



A Balm That Brings Revival

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” (Jeremiah 8:22)

Intro

To say that things were not going well would have been an understatement! The children were all grown and gone from home. Finances had never been worse for Jim and Mary. They were “swimming” in debt, just trying to stay afloat as creditors hounded them daily. Jim was out of work and restless beyond endurance. To top it all off Mary had just left Jim and had filed for divorce. Unfortunate though it may be, the above scenario has become all too common. Many traditional homes throughout the world are facing similar circumstances. Struggles, problems and tragedies have invaded the family unit and are leaving paths of destruction and devastation behind them.

Equally sobering is the realization that many of the same struggles and problems facing families are facing the church as well. How many congregations and their pastors have divorced and separated solely because problems had arisen, pressures were heavy, and revival simply did not exist? Just as divorce is not the answer for troubled marriages, neither is separation between church and pastor the solution for revival. Sometimes ministers and laymen alike are tempted to seek the easy way out of a troubling situation.

The thrilling truth is that there is spiritual healing available for any congregation that suffers from any spiritual malady. When Christians will sincerely examine themselves and their roles in the body of Christ, there can and will come spiritual renewal.

Symptoms of Spiritual Sickness

More than ever before, many physicians are beginning to practice “preventative health care.” In other words, rather than wait until their patients are sick and need immediate, emergency treatment, doctors are diagnosing possible health problems before they develop. This can spare the patient much of the trauma and anguish experienced through illness, and possibly even death.

Preventative health care can be practiced in the spiritual realm as well. Why wait until a congregation of believers becomes seriously ill spiritually before administering the proper treatment? Symptoms appear early and are signals that spiritual renewal is needed at once. Some of the common symptoms of spiritual disease should be considered at this point.

A church needs revival when divisions exist among the members. The word *revival* primarily

means “the act of returning or restoring to consciousness or life.” Revival is a renewal of awareness and spiritual vitality. To the church, revival means a return to the living patterns of the original apostolic church that Christ set in order. That means a return to unity. When God breathed life into His church at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, He established a body of believers who were closely knit together in unity. They were “all with one accord in one place”

(Acts 2:1). From that birthing of the church even to this day unity has been a significant characteristic of God’s children.

Divisions within a church are signs of spiritual decay. When a person’s spirituality begins to wane, he gets out of step with others in the church and division results. In writing to the Corinthian church, a church torn with division and strife, the apostle Paul urged,

“that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined

together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Corinthians 1:10).

Another symptom of spiritual sickness is that the people are carnal and worldly. When people

become carnal, they lose sight of spiritual goals and become critical and sensitive. The thoughts and discussions of the people deteriorate when they become carnal. Carnality manifests itself in numerous ways in a church. The apostle Paul recognized the Corinthians’ carnality by the divisions, strife and envy that existed among them (I Corinthians 3:3). Carnal people will tend to gossip about the problems of others rather than discuss the good news of Jesus Christ. Carnal individuals will seek after worldly fashions, develop rebellious attitudes, and will resent and hold grudges against those who try to help them. Carnality must be purged from the church lest sincere Christians become infected and destroyed.

When a church congregation is not seeing lost people experience salvation, it needs spiritual

healing. The church exists as an “ark of safety” to redeem the lost from sin. As the body of Christ, the church stands with its spiritual arms open to those who need salvation and shelter.

Jesus Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). During Christ’s earthly ministry He healed the sick and lame, opened deaf ears and blind eyes, and raised the dead to life. He cleansed lepers, befriended the friendless and turned water into wine. But none of these miracles exhibited the purpose for which He came—they were merely benefits of His compassion and love for mankind. He came for one reason only and that was to restore to men spiritual life which was lost because of sin. (See John 10:10.) He came to save men from sin.

For the church to exist for any reason other than the salvation of the lost would be completely contrary to the purpose of its creation. “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

A lack of a burden for the lost is another symptom of spiritual illness in the church.

When a church is not seeing souls born again, it is generally due to this malady—apathy. When Christians do not care about their neighbors’ spiritual condition as they should, they will not be soulwinners. The early church exhibited a tremendous burden for lost souls. **“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them” (Mark 16:20).** (See also Acts 8:4.) They possessed such a burning compassion to win the lost that it was said of them they had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) and had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). The apostle Paul spread the gospel throughout Asia in the space of two years (Acts 19:10). Active evangelism keeps the love of Christ for lost men coursing through the spiritual arteries of the church. It is true that “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18)—they who are lost perish and they who have no vision perish.

But where there is a vision and burden to do the work of God there is abundant life!

Finally, the lack of giving is a symptom of disease in the church.

It is holy and natural for a Christian to give of his finances to the work of God. God set the pattern for Christianity by giving Himself as a sacrifice for sin. (See John 3:16; I John

3:16.) God is a giving God. He will withhold no good gift from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). In fact, every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17). Since a man is created in God’s image and God left him an example of giving, he should give also when the Spirit of God dwells within him.

Tithes and offerings are both types of biblical giving that a man owes to God. (See Malachi 3:8-10.) Not only is it required by God that men give to His kingdom, but He also promised He would pour out a blessing that a person could not even contain (Malachi 3:10).

Balm in Gilead

If one or all of these spiritual maladies should happen to exist in a church, there is an answer—there is hope! God has provided healing for those who are sick.

During a time of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God, the prophet Jeremiah wrote, **“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” (Jeremiah 8:22).**

Indeed there was balm in Gilead. In fact, Gilead had become quite renowned for its medicinal balms— excellent for the healing of the body. Israel’s lack of healing was not to be blamed on the lack of healing power (spiritual) nor the lack of a physician (Jehovah) to apply it. Any lack of healing they experienced was due to their failure to apply the cure prescribed by God’s prophets.

God has also provided spiritual healing for the church. The cures are prescribed in God’s Word and must be applied with faith. The atonement of Jesus Christ’s death on Calvary purchased not only physical healing for the church, but spiritual healing as well. Isaiah wrote, **“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah**

53:5).

Of the four areas of atonement mentioned, three referred specifically to spiritual healing or

atonement. God was more concerned in the spiritual welfare of His children than the physical—not to ignore their physical health. Jesus often demonstrated His concern for the spiritual man, even over the physical man. (See Mark 2:1-5.)

Revival Is the Answer

The therapy and prescription are the same for every symptom of spiritual disease—revival! When Christians are awakened to their spiritual prowess and motivated to a spiritual renewal of life, spiritual growth and Christian maturity will result. Every symptom will disappear and new spiritual vitality will reign.

Revival cleanses the heart. The carnal nature is purged out. The old dead roots and branches of sin are once again clipped away from a Christian’s heart. The spiritual heart of a man is renewed and given room to grow when revival comes.

Revival changes attitudes. When a man’s attitudes become sour and diseased, his entire life is

affected. There is a unique relationship between a person’s attitudes and his actions. Wrong attitudes produce wrong actions; right attitudes produce right actions! As a man thinks in his heart so is he (Proverbs 23:7). A revival atmosphere in the church will cause Christians to respond with healthy, positive attitudes toward God, church leaders, the unregenerated, and

themselves. These positive attitudes toward the things of God cause positive actions and involvement in church programs and activities, which in turn can produce more revival.

Revival motivates spiritual growth. As the heart is continually cleansed and attitudes strengthened by revival, spiritual growth will result. Growth is sometimes a slow and tedious process. Some things require years of slow, continual growth before reaching maturity. It also takes time to grow into spiritual maturity. Mature Christians are not made overnight—it takes time.

In order for plants to grow, the right combination of light, food, and water are necessary. Certain elements are also needed to institute spiritual growth and maturity. Revival contains all the necessary ingredients to motivate spiritual growth.

The Way of Revival

A prescription designed to cure spiritual disease is only valuable if it is applied in actual therapy. Christians must not only assess their spiritual deficiencies and determine a course of therapy, but they should also begin actual rehabilitation. One might say, “I know I have a problem and I know that revival is the cure, but how do I have revival?” Covered below are some steps of action to take which will bring revival to a church and hence, spiritual healing.

Prayer and fasting. Without a doubt these should top the list of steps to revival. They simply

cannot be emphasized too much. Prayer was evidently very important to God, for He desired His house to be called a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13). Even Jesus, though

God wrapped in flesh, prayed often to the Father. According to Jesus, prayer and fasting were the only elements that could bind the power of the enemy and bring deliverance. (See Matthew 17:14-21.)

Fasting must not be forgotten. It is an essential key to self-discipline of the flesh and natural man in order to be fully submitted to the Spirit. Fasting does not change God, for He does not change. (See Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.) Fasting changes the participant and helps him to keep his flesh subject to God's Spirit and His will.

Faithfulness. Each member being faithful to God's house and service will help prepare a church for revival. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). God will only entrust revival to those He can depend on.

Faithfulness is dependability. Another element of faithfulness is consistency.

When a Christian is consistent in the life he lives to the degree that he is dependable, then he is faithful. If a businessman is faithful to his business and there is a need for the product he produces, he will prosper. There can be no question that there is tremendous need for the product offered by the church. If those who operate the business of the church will be diligent and faithful in any circumstance, the church and its members will be blessed and prosper. (See Proverbs 28:20.) Revival is available for those who will faithfully and diligently seek it.

Giving. Consistent giving to the work of God will help initiate revival. Giving of one's financial substance is in the plan of God for basically three reasons:

- It tests a Christian's faith in God.
- It is an expression of a Christian's love, devotion and commitment to God.
- It finances the earthly work of God.

God will bless those who give to His cause. He will give in direct proportion to a person's willingness to give. **"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. . . . For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again"** (Luke 6:38). (See also II Corinthians 9:6-7.) It is not to be

thought that a church can buy revival with giving, but by giving in accordance with God's plan the members can align themselves with God and be receptive to revival.

The final three steps not only foster revival, but maintain it within the church:

Witnessing. When Christians busy themselves in the matter of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, revival will continue. Sharing one's testimony with the lost not only benefits those with whom the gospel is shared but it also helps to maintain that person's experience with God. An active program of evangelism in a congregation of believers will create excitement and a spirit of revival. As members witness to lost souls, they see others come to Christ which keeps a flame of renewal and revival burning in their own souls. The entire church then matures

and is benefited by it.

Busy people. Involved, busy Christians are happy Christians. They do not have time to gossip and spread rumors concerning others. They are totally immersed in the purpose of the church—reaching the world with true Bible salvation. The old saying has merit, "If you want to get a job

done, ask someone to do it who is busy." Often, people who are not busy are that way by choice. They probably have things they could do but simply are not motivated. Those who are busy usually want to be busy. Perhaps they have learned that one of the keys to a healthy, spiritual relationship with God is staying involved in His work. There is a job for every person in God's kingdom and a person for every job. As a Christian involves himself in the kingdom of God, he will find himself happy about life, renewed daily in the Holy Spirit. If an idle mind is the devil's workshop, then a busy mind must be the hub of activity in Christian involvement.

Worship. Finally, a church must maintain a continual program of true worship of God. God still

seeks men who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Worship feeds revival. The more a church worships, the better prepared their hearts will be to receive total spiritual renewal.

True worship is alive and it spreads that spiritual life to all who contact it. A church can worship its way through every trial, problem and battle. Revival will come to those who know how to worship God as true worshippers.

As a church follows these steps along the way of revival, renewal will come. Spiritual renewal on a daily basis is the key to obtaining spiritual healing and experiencing growth and maturity within the body of Christ. **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).**

Is there healing balm for the church today? Yes, and an ample supply for those who are willing to seek a diagnosis, receive the prescriptions of God’s Word, and “take the medicine.” The Great Physician is alive and well and ready to minister to every need of His growing church.