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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

Revive Us
Again

Revive Us Again



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Our sincere thanks to Dr. David Shumate for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? (Ps. 85:6)

Throughout the history of the Church, individuals and groups of believers have longed and prayed for the moving of God, and God in His grace and His timing has responded. Today we tend to use the word “revival” in various ways. One use is to refer to special evangelistic meetings in which we desire to see God work in power to convert the lost. However, a study of both Scripture and history teaches us that, although often accompanied by an influx of new believers, the essence of revival is the special moving of God, bringing about spiritual renewal of His people. It is this core element that must animate our prayer for revival today.

This edition of *FrontLine* is not intended to give anything approaching a comprehensive theology of revival. Instead, it is designed to whet our appetites by showing us windows into revival from Scripture, history, and personal experience. It is our hope and prayer that these articles will be a blessed challenge to our hearts and to our heads. First, we are blessed by two articles adapted from sermons preached by Mark Minnick. In the first he unfolds for us Christ’s message to the church at Laodicea, pointing out the need for and the essence of revival in a New Testament local church. In the companion article, he shows the need in our day for a spiritual renewal and calls us to pray that God would grant it to us. We are also blessed by a powerful personal application of these truths by Karen Jones. Of the conditions for revival, one of the most important is that we give up bitterness and genuinely forgive others. In powerful and insightful terms, Karen relates her testimony as to how God taught her this fundamental truth and how He has blessed her as a result.

Then we shift gears a little and focus on some theological questions regarding revival. One of these questions is whether the revival in Old Testament Israel can serve in any way as a model for the New Testament Church. In this regard, my article looks at Psalm 85. I argue that when the psalm says, “Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our

land” (v. 10), it is talking about spiritual renewal as well as restored national blessing. Although the Land Promise is unique to the Nation of Israel, the spiritual revival that was intimately connected with Israel’s enjoyment of the land is applicable to the believers’ lives and ministry today. Therefore, we can and should pray with the Old Testament saint that God would revive us and that His glory would be seen in us.

Next, we travel to the Gospels, the axle around which the whole Bible revolves. There Nathan Mestler shows that the Beatitudes encompass spiritual attitudes that apply not only to the Jewish audience whom Christ was addressing but also to believers today, who share in the blessings of the promised New Covenant. The truths and the promises found in the Beatitudes are powerful motivation for revival in any age. Finally, Jason Armstrong gives an important historical and theological perspective on revival, pointing out the debt that Bible believers today owe to the First Great Awakening of the 1730s. We might take for granted the biblical teaching that at the point when someone trusts Christ, he or she is born again and can know it. However, this was a truth that was not widely accepted in the English-speaking world before that great revival, and it was something that those believers and preachers of spiritual revival had to contend for.

Revival, like all spiritual work, depends upon the grace and power of God. We cannot manufacture it; God must send it by His Spirit. However, this should not deter us but should motivate us to pray for His powerful intervention in our lives and ministries. While we cannot dictate the times or the details of this moving of God among His children, we must continue to lay the wood upon the altar and remain there ourselves in dedication and trust to the Lord. Then we must pray earnestly that God would send spiritual fire from heaven and glorify His Name among us once again. May the Lord make it so for Jesus’ sake.

—David Shumate



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We were surprised—but so very thankful—to have received this issue [July/August]! We started reading an article tonight but didn't get to finish it. Hopefully, little by little, we'll grow from it. *FrontLine* is indeed such a wonderful read! Thank you again!

*Daryl Kopp
Greenville, SC*



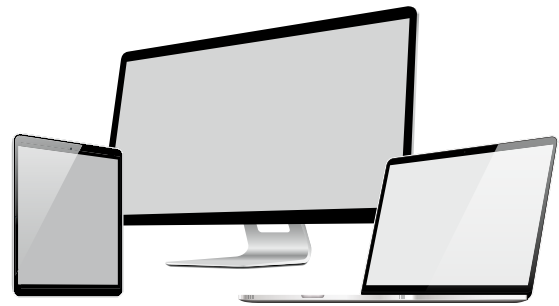
Dr. Bennie Moran, FBFI board member and long-time pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Morgantown, West Virginia, went home to be with the Lord on August 7, 2021. "Bennie," as he was lovingly known to so many, had a fruitful ministry of evangelism and was a great encouragement to preachers. He was converted under the ministry of Dr. Bill Hall.

Bob and Tammy Condict have served together at Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland, since 1991. God has now directed their path to serve the Heartland Baptist Church in Marysville, Ohio.



After thirty years as pastor at Central Baptist Church in Dothan, Alabama, **Stephen Russell** began serving in August at Appalachian Bible College in Mount

Hope, West Virginia. He directs Mount Olive Bible College, a four-year BA program offering in-person instruction at Mount Olive Correctional Center, West Virginia's maximum-security prison. Successful graduates usually serve as peer mentors as long as they remain in the correctional system. His wife, Renee, is serving part-time on the ABC business office staff.



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Christ's Call for Revival in the Local Church

If you wanted to understand what revival means to a local church, where in your Bible would you look? The Old Testament speaks frequently of revivals (in the sense of “reformations”) throughout Israel’s history. The Psalms express the heart cry of God’s servants to be revived by God’s Spirit. And the early chapters of the Book of Acts show us that the New Testament Church was born in a state of what many would term “revival.” But you could not

find a more perfect passage for understanding the application of the whole concept of revival to a local church than in Christ’s message to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14–22.

This is not just one of many passages having a bearing on this subject. This is one of *the* passages. One reason for that is because it is addressed to an actual church made up of true Christians. Jesus Christ regards them as genuine Christians when He

says to them in verse 19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” Chastening is something that God does only for His children (Heb. 12). Of course, there may have been some lost people in that assembly, just as there are in nearly all of our own churches, but the Lord speaks to this church as if most of its members are truly regenerated.

The second reason that this passage is so helpful for us is because we know some of the background of the Laodicean church. Paul says in Colossians 2 that he agonized over this church (v. 1). In the fourth chapter he says that its senior minister, Epaphras, also agonized for them in prayer (v. 12). Thus we know that the believers in Laodicea had been blessed with an unusual measure of pastoral and apostolic care.

John wrote Revelation about thirty to thirty-five years later. We may naturally wonder whether the Laodicean church, given its privileged founding and early growth, had made strong spiritual advances by that time. The Lord gives His evaluation. In short, it was that this church, though alive, needed to be revived.

Things to Consider

As we think about this passage, we should consider two things. First, how would you know that a church needs reviving? What is apparent from this letter is that these people did not know this. Their estimation of themselves was much different from Christ’s. The Lord uses the analogy of temperature: “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” We’ve all done something like that with tepid coffee or lukewarm water from a hose, so we understand the point of the Lord’s dramatic language—the state of this church was unpleasant to Him.

Of what specifically is the Lord measuring the temperature? The Lord says that He knows their works, but he does not specifically name anything that is missing in their activities. Ministry, check. Services, check. Outreach, check. We preach, we teach, we sing, we pray, check. However, by His analogy, the Lord was evidently saying that none of their works were notable.

Certainly, the most conspicuous thing about revival is new activity. There is almost a geyser-like outburst of activity,

particularly in confession of sin, prayer, and evangelism. But conditions have roots. When you are thinking about revival and desiring it and analyzing whether it is taking place, your temptation is to measure revival by new activity, but that is not actually how to gauge whether it is happening. You must look at the roots to find out if the new activity is genuine or whether somebody has just been beating up a storm of excitement. If your root is changed, the activity will be there, but activity can be there apart from genuine revival.

You can get down to the heart of things if you look at the church’s self-assessment in verse 17, and then how the Lord responds to it. The language that the Laodiceans use relates to the culture in which they lived. They refer to themselves as rich and increased in goods. But the Lord says that they need clothing, that they need eye-salve. That was something that these people understood because Laodicea was the financial center of their district. It also had a garment industry because they raised sheep with a highly desired wool. A medical school in Laodicea had developed a compound for the treatment of eye diseases. The Lord uses language that reflects all of this: He uses analogies that they would understand.

The Lord quotes them as saying, “We’re rich, and we don’t need anything.” But Jesus says to them, “You don’t know that you can’t see, and that you are poor and wretched and naked.” The frightening thing about that is how far removed a church’s actual condition can be from its own estimation of itself. They would have described themselves as hot. Would you describe yourself or your church as cold or hot or somewhere in between? We might say things like, “There’s a lot of energy around here, our church is really booming, there’s a lot going on, I just feel it in the atmosphere,” but our assessments can be drastically different from the actual condition.

Case Study: John Newton

John Newton, an English pastor and hymn writer, was a slave-ship captain when he experienced a dramatic conversion. But he stayed in the slave trade for six more years. If you read his journals from those years, you discover that he is fervent in spirit. He spends hours a day in intensive Bible study and prayer. He writes about his prayer life and his love

Our Lord’s Message of Revival to His Church

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 3:14–22

of God. But a deck below, right underneath his feet, are hundreds of chained human beings, and he does not see it as being any contradiction.

After he finally abandoned the slave trade, Newton said that although it had been very disagreeable to him, there were three factors that blinded him to it. These were “custom” (he was used to it), “example” (a lot of other people did it), and “interest” (by which he meant that it was his living). He said that custom, example, and interest had blinded his eyes. These are the same factors that often explain how we and our churches can be in a condition that is so contradictory to our Bible, though describing ourselves as these Laodiceans did.

We must let the Lord tell the truth about us. You must believe in your heart that the Bible is right. That it is no exaggeration. That’s why this letter begins the way it does, with the Lord’s asserting Himself to be “the faithful and true witness.” We have to believe that what Christ tells us is so.

Christ gives profound counsel in verses 18 through 20. “I counsel thee,” says the Lord. What do You counsel me? “To buy of me” (v. 18). “I stand at the door. . . . Open the door” (v. 20). You can summarize Christ’s counsel as being that He, Himself, is the counsel. He is not just *giving* counsel. He *is* the counsel, its very content. “Come straight to me! Open the door to me!”

We will know that we are really living at an animated, enlarged, empowered level when Christ is truly at the center again. That is the distilled essence of revival. I am a Christian, and I’m in need, and I sense it. What is the answer? Christ! Christ Himself! If you feel that your church needs reviving, the answer is to go straight back to the Lord. New programs excite, but that is not revival. Christ is. If you are disappointed or defeated, or if the fires are burning low, you have got to go back to the Lord.

Not a Formula

This is something that cannot be forced by seizing upon a formula. It is something that God Himself does to you when

you open your heart to it. And typically your heart opens because you get so absolutely desperate that you can barely keep going. You realize that you cannot be satisfied another day without Christ. Yet all along you thought that you were right with Him. But that is what Jesus was revealing to the Laodiceans: “Your eyes are not opened, and you really do not know.”

There is no formula for revival. But if you ever experience it, it is sweeter than honey, and you would not exchange it for a bag of gold. When it happens, you want to throw the windows up and shout, “Hallelujah!” You would not take anything for the closer, more intimate experience of Christ in your soul. That is the heart-satisfying fruit of real revival.

In verse 20 the Lord says, in effect, “If you open your heart, I will come in, and I will sit down and eat with you.” In the New Testament culture, eating together was the closest possible communion. People physically reclined so closely to one another that they leaned back upon each other and ate out of a common plate. When the Lord promises to eat with you, He’s saying to you that His fellowship with you is going to be close like that: “I will be intimate with you like that.”

Jesus is not hesitant about this. He is not saying that once you accumulate enough prayer time, then He will come in. He says that He is there at your door and that He is knocking. The difficult part is opening. But once you do, He will come in. Surely, this would be the reviving of miserable, poor, blind and naked Christians.

FrontLine editors have adapted this article from a message preached by Mark Minnick on February 14, 2018. The entire message is available for free at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=21418173206>.

Dr. Mark Minnick pastors Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



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The Vital Necessity of the Spirit's Effectual Working

I was recently preparing to pray for some longstanding prayer requests of one of our faithful missionaries. Her petitions were for the salvation of several people who have worked for her for many years. I thought to myself, "How can someone work so closely with this lady for so long, hearing the messages she teaches to women and children, and still not come to Christ?"

The answer is that salvation is not a human activity, but the Holy Spirit's.

Convincing, Enlightening, Renewing

In Ezekiel 36 God promises a restoration to Israel, not for her own sake, but for the sake of His own holy name. God states this in verses 26 and 27:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Verse 27 refers to the work of God's Spirit in the salvation of many in Israel. This same effectual work is vital for the conversion of anyone, whether on a mission field or here at home. Nothing can substitute for it; no human fervency, no intellectual clarity, no programs—not even preaching. The Spirit of God must work, or no one will come to Christ. Every sinner must be effectually called by the Holy Spirit.

Effectual calling is God's working in such a way, through the human communication of the gospel, that sinners respond willingly with saving faith. God does not override a person's will; the work of the Spirit makes him willing. The Holy Spirit works faith in us by convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills.

Look at those three points again. *Convincing us*, because, as Jesus said, those that are whole do not need a physician. Even though they experience the horrible consequences of sin, most lost people do not relate that misery to their rejection of God. The Spirit of God is the one who must convince them that sin and misery are related. He must then *enlighten their minds* so that they realize that Christ is the only remedy. He must then *renew their wills* so that they willingly embrace Christ.

Apart from this divine work no one will come to Christ. I call our attention to this because it is the desperate need everywhere—not only for converting the lost but also for reviving Christians and churches in sanctification and devotion.

Symptoms of the Need

There are many telltale symptoms of this crying need. The abandonment of prayer meetings, or the substitution of other activities for prayer, is a symptom of a low level of spiritual life in an assembly. Many pastors are concerned because their people are not willing to gather for prayer.

Another symptom is the shortage of the men for the ministry. Where are the brethren whom God is calling to refill the pulpits of this land or to do the work of foreign missions? The fact is, there is a great dearth of them, and it is not among just the conservative, fundamentalist branch of the church here in America. It is also true in other groups that are more broadly evangelical, even those that are conservatively evangelical.

Yet another symptom is the enfeeblement of the contemporary pulpit. If you observe services online and notice the demeanor of men in the pulpit, in many cases the message has the quality of an informative talk or an undisturbing counseling session. There is seldom any of the rebuke, reproof, correction, or insistent admonition that characterizes a strong pulpit.

The decline in worship is another symptom. Much worship today emphasizes the horizontal connection between the worshippers or bridge building to the world rather than the vertical pursuit of an encounter with a holy God. And there is the deliberate stylizing of the worship to look and sound like contemporary, popular entertainers. This is the sign

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of a low spiritual life and a defective understanding of Scripture.

Then there is a much-lowered standard of personal holiness. Churches today are like fields that are covered with hundreds of thousands of tares. When the average Christian, and even the average pastor, believes that it is necessary to live only a few notches higher than the world, it is very difficult to detect who is a genuine Christian and who is not. Of course, our benchmark is not external behavior alone, but sound theology coupled with an insatiable appetite for personal piety produces Christians who are otherworldly. They genuinely view

themselves more and more as strangers and pilgrims in this world. They are increasingly uncomfortable with Vanity Fair. A true Christian has been made partaker of the divine nature and seeks holiness. It is his instinct.

This is what Ezekiel 36:27 refers to; God says, "I will put my [S]pirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." When Christian people do not seem to be possessed by God and His ways but are instead oriented toward the fallen world, this is a conspicuous, unmistakable evidence that the Spirit of God has withdrawn . . . or that many of these professing believers are not regenerated after all.

This is the point—we must pray for the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, families, churches, and across the world. This is the work described in 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5. Paul gives one of the finest descriptions to be found in the Word of God for what happens when the Spirit works in evangelism. He says that when he was ministering to them, he knew God's *election* of them (v. 4). What gave Paul this assurance? It was that the gospel did not come to them in word only. How much preaching is there today that is word only? What is needed is what Paul witnessed. The gospel came to these Thessalonians in *power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance* (v. 5). When the Holy Spirit works effectually, you have full conviction of the truth. Lost people are persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ.

Similarly, 1 Corinthians 2:11–14 explains the absolute necessity of the Spirit of God's illumination of a sinner's heart. Again, in Philippians 2:12–13 Paul explains that it is God who energizes in us both the "to-be-willing" and the "to-be-doing" of His pleasure. Just as the Spirit of God renews the will of lost people so that they're persuaded and enabled to embrace Christ, so it is God who energizes Christian people so that they are made willing to do what has been preached to them. That is a missing element in much of Christianity today as evidenced by some of the telltale symptoms mentioned earlier.

This is not the first time that there has been this condition in the churches. Previous instances instruct us that we should never, ever be complacent about it. Least of all should we think to ourselves, "There's nothing that we can do since it is God's work." Scripture shows us that we are obligated to seek for the renewing of God's mighty acts among us.

Elijah is held up to us as an example of a man who moved God with his prayers. And thank the Lord, there are many people have been praying earnestly for years that God would intervene at this present time; that He would do something to revive His church.

Our Obligations

That kind of praying has been done before. Previous to the Second Great Awakening a group of Baptist pastors in England resolved that their churches would gather for weekly prayer “to bewail the low estate of religion, and to earnestly implore a revival of our churches and of the general cause of our redeemer. For that end, to wrestle with God for the effusion of His Holy Spirit, which alone can produce the blessed effect.” This became known as the Prayer Call of 1784. And it was answered.

When we see such examples from history, we ought not dismiss them as being irrelevant to us. The works of God are great and should be studied by Christian people to encourage us. It is the same God today that answered prayer then. The Prayer Call continues, “Who can tell what the consequences of such a united effort in prayer may be?” The Spirit of God moves as He wills, but when He does move, it will be obvious. That movement of the Spirit is what Paul was describing when it came to his preaching in Thessalonica. And it resulted in what historians have come to refer to as the Second Great Awakening.

We must consciously, intentionally, and knowingly beseech God for the work of His Spirit. First, in our own hearts. Pray that God would use His word and that we would not be satisfied until we experience a renewal of our affections, a return of our devotion and an intense interest in the things of the Lord; the kind of interest that makes all other things grow strangely dim because we are truly Spirit filled. When the Spirit of God does that in us and in our churches, there will be more and more people who will truly come to new life in Jesus Christ.

FrontLine editors have adapted this article from a message preached by Mark Minnick on May 26, 2021. You can hear the entire message at <https://www.mountcalvarybaptist.org/pages/sermons/detail/sermon/7863>.

Dr. Mark Minnick pastors Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



Preparing Your Heart for Personal Revival: Seven Practical Suggestions

Revival is the work of the Holy Spirit and cannot be manufactured. However, we should be arranging wood upon the altar as we wait on the Lord to send revival fires. Here are seven practical suggestions for God's people.

1 Accept by faith the teaching of Romans chapters 6 through 8.

Romans 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Your being crucified with Christ has to do with your position or state before God. His purpose is that the body of sin might be done away with, so that you may no longer be a slave to sin. The “body of sin” refers to the phenomenon of your body being dominated or ruled by sin. You were crucified with Christ so that this phenomenon could be done away with. In yourself you have no possibility of being free from sin. But God dealt sin a knockout blow so that you can be free. The dominating power of sin in your life has ended. There is a real, supernatural experience in that takes place when you come to Christ. While it is still possible for you yield your members to sin, you do not need to submit to it. You are under no ruling power to do so.

Romans 7:18a: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” There is a part of you, your unredeemable humanity, that has no good in it. That truth is actually liberating. Romans 8:7 says that the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God and cannot be. You cannot discipline it into changing; you cannot educate it into changing. This explains why Galatians 5 says that the Spirit and the flesh unendingly lust against each other. It also explains why at this point in your Christian life you are still struggling with the same things. However, that is not the whole story anymore. You now have Christ living in you, and by His Spirit, you can love and serve Him.

2 Every day, deliberately and formally present yourself to the Lord for the day.

It should be formal, like a couple on a platform getting married and reciting their vows. Yield yourself for the day (even before rolling out of bed). In a hymn by Thomas Ken, “Awake My Soul,” one stanza says, “Direct, control, suggest this day All I design or do or say, That all my powers With all their might In thy sole glory may unite.” Experiment with praying that every morning.

3 Continually be pursuing a satisfying rhythm of worship.

It begins with the first day of the week. Sunday is not part of the weekend. Sunday is the first day of a new week. The way that the Scripture speaks of it is that it is the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a day of recalibration; like resetting your compass.

4 Make it a habit throughout the day to distinguish between the mind of your flesh and the mind of the Spirit.

Regularly ask yourself, “Would the mind of the Spirit have the attitude that I have, the expression on my face, or the thoughts I have?”

5 Consciously turn to Christ for victory.

Say to Him, “Lord, I really need You to win this battle for me. I cannot do this. I cannot stand. I will fall, unless You strengthen me and win for me.”

6 Periodically set aside time that is devoted to nothing but your spiritual life and relationship with God.

Take your Bible, a good book, a journal, and a picnic lunch and get away somewhere with God. Just you and the Lord for part of a day.

7 Consciously accept the grace of God.

Let yourself accept it. As beaten-up as you may feel, as carnal as you may feel, accept God's grace.

Revival and the Prodigal

Psalm 16:11 reveals the necessity of revival. Only with the Father can we have life, and when we wander, we lose our relationship with Him and His joy. Let me share how, like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), I came to myself and experienced the Lord's revival and restoration.

My Daddy

Like everyone's, my path began with my parents. My father married my mother after he finished a naval career that saw him spend the entirety of World War II as a Japanese POW. My mother, a nurse-anesthetist with a serious heart condition, met him in Florida. A no-nonsense woman, my mother did not panic when I played in the arsenic used in my father's orange groves. She washed me off, and that was that. I hazily remember nearly drowning in Lake Griffin, and only the Lord kept me from being bitten by water moccasins in the backyard. God absolutely wanted me to be born and survive my childhood!

At age five, I clearly remember my mother telling me my daddy had died.

Life went on as it does, but with growing friction between my exacting mother and me. We were nothing alike. I mean, how could someone not laugh uproariously at the *Gone with the Wind* skit with the dress Carol Burnett's Scarlett "saw in the window"? My father and I had, but my mother had not. My mother didn't dislike animals, but I'm the person who goes to a party and makes friends with the dog. (Except for that ferocious chihuahua in North Carolina.) My mother, however, was never afraid of anything.

We were opposites emotionally as well. I am a romantic; she was a realist. I am a dreamer; she was a project manager. I am definitely a "feelings" person; she was facts, facts, facts. Even today, I don't know if she couldn't or wouldn't understand me.

My next clear memory is raising my hand to stay after Sunday school and accept Christ. Eventually my mother got saved and began attending church rather than just dropping me off. When she thought I needed more challenging in school, we moved for me to attend sixth grade at Bob Jones Elementary School in Greenville, South Carolina. I loved it.

My life, however good at times, was marked by chronic anger, bitter words, and crippling hurt at home. Criticism that began, "You never," or, "You always," wounded deeply. Actions that were deliberately harsh made me despise her.

We were both good at provoking the other to anger. She was not a skillful parent, and I was not an obedient child. I used to wish she would remarry so that there would be a referee in the house. But she didn't. And I was left feeling unloved, wishing desperately that my father had lived.

Though I have sobbed over my family life, my testimony is not a sob story. The Lord graciously designed my path to teach me lessons I needed later. I finally figured that if "God will supply all [my] need in Christ Jesus," I must not have needed my father. I don't understand why my father died, but I believe God's Word even though fatherlessness made staying on God's path harder. My mother rarely talked about my father, but when I was in college God had her drop a tidbit that I cherish: "Your father asked me to promise to take you to Sunday school." My daddy loved me enough to care about my spiritual life, and my mother rigidly kept her word. Though painful, my formative years set my feet on the path to God's goodness.

My Friend

My time in school and on faculty at Bob Jones Academy and University meant that I developed a love of all things British, which led to my friendship with Mona Dunkel. We both needed a friend, and the Lord knit our hearts together for fifteen years, eleven of those as housemates. We loved to travel, but the Lord designed an unplanned path. She developed cancer. Anxious months later, after the Lord gave us a clear scan, we took one more trip.

But.

Her cancer returned and couldn't be cured. Life seesawed again; this time the side effects were horrific. Apparently, she was allergic to the drugs that extended her life. Eventually treatment for the side effects became as dangerous as the cancer. Mona found herself on the path of endurance. As did I. We taught. We laughed at the cats. At appointments I took notes. She lost her significant edge in wordplay. But she carried on. No stopping by the wayside to feel sorry for herself. No loss of testimony. Just quiet suffering and patient waiting.

I, however, yelled at God.

My Mother

The last year was terrible. Separated from Mona for three months, I cared for my mother on hospice. The Lord was kind: Mona was well enough to be alone. Then our mothers died

Daughter

My Lord

twelve hours apart in September. Three months later I had to have Mona's cat euthanized. I accused God of being unfair. Why couldn't Mona have the comfort of her cat until the end? In July, Mona died. The path hurt my feet and tore my heart.

But I learned that I could not have taken care of Mona without having the mother God gave me. The one who always faced facts about her own illness. The one whose job made hospitals familiar to me. The one who taught me not to fear the unknown. God knew that I needed realism about Mona's illness. I couldn't have been a perky Pollyanna about her being cured and really help her. She had a finite amount of time, and I knew she wanted to spend it well. Reality checks have a place in illness, and I found myself thankful for my "facts, not feelings" mother. I needed to be my mother's daughter to face my reality as well. My best friend was going to die. And a part of me was going to die too.

The Lord's right hand dispenses blessings. But sometimes the blessing feels like a curse. After three years of caregiving, I knew what Paul meant about being completely spent for those he loved in the faith. But Mona's death was part of "all things work together for good," and a crisis revealed I was off the path.

I lashed out at a good friend.

Horried and shocked, I went to a counselor. At our first meeting, she said to me, "The Lord delights in you, Karen." I decided to be a Berean and see if the Lord really did. I absolutely love research, but I couldn't find proof of God's delighting in me. He delighted in Israel, but that wasn't the same. Then I found a verse that says believing Gentiles are also the children of Abraham. In my state of mind, that was good enough. And, according to Jude, I was positively beloved. I meditated on those facts, good food for the journey back to the path.

I pulled together other thoughts. God knew me *before* I was in my mother's womb. (Yes, that mother.) From before the foundation of the world, He loved me. To my heart that meant that while He was creating Adam and Eve, He was anticipating my being created too. Through millennia, God eagerly waited for me to be born, knowing that I would accept Him and then be with Him forever. And He wants His children with Him. That fact changes the face of grief and suffering. He won't leave us here a minute longer than necessary for His divine purpose. If I am still here, God has a powerful reason because He has been waiting since forever for me to be with Him. I needed to know these things, but I needed something more.

I needed to forgive my mother.

As a prodigal, I learned that bitterness is a hard husk to chew. Its lack of nutrition had stunted my growth as God's child. So I asked the Lord to help me remember every way my mother had hurt me. Then I asked Him to help me forgive her. And when I did, a great burden, like Christian's in *Pilgrim's Progress*, rolled off my back. I was ecstatic! Like someone newly saved, I told everyone. Mona's death had opened a wound that needed healing from the inside out.

Death has turned out to be the greatest tool of God in my life. Because my father died of cancer, I got saved. Because Mona died, I forgave my mother. I also gained some understanding of Dr. Bob Jones III's loss of his wife, Beneth. Losing someone you have lived with for years in close relationship is not like losing a parent or sibling. Empty houses and crippling loneliness do not come with those losses. Neither does feeling like an outsider in a world of already-established relationships. Beneth was my "Most Admired Person on Campus." She and Dr. Bob had become my friends through my service on the Museum and Gallery board. When I lost Mona, I determined not to waste anything I had learned. So I shared with Dr. Bob what I had learned about grief. And God could put us on the path of marriage because I was properly related to Him again. Because of revival, I have a new life and a relationship that reflects God's love for me. Like the Prodigal-come-home, I even received a ring for my finger!

The Prodigal Son never had the chance to finish his speech, for his father, delighting in him, dressed him in the best robe and ordered the fatted calf killed. We have never been worthy to be called God's children, but He loved us and gave Himself for us so that we could be. I've learned that when we forgive as He has forgiven us, He revives our hearts and bestows blessings on us we could never imagine.


I wonder if the elder brother ever learned that.

Karen Rowe Jones, long-time member of the English department at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, misses teaching literature, especially that of the British Isles. She is, however, enjoying meeting many longtime friends of Dr. Bob Jones III, chancellor of the University and her new husband, as she ministers with him around the country and hopefully around the world in the future. She is grateful for the Lord's patience with and everlasting goodness to her.



Psalm 85

Revive Us Again



As we think about the need for personal and corporate renewal among God's people today, Psalm 85 would seem to be a model prayer for us. It even says directly, "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (v. 6). However, we also see in this psalm elements that are unique to Old Testament Israel. While we know that the Old Testament Scripture is profitable for us (2 Tim. 3:16), we need to make sure to both interpret it correctly (2 Tim. 2:15) and to apply it properly (1 Tim. 1:7). Therefore, as we look at this wonderful psalm, we are going to try to answer two questions. Was it truly a cry for spiritual revival in Israel? And, if so, does it provide a model for believers today?

Two Key Themes in the Psalm: Forgiveness of Sin and Blessings on the Land

Even a cursory look at the psalm reveals the importance of the forgiveness of sin and restoration to God's favor. We can see this as the psalmist both thanks Jehovah for His past forgiveness (vv. 2–3) and appeals to Him to again pardon His people (vv. 4–5). Multiple words and expressions are used to describe the people's sin ("iniquity," v. 2; "sin," v. 2; "folly," v. 8) and God's anger ("wrath," v. 3; "[fierce] anger," v. 3; "anger," v. 4; "be angry," v. 5; "draw out . . . anger," v. 5). Alongside this ominous picture, however, we see the hope of forgiveness, which is emphasized in various ways. In the past, God showed favor to His land and restored the fortunes of Israel (v. 1). He also forgave their iniquity and covered their sin (v. 2). He withdrew His wrath and turned back the execution of His fierce anger (v. 3). Likewise, the psalmist appeals to the Lord at the present time to cause His anger to cease and not allow it to continue forever (vv. 4–5) but instead to revive His people (v. 6), showing them loyal love ("mercy") and deliverance ("salvation") (v. 7).

A notable way for expressing God's restoration of His people is with the Hebrew verb *shub*, which means "to change direction," "return," or "bring back." *Shub* is the most common verb in the psalm, occurring four times (vv. 1, 3, 4, 8).^{*} In three of the four instances it is the Lord who is doing the turning, whether reversing the fortunes of Israel (v. 1), turning back His anger from them (v. 3), or bringing them back to Himself (v. 4). It seems that the only "turning" that Israel initiates in this psalm is the possibility of its turning back to its foolish ways. This is not meant to deny the responsibility of Israel to repent, a truth that is taught frequently elsewhere (e.g., Isa. 55:7; Jer. 4:1; 35:15; Ezek. 13:22; Hos. 14:1). However, the emphasis of this psalm is on God's initiative in renewing His people. He must forgive them, and He must turn them back to Himself.

Another central theme in the psalm is blessing upon the land. The Hebrew word *eret* ("land" or "earth") occurs four times, which begins by noting that in the past God showed favor towards His land (v. 2). In the future, God's blessing will again be upon the land, causing it to be fruitful. In verse 9 the purpose of God's deliverance of His people is that glory may dwell in their land. Then verses 11–12 describe the renewed state in terms of rainfall and harvests. This emphasis on the land and material blessings is a regular theme running throughout Old Testament history.

The Spiritual Heart of Renewal in the Psalm

The physical and economic nature of the blessings described in Psalm 85 raise the question whether the psalmist was praying primarily for spiritual renewal and blessing or for national prosperity. An initial clue is the use of relational pronouns. Israel is called "God's people" three times (vv. 2, 6, 8). Not only is Israel His people, but He is her God. The Hebrew expression "God of our salvation," conveys the idea of "our God and Savior." These phrases are echoes of God's relationship promises contained in His covenant with Israel. At the beginning of Israel's national history, when Jehovah was preparing to rescue them from Egypt, nine times He said, "Let my people go" (Exod. 5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20–21; 9:1, 13;

10:3–4). Similarly, when God was preparing Israel to receive the terms of His covenant at Mount Sinai, He said to them, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure [i.e., "a personal and special possession"] unto me above all people" (Exod. 19:5). The couplet "your God" and "my people" is central to the giving of the Law (Lev. 26:12), to the rebuke of the prophets (Jer. 7:22–23); and to the millennial promises (Jer. 30:22; Ezek. 36:28).

The special covenant relationship between God and Israel undergirds the entire psalm. Words such as "salvation," "mercy" (loyal love and kindness), "truth" ("firmness," "reliability"), "peace" (*shalom*—"welfare"), "generations," and "righteousness" ("conformity to a standard") are loaded with covenant significance. In this context, the stated motivation for revival, that God's people may rejoice in Him, is a longing for renewed fellowship with God and not simply the enjoyment of His material blessings.

Psalm 85

¹ Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

² Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

³ Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

⁴ Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

⁵ Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

⁶ Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

⁷ Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

⁸ I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

⁹ Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹ Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

¹² Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

¹³ Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

The land, so emphasized in this psalm, is also part of this relationship. Note that it is both Jehovah's land (v. 1) and the people's land (v. 9). When the Lord instituted the covenant sign of circumcision with Abraham and his descendants, He said,

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:7–8).

Notice that just as the covenant is perpetual, so is the land promise. Notice also that the land connected to God's promise of a personal relationship with Abraham and His descendants. The Lord made it clear to Israel that the land belonged to Him (Deut. 32:43; Jer. 16:18) and that their possession and enjoyment of it depended upon their faithfulness to Him

(Deut. 6:18). Moreover, He purposed to grant or withhold the rain and the productivity of the land as a means of blessing and chastening His people (Deut. 11:10–17; 1 Kings 8:35–36).

The close connection between Israel's relationship with God and their enjoyment of the land is made clear in the latter part of Psalm 85. Verse 9 says, "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land." The "fear of the Lord" is a rich theological phrase that expresses the entirety of a life lived in a right relationship with God, respecting Him, loving Him, trusting Him, and obeying Him. The phrase "that glory may dwell [Heb. *shakan*] in our land" refers to the Shekinah Glory, God's manifest presence among His people (Exod. 29:43–46; 1 Sam. 4:21; Ps. 63:2; Ezek. 10:4, 18–23). Even the description of the blessings of God in Psalm 85 combine images of agricultural productivity with covenant relational concepts. Loyal kindness and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace kiss (v. 10). Faithfulness springs out of the earth like a harvest and the righteousness of God looks down from heaven in approval and blessing (v. 11).

A Key Application for the Church

The psalmist's expectation for God's blessing on the land has an important application for the New Testament Church. The land, although physically granted to Israel, is a picture of the spiritual life and ministry of the believers. As we have seen, the land was intertwined with the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenant with God. Believers are participants in the New Covenant (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:6–12; 10:10–17; 12:22–24; 13:20–22). The author of Hebrews draws a parallel between the failure of Israel to enter the land through unbelief and the failure of nominal Christians to enter into the rest of salvation because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:7–4:2; Ps. 95:11; see also Exod. 33:14; Josh. 1:15; 2 Chr. 15:15). For Israel the land was also a place of military conflict. As both a parallel and a contrast, believers are engaged in a warfare, but that warfare is spiritual rather than physical (Rom. 7:23; 2 Cor. 10:3; Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12). God also made it clear to Israel that the land would be an instrument by which He both blessed and corrected them (Deut. 11:10–17). In a similar way, God promises both blessing and discipline for His children (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 12:5–11; 1 Cor. 11:32). Therefore, it is an appropriate application of this psalm to call out to God to spiritually prosper His Church, just as the psalmist prayed that God would materially prosper His land.

Psalm 85 and Christian Revival

From the information above we can see that, although material blessing is an important part of Psalm 85, it both reflects and depends upon the greater spiritual blessing of a living relationship with the Lord. This helps us in applying the psalm to the Christian life.

The covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai, although based on His grace and being full of spiritual elements, was a national covenant. It did not grant the individual salvation of anyone who was not born again (John 3:3–10). By contrast genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have been saved from wrath through Him (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9), which God often poured out upon the unfaithful in Israel. People in all ages have been saved only by grace through faith (see Rom. 4:1–8; Eph. 2:8–9). However, before the coming of Christ, even the faithful in Israel were under the weight of the Law (Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:1), not as a means of salvation, but as a constant reminder of their sins (Rom. 3:20; Heb. 9:8–9; 10:1). New Testament believers have the wonderful privilege of being dead to the Law (Rom. 7:4), in the sense of its bondage and condemnation, and of resting in the promised redemption of God through Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11–14; 1 Pet. 1:10–12). Those who have come to Christ in faith know that they are secure (John 10:28) and that He will never reject them (John 6:37).

Although New Testament saints need not fear God's anger in the same way that godly Israelites must have, the calls of Psalm 85 for God to turn away from His anger over sin still have important applications for us. First, like Israel, even faithful churches today contain people who are not truly born again (see 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Cor. 10:1–12; Rev. 2:14–15, 20–23; 3:1–4). To these the warning of God is a fearful thing (Heb. 10:26–29). Second, even true children of God can face His disciplining anger. God disciplines His children out of love (Heb. 12:5; Rev. 3:19), but this discipline can be severe, even leading to the physical death of believers (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16) and the organizational death of local churches

Continued on page 24

The Sermon on the Mount is without a doubt the most famous sermon of all time, and well it should be. Matthew includes the sermon to capture what Jesus was teaching and preaching about the Kingdom during this phase of His earthly ministry. In other words, Matthew 5–7 is a Holy Spirit-inspired encapsulation of what Jesus Christ taught about the great enterprise that God was bringing about! It would be hard to conceive of a body of words that could be of more import and more deserving of study than these three chapters. Yet the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is hardly a settled question even after two thousand years of Christian interpretation. At stake is how the sermon can and should be applied to the life of the believer today. Admittedly, the interpretation of the sermon is somewhat complex, but it is my contention that, when the sermon is understood nestled within the context of Matthew and within a broader biblical theology, what emerges is a stunning portrait of Spirit-enabled living.

The Kingdom: Now or Later?

Even a cursory reading of the Sermon on the Mount quickly establishes its central theme—the kingdom. This is the essential concern not just of this sermon but of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole. The kingdom theme is established early in the Gospel and winds its way through the entire book. Matthew summarized what Jesus was doing during this phase of His earthly ministry in Matthew 4:17 when he writes, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Hit the click down menu on the message in Matthew 4:17 and you get the Sermon on the Mount.

It is in fact the theme of the kingdom that causes the great struggle with the interpretation of the sermon. Your view of the kingdom is imported into the text and then shades how you read the mandate of the sermon. For instance, if you believe in a fully realized kingdom on earth right now, then the Sermon on the Mount is your marching orders for grand political action. President Franklin Roosevelt said, “I doubt if there is any problem in the world today—social, political or economic—that would not find happy solution if approached in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.”*

It is this same essential vision of the kingdom, loosed from any biblical mores, that explains the modern political left. Barack Obama cites the Sermon on the Mount as justification for advancing the LGBTQA agenda because he is reading the text through the lens of liberation theology, which views the kingdom as a present political struggle. Social justice is achieved by applying Jesus’ teaching about doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Once this kind of equality is achieved, the kingdom mandate is closer to fulfillment.

There are, of course, more conservative approaches (both theological and political) to the realized kingdom interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, but they still suffer from the fatal defect of locating the kingdom in the here and now, and they also locate the ethical vision of the Sermon as something that is achieved through political and communal action.

On the other end of the spectrum is the view that the kingdom is entirely in the future; therefore, the Sermon on the

A Portrait of Spirit-Enabled Living

Mount does not have any direct application to the believer today. According to this view, it may be useful to study, and we may gain some insight into the ethical values that will pervade the future kingdom, but the Christian today should not take any direct mandate from the Sermon on the Mount. It is for Israel, and it is about the future kingdom for Israel; it is not a church text. There is much to this view that I want to affirm. The kingdom indeed is not here now in a way that fulfills the Old Testament promises to Israel. There can be no kingdom without a king! There must be a literal and future fulfillment for these promises for Israel and the literal assumption of the Davidic throne by King Jesus before the Sermon on the Mount is fully realized. Jesus does, however, intend for the values of the kingdom to be lived out before the kingdom comes. Jesus anticipates the application of His sermon in a world of lawsuits, liars, and lust. The command to “go the extra mile” is in response to an order given by a Roman soldier. Additionally, while the original audience of the sermon was Jewish, the original recipient of the Gospel of Matthew was the church. The fact that the Sermon on the Mount is part of the inspired Word of God, entrusted to the church, would compel us to seek its application to our lives today.

A Present Spiritual Reality

I believe that the way through these two approaches is to understand the Sermon on the Mount within the context of biblical theology and particularly in its relationship to the New Covenant. The Old Testament promises a future forever kingdom, a future forever king, and a future forever relationship between God and Israel. The first of these promises is embodied in the land promise given to Abraham, a promise that is rehearsed all throughout the Old Testament. When Jesus says that the meek will inherit the “earth” (5:5), I think we would be better off translating that word “land.” I think that Jesus is talking to Jews in this verse about dirt they are standing on, not the globe. God will give the land of Israel to Israel. The second promise is given to David and fulfilled absolutely in Christ. Matthew had already established Jesus’ right to the throne in terms by lineage, but the Sermon on the Mount establishes His right to the throne by authority. The word “authority” is a big deal in Matthew. Matthew tells stories of dramatic demonstrations of Jesus’ authority. He has authority over the natural and supernatural realms in Matthew 4. He emphasizes this authority, making sure that the Pharisees knew that He has the authority to forgive sins (9:1–8) and that He can interpret how the Sabbath should be kept (12:1–14). Think of the authority being claimed in this sermon when Jesus boldly states, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,” quotes the Law, and then says, “But I say unto you. . . .” In fact, by the time Jesus concludes His sermon, the crowd is dumbfounded because “he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (7:29). I believe that in this sermon, Jesus, as the promised King of Israel, is authoritatively laying out the constitution of the kingdom.

It is this New-Covenant reality that brings the Sermon on the Mount in a direct way into the life of a Christian.

The Old Testament also promises a future forever relationship between God and His people. This promise is so beautifully detailed in Jeremiah 31:31–34. There is a time coming when God will be Israel’s God. The law of God will be inscribed on their hearts. Their sins will be forgiven, and their iniquities forgotten.

The Old Testament also details for us how this work will be accomplished in the hearts of Israel—it will be a work of the Spirit! In Ezekiel 36:27 God promises that He will put His Spirit into the hearts of His people, and then in Ezekiel 37 there is a striking image of the Spirit of God enlivening the nation of Israel. This is a promised and coming reality for the nation of Israel and is the biblical theological background to the Sermon on the Mount.

We see this New Covenant work of the Spirit all over the Sermon. The Beatitudes are not describing an external and rote obedience to the law, but a vital, internal, spiritual life. It is the poor in spirit and the pure in heart who are being spoken of. This is what Jesus means when He calls people to a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20)—an ounce of genuine internal righteousness outweighs a megaton of external self-righteousness. Jesus is writing the law on new tablets when He says that the absence of adultery is not enough; He requires the presence of purity. It is not enough not to lie; you must be a truth teller. It is insufficient to simply not murder; you must love your enemy and bless him. This is a spiritual work—a work accomplished by the Spirit.

It is this New-Covenant reality that brings the Sermon on the Mount in a direct way into the life of a Christian. The New Testament makes it clear that the New Covenant is being applied now to the church (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 12:22–24; 13:20–21). This is not about the church replacing or superseding Israel in God’s plan; it is about the church being included in God’s plan for Israel. The spiritual (the “of the Spirit”) realities of the New Covenant are here now for the Christian. We have our sins forgiven, we have the law of God written in our hearts, and we have the Spirit of God in us, enabling us to live for Him. This is exactly what God promised to do for Israel and these realities are ours now. The Sermon on the Mount is not laying out a plan for bold political action but describing the way that Spirit-filled believers in Christ ought to live. This is the life and ethic that Jesus anticipates for the nation of Israel when they are filled with the Spirit, and it is the life and ethic that Spirit-filled people ought to be pursuing today.

It is audacious of us to read the Sermon on the Mount and conclude that it could be fulfilled through our human effort and political action. We ought rather to read the Sermon on the Mount and then get on our knees and beg the Spirit of God to transform us from the inside out so that we can live a life worthy of the King who is coming!

Nathan Mestler serves as president of International Baptist College and Seminary.



* Franklin Roosevelt, *Greeting to the National Eucharist Congress*. Online by Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209231>.

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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

A Handful of Useful Titles on Revival

The very mention of the word “revival” is stirring to every earnest Christian. I believe that this is almost without exception. For in the heart of an earnest Christian the Spirit of God is able to energize without impediment His own greatest interests, among which none is greater than the vivifying (quickening, animating, invigorating) of that believer’s eternal life. *He that believeth on me . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit . . .)* (John 7:38–39a).

It is also the case that when earnest Christians are stirred about revival, they inevitably are keenly interested in hearing about it and reading about it. What is it? How does it begin? Where and when has it happened? Who has experienced it? Is there anything that we can do to bring it to ourselves?

I thought that it might be useful to suggest titles on the subject for those wishing for more information and inspiration than this one issue of *FrontLine* can provide. But I must give two clarifications before doing so.

First, the matter of definition is paramount. The authors I’ll suggest are not necessarily agreed in every particular about what constitutes revival, but all do understand it to be a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit for which Christians ought to plead and prepare, but which they can neither determine nor orchestrate.

Second, even an author who has a scriptural understanding may quote favorably the testimonies and opinions of those whose views are in some respects defective, or even contrary to his own. But this needn’t confuse us, provided that we ourselves stay tethered scripturally

and also that we allow for the fact that a man’s heart may be right even though his head may need further light.

Let me, then, begin with the matter of bibliographies.

“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits”
(2 Tim. 2:6)

Bibliography

Probably the world’s foremost student of the history of revival is Richard Owen Roberts of Wheaton, Illinois. His website (rortrust.org) states that he possesses over nine thousand volumes connected with the phenomenon of revival. In 1987 he self-published *Revival Literature: An Annotated Bibliography with Biographical and Historical Notes*. Its 575 pages contain over five thousand titles associated with revival. But the volume was expensive and is now out of print.

A friend and I visited Mr. Roberts in his bookshop in 1994. We enjoyed a brief time of fellowship with him about his books on revival before leaving with signed copies of what was then his newest release, *Revival* (1993), a small paperback of around 150 pages. The greatest value of this book, which thankfully is still in print, is that it contains a much more accessible bibliography of what Mr. Roberts considers to be some of the best 250 titles on the subject.

Roberts was a close friend and associate of J. Edwin Orr, whose writings on revival contain a mountain of valuable factual material, but whose openness to the Charismatic Movement should be kept in mind as one reads his accounts, particularly of twentieth-century religious phenomena.

Historical Survey

Earle Cairns, for many years chairman of the history department at Wheaton College, published a survey of revivals under the title *An Endless Line of Splendor* (Tyndale House, 1986). Employing alliteration, he writes of revival under four headings: “The Facts,” “The Fruits,” “The Faith,” and “The Forms.”

The first section, “The Facts,” is a historical survey covering about 250 years, beginning in seventeenth-

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century Germany and concluding with various awakenings in Asia just after the Second World War. This section takes up seven of the book's twelve chapters. Even so, to cover roughly four centuries in only a few hundred pages, Cairns was constrained to devote just a few paragraphs to whole periods and to give only thumbnail sketches of major participants. But that's what makes for the manageability of a survey, as well as its limitations.

Although recommending Cairns, I should in all fairness mention a few weaknesses with his work: It includes no footnotes or endnotes. It omits assessments of the significance of each revival era. It contains few anecdotes or insightful quotations. And although, like Roberts' works, it contains an extensive bibliography (of probably five hundred or so titles), it offers no annotations.

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Definition and Distinction

But what is revival? Surely this is the first and most important question to be answered. Two titles that are especially helpful are Iain Murray's *Revival and Revivalism* (Banner of Truth, 1994) and *Pentecost—Today?* (Banner of Truth, 1998).

Revival and Revivalism is a study of a single century in American evangelicalism (1750–1858), marked by both Spirit-induced revival and then human attempts to reproduce it (“revivalism”). Murray explains: *The understanding of the subject of revival has passed through several distinct phases in American history. In the first phase, from the 1620s to about 1858 (the year which marked the last general religious awakening in North America), revival was understood to refer to “some special seasons where God doth in a remarkable way revive religion among his people.” . . . From the time of the first settlers in New England, the phenomenon was regarded as a “surprising work of God,” to use the later phrase of Jonathan Edwards (xvii).*

But then, Murray believes, a new view of revival displaced the old in the latter half of the 1800s. *Seasons of revival became revival meetings. Instead of being “surprising” they might now be even announced in advance, and whereas no one in the previous century had known of ways to secure a revival, a system was now popularized by “revivalists” which came near to guaranteeing results (xviii).*

Murray's second work *Pentecost—Today?* is subtitled, *The Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival*. But Murray isn't so much concerned to exposit individual Scripture texts as he is to explore the broader scriptural subjects which influence one's perspective on revival. His chapters include “How Theology Affects Understanding of Revival,” “Our Responsibility and God's Sovereignty,” and “The Holy Spirit and Preaching.”

The final chapter, “Six Things Revival Will Bring,” is Murray's attempt to distinguish between results that are unmistakably the work of the Holy Spirit and those that are merely superficial appearances of such. He opens with a quotation from John Elias (a Welsh preacher widely used in the Welsh Methodist revival of the early 1800s): *O that there should appear an evident difference between his work and everything human.* Murray then offers the following evidences of a Spirit-given revival.

- Revival Restores Faith in the Word of God.
- Revival Restores Definiteness to the Meaning of “Christian.”
- Revival Advances the Gospel with Amazing Swiftmess.
- Revival Always Has Moral Impact upon Communities.
- Revival Changes Understanding of the Christian Ministry.
- Revival Will Change the Public Worship of the Churches.

As in all his works, Murray draws extensively from the lives, journals, sermons, and viewpoints of figures from the past, both those whose legacies are highly valued to this present day, as well as those whose reputations have proven questionable. Hundreds of historical anecdotes and insightful quotations fill each volume.

Regardless of whatever one's past studies on revival might have been, I would highly recommend that these two works be added and prayerfully considered.

Revivals in Scripture

That there are events recorded in the Bible which may be classified as “awakenings” or “renewals” is indisputable. In what senses they were “revivals” (as opposed to, for instance, “reformations”) is debatable. And there is also the further question of whether or not Pentecost should be considered a revival.

Unfortunately, there are few works on the subject of revivals in the Bible, and what there are generally fail to be sufficiently defining of the phenomenon. Walter Kaiser authored a work on Bible “revivals” entitled *Quest for Renewal: Personal Revival in the Old Testament* (Moody Press, 1986). In it he testifies that out of several thousand volumes on the topic of revival, he was able to locate only five (two very brief) that dealt with revivals in Scripture.

Kaiser's own work is commendable, although his understanding of revival is not entirely my own. He takes 2 Chronicles 7:14 to be the *greatest text on the subject*, and as supplying *most of the components of a definition* (p. 13). From that vantage point, he examines ten Old Testament characters who seem either to have experienced spiritual renewal themselves or to have been its agents in national reform. His examples stretch from Jacob ("It Is Time to Get Rid of Our Idols") to Elijah ("It Is Time to Let God Be God") and Jehoshaphat ("It Is Time to Pray to the Lord"), right through to Nehemiah ("It Is Time to Rejoice in the Lord"). These chapters provide initial, insightful analysis by a respected theologian for a substantive short series on personal renewal. And they are punctuated by pungent applications.

The price for refusing to be renewed by the Spirit of God is very high (p. 85).

Minimalistic goals are a weariness to God and a bother to mankind in general (p. 98).

There is indeed a theology of revivals that has yet to be tackled, it is to be hoped by our generation. But there is no place for the kind of armchair theology of revivalism that refused to put the discussion in the context of a working ecclesiology (p. 112).

We are responsible for the lessons taught to us by history (p. 133).

Because there are so few treatments of Bible renewals, I'll include here what amounts to only a brief chapter included within a book on the broader subject of the Holy Spirit (*The Beauty and Glory of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Joseph A. Pipa Jr. [Reformation Heritage, 2012]). The chapter, by David Murray, is entitled "The Old Testament Pentecost" and is a treatment of Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 6–7). Murray is concerned primarily with using this event to make the point that *spiritual revival is rooted in united prayer*. Happily, at least this one entire chapter of the whole volume is available for free online at Google Books.

General Treatments

One of the most encouraging works on revival is one of the briefest. *True Revivals and the Men God Uses*, by the nineteenth-century Scottish pastor and hymnwriter Andrew Bonar, is less than twenty pages. It was what then was called a "tract." Bonar gives a full half of it to describing briefly the core characteristics of men that God had used historically in awakening sinners and renewing the saved. His nine points are both sobering and invigorating. Let me give an encouraging portion of the fifth. In answer to the question, *What manner of men were they?*, Bonar concludes,

They were men of patience. They were not discouraged, though they had to labour long without seeing all the fruit they desired. They continued still to

sow. Day after day they pursued what, to the eye of the world, appeared a thankless and fruitless round of toil. . . . Attempts have been made to force on a revival by men who were impatient at the slow progress of the work in their hand; and seldom have these ended in anything but calamitous failure, or at best a momentary excitement which scorched and sterilized a soil from which a little more patient toil would have reaped an abundant harvest. There may be and there always ought to be the calmest patience in conjunction with the most intense longing for success. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

One of the most insightful and spiritually edifying treatments of the subject consists of a series of sermons preached by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the 1859 Welsh revival. These were published by Crossway in 1987 under the title *Revival*.

Having been a respected physician before surrendering to the call to preach, Dr. Lloyd-Jones carried with him throughout the entirety of his ministry a habitual instinct for diagnosis before any attempt at remedy. *It is a universal rule and principle that it is sheer madness and waste of energy to attempt any kind of treatment until we have first established an accurate diagnosis. Of course, it is a great relief to be doing things. . . . It is a great relief to have something to do. But it is not always very intelligent just to be doing something. There is this danger, of rushing into activity before we fully realize the nature of the problem by which we are confronted* (p. 11). Accordingly, one of the great strengths of this book is its attempt, chapter by chapter, to analyze, inspect, and understand the underlying causes and situations requiring revival, and only then to prescribe and urge certain efforts to prepare ourselves for the possibility that God might mercifully quicken His people on a large scale. In addition, Lloyd-Jones was a lifelong student of church history, and although the book doesn't feature historical anecdotes, it nevertheless draws constantly upon the past in order to elucidate our contemporary situation.

The really blessed thing about this particular series is that all of its sermons are not only in print, but also available for hearing (mljtrust.org/free-sermons/revival). What might be the quickening effects if a man were to shut himself up with his Bible and these sermons for three or four days?

Another work that ought to be considered is Brian Edwards' *Revival: A People Saturated with God* (Evangelical Press, 1990). I began to read this in 1994 and have been drawing upon it ever since. Edwards writes that his intention is *the creation of . . . heart-longing*, and I have found that he succeeds.

To cover our weakness and ineffectiveness, we have taken a number of alternative routes. Many hide behind the façade of excitement and activity, keeping congregations high on promises and

pretense. In addition, for two decades now we have been arranging ever more elaborate missions and conferences; they are very impressive, and the sheer weight of work and preparation takes our minds off the reality of our lack of success and the absence of the presence of God.

Spurgeon, the great preacher of the last century, told the story of a small church in the United States that decided to halt its decline in numbers by purchasing an impressive chandelier for its sanctuary. The first Sunday it was in place, the church building was packed with local people; the second Sunday only the regular few gathered. Everyone had seen the chandelier and it was not worth a second visit (p. 15).

What is the answer? Edwards writes in the vein of what has been the historical understanding: *Towards the end of a decade of local church revival in the 1830s, the Methodist Conference declared, "Some churches regard revivals of religion as gracious singularities in their history; we regard them as essential to our existence* (p. 227).

Before moving to another category of sources, I should mention a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon, preached during the 1859 revival in the British Isles. Based upon Psalm 44:1 (*We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*), it is entitled "The Story of God's Mighty Acts" (readable at spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-story-of-gods-mighty-acts/#flipbook). Its great value is its insistence that Christians must pay attention to the great works of God in history. Spurgeon expresses his dismay:

When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is, "Oh, that was a very long while ago. [But, said Spurgeon,] *the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise, [and the second should be that we would pray] that he would repeat like signs and wonders among us. . . . Dear friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we do but pray for a blessing.*

Specific Accounts

Among the many, many edifying histories of specific revivals, I'll limit my suggestions to just four.

The first simply cannot be ignored by anyone seeking to understand what we refer to as the First Great Awakening. It consists of three works by Jonathan Edwards, in which he relates what was experienced in the Connecticut River Valley in the 1730s and 1740s. The three titles, *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*,

and *An Account of the Revival of Religion in Northampton 1740–1742* are combined in *Jonathan Edwards on Revival* (Banner of Truth, 1984).

A Narrative of Surprising Conversions is particularly valuable, in that it was written as a letter to Isaac Watts and another British minister, John Guyse, in order to answer the inquiries as to what was taking place in the awakening in the colonies. Edwards states that he wrote *in as just and faithful a manner as in me lies*, indicating that he felt a solemn obligation not to exaggerate in any way. My copy of this wonderful work is annotated on its inside front cover and flyleaf with dozens of lessons I took away from carefully reading it years ago. Had I kept them in mind, I might have labored more earnestly and more hopefully.

A second title not to be missed is *The Power of Prayer: The New York Revival of 1858* by Samuel Prime (Banner of Truth, 1991). This is the account of the famous Fulton Street prayer meeting and its phenomenal influence. Prime wrote that *this revival is to be remembered through all coming ages as simply an answer to prayer* (p. 3). How heartening!


The 1858 prayer revival is thought to have resulted in upwards of one million Americans coming to Christ. They were added to churches of many different denominations. Roy J. Fish, a former professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, authored a valuable work entitled *When Heaven Touched Earth: The Awakening of 1858 and Its Effects on Baptists* (Need of the Times, 1996). It documents the effects of the revival on Baptists region by region and state by state. Fish includes hundreds of encouraging anecdotes and quotations.

Lastly, I'll mention the writings of Eifion Evans, especially his *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Evangelical Press of Wales, 1969). Evans, a pastor and historian, wrote this and at least two other works on revival (*Revival Comes to Wales* and *Fire in the Thatch*) as well as biographies of several outstanding Welsh preachers. He writes with a scripturally informed pen and a proper sensitivity to both the genuine and the counterfeit which characterizes true awakenings.

Finally

Undoubtedly there are scores of additional titles on this subject which deserve mention. I've limited myself, for the most part, to books which I myself have read almost in entirety. They have influenced me for good. Even doing this brief bibliography has awakened a fresh hunger for reading in this field but most of all, for a fresh commitment to praying and laboring in hope.

Lord of Eternity, Lord of the Ages,
Father and Spirit and Saviour of Men!
Thine is the glory of time's numbered pages;
Thine is the power to revive us again.

Ernest N. Merrington 

Dr. Mark Minnick pastors Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. His sermons are available at mountcalvarybaptist.org/sermons. You can also access the last month of sermons in your favorite podcast app. Simply search for Mount Calvary Baptist Church and choose "subscribe."

Bring . . . the Books

Roy and Revel Hession, *We Would See Jesus*

I'll never forget it! It was the middle of the night. I had just come out of a several-hour prayer meeting that was "in the heavenlies." The presence of God was so real that time was lost. We were finishing up a conference in picturesque Avoca, Ireland, and I was to leave early in the morning to catch a flight. But as a part of the conference we were going through the book *We Would See Jesus* by Roy and Revel Hession, and the Spirit bore witness with my spirit to read the final chapter entitled "Seeing Jesus as the End." What followed was a life-changing moment.

Roy Hession led a large conference in Wales. When he heard that some leaders from the East African revivals were speaking throughout Great Britain, he invited them to speak at his conference for young people. But the message they spoke proved to be for him. He codified what he learned into a series of articles later published as *The Calvary Road*, a book that has sold well over a million copies and has blessed many with the truth of brokenness—a key revival truth. Later he and his wife wrote *We Would See Jesus* as a follow-up to provide a fuller picture.

The second book highlights the importance of focusing on Jesus. This emphasis is needed in any era, and certainly in our day. In contrast to trying to make certain things "work," which easily becomes formulaic and leads to bondage, the authors emphasize in the preface that Jesus "is both the Blessing we all seek and the easily accessible Way to that blessing" (p. 7).

The early chapters clarify that we see God in the face of Christ. Seeing Jesus does not imply seeing Jesus in a mystical sense of craving for visions or in a merely academic way. Rather, seeing Jesus "is to apprehend Him as the supply of our present needs and believingly to lay hold on Him as such" (p. 37).

The book emphasizes seeing Jesus as all we need. He is sufficient as the I AM. Jesus is salvation, peace, strength, wisdom, righteousness, joy, life, victory, and so much more.

A chapter recaps the essence of *The Calvary Road*. Since sin hinders our fellowship with Jesus, who is the truth, Jesus contrasts doing evil with doing truth (John 3:20–21). "The alternative that God presents to our doing evil is not doing good, but doing truth; that is, honesty with regard to our evil" (p. 66). This is seeing Jesus as the truth. With this honesty Jesus cleanses and restores.

The following two chapters contrast looking unto Jesus (faith) versus self-effort. Jesus is the door, not only for salvation, but everything. The door of Jesus is an "open door" always available (p. 76) and a door "on street level" (p. 77). "His blood has made Him available to the sinner as a *sinner*, and to the failing saint as a *failing saint*" (p. 77). Also, the door is a "low door" for the

humble and honest (p. 81) and a "narrow door" (p. 82).

The accuser of the brethren seeks to cause us either to make excuses for our failures or "get us on the ground of self-effort and 'striving'" (pp. 90–91). But the sight of Jesus leads to agreement, honesty, and resting in Jesus. "While Satan accuses only to bring despair, bondage and striving, the Holy Spirit convicts only to bring comfort, freedom and rest" (p. 101).

The final two chapters unfold our seeing Jesus as the way and as the end. This double emphasis culminates in the major crux of the book. Jesus as the Door opens to Jesus as the Way, which leads to Jesus as the End or final destination.

"A 'way' speaks not of a final, settled blessing but rather of a walk, of an experience which is continuous. A walk is simply a reiterated step—where something is happening each moment in the present" (p. 104). You start with Jesus; you continue with Jesus—all by faith. Jesus is the way or source of life and power. We try to make other things the way, even good things like prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. But life is in a person, not activities.

When we learn that Jesus is the way, we often go to Him as the way to get to some other goal like holiness or service—as if that's better than Jesus. This is a great deception. But Jesus must be the goal. For when you have Him you have all that He is, which includes holiness and service.

The authors reference John 14 in which Jesus says He is the way. "But where did the way lead? To the Father, of course, for He went on: 'No one comes to the Father except through Me.' Then He startled them with the statement, 'If you had recognized Me, you would have known My Father also. . . . He who has seen Me has seen the Father'" (pp. 127–28). This is the big point. Jesus is both the way and the end! He is both the source of life and the goal.

This truth rocked my paradigm that night in Ireland. I had already awakened to the need for the power of Jesus instead of the strength of the flesh. But my goal was still something other than Jesus: holiness, service, and so forth. That night the Spirit illuminated Jesus, not only as the way, but the end of the way. For Jesus is holiness, righteousness, victory, the life of revival (life again), and more. He must not only be our power source, but He Himself must be our aim.

"We would see Jesus." 

“. . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books”
(2 Tim. 4:13)

John Van Gelderen has been in evangelism since 1992 and is the president of Revival Focus based in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Matthew 18:15–17 gives us important guidance in helping others and resolving conflict. We are told that if a brother sins against us, we must go to him. If he is not responsive, we are to bring others along with us. And if that does not work, we are told to bring the whole local church into the issue. If the person does not respond after all of that, we are commanded to put him out of the church and treat him as an unsaved person.

The challenge is that the use of this plan for every offense often makes things worse. Our goal in this article is to help the believer who has been sinned against to know how to respond wisely. We will first deal with Matthew 18 and then look elsewhere to see all our biblical options.

What Is a Trespass?

In the New Testament there are a variety of words in both the Greek and in English translations that reflect differing dynamics of sin. The word “unjust” (Luke 16:8) refers to that which is the opposite of biblical justice. The word “iniquity” (Matt. 24:12) highlights a contempt for God’s law. And the word “offense” (Rom. 5:17) references the faltering nature of sin.

The word “trespass” in our passage (Matt. 18:15) is different. It is an umbrella term that is general in its meaning but clear in its focus. It can refer to both the origin and nature of any action that is in violation of God’s truth. The meaning in English is best summarized as “missing the mark.” This general term helps us to understand the breadth of the offense but not enough detail to identify the nature of the offense.

Which Trespasses Must We Confront?

To determine what must be confronted, we need to examine the general meaning of the word “trespass,” which requires an examination of the context as well as comparisons with other Scriptures.

In Matthew 18 we learn that the trespass meets two requirements. First, the sin was clearly viewed by other believers as one that needed to be dealt with. It was not about feelings and impressions. Instead, it was sin that could be readily understood by those involved on the second attempt and by the church at large on the third. Second, it was a sin, that, if not confessed and forsaken, was of such a nature that the church had no choice but to publicly excommunicate the member.

First Corinthians helps as we see how Paul deals with a variety of conflicts between Christians. Yet he prescribes church discipline only one time. Remember, if the sin will not warrant discipline by the whole church,

one cannot force Matthew 18 to deal with it.

What we learn from Paul is that the sin being dealt with was officially known, universally condemned, and violated one of the core boundaries of human relationship. This was to such a degree that no more time could be given to resolve this issue, and no accommodations could be made.

*“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)*

What Now?


If the sin committed against us matches the nature of the offenses given above, we must act under God’s leadership. This will require wisdom from God and communication with our local church leaders. This must be done out of a love for God and for the one who has sinned.

When the sin does not match Matthew 18, we turn to other Scriptures for help.

If God leads us, we reach out. Galatians 6:1 shows us the importance of being right with God and under His control when we reach out to the one who has sinned. As taught in Matthew 7:3–5, we must be right if we are going to help others find right.

If love can cover it, we move on. First Peter 4:8 teaches that “charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins.” The word “cover” means “to hide.” The word used in Matthew 8:24 and Luke 23:30 shows that this covering is complete, leaving nothing to be exposed. Covered sin allows us to live with each of our imperfect brothers and sisters. The reality is that God is continually revealing us to ourselves, leading us through His word and changing us daily into Christlikeness. Through this walk of life, we need others who will love us enough to excuse our sin and are patient with us as we are changing into His image.

No matter what happens, we guard our heart (Matt. 5:44). The word “enemy” speaks of one bent on inflicting pain. Sin always brings pain into the lives of everyone it effects. Though we hate the sin and dislike the pain, we must guard our hearts. There is a saying that goes, “When things go wrong, make sure you don’t go wrong with them.” That is certainly true here. We are told to love, speak well of (bless), and be helpful to those who have hurt us. Then we are told to pray for them.

In all our years of our counseling at the Harbor Counseling Ministry, my wife and I have repeatedly seen that bitterness flees from the heart that has been hurt when prayer is offered for the one who did the hurting. 

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David Brainerd

A few Native Americans lived at Crossweeksung, New Jersey, when David Brainerd (1718–47) arrived to bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ in June 1745. Brainerd was disappointed that his first attempt to preach was attended by only a few women and children. Those women set out immediately to find and bring others to hear the preaching the next day. Each day the group grew larger until the original seven or eight had grown into thirty or so by the fourth day. Soon Indians were turning to Christ. By March the next year, there was an Indian church with 140 members.

Brainerd began his missionary work among the Indians at Kaunaumek, New York. The difficult time he had there is recorded in the journal he kept. His devotion to Christ and commitment to the work of the gospel is evident in his journal. His suffering from tuberculosis did not deter him. He was assigned next to the Forks of the Delaware in Pennsylvania. Brainerd was not encouraged by the response and circumstances there. Typically, the Indians were resistant and argumentative when he preached the gospel. During this assignment he stopped to preach at Crossweeksung. He was surprised and delighted when there was no contrariness to his preaching there. For the first time he saw clear evidence that his hearers were experiencing conviction regarding their spiritual needs.

July 1. Preached again twice to a very serious and attentive assembly of Indians, they having now learned to attend the worship of God with Christian decency in all respects. There were now between forty and fifty persons of them present, old and young. . . .

July 2. Was obliged to leave these Indians at Crossweeksung. . . . And when I parted, one told me with many tears, “She wished God would change her heart”; another, that “she wanted to find Christ”; and an old man that had been one of their chiefs, wept bitterly with concern for his soul.¹

When Brainerd returned to Crossweeksung in August, he found the Indians intensely concerned for their souls. Each day as Brainerd preached to them, their distress of soul grew as did their numbers. As he preached, tears could be seen on faces and groans and sobs heard from them. On August 5 the harvest began when a woman found comfort in Christ. The next day two more were saved amid tears and cries all around from the fifty-five Indians present. On August 8 he wrote,

When I spoke to one and another more particularly,

whom I perceived under much concern, the power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly, “like a rushing mighty wind,” and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it. I stood amazed at the influence that seized the audience almost universally.²

Indians continued to come to Christ and a church was formed.

The believers formed a town of their own (Cranberry, New Jersey) in an attempt to distance themselves from their former lives. Brainerd left his church of 140 members in March of 1746 due to the advance of his tuberculosis. His brother John became the pastor. David Brainerd died in October 1747.

Samuel Mills

In the northwest corner of Massachusetts is the beautiful campus of Williams College where a revival among the students occurred in 1806. The “Haystack Prayer Meeting” and the Society of Brethren were part of the fruit of the revival as was the foreign missions movement in America. Samuel Mills was God’s instrument in this revival.

Samuel Mills (1783–1818) came from a pastor’s home in Torrington, Connecticut, at a period when God was doing a special work among churches in New England. Samuel resisted the Lord until he was fifteen, but he turned to Christ in a rather dramatic and sudden conversion. Almost immediately he committed himself to the cause of the gospel among the heathen in foreign places. In 1806 he became a student at Williams College.

At Williams, Mills avoided the worldly pursuits of his classmates and instead devoted himself to seeking the Lord. He went door-to-door witnessing to his fellow students and saw them turning to Christ. Some of those converts went into the ministry and to the mission field. He was intensely devoted to prayer for revival among his fellow students and for the cause of the gospel among heathen nations. He wrote in his journal,

June 25, 1806. I hope I shall have an opportunity to retire and address the Throne of Grace today without molestation. O that God would be with me, and assist me in the performance of duty! It will be a stupid time indeed, if the Lord does not pour down his Spirit and convince me of my unworthiness and dependence. O how unworthy we are at this institution to partake of the crumbs that fall from our Master’s table! Blessed be God, he has, I

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

trust, wrought a good work upon the hearts of some, and is forcing conviction and light upon the minds of others. I hope nothing may retard the progress of this most glorious work.³

A classmate wrote,

During the last term of his first year, there was a revival of religion in College, which commenced in his class. It was then my opinion, and I believe the general opinion, that Mr. Mills was principally instrumental in the hands of God, in producing the blessed work. Certain it is that no one was so much resorted to as he by those under serious impressions. He was singularly devoted and engaged, a little before the revival commenced, and while it lasted. Nor did he, after it had ceased, relapse into that state of apathy and indifference so common with many, and to which there are so many temptations in College. It may well be said of him, that he “walked with God,” and I trust his footsteps were seen long after he left the College.⁴

When Brainerd returned to Cross-weeksung in August, he found the Indians intensely concerned for their souls.

The Haystack Prayer Meeting occurred the summer of 1806 when Mills and four others met for prayer, taking refuge from a storm under the edge of a large haystack. Taking the gospel to the heathen was the purpose of the prayer meeting. This group formed the Society of Brethren. When Mills went from Williams College and later to Andover Seminary, “The Brethren” went with him, including men such as Luther Rice, Gordon Hall, and James Richards. At Andover, Adoniram Judson, Samuel Nott, and Samuel Newel joined the group. These men were instrumental in the founding of the first foreign missionary society in America. The history of American foreign missionary efforts flows largely from this beginning.


John Girardeau

Before the Civil War, Blacks, most of whom were enslaved, were allowed by law to attend church only at White assemblies. In the early 1800s, however, separate congregations of enslaved and free Blacks began to develop. In Charleston, South Carolina, the Anson Street Mission—built by Whites for Blacks—was started at the Second Presbyterian Church. And during the years 1858–59 an unusual revival began at the Anson Street Mission. The revival drew both Blacks and Whites throughout Charleston to Christ.

John Girardeau (1825–98) was the minister at the time of the revival. Girardeau, who was White, was from nearby James Island. He was saved after a remarkable struggle when he was fourteen. He trained for the minis-

try at South Carolina’s Columbia Theological Seminary and became the pastor of the Anson Street church in 1854. Girardeau was by all accounts a fine theologian and a powerful preacher. Early in his preparation, he recognized a calling from God to minister to the enslaved people of South Carolina. In his biography of Girardeau, George Blackburn writes,

The greatest event in his ministry was the revival in the later fifties. This began with a prayer meeting that constantly increased until the house was filled. Some of the officers of the church wanted him to commence preaching services, but he steadily refused, waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit. . . . Day after day he, therefore, kept his prayer addressed directly to the mediatorial throne for the Holy Spirit in mighty reviving power.

One evening, while leading the people in prayer, he received a sensation as if a bolt of electricity had struck his head and diffused itself through his whole body. For a little while he stood speechless under the strange physical feeling. Then he said: “The Holy Spirit has come; we will begin preaching tomorrow evening.” He closed the service with a hymn, dismissed the congregation, and came down from the pulpit; but no one left the house. The whole congregation had quietly resumed its seat. Instantly he realized the situation. The Holy Spirit had not only come to him—He had also taken possession of the hearts of the people. Immediately he began exhorting them to accept the Gospel. They began to sob, softly, like the falling of rain; then, with deeper emotion, to weep bitterly, or to rejoice loudly, according to their circumstances. It was midnight before he could dismiss his congregation. . . . The meeting went on night and day for eight weeks. Large numbers of both white and black were converted and joined the various churches of the city. His own was wonderfully built up, not only in numbers, but also in an experience that remained in the church. . . . This was probably due to the deep work of conviction of sin, the protracted period of the conviction, the clear sense of pardon, and the joyful witness of the Spirit to their adoption.⁵ 

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Life and Dairy of David Brainerd* (Baker Book House, 1989), 205–6.

² *Ibid.*, 216.

³ Garner Spring, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills* (1820), 12–13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ George A. Blackburn, *The Life Work of John L. Girardeau, D.D., LL.D* (1916), 99–100.

After planting and pastoring for over forty years an independent Baptist church in Charleston, South Carolina, Tom Sims retired in 2020.

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The Great Awakening and the

I was only four years old when I repeated the words of the “sinner’s prayer” after my mother to accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Many of us may take for granted that the moment a sinner turns to Christ in faith, he is born again to eternal life. However, while the necessity of a Christian life that is characterized by repentance and faith has always been stressed in Christian theology, the need for a conversion experience followed by believer’s baptism has not been.¹ Our current understanding of the Bible’s teaching on this vital matter owes much to the eighteenth-century revival known as the First Great Awakening.

The Early Church

A historical survey of conversion is tied to a historical survey of baptism. While baptism was practiced as the marker of conversion in the New Testament and for the first several centuries of Christian history, two things seemed to have changed the way baptism was practiced and the way conversion was understood: infant baptism and the joining of church and state. The growing practice of infant baptism in the fourth and fifth centuries would strip it of its original significance as the testimony of conversion.² The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church explains that the typical three years of instruction required of baptismal candidates evolved into catechesis, or instruction required before baptized child could partake of the Lord’s Supper. (In the Eastern Churches, baptized children were immediately admitted into full membership including access to the Lord’s Supper.)

The Reformation

One of Martin Luther’s famous Ninety-Five Theses states that repentance is not the purchasing of an indulgence from the pope but the lifestyle of a true Christian. Following Augustine, Luther taught that baptism regenerated infants and cleansed them from original sin; however, only God’s elect received the gifts of repentance and faith, which were required for eternal life.

John Calvin differed with Luther regarding baptismal regeneration but agreed that repentance or conversion was a gift of God that evidenced itself in the whole life of the believer. In his *Institutes* Calvin mocks the idea of instantaneous conversion as a Jesuit and an Anabaptist error. By the time of the Reformation, infant baptism was not only common practice, it was law. While Zwingli seems to have doubted infant baptism for a time, he eventually supported Zurich’s council’s decision to exile and even drown those who refused to baptize their infants. This union of church and state continued in most of the American colonies during the time of the Great Awakening.

The Puritans

In *Historical Theology in Depth* (2 vols.) Dr. David Beale explains the historical development of conversion in Puritanism.³ While Puritans followed the Roman practice of



catechism as instruction to baptized children, before admitting children to the Lord’s Supper they did not require confession to a priest. Instead, they required the affirmation of a creed. By 1640 some Puritans/Congregationalists began to require a conversion narrative for admission to the Lord’s Supper. The candidate for membership would give testimony of conviction of sin, repentance, faith and often assurance of salvation. These conversion narratives were thought of as part of an investigation into the individual’s election but not so much as testimonies of why the individual decided to trust in Jesus.

The Half-Way Covenant

Infant baptism in the first five centuries of the Church developed as a kind of eternal life insurance policy for children when they became sick and were not expected to survive. For the Puritans, infant baptism was part of their Covenant Theology. Puritans believed that not only individuals, but whole families, churches, and nations should enter the New Covenant with God just as Israel entered the Mosaic Covenant with God. Faithfulness to the covenant was believed to be



connected to God's blessing on the individual, the church, and the nation.

Unfortunately, the children of the Puritans did not all experience conversion as was expected, and the Puritans found themselves inventing a "half-way" covenant when grandparents requested that their grandchildren be baptized as infants although the parents of these children did not have a conversion testimony. The Half-Way Covenant allowed adults baptized as infants but without a "conversion narrative" to be "half-way members" of the church with the right to baptize their children but not to partake of the Lord's Supper or to vote in the church or the state.

The Half-Way Covenant eventually led to a further development known as Stoddardism. Solomon Stoddard was Jonathan Edwards' grandfather, pastor, and mentor. He was converted while giving the Lord's Supper to his church members. In hopes that others would experience conversion by partaking of the Lord's Supper, he taught that anyone baptized as an infant and not living in open sin should be admitted to the communion table.⁴

The First Great Awakening

When Jonathan Edwards succeeded Stoddard as pastor, he preached about the need for personal conversion and fought against the Half-Way Covenant. It was during Edwards's ministry that the Dutch Reformed pastor Theodore Frelinghuysen, Anglicans Wesley and Whitefield, and many Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists would begin to see a "surprising work of God" in overwhelming numbers of conversions in their churches and communities.

Edwards believed that conversion referred to the moment when God granted repentance and faith to the individual rather than to the whole process of the conversion narrative or to the whole life of the believer. During the Great Awakening, not only laymen but also pastors and ministerial students were converted. Whitefield saw conversions at Yale after preaching there about the need for pastors to be converted ("a converted ministry"). Unfortunately, some Great Awakening preachers began to name and humiliate pastors whom they believed were unconverted, creating even more opposition to the revival movement.

The Aftermath of the Great Awakening

While many individuals were genuinely converted, the effects of the Great Awakening were often short-lived in the churches and colleges where these revivals took place. Edwards would be dismissed from his church, and Yale would soon return to the path of doctrinal and moral downgrade. The emotionalism that accompanied the Great Awakening led Edwards to write a book distinguishing genuine conversions that evidenced long-term change from emotional experiences with short-lived effects.

Historians look back to the First Great Awakening as a turning point in the history of conversion. This emphasis on conversion in English-speaking Protestantism would eventually give birth to the modern missions movement with Baptist missionary, William Carey. While many of the preachers of the First (and Second) Great Awakening were Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, historian David Bebbington notes that Baptist churches grew significantly as a result of this new emphasis on conversion.⁵ Lincoln Mullen observes that by the 1900s conversion had become such a part of American culture that even churches that baptized infants grew more from conversions than from infant baptisms.⁶

Lessons for Today

In addition to the necessity of conversion and the importance of believer's baptism, there are other important lessons we can learn from the Great Awakening.

First, God uses imperfect individuals, such as you and me, to accomplish His work in this world. John Wesley found assurance of his salvation while hearing Martin Luther's Preface to Romans.⁷ Martin Luther's emphasis on justification by faith spread throughout the world, just as John

Wesley's emphasis on individual conversion would spread over two centuries later. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists would see many people turn to Jesus for forgiveness, changed lives, and assurance of their salvation. While biblical baptism is believer's baptism, the First Great Awakening saw God work primarily among those who believed in baptizing infants.

Second, the study of the historical development of conversion should help us to appreciate both the need for individual conversion and some of the pastoral and theological problems of infant baptism. During the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney (as a Presbyterian who baptized infants and emphasized conversion) would advocate substituting the sinner's prayer for the apostolic practice of baptism as the mark of Christian conversion.⁸ As Baptists we should remember that baptism is not magic, but it is more than an ordinary act of obedience. Baptism is a public confession of our faith in and union with Jesus' death and resurrection and a commitment to die by faith to sin and to rise by faith in Jesus to a new life of love and holiness.

Finally, the Great Awakening should teach us to appreciate the complexities of determining the exact timing of conversion. Some conversions are very emotional with immediate and enduring effects. Some apparent conversions are very emotional but not very enduring. Others find it difficult to know exactly when they fully trusted in Jesus as their Savior, but they are sure that they do trust fully and only in Jesus for salvation and live long lives of faithfulness to their Savior.

The First Great Awakening consisted of more than the conversion of many people—it represented a recovery of the doctrine of conversion and led indirectly to the later growth of Baptist churches and the birth of modern missions.

Jason Armstrong follows Jesus as a contractor salesperson in Lynden, Washington.



He previously served as a missionary to Mexico with his family from 2010–20. He enjoys exploring God's beautiful creation in Bellingham, Washington, with Heather, his wife, and their two children.

¹ David W. Bebbington lists conversionism as the first distinctive of evangelicalism, which began its exponential growth during the First Great Awakening (*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* [New York: Routledge, 1989], 3).

² See Hendrick F. Stander and Johannes P. Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2004). These paedobaptist authors present a compelling case for the timeline of infant baptism presented above.

³ See chapter 12 of the second volume of *Historical Theology In-Depth: Themes and Contexts of Doctrinal Development since the First Century*, vol. 2 (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2013), 231. I cannot recommend highly enough this two-volume work. For more on the historical doctrine of conversion, Puritanism, and Baptists see *The Mayflower Pilgrims and Baptist History in England and America*.

⁴ "Half-Way Covenant," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half-Way_Covenant (accessed June 17, 2021). Stoddard called the Lord's Supper a "converting ordinance." This article helpfully illuminates Puritan church membership and the Half-Way Covenant.

⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 76.

⁶ "By 1900, members were far less likely to have become Presbyterian through infant baptism." Mullen observes the tension between the practice of infant baptism and the belief in the necessity of conversion for everyone (*The Chance of Salvation: A History of Conversion in America* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017], 23–26).

⁷ For more biographical sketches on important historical figures see *Faith of Our Fathers: Scenes from Church History*, edited by Mark Sidwell (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1989) and *Faith of Our Fathers: Scenes from American Church History*, edited by Mark Sidwell (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991). Both works were helpful in research for this article, particularly regarding Luther, Edwards, and Wesley.

⁸ "In the days of the apostles, Finney believed, baptism held 'the precise place that the anxious bench does now, as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians.' In place of the sacrament, Finney offered prayer" (Mullen, 31, quoting Finney, *Lectures* 258–59).

Psalm 85

Continued from page 16

(Rev. 2:5). Therefore, although true believers in Christ Jesus do not fear ultimate rejection of God, there is certainly a scriptural basis to pray with the psalmist, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease" (Ps. 85:4).

Key Lessons of the Psalm

Having seen that Psalm 85 is a prayer for true revival, what are the lessons for us as believers in Jesus Christ? First, with the psalmist we must be thankful for God's past deliverance. A preacher once said that revival is for believers, since to be "re-vived" you first have to have been "vived." In Christ Jesus we have passed from death unto life. God truly has had mercy on us, turning away His fierce anger and blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Ingratitude is a great hindrance to revival. Second, we must be humble, realizing that in many ways we sin and do not honor the Lord with our hearts and our lives. Although confident of God's redeeming love in Christ, we must also realize that He still hates sin in His people and purposes to deal with it. How much better if we "judge ourselves" that "we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). Finally, we must with the psalmist have faith in God to keep His promises and bless His people. His salvation truly is with those that fear Him, so that His glorious presence may be seen in our lives and ministries. He is both able and desirous to truly bless His people with spiritual vitality, righteousness, and blessing. We must pray in faith that that "righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."

David Shumate is a missionary and seminary professor. He and his wife, Linda, live in Phoenix, Arizona.



* *Shub* is used once as an auxiliary verb to mean "to do something again," literally "Will you not return to revive us?" (v. 6).

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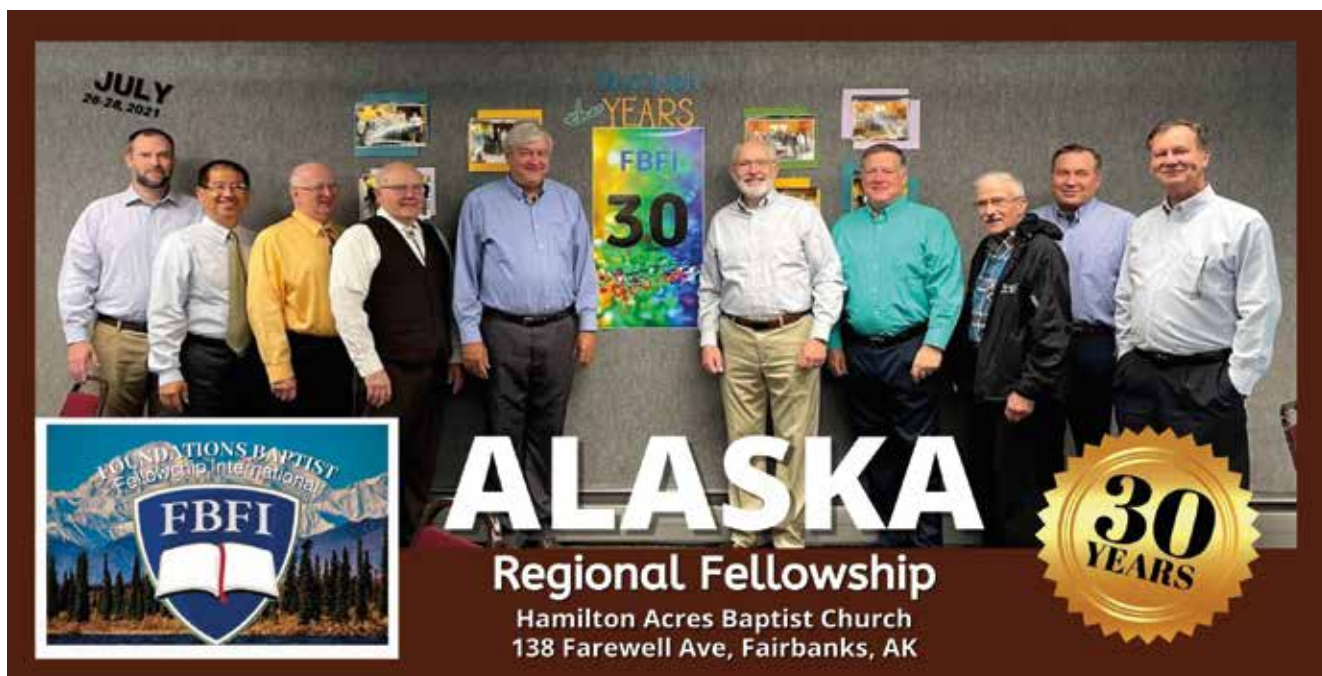
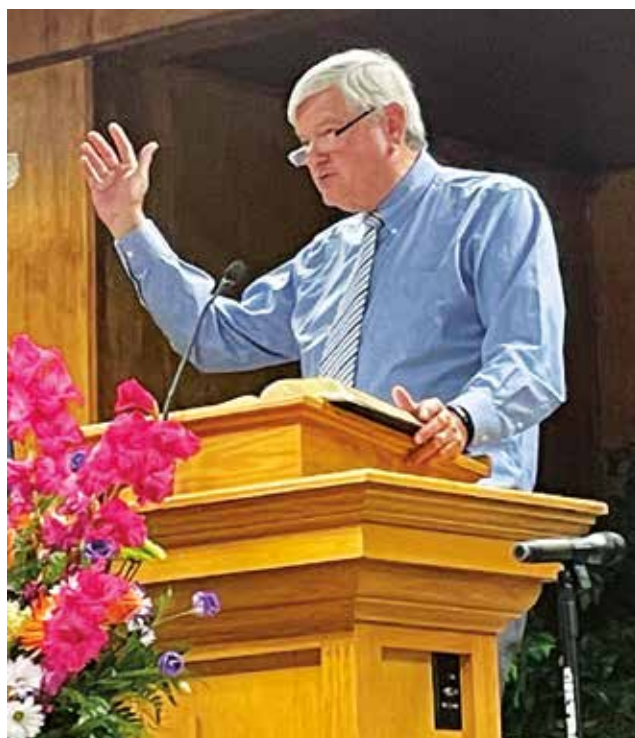
Bruce Hamilton

The thirtieth anniversary meeting of the Alaska Regional FBFI Fellowship was held at the church where it was started: Hamilton Acres Baptist Church Fairbanks, Alaska.

My church family welcomed about twenty out-of-town guests to the fellowship meeting July 26–28, 2021. In addition, the members of the church as well as people and pastors from around the community also participated.

One simple but important word was chosen as the theme of the meeting: “Faithfulness.” All the keynote speakers (Dr. Bud Steadman, executive director of Baptist World Missions; Dr. Larry Ball, general director of International Baptist Missions; and Jeff Davis, director of EMU International) spoke on this theme. In addition, pastors from around the state preached along the same lines. Messages on “Faithfulness to the Word of God,” “Faithfulness to the Local Church,” and “Faithfulness in the Midst of Fear” were preached. Many hearts were blessed, and the response was very enthusiastic.

In addition, Pastor Jon Craven of Soldotna Baptist Church in Soldotna, Alaska, agreed to host the 2022 meeting. We are already anticipating another great time together next year!





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God Is My Refuge and Strength

On June 1, 2021, missionaries Tim and Jeannette Joyner became sick with the COVID-19 virus. Jeannette recovered, but Tim was soon admitted to an ICU in Bokoto-Kampala, Uganda. On June 20 Tim went to be with his Savior. Jeannette's e-mails tell the story best.

Dear praying friends and supporters,

On Thursday, Dr. Tugume came in and was positive about Tim's prognosis. He asked about our thoughts on COVID, then asked what I thought about life after death.

Before I could make a sentence, Timothy began, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). He told the doctor that he did not need to fear death, but only the judgment that was to follow, for Jesus has paid for our sins and offers us HIS righteousness.

This was Tim's last real conversation. On Friday morning, Tim's breathing became so labored that the doctors told him not to speak but to save his breath.

When Jeannette saw Tim on Sunday morning, he drank water and ate watermelon. She encouraged him with Scripture and words of love. Thirty minutes later, Tim went into cardiac arrest, and the doctor was unable to resuscitate him.

God, in His wisdom and His will, has called Timothy home to glory. God saw fit to make Tim's physical battle short on this earth, and for that I am thankful. We have many questions, but GOD KNOWS THAT!

Uganda is in lockdown so things were not as we would have wanted, but GOD KNOWS THAT! The Lord worked, and people were given permission to be there to help me.

A missionary was at the hospital to help with details and arrangements. Another missionary helped finalize those plans. Still another initiated a prayer chain and later drove me to the

funeral. Missionaries and churches paid for the funeral expenses. I have been so humbled by this.

Pastor Amos took care of all the arrangements for "his father." He and his wife stayed the night with me on Sunday and prepared for Tim's burial up-country.

Timothy and I had planned to be buried wherever we died. So it was that on Tuesday afternoon we laid his body to rest in Kanyandegaa-Fort Port. Can't think of a more beautiful place for Tim's bones to rest, but even this cannot compare to the beauty he is experiencing now in heaven.

Timothy always said God gives His grace when we need it, not before. To help you understand HOW MUCH GRACE God has given me—I used only one tissue the entire funeral!

I have the wonderful assurance that I will see my husband again in heaven and that God will continue to comfort and guide me. I don't doubt God's sovereignty in all of this; it's just not easy. God is ministering to my heart daily by His Word, but that does not stop the waves of grief. And it's not just grief—it's all the changes! Psalm 46 has become precious to me.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. (Ps. 46:1–3)

I will not fear—

- though the ATM has not been working. (This was where Tim always went. Now what ATM should I use?)*
- though I need to get the sewer connected before the rains come. (So I can't leave the house empty yet.)*



- though the government offices are operating at 10–30%. (To get Tim's Uganda death certificate, I had to pay almost three times more than usual. I can't get the Death Abroad certificate from the

Embassy without it. Even then I'm not sure I can get it because the Consular services are also closed.)

- though I had to pay a technician to unlock Tim's phone. (Tim had set it up for me with fingerprint ID, but someone turned it off, and it required a PIN I did not know.)
- though I no longer have a resident mechanic. (I will need a little newer and more reliable vehicle.)
- though I have to change my status with the NGO. (I'm no longer a dependent.)
- though Sundays are especially hard. (I am purposely taking my thoughts captive.)

I don't have answers for everything, only for the things I need to know right now. For now, I know God wants me to continue here in Uganda.

I will "be still, and know that [He is] God" (Ps. 46:10). "God shall help [me], and that right early. . . . The Lord of hosts is with [me]; the God of Jacob is [my] refuge" (Ps. 46:5, 11). God will see me through.

I've written hundreds of thank-you notes in my thirty-six years as a missionary, but

now words do not seem adequate to express how much your words of encouragement have meant to me. I appreciate your prayers and cherish them still for the many things I have to do and the decisions which have to be made. It will take time, and GOD KNOWS THAT!

*In His Grace and Strength Alone,
Jeannette*

*"My grace is sufficient for thee:
for my strength is made perfect in
weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).*



Correction

In the July/August 2021 issue of *FrontLine* we mistakenly stated that Brother Tim Joyner passed away on June 29. His homegoing was actually on Sunday, June 20. We apologize for this error.

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Layton Talbert

Common Grace:

Ben Stein once put this question to Richard Dawkins: “What if, after you died, you ran into God and He said, ‘What have you been doing, Richard? I’ve been trying to be nice to you. I gave you a multi-million-dollar paycheck over and over again with your book, and look what you did!’” Wittingly or not, Stein was alluding to one dimension of God’s common grace even to this famous atheist.

God is uncommonly kind not only to believers but also to people who are ignorant of Him, and even to those who are openly hostile to Him. Why is that? Or more to the point, *how* is that? If sin merits nothing but God’s disapproval, wrath, and judgment, on what grounds *can* God be kind to unrepentant sinners and still maintain His holiness and justice? It’s easy to find passages that *describe* common grace, but do any passages *explain* the divine rationale behind God’s common grace?

What is the scriptural justification for God’s common grace to the unsaved? You could just say, “God is gracious to all because that is His character.” But in the case of people who deserve the death sentence, it seems incongruous, if not inappropriate, for the Judge not merely to put up with them but to show them positive and profound kindness on a daily basis, unless He has a grounded reason. (Even if you wish to argue that God does so to give them time to repent, He already infallibly knows who will repent and who will not.)

Theologians distinguish, on the basis of biblical revelation, between general (creational) and special (scriptural) revelation, between a general (invitational) and a special (effectual) call. Likewise, “we distinguish between two forms of grace that differ in kind, not merely in degree” (Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 76): common (nonsaving) grace and special (saving) grace.

Common grace has two major components. (1) It is used to describe God’s indiscriminate kindness to all men, believers and unbelievers, through the abundant blessings of earthly life (e.g., Ps. 145:9; Matt. 5:43–48; Acts 14:17). (2) It is also used to describe any behavior or product of (particularly unregenerate) man that mirrors divine truth or divine character (e.g., Acts 17:28). An unsaved mother who sacrifices herself to save her child reflects aspects of God’s self-sacrificial character. An unbelieving author or artist can often capture and express truth with powerful clarity. Regarding the latter example, Calvin (*Institutes* 2.2.15) comments:

Therefore, in reading profane [non-Christian] authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver.

It seems apparent that common grace in a sense (see 2 above) is rooted predominantly in the remnants and influence of the *imago Dei*—the image of God in which man was originally created. The more debated sense (see 1 above) of common grace seems rooted primarily and *directly* in the character of God, but secondarily and *indirectly* in the atonement.

Let me return to the analogy of the judge raised above. Theologian Louis Berkhof writes,

How is it to be explained that a holy and just God extends grace to, and bestows favor upon, sinners who have forfeited everything, even when they have no share in the righteousness of Christ and prove finally impenitent[?]
The question is exactly, How can God continue to bestow those blessings of creation on men who are under the sentence of death and condemnation? As far as the elect are concerned this question is answered by the cross of Christ, but how about the reprobate?

When a judge pronounces a death sentence upon a murderer, he does not deny the prisoner food and drink until the sentence is carried out. A measure of humaneness (linked to the *imago Dei*) prevails even towards those convicted of high crimes. Moreover, a judge who condemns legally may (should) still show a level of grace personally. But what if it was the judge’s own son who was murdered? That barely begins to approximate the situation in which God finds Himself in respect to humanity, since He is the ultimate “offendee” of all our sin. Yet still He shows extraordinary grace daily even to resolute and impenitent sinners.

Most of the passages used to describe common grace seem to root it in the character of God. Matthew 5:43–48 teaches that being good even to your enemies is being like God. Acts 14:17 simply asserts that common grace is one of God’s ways of “witnessing” to His existence and character. Acts 17:24–31

What Is It and Why Is It Important?

seem to imply the same testimonial function of common grace. In short, God is Judge, but He is also Creator, and those roles call forth different actions and behaviors that do not of necessity conflict or contradict each other.

Those who ground all grace (common and special) directly in the atonement may appeal to Isaiah 53:4 and its context: since sickness, disease, degeneration, and death are consequences of the Fall, Jesus could partially and temporarily remove these consequences (as a manifestation of common grace) on the basis of the cross. This, however, unnecessarily conflates the physical healing ministry of Christ (cf. Isa. 53:4 and Matt. 8:17) with the spiritual healing inherent in the atonement. Matthew 8 applies Isaiah 53:4 to the healing ministry of Christ, not to the atoning work referenced in 53:5 (which was still three years away). It is entirely in keeping with the telescopic nature of prophecy for Isaiah 53:4 to refer to the physical ministry of Christ (as Matthew states) while 53:5 refers to the spiritual healing supplied in the atonement (as Peter implies, cf. 1 Pet. 2:24). Indeed, the last verse of Isaiah 53 completes the image—just as He bore (*nasa'*) our sicknesses and carried our pains in His life (53:4), he bore (*nasa'*) our sins in His death (53:12).

Wayne Grudem devotes an entire chapter of his *Systematic Theology* to common grace. He argues that common grace

does not *directly* flow from Christ's atoning work, since Christ's death did not earn any measure of forgiveness for unbelievers, and therefore did not merit the blessings of common grace for them either. However . . . common grace does flow *indirectly* from Christ's redemptive work because the fact that God did not judge the world at once when sin entered it was primarily or perhaps exclusively due to the fact that he planned eventually to save some sinners through the death of his Son.

Though Grudem doesn't cite it, the implication of Romans 3:25 (specifically 25b) corroborates this view: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Paul's statement implies some linkage between the cross and common grace, but it's an indirect link. Namely, God "forbore" the sins that are past (i.e., He did not punish them immediately) because He was going to deal with them via the propitiatory sacrifice

of Christ. But even here, God's ability to do that is again linked to His character—"through the *forbearance* of God." When Grudem addresses the realms in which common grace is manifested (physical, intellectual, moral, creative), the link between common grace and the divine character seems clear in the first of these (physical), while the link between common grace and the *imago Dei* seems clear in the last three (intellectual, moral, creative).

If anyone would argue for grounding common grace directly in the atonement, one would expect Berkhof to do so. However, even Berkhof (and according to him, most Reformed theologians) corroborates Grudem on the *indirectness* of the linkage between common grace and the atonement.

It is not necessary to assume a specific judicial basis for the bestowal of common grace on man in view of the fact (a) that it does not remove the guilt of sin and therefore does not carry pardon with it; and (b) that it does not lift the sentence of condemnation, but only postpones the execution. Perhaps the divine good pleasure to stay the revelation of His wrath . . . offers a sufficient explanation for the blessings of common grace. . . . All that the natural man receives other than curse and death is an indirect result of the redemptive work of Christ.

Berkhof develops this further, but this is the heart and sum of his resolution. This view is, of course, consistent with a particular or limited view of the atonement, but it does not necessitate such a view of the atonement. Even a universal atonement is effectual only for (i.e., particularizes) those who believe, and it is difficult to show any textual basis for common grace blessings flowing directly from the atonement to the unregenerate and the finally impenitent.

God's common grace that sustains the life and breath of every unbeliever (Dan. 5:23) and permits the unregenerate to partake of and enjoy the pleasures and blessings of life as part of His creation (cf. Ecclesiastes) is primarily a manifestation of His good and gracious character. At the same time, His planned and decisive dealing with sin in the propitiatory atonement of Christ may be said to supply the rationale for extending such grace for so long.

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Let's Stop and Refocus

Jim Tillotson

COVID has been a very challenging time, and it has been especially hard on pastors. It was heart-breaking to have people that you have ministered to for years pass away in care facilities that you were not allowed to enter. In many cases, even family members were required to stand outside the window or try to FaceTime. Then funerals were limited in size, and receptions—times that are intended to bring comfort to the family—were not allowed. Weddings were also limited in size, and receptions were not allowed.

Then there was the way the church responded to COVID. Every pastor and leadership team had to decide how their church would respond. Pastors who had served their congregations faithfully and well were suddenly attacked over their decisions regarding masks, no masks, social distancing, and kids' programs. People left their churches over these issues. People went after each other personally and on social media over their personal feelings about COVID. Some have still not come back to church due to concerns over being around others in public, and yet you see them at every other social gathering in town. Pastors saw their congregations get much more engaged and passionate about an election than they have ever seen them get engaged and passionate about sharing the gospel. At the annual budget meeting, a motion was taken to give \$500 to widows and orphans, and it passed with 92%. Every pastor wonders, "Who are those 8% who don't like widows and orphans?" Perhaps it was just the fact that it was the pastor's idea.

Then there is a political system that is aggressively pushing an anti-Christian agenda, an economic situation that is headed toward inflation, and a sexual battle that is deeply impacting our young people.

Many pastors have been discouraged. Many have felt a sense of failure over things they can't control, such as Sunday attendance and the spiritual temperature of the congregation. They wonder how people who have sat under their ministry for years could treat each other so poorly. Many people feared COVID so much that they stopped inviting people to church or over to their homes. They have not reached out to an unsaved person in over a year. I would think everyone reading this article would agree that people's greatest need is not a vaccine, but Christ. As Matthew 10:28 states, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Our world desperately needs Jesus Christ. It seems all of the things I have mentioned have distracted many Christians from the critical mission of sharing the gospel.

Joan and I have found that COVID has opened so many doors. Our neighbors on either side of us are not saved yet, but both have been forced to work from home. In a time of isolation, they were happy to come over for dinner. Joan has made random meals and delivered them. COVID is giving all of us wonderful opportunities to do good to those around us, yet too many became inward focused and for over a year have not done one intentional thing to share the gospel with those around them.

As Spurgeon said in his *Lectures to My Students*,

Have they no bowels of compassion for others? No sense of responsibility upon themselves? Dare they, by a vain misrepresentation of divine sovereignty, cast the blame on their Master? Or is it their belief that Paul plants and Apollos waters, and that God gives no increase? Vain are their talents, their philosophy, their rhetoric, and even their orthodoxy, without the signs following. How are they sent of God who bring no men to God? Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds—are these God's men?

It is as crucial as it has ever been that as we come out of COVID the church reengage with the mission of the Great Commission. If our neighbors know only our political views but not our spiritual views, we have missed the purpose for which God put us in the neighborhood. Is there someone we pray for regularly and are intentionally seeking to build a relationship with so we can share the gospel? Satan will always give us things to worry about and keep us distracted from the command God has given us to share the gospel.

For weary pastors, may you continue to challenge your churches to be outward focused, not out of frustration but out of a burden. Thankfully, it is not a pastor's job to change anyone; that is up to the Holy Spirit. Godly, eternity-minded, gospel-sharing pastors are in high demand and are desperately needed. In spite of these challenging times, there are some amazing opportunities to share who God is and what He has done. May we not allow anyone or anything to keep us from reaching out to those who are lost.

As the great Canadian Red Green often says, "Keep your stick on the ice. We are all in this together."

Jim Tillotson has served as the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, since June 2015. Previously he was the senior pastor of Meadowlands Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, for eighteen years. During his time in Canada, he led Meadowlands Baptist in planting three new churches and helped start a Christian school and a Bible institute.

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Ministering after Trauma

Trauma changes us—no doubt or debate about it. Experts estimate that, in America, 40% of people have gone through a traumatic experience.¹ I am confident that number is much higher in military and first responders. Trauma is not new to our society and is inevitable in our fallen world.

The Attack

On New Year's Eve 2006 I was wading through the Save River in southern Mozambique when a seventeen-foot crocodile grabbed my legs, pulled me under the water, and commenced a series of death rolls. After a few torrential spins in the water, I was staring eye to eye with a murderous beast intent on feasting on my flesh. The trauma of the attack lasted only a few moments, but the trauma of that memory tore much deeper into my being.

I marvel at the specific details of the attack. It lasted only a few seconds, and yet, through God's splendid design of our minds, I had a conversation that seemed to last for an hour. Three key thoughts ran through my mind as I spun furiously in the warm, green water. The first thought was simple, "You are going to die!" It was straightforward and evoked no fear, but rather excitement. I knew within a matter of seconds I would be seeing my Savior face to face. My second thought was less spiritual, and was a raging, "NO! This is not my purpose in life!" However, it was my third realization that resulted in my escape. It sounded very casual in my mind. I

thought, "Hey, remember Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter? He said if he was ever attacked, that he would insert his hand into the crocodile's mouth and open the palatal valve." Amazing, isn't it, that God would bring that thought to my mind? It was just an obscure fact from a passing TV show, and yet, God would use it to bring my release.

The Escape

After a few furious death rolls, while I was trapped in the grip of jaws exerting four thousand pounds of pressure per square inch, the crocodile paused. It paused just long enough for me to catch a small breath and glimpse a space at my thighs where the crocodile couldn't close its mouth. I inserted my hand, grabbed (by God's providence) the valve, and ripped away. Immediately, the crocodile released its bite, and I watched it sink into the green abyss.

I swam to shore, applied tourniquets, and was promptly taken to a small, simple field clinic. Again, by God's providence, someone knew how to stitch my hamstring muscles and legs back together. After seventeen hours of driving, we arrived at a true hospital where medicine and anesthetic awaited me.

After five days in the hospital, I was released to my wife, a highly trained nurse. Through the next four months of surgery, physical therapy, and extensive care, I was eventually



able to walk and function normally. However, the battle for normalcy was much more than just physical restoration.

The Recovery

As time passes and I look back, I realize the immense



work that God was doing in my heart during the recovery. God was teaching me, revealing to me, and instilling in me valuable and powerful truths.

First, I realized the importance of proactive mental health. Even cutting-edge psychology is beginning to realize this point. Proactive mental health is not just a strong mind but a fortified faith. We don't just need to talk through our problems after they happen, we need to place our faith and trust in Someone bigger than ourselves, and it must be the true God!

Read anywhere in the Bible, and you will find trauma. In fact, God repeatedly uses trauma to advance the faith of individuals or even people groups. God allows trauma and hardships to alert our attention to our need for Him. God alone can give grace, hope, mercy, and comfort. Before a trauma begins, and afterwards, we must make sure our faith is fortified in God. In Christian counselor Timothy Lane's book on PTSD, *Healing for Bad Memories*, he writes, "Cultivating a memory that allows the great mercy of God to overshadow your trauma is a lifelong battle."²

Second, I began asking a lot of questions of God. Some of the questions had answers, and some still don't. I asked questions like, "Why? Why would you allow this to happen?" I asked "What if?" questions, second-guessing myself and others. I wondered if there was blame to be placed on someone, especially someone other than myself. I even asked accusatory questions, as if God had made a mistake. What I realized is vital! I may never get the answers I seek, and that is ok. I said things to God that I should be ashamed of, but He already knew, and He wanted to repair them. I poured my heart out to God, and it brought healing to my mind.

Third, and lastly here, I began to remember who God is. I placed my focus on God, not myself, and began to remind myself who God really is. In Psalm 27:4 we read, "One thing



have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple." Like David, I decided to cry to God and make sure I was focused on Him, not

myself. The confident assurance I received resulted in a settled heart and a sustained faith.

Trauma changes us! The question is whether we will allow God to use the trauma in and around our lives to change us for His glory. Will we allow the concerns, memories, and fears of this world to cloud out God's presence, or will we allow God to bring purpose, clarity, and growth out of trauma?

Dr. Daniel Minton is the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Westfield, Indiana, and an FBI chaplain with the Westfield Police Department, Indiana. Since the events of this article the Lord has greatly blessed Daniel and Joy with four beautiful children.



¹ Schiraldi, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook: A Guide to Healing, Recovery, and Growth* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2000), 36.

² Lane, *PTSD: Healing for Bad Memories* (Greensboro, NC; New Growth Press, 2012), 14.

How Can We Work the Works of God?

In John 6 we read the account of the Lord Jesus Christ feeding five thousand men with five small loaves of bread and two small fish. What a miraculous event! Then Jesus went to Capernaum, where He was followed by the men who had eaten the bread and fish. However, the Lord kindly rebuked them by saying to them in verses 26 and 27, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." He struck a chord in their hearts, and they asked Him in John 6:28, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Then the Lord Jesus responded by stating in verse 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Today there are millions of people on earth who also want to know how they can work the works of God. But their entire approach is wrong because they believe salvation is based on the works they do. They wrongly believe their good works will make them acceptable to God. Many religious people are like the Pharisee who boasted in Luke 18:11-12, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Notice that in these two verses this religious man uses the personal pronoun "I" five times. He thought he had favor with God because of his moral life and good works.

Let's take a closer look at this Pharisee's "good" life in Luke 18. He did not take advantage of people. He was honest in his transactions with others. And he did not live an immoral life. Second, let's take a closer look at his religious life. He fasted two days a week. He gave God a tithe, which means a tenth of all that he possessed. Sounds impressive, does it not? In the sight of men, yes, but not in the sight of God. For the Scriptures declare in Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." So therefore one may ask, "Then how can a person work the works of God?"

The Lord Jesus Christ gives the answer in John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Jesus makes it very clear that the work of God is not based on what we do but on believing on Him whom God has sent. And whom did God send? John 3:17 says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." And Jesus said in John 6:38, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Then He plainly stated God's will for Him in verse 40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

The works of God are not based on any work you can do. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Ephesians 2:9 states that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." Salvation is entirely based on believing in Christ, whom God sent to save mankind. So simple and yet so profound.

Will you work the works of God by believing that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose from the grave? First Corinthians 15:3-4 declares, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." If you believe on Christ, He will save you. The Bible tells you how you can do that. Romans 10:9 says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Remember what Jesus said in John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." For those of us who are saved, let us proclaim this glorious message to those we love.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

A background image of a graduate in a black cap and gown, smiling broadly. The image is slightly faded and serves as the backdrop for the text.

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