

Praying for Revival

I have been a baptized Primitive Baptist since July 18, 1954. I have been an ordained Primitive Baptist preacher since April 9, 1967. I love the truths taught by Primitive Baptists. I love the doctrine and practice of this people. I have written extensively defending both our doctrine and practice. For example, in the early 70s I wrote a pamphlet against the use of instrumental music in worship services. I have preached and written in defense of the glorious doctrines of grace. I have and do oppose mission boards, Sunday schools, and theological seminaries. The reason I hold to these doctrines and practices is because they are plainly taught in the New Testament.

This does not mean that I am against propagating the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has been my privilege to be intimately involved in the establishing of two Primitive Baptist churches. I have tried to follow the Biblical pattern of training young ministers who have been given by God in churches I have pastored. That pattern is the apprenticeship pattern. This is found in 2 Timothy 2:1, 2, where Paul says to Timothy “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

The fact that I oppose Sunday schools does not mean that I am against studying the Bible. In the churches I have pastored we have always had a time when we study God’s word together. I cannot comprehend how anyone who reads his Bible could be against this. I know that our forefathers were not against it. I plan to show that in future articles.

The fact that I am opposed to mission boards does not mean that I am opposed to the propagation of the gospel. I have been trying to do just that for thirty-four years. I am not against preaching in foreign lands. In fact I have been blessed to preach what Primitive Baptists love and preach in the Philippines, in India in Siberia, in Malaysia, and in the British Virgin Islands. Anyone opposed to this needs to cut a couple of verses out of their songbooks. They need to quit singing “Hast Thou a lamb in all Thy flock I would disdain to feed? Hast Thou a foe before whose face I fear Thy cause to plead?” To avoid hypocrisy they also need to quit singing “I love to tell the story, Tis pleasant to repeat what seems each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet; I love to tell the story, for some have never heard the message of salvation from God’s own holy word.” The New Testament pattern to spread the gospel is preachers going out under the leadership of the Holy Spirit with the support and cooperation of their local churches.

Just because I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in worship services does not mean that I am against singing. I love to sing praises to God and believe that spiritual singing is a vital part of our worship services.

The test of whether a thing is right or wrong is to see whether or not it is supported by Biblical precept or example.

Having said all this I want to encourage the people known as Primitive Baptists to earnestly seek and pray for a revival of vital religion among us. I am satisfied with the church of God, but I am not satisfied with the condition our churches are in. I can and plan to also prove that this was a constant concern of our forefathers.

In the early part of my ministry it was my privilege to preach in some churches in southern Indiana. For a period of over twenty years I did not have the opportunity to go there. When I was blessed to go back almost two years ago, I began to inquire about certain churches. The people I was talking to would say, “Brother Zack, that church closed their doors a few years ago.” I found that in about two

decades eight Primitive Baptist churches had gone out of existence in southern Indiana. A like number had also ceased to exist in southern Illinois. Anyone who is not immensely disturbed by this needs to examine his or her love for the cause of Christ as promoted by the Primitive Baptists. The same trail of desolation can be traced in other parts of our nation.

We need to begin to ask why this is so.

We need to get on our knees and implore God to have mercy on us and to send us revival.

The Songbook

It is obvious from our songbooks that revival was a vital concern of our forefathers. In their songs they begged God to have mercy on them in their languishing condition and to send them a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

It is plain that these dear people felt deeply their spiritual poverty and their great need of an ingathering. No one will truly pray for revival unless they feel they are absolutely destitute without God. It would be interesting to know if any of the churches that have gone out of existence had any prayer meetings begging God to spare them and to give them an ingathering. I seriously doubt it. Are any of you in churches that are doing so well that you do not need revival? If that is your perception, you will not agonize before God as many of our forefathers did. When you pray you will just be going through the motions. God will not hear such “prayers” as these. On the other hand, do you feel a desperate need that God will come to your church with a refreshing breeze from the Holy Spirit? If so, set yourself to touch the hem of His garment and in due time He will bless according to Ephesians 3:20,21, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

Let us look at a few of these songs, which are really prayers set to music, and make them our prayers as well:

Return Again

Saviour, visit Thy plantation; Grant us Lord, a gracious rain!

All will come to desolation, Unless Thou return again.

Keep no longer at a distance, Shine upon us from on high;

Lest, for want of Thy assistance, Ev’ry plant should droop and die.

Surely once Thy garden flourished, Every plant looked gay and green;

Then Thy word our spirits nourished; Happy seasons we have seen.

But a drought has since succeeded, And a sad decline we see;

Lord, Thy help is greatly needed; Help can only come from Thee.

Where are those we counted leaders, Filled with zeal, and love, and truth?
 Old professors, tall as cedars, Bright examples to our youth!

Some in whom we once delighted, We shall meet no more below;
 Some, alas! We fear are blighted; Scarce a single leaf they show.

Younger plants, the sight how pleasant, Covered thick with blossoms stood;
 But they cause us grief at present; Frost has nipped them in the bud.

Dearest Saviour, hasten hither; Thou canst make them bloom again.
 O permit them not to wither; Let not all our hopes be vain.

Let our mutual love be fervent; Make us prevalent in prayers;
 Let each one, esteemed Thy servant, Shun the world's bewitching snares.

Break the tempter's fatal power; Turn the stony heart to flesh;
 And begin from this good hour, To revive Thy work afresh.

Chorus

Lord, revive us! Lord, revive us! All our help must come from Thee;
 Lord, revive us! Lord, revive us! All our help must come from Thee.

Let us look at a few more of the songs our forefathers have written
 imploring God to send a revival of vital religion. These songs are really
 prayers set to music. Let us make them our prayers as well.

Revive Us Again

We praise Thee O God! for the Son of Thy love, For Jesus who died, and is
 now gone above.

We praise Thee O God! for Thy Spirit of light, Who has shown us our
 Savior and scattered our night.

All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain, Who has borne all our
sins, and hath cleansed ev'ry strain.

Revive us again; fill each heart with Thy love; May each soul be
rekindled with fire from above.

Chorus

Hallelujah! Thine the glory, Hallelujah! amen; Hallelujah! Thine the
glory, revive us again.

There Shall Be Showers of Blessing

There shall be showers of blessing; this is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons of refreshing, sent from the Savior above.

There shall be showers of blessing, precious, reviving again,
Over the hills and the valleys sound of abundance of rain.

There shall be showers of blessing, send them upon us O Lord,
Grant to us now a refreshing, come, and now honor Thy word.

There shall be showers of blessing, O that today they might fall,
Now as to God we're confessing, now as on Jesus we call.

Chorus

Showers of blessing, showers of blessing we need;
Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead.

Kehukee Association

Our forefathers among the Primitive Baptists in the early history of this nation certainly felt the need to seek God and to pray for Him to send revival. I would like to give a few quotes from *Hassell's History*:

1785-“The Association, at this time, being oppressed with a sense of coldness and barrenness among the churches, appointed a day of fasting and prayer, wherein God was to be implored for a manifestation of His loving kindness to Zion, and a revival of His work of grace among the churches.”
-p.704.

I have never known a Primitive Baptist association in my lifetime to do this. Have any of you? Why not? Are we complacent and self-satisfied?

1794-*Resolved*, That the Saturday before the fourth Sunday in every month should be appointed a day for prayer-meetings throughout the churches; whereon all the members of the respective churches are requested to meet at their meeting-houses, or places of worship, and there for each of them, as far as time will admit, to make earnest prayer to God for a revival of religion amongst us.” –p. 713.

Here, nine years later, they are still concerned about revival. Are we today meeting in our churches, month after month, for the specific purpose of making earnest prayer for revival? Are we preachers failing to take the lead in exhorting our people to call for days of fasting and prayer and for prayer meetings imploring God for revival?

1801-It seems that God had been pleased to graciously answer these fervent prayers. They were very interested in revival and one of the signs of revival was always an ingathering of God’s children into the churches.

“The Circular Letter in the Minutes of the Dover Association was read in this Association, and the same gave an account of a happy revival among the churches of that body.”

“Letters from the churches reported 138 baptisms for the previous year. And, from the signs all around, it was stated in the Minutes of this year that a growing interest was felt in religious concerns, and a glorious revival was believed to be not far distant.”-p. 716.

Would we be happy to have people added to our churches? Some people accuse those who long for people to be added to the churches of God to be in the “numbers game.” Indeed, it is possible to be in this “game.” Some worldly churches will do anything in the way of entertainment to have large numbers of people join their organizations. However, just because some do this does not make it wrong for God’s children to long for true, born-again people to be added to their churches. Numbers represent people. If I say that I do not want numbers added to my church, I am saying that I do not want any people added to my church.

I have read quite a few minutes of Primitive Baptist associations lately and it is very depressing. Almost all the churches and associations that I know about seem to be in a period of decline. No one that I know of wants to use any worldly methods to bring people into the churches. It does bother me that ministers can see the churches decline year after year and never sound the alarm. I am so glad that these good old Primitive Baptists in the Kehukee Association were not ashamed to call for prayer and fasting for a revival of religion. I long to see some real spiritual leadership among God’s servants today. Let us stop making excuses for our destitute condition and call our people to prayer. In doing so, we will be walking in the footsteps of the flock.

1802—"According to expectation, there had been a wonderful outpouring of God's Spirit among the churches during the previous year, and a large ingathering was the result; 872 were added to the churches by baptism in one year."

"The interest then felt in religion—the activity of ministers and members generally, the large numbers added to the churches by baptism, upon a profession of their faith in Christ—seemed to say that the day of prosperity had indeed dawned upon the churches of the Kehukee Association, after a long night of coldness and seeming indifference..."

"The Lord impressed the minds of His people to crave and earnestly beseech Him to revive His work of grace in the hearts of His children, to pour forth His Spirit abundantly on the people, and cause the ransomed of the Lord to return and come with singing unto Zion; and as a consequence those prayers were answered. The prayer indited by the Holy Spirit will assuredly be heard and answered by a covenant-keeping God, who regardeth the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer. It will be heard and answered, though apparently long delayed. For many years such petitions had gone forth from the hearts of God's people in the bounds of the Kehukee Association, and the set time to favor Zion at length appeared, when the Lord seemed to break forth on the right hand and on the left in her behalf, and draw many sons and daughters home to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls."

"The work was progressing considerably in 1801, during which year 138 were added by baptism. But in 1802 there was a wonderful increase. At the Association in 1801, held at Great Swamp, Pitt County, Elder Burkitt, having just returned from Tennessee and Kentucky, brought the news from Kentucky and proclaimed it from the stage, that in that State about 6000 persons had, within about eight months, given a rational account of grace in their souls and had been baptized.

"This declaration seemed to have a wonderful effect on the congregation then present, so that numbers were crying for mercy, and many praising and glorifying God. All throughout that Associational year the seasons were refreshing, and nearly all the churches received additions to their number. About 1, 500 were added in two years."

"During this exciting time it might reasonably be supposed that some errors in practice would creep in. Too much reliance was placed at times on human means for the conversion of sinners and bringing them under a profession of religion. A degree of zeal abounded which, upon calm reflection, it must be admitted was not 'according to knowledge,' not according to the New Testament, neither according to the practice in the churches composing the Kehukee Association from its origin up to this period. Of course reasonable allowance can be made for all this. While some are brought into the visible church, under such circumstances, who are not 'born again,' but are deceived and deceive others, yet others are 'new creatures,' and remain through life steadfast and worthy members of the church." *Hassell*, pp. 716, 717.

I like the balance that Brother Hassell has here. He knows that we must be cautious in a time of real revival. Satan will bring in his counterfeit and some "false revival" will accompany the real. However, he was not so cautious as to "throw out the baby with the bath water." Some among us today are so

afraid of the false that they do not want the true. I believe that we should follow the Bible and our forefathers in longing, praying, and seeking for revival. At the same time we should be alert and try to weed out the false from the true when God does send revival. The best way to weed out the false is for God's servants to continually preach all the counsel of God.

It is pitiful how paranoid and afraid we can become. Brother Steven Bloyd told of the historic Old School Baptist Church at Hopewell, New Jersey. This church has now ceased to exist. She had a very rich history, going back to pre-Revolutionary times. The meeting house is very large and at one time housed several hundred saints who delighted in the glorious doctrines of God's sovereign grace. She had many seasons of reviving. However, lethargy and fear took hold. Brother Bloyd recounted a conversation he had with an old lady in Hopewell. When she was young and had just moved to Hopewell she attended the Old School Baptist Church. There were only a few old people there. Instead of being friendly they looked at her suspiciously and asked, "What are you doing here?" Needless to say, she never went back and they soon went out of existence. This may be an extreme example but the same spirit is all too prevalent today among some Primitive Baptists in varying degrees. If some Primitive Baptists were honest they should just plainly come out and admit that they do not want revival.

It is not easy to live in times of revival. It takes a lot of prayer, the study of God's word, the teaching of new converts, etc. It is a lot easier when "business is usual" and we don't have to think and pray too much. This reminds me of dear old Brother Grady Norton, a wonderful saint who was the clerk of the Regular Baptist Association. In writing the associational letter one year, and listing the statistics of how many were baptized, how many had died, and so forth, he wrote, "Brethren, we are in peace-the graveyard kind." I fear that too many of us are satisfied with this graveyard peace. Let us beg God to give us a proper zeal for a revival of true religion among us.

-Zack Meaders Guess