

Introduction for July 4, 2010

J.I. Packer defines revival in these terms. "A work of God, by His Spirit through the Word, bringing the spiritually dead to living faith in Christ and renewing the inner life of the church (Christians) who have grown slack and sleepy. In revival God makes old things new, giving new power to law and gospel, and new spiritual awareness to those whose hearts and consciences had been blind, hard and cold. Revival thus animates and reanimates churches and Christian groups to make a spiritual and moral impact upon communities."

It was revival that birthed the great universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Dartmouth, all formed for the purpose of training young men for the gospel ministry. It was revival that brought about libraries, hospitals, orphanages and prisons. It has always been the deep work of God in the soul that stirs men to love God and thus to love their neighbor and delight in his good for God's glory. When the fires of revival burn low, so does the fire of love to God and His church.

Packer continues as he lists the marks of revival: "An awesome sense of the presence of God and the truth of the gospel; a profound awareness of sin, leading to deep repentance and heartfelt embrace of the glorified, loving, pardoning Christ; an uninhibited witness to the power and glory of Christ, with a mighty freedom of speech expressing a mighty freedom of spirit; joy in the Lord, love for His people and fear of sinning; and from God's side an intensifying and speeding up of the work of grace so that men are struck down by the Word and transformed by the Spirit in short order, making is appropriate pastorally as well as theologically to baptize adult converts straight after they have professed faith. It is true, of course, that there can be personal revival without any community movement, and that there can be no community movement save as individuals are revived. Nonetheless, if we follow Acts as our paradigm we shall define revival as an essentially corporate phenomenon in which God sovereignly shows His hand, visits His people, extends His kingdom, and glorifies His name."

This is the essence of Zechariah 1-6. This is the great need of our churches, our land and our families. On this 234th anniversary of our nation's freedom we must pray that God will again be pleased to pour out His Spirit on this nation and baptize His churches with the fires of revival.