

Aug 14, 11 Outside in Park

## BEING RENEWED IN OUR SPIRITS

Our closing hymn's last verse goes like this: *"Revive us again, fill each heart with Thy love. May each soul be rekindled with fire from above? Hallelujah! Thine glory! Hallelujah! Amen! Hallelujah! Thine glory! Revive us again."*

For much summer is that rekindling time. Schedules aren't as hectic for some. But with baseball, softball, soccer trying to get a time to relax and be renewed isn't always easy. Vacations are taken; weekends are times of travel or camping. Golf is enjoyed, fishing, boating, swimming keeps some cool. There is something about summer time. It's being able to have all that extra daylight to do things you might enjoy. Gardening, flower planting, fixing the lawn are things some people do. Some like to be out in the sun getting some rays to tone up their skin so that they don't look like a zombie when winter falls upon us. It's a renewing of our spirits in many ways. Teachers and administrators look forward to summer vacation in order to rekindle their flame, their passion to teach. Kids look forward to summer because they are ready to relax and look forward to a new grade, new teachers, some looking forward to moving to a college someplace. In the summer many churches see less in attendance as people do all these things. But right about now, at the end of August as another school year comes into focus; we begin to wind things down and begin to focus on the coming months.

Yes summer is taking a break from normal. Today since it is August and school is just around the corner, I want us to think about renewing our spirits. *"Revive us again, fill each heart with Thy love. May each soul be rekindled with fire from above"* is a prayer to God helping us to rekindle our spiritual lives. It's asking God to renew a right spirit within us. We are reminded that God never takes a

vacation. He is always on duty, and so are his heavenly messengers. In fact, Satan never takes a vacation from his work either and sometimes maybe in the summer he works overtime.

We don't hear very much about revivals as much as the early church did. Almost every fall there is used to be a revival service somewhere in some church preparing God's people to begin a fresh. I know even today in some southern churches revival services are being planned for the fall. It comes with the change of the seasons, and an ending of the church year and beginning with a new one when fall comes. Revival means there is still a flicker of life left. Revival means stoking the coals, adding some new ones so that a new burning passion can happen. At least that's what it used to mean.

Many years ago people like Billy Sunday, D.L. Moody, Whitefield, Wesley, Oral Roberts, and Billy Graham had great success in conducting tent services in towns. After his conversion experience Wesley would preach in the open air to thousands of people. Billy Sunday would stand on street corners standing on a box as he preached to crowds that would gather. But these weren't really revival meetings, but called by a different name to reach people for Jesus. They were times to bring people into a relationship with God through Jesus and give them something to live for. It was to offer hope in times of stress, light in times of darkness. It was to lift up Christ so that lives could be transformed and spirits could be renewed. Revival meetings came to be a renewing of those feelings of hope. Revival was just like it said, to renew God's spirit within you. Read the words to the old hymns of our faith and you read testimonies of the writers walk with God. People like Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, John Newton, and Horatio Spafford. He wrote one of my favorite hymns, "It Is Well With My Soul" following the ship disaster that cost the lives of his daughters in the Atlantic. The words on the telegram from his wife were brief....

“Saved alone.” When he was over the spot where their ship went down Mr. Spafford began his great hymn, “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.” Or Fannie Crosby who wrote “Blessed assurance Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.” And she was blind, yet, even though she was physically blind, she had great spiritual sight and God blessed her with a wonderful talent of writing hymns to encourage God’s people where these words have been heard.

Paul wrote these words to Timothy. *“For this reason I remind you to fan into flames the gift of God.”* Could he be saying, “Hey Timothy you need to be revived. It’s time to get you restarted again. It’s time to get those spiritual juices flowing. It’s revival time.” In Isaiah we read, *“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”* King David’s psalm of confession states, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”* Paul writes to the church at Rome these words, *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* To the Corinthian church Paul wrote, *“We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”*

Think about that for a moment. Every day we are wasting away. That means we are getting older. When we are young we can’t wait to get older. We can’t wait until we can cross the street by ourselves, to go to movies with our friends. We can’t wait to sleep over at a friend’s house, or have friends over. We can’t wait to be a teenager, our first dance, the first date, etc. Then to be sixteen so we can get our

drivers license and perhaps the first car. Then you can't wait till your 18 and you are proclaimed an adult and you begin to feel freedom. Then 21 and the freedom to make other choices and so on and so on. But then the times begin to change when you get older and older and older, like me, like Leonard and Lucy and scores of others. Things wear out, mind not always as sharp, getting around a struggle. Tire easier, go to bed earlier and, well some of you know what I mean. However, even though this old body gets to be decaying, each day there is that inner renewal of the spirit that reminds us that so what, God is still in charge, still guiding us, and we are now closer to our rewards today than we were a few years ago. Some might think the best days were yesterday, but others think the best days still lie ahead of us. Paul finishes that section with these words of encouragement and renewal.. *“We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

What great words of wisdom for us today. Renewal is revival which is remembering our walk with God and why we walk with Him and why we need to make a decision to accept him as our Savior.

All the great preachers had great success. But remember, not everyone responded positively to their messages. They had failures. D.L. Moody often spoke about having services in one town and when he was getting ready to enter the place he was preaching an intoxicated man looked up from the gutter with a slurred speech and said, “Hey, I know you. You're D.L. Moody the great preacher. I'm one of your converts.” Moody looked at him and said, “You must be. For if you were converted by the Spirit of God you wouldn't be still lying in the gutter in that condition.”

Revival, coming to life. Having new enthusiasm. Isn't that what the weekend used to be for? Sunday's were a day of rest, a Sabbath, to rest, focus on God, attend

church, and prepare for another week of work. As a child I grew up where there were no baseball games on Sunday or if there were, it was later in the day. I didn't get to go play outside with my friends, but stayed home and played in the backyard, or took a bus trip to visit my grandparents. Stores weren't open. Drug stores opened in the morning for those who needed medicine, but closed at noon. Don't even think there were many eating places open, or gas stations. Sunday was a day of rest and family time, a time of relaxing to let the body and mind rest and to worship God and prepare for the coming week.

Today it is all together different. Some people become even busier on weekends and are glad to get back to work on Monday so they can rest.

Josiah was a boy when he became king of Israel. His dad was a bad king so were most of his uncles. They allowed so much evil in the land that God was not pleased with them. He sent prophet after prophet but they would not listen. The priesthood had also failed to proclaim God's word. In fact when you read the history of the kings you find there would be one bad king after the other and often when that king died it will read how evil he was. Or the next king's reign would begin saying he was more evil then the king before him.

Under Josiah, though, when he came of age, and God's word was read to him he tore his robes and realized the people he was ruling had lost their way. It was time for them to hear God's lost words in order for transformed lives to happen and that *"Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because our father's have not obeyed the words of this book. They have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."*

Tears began to flow as the people began to sense the power of God's Word in their hearts. Right then and there a revival broke out and God's people were renewed in their spirits as they tore down all the altars where other gods were worshipped, and they returned to the one true God and they hungered to hear more of God's Word, for God's people. At the end of his reign it was written of Josiah, *"Neither before, nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the law of Moses."*

Revival! It's a shot in the. It's getting back to square one in our spiritual lives. Sometimes we drift away from our walk with God. Other things, some of them good, often distract us from walking with God as closely as we once did. It just happens. That mean devil or one of his warriors tries to get our attention and lead us down the wrong path. We drift away and sometimes we lose our focus, our enthusiasm. We say we will start going to church again as soon as things get less hectic. Now is the time for revival to recapture that flame, to get back to believing in God's word, trusting in him for all things. It's time to turn that little flicker of hope into a full flame lighting the world for Jesus Christ. It is time to recapture that first Easter morning feeling, "He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and talks with me along lives narrow way. You ask me how I know he lives. He lives within my heart." Now that's what I'm talking about!

There are two choruses' that remind us about revivals. One is, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine." The other one is, "It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it, you spread his love to everyone, and you want to pass it on."

Each Sunday is a renewal service of hope for those who enter the church. The hymns, the music Linda plays before and after, the message, the greeting of each other, the praying, even the offering becomes a time of renewal. We enter the gates to be in the very presence of God, giving thanks for his blessings, seeking forgiveness for our sins, looking for wisdom and courage to face our problems and the next day's situations. And if we sit and concentrate, in the stillness of maybe just a moment, God will speak to you his words for the day. We enter seeking something from God. Following the service God asks did we get what we came for? Hopefully we are paying attention to God.

“Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us. Melt us, mold us, use us, Spirit of the living God, fall a fresh on us,” amen!