is right but fails to do it is guilty of sin.” In the next part, let us find out what kind of things are included in the sins mentioned in these words.

1. Lack of Gratitude

It is a sin not to express your gratitude to the Lord. The Lord Jesus gave up His own life for our sins when we were still sinners. Do we give thanks to the Lord from the bottom of our hearts? Gratitude is sin if it is superficial and only verbal. Life without gratitude causes the window of heaven to close.

“Whoever offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me, and I will reveal the salvation of God to whomever continues in my way” (Psalms 50:23).

To put it another way, “Whoever refuses to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving insults me. To those who are not discreet about their behaviour, the salvation of God will not be revealed.” This verse is telling us that, to those who refuse to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus, no revival will occur.

The Lord is waiting for us to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving sincerely and put our gratitude into words. What is the reason that we offer thanks to the Lord? It is for the fact that we received salvation because of the gracious love of the Lord and that the salvation of our family is promised as well. We also should thank Him for forgiving our confessed sins forever and for His promise not to remember them ever again.

We should all confess our sin of not having been thanking the Lord Jesus enough, repent before the Lord wholeheartedly and renew our gratitude to Him.

2. Lack of Love for the Lord

This is also a sin. The Lord Jesus desires and is eagerly waiting for us to love Him with all of our hearts and spirits. The Lord truly wants us to offer pure and heartfelt love to Him.

It is written in the Bible, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God (Exodus 20:5).” If wives love their husbands halfway or husbands love other women at the same time, they would feel jealous. If we do not love the Lord with all our hearts, He would feel sorrow.

We are the ones who were redeemed by the blood that the Lord Jesus shed and all things we have belong to Him. Our love should be directed to the Lord alone. Nevertheless, as we reflect on our lives, we have to

admit that we are more preoccupied with satisfying our jobs, families or ourselves, rather than the Lord and that we devote more of our lives to these things than to the Lord, don't we?

“However, I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first” (Revelation 2:4).

What a dreadful sin the lack of love for the Lord Jesus is! Let us confess to the Lord that we do not have sincere love for Him. Otherwise, we would never be able to make any spiritual progress. We ought to understand every day how much we are loved by the Lord. David exclaimed from the bottom of his heart.

“I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my stronghold in whom I take refuge, my shield, the glory of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psalms 18:1,2).

3. Not Consuming the Word of God

We need to realize that it is also a sin not to read the Bible. Sometimes, we also find ourselves reading the Bible with no joy at all for weeks, don't we? If we do not read the Bible without hunger and thirst, or we fail to consume the Word from the Scriptures deep in our hearts then, it is no wonder that we make no spiritual progress. If we confess this sin, the Lord will give us the hunger and thirst for His Word and He will absolutely talk to us in a voice we have never heard. The Lord has said:

“He must make a copy of this Law for himself. It is to remain with him the rest of his life so he may learn to fear the Lord his God and observe all the words of this Law and these statutes, in order to fulfill them” (Deuteronomy 17:18,19).

“This set of instructions is not to cease being a part of your conversations. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to carry out everything that's written in it, for then you'll prosper and succeed” (Joshua 1:8).

The author of these Psalms praised the Word of God:

“Instruction that comes from you is better for me than thousands of gold and silver coins. How I love your instruction! Every day it is my meditation. Your word is very pure, and your servant loves it” (Psalms 119:72,97,140).

Jeremiah too consumed the word of God:

“Your words were found, and I consumed them.

Your words were joy and my hearts delight,
because I bear your name, Lord God of the
Heavenly Armies” (Jeremiah 15:16)

Our life of faith continues to grow according to and in proportion to how much we consume the Word of God.

4. Disbelief

The Bible says that “anything that is not done in faith is sin” in Romans 14:23. Faith is the connection to the Lord Jesus. Without connecting to the Lord, we have to live a life of sin. If we do not place more importance on the Lord than anything else, it would give pleasure to the Devil. When we are occupied with the worldly things that our eyes see, we are putting the Lord Jesus away and avoiding Him as though we do not need Him. “To believe” in the Lord is to “remain in Him.”

“I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

There are many promises of God in the Scriptures and it is a sin not to believe in them. For example, it is said in the Acts, 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved.” Do we truly believe in this promise?

We are privileged to move forward every day filled with gratitude believing firmly in this promise and free from any doubt. We will never be able to experience the great work of the Lord if we have distrust in Him even if only a little. The Bible tells us this fact in these verses:

Jesus left that place and went back to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were utterly amazed. “Where did this man get all these things?” they asked. “What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What great miracles are being done by his hands! This is the builder, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon, isn’t it? His sisters are here with us, aren’t they?” And they were offended by him. Jesus was telling them, “A prophet is without honor only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own home.” He couldn’t perform a miracle there except to lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went around to the villages and continued teaching. — Mark 6:1-6.

Where people are governed by disbelief, the Lord Jesus does not have a chance to enforce his divine

power at all.

5. To neglect to Pray.

It is also a sin to neglect to pray for others. What kind of prayer is the “true payer”? “True prayer” is the prayer that the Holy Spirit prays through us.

To whom do we pray? Do we pray to a god that resides somewhere distant and separated from us? If we are to pray to a god that lives very far away, we will have to shout with a loud voice just like the prophets of Baal did (1Kings, 18:28). We pray to the Lord, who governs the whole universe and at the same time, dwells inside us. How should we pray to this Lord? The people of Israel never gave voice to the name of the Lord even when they read the Scriptures and prayed because they feared the Lord God. When we pray, we too need to come into the presence of the Lord with awe just like the people of Israel did. We ought to pray to the Lord, sincerely and with fear, believing that the Lord would never fail to answer.

Paul described those who have no faith as, “There is no fear of God before his eyes (Romans, 3:18).” I suppose that these words are true to many believers living today. The Lord has said:

“This is the one to whom I will look favorably: to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my message” (Isaiah 66:2).

The Lord is looking for someone who trembles at His message. Are we the ones who tremble at His message? Do we truly understand what it is like to fear the Lord? Let us ask the Lord again to illuminate inside us and examine us.

6. Not Gathering at the Meeting of the Assembly

Needless to say, Christian assemblies are not religious clubs. The Lord Jesus, who was raised to heaven is the “head” and the flock of brothers and sisters who gather under the name of the Lord are the “bodies of the Christ, the head.” The assembly is the “house of God,” “pillar of truth” and the “foundation” according to the Bible (1 Timothy 3:15). It is sin not to respect this “house of God.”

“First be concerned about God’s kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

There are such believers everywhere, who are not concerned about God’s kingdom and His righteousness at all, instead, they place higher importance on various mundane matters in their lives

or jobs than coming to assemblies. I understand that it is necessary on some occasions. However, in this regard, let us pray to the Lord just like David did, "Examine me, Lord, and inspect me! Test my heart and mind." The Bible says:

"Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another even more as you see the day of the Lord coming nearer" (Hebrews 10:25).

7. Insufficient Love for Your Family, Relatives, and Friends

Some people value their jobs higher than the salvation of their family. Many of us are occupied with our mundane duties and consider them as our serious responsibility. However, we pay less attention to the mission the Lord assigned to us, don't we?

When our family members have not received salvation yet and are walking toward "eternal destruction" how can we remain indifferent to them? We all had a time when, instead of praying sincerely for our family, relatives, and friends, we wasted our time in vain without caring about them, didn't we? This is another reason to believe that our sins are piled up like a mountain.

8. Insufficient Care for the Souls that are Heading Toward Destruction

Do we sincerely care about the souls of many people around us who are heading toward destruction? Are we sacrificing everything for these people? Whether we sacrifice as much as we can for them or not reveals whether we truly love the souls heading toward destruction or not. We will be blessed when the Lord forgives this sin of insufficient care and places in our hearts a passion for spiritual salvation.

9. Not to Stay Alert for Brothers and Sisters in the Lord.

It is also a sin to not care enough about other brothers and sisters in the Lord.

"Therefore, as long as the promise of entering his rest remains valid, let us be afraid! Otherwise, some of you will fail to reach it" (Hebrews 4:1).

Are we seriously concerned about our brothers and sisters in the Lord? Do we spend our time in fellowship with each one of our brothers and sisters and break our hearts for their spiritual growth? This is our "duty" assigned by the Lord. We should not forget to write down all the names of our fellow brothers and sisters,

those who are sick in bed and are suffering, those who are seeking salvation and pray for them every day.

10. Refusal to Abandon Ourselves and Follow the Lord

It is also a sin if you are not willing to abandon yourself to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be absolutely no spiritual growth without sacrificing yourself. Unless we die to ourselves, we would never bear fruit that will last forever. Are we prepared to endure the pain, to be humiliated and to be persecuted for the name of the Lord?

"Therefore, anyone who knows what is right but fails to do it is guilty of sin" (James 4:17).

It is a wonderful blessing if the Lord Himself shines His light and exposes these "sins of negligence" that each one of us is committing. When we humbly admit our sinfulness and repent, the great revival will occur.

End