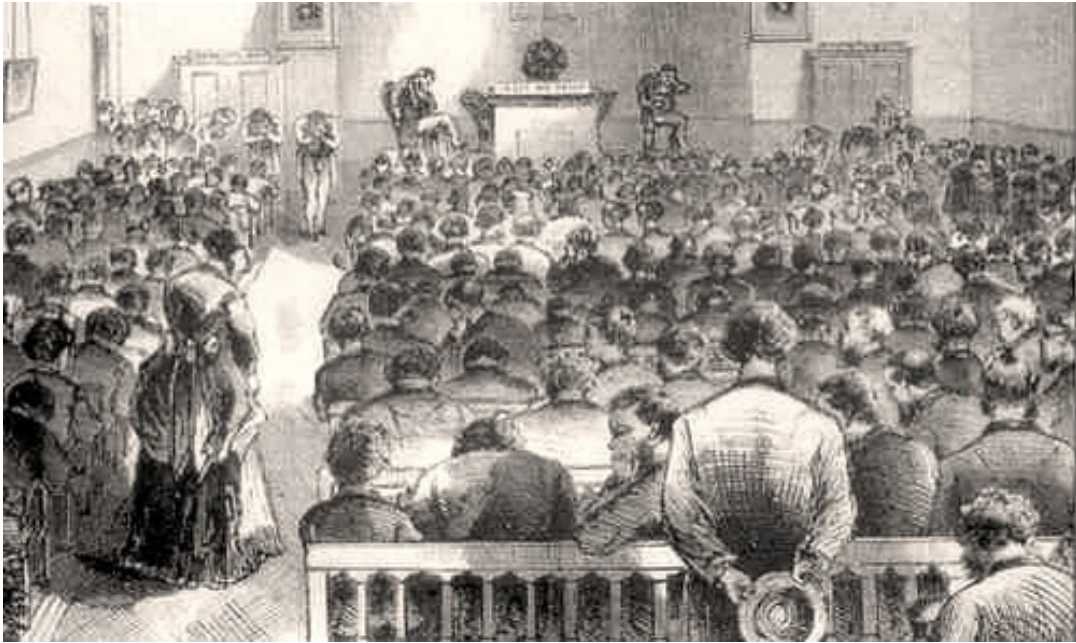


REVIVE *ME!*



REVIVED! PART 1

T. M. MOORE

A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Revive Me!

Revive *Me!*
Revived! Part 1
T. M. Moore
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The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Revive Me!

Welcome to *Revive Me!*

Why are there so many psalms encouraging us to seek the Lord for revival?

Obviously, because God wants us to do so. And He has provided the psalms to guide us in understanding what revival is, why it's necessary, and how we may seek it from Him.

Psalms 119 includes many verses that lead us to understand that revival must first begin in each one of us. From this psalm we will branch out to many more, learning to pray the psalms, seeking the Lord for the great blessing of revival in our day.

This *ReVision* series, "Revived!", is designed to help you understand why revival is so important, and how we can seek it together from the Lord in prayer.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

And if you find this study helpful, please let us know. How have you benefited from this study? Go to our website, www.ailbe.org, and use the Contact Us button to share your story.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Psalms and Prayer

So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

Why did the nations rage,

And the people plot vain things?

The kings of the earth took their stand,

And the rulers were gathered together

Against the Lord and against His Christ.' Acts 4.24-26

The power of united prayer

I find this passage remarkably instructive concerning the work of prayer.

Imagine that you are in a room with thousands of other believers. You've just heard a report about a threat from the authorities to punish you and your friends for worshiping Jesus. The threat is real, because the authorities don't care about Jesus, they're not impressed with all the good done in His Name, and they are determined to silence anyone who persists in testifying about Him. And they have the wherewithal to make that threat a reality.

For the briefest moment, a stunned silence hangs over the congregation. Then, perhaps softly, someone begins to sing the Doxology: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow..."

What happens next? Everyone joins in and sings it right through to the end, boldly, joyously, and with tears! Then another voice begins, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound..." with the same result. Thousands and thousands of believers, defying danger, standing firm in Jesus, singing His praise and renewing their commitment to Him in the familiar words and melodies of beloved hymns.

This is precisely what happened in Acts 4.24-26. Except that, instead of the Doxology and "Amazing Grace," these people sang Psalm 146.6 and the beginning of Psalm 2. As perhaps one person began the line, the congregation of thousands of new believers "raised their voice to God with one accord", and renewed their faith and glorified their Savior by singing and praying the psalms. These psalms then guided their prayers for the Spirit of God and boldness, that the good works of Jesus, and joyful witness to His Name might increase, and not be stopped (Acts 4.27-30).

The result of this should not surprise us (Acts 4.31): "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

Why pray the psalms?

God has given us the psalms – the largest and most beautiful book in the Bible – to help us come before Him in prayer, that we may find mercy and grace to help in our times of need (Heb. 4.16). It's a good thing He has, because, as Paul explained, we don't know how to pray as we should (Rom. 8.26). The Spirit helps us in our prayer, and Jesus intercedes for us at all times (Heb. 7.25); but this does not relieve us of the duty of seeking the Lord in prayer.

And, since we are commanded to pray, but don't know how to pray as we should; since God has given us an abundance of prayers, testimonies, and songs to use in coming before Him; and especially since, as we see in many places in Scripture, the saints of God turned to the psalms to comprise and direct their prayers, we can do no better in seeking the Lord than to learn to pray the Psalms.

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And to pray them together with other believers. And especially, to pray them for God's Spirit to embolden us, revive and renew us, and empower us to live as witnesses for Christ.

To be precise, for the purposes of this study, we want to begin using the psalms to seek the Lord in prayer together for revival in our Lord Jesus Christ.

That our world needs reviving is abundantly clear. That we in the Church need reviving may not be quite as clear, since we tend to think of ourselves as saved and doing OK – not perfect, mind you, but sure of our salvation and at peace with the Lord and one another. But the evidence of the psalms is that revival – revival that brings the goodness of God to light in the land of the living, so that multitudes are converted to Jesus, and good works abound to transform societies and cultures – such revival begins among the people of God, and spreads out from them, by the power of their witness, to bring renewal to churches and awakening to the lost world.

It may surprise us to see just how many of the psalms, as God's prayer guides, lead us to seek the Lord for revival. And in this study, we're going to consider many of those psalms, to discover the promise and hope for revival, to begin seeking it daily and earnestly in prayer, and to encourage and equip others to join us, until the Spirit once again fills and shakes us, and we are emboldened to live and speak as witnesses for Jesus Christ.

And we will begin with Psalm 119.

Praying the psalms together for revival

Psalm 119 is a much-loved psalm, dealing as it does with the place, purpose, and power of the Word of God in shaping our lives for Him.

It is true that nearly every verse of this great acrostic poem encourages us, in one form or another, to shelter in the Law and Word of God; teaches us to find our greatest delight in meeting the Lord there; and counsels us to submit to the power of the Word for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. But laced throughout these 176 verses are cries for revival: "Revive *me!*" the psalmist cries, thus recognizing that even he, the human author of one of the greatest chapters in all of God's holy Word, stood daily in need of the reviving grace and power of the Lord.

But what does that mean? What is revival? Why do we need it? How can we know when to seek it? How may we seek revival? And what should we expect as we begin to be revived?

We'll look to Psalm 119 to outline answers to these and other questions about revival, before we turn, in the remainder of our study, to examine various other revival psalms, and begin praying them as our own heart cry to the Lord.

For Reflection

1. Have you ever tried praying the psalms? If you were to pray to begin praying the psalms, with which psalm would you begin? Why that psalm?
2. What do you understand by the term "revival"? Why would the writer of Psalm 119 cry out for revival over and over again?
3. We're going to be learning how to pray the psalms that guide us in seeking revival. Are you willing to take up this challenge, and begin seeking the Lord to revive you?

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Next Steps – Transformation. The “Next Steps” portion of each installment in this series will be devoted to help you seek the Lord for revival. In each installment, we will give you part of a psalm to pray, which you can use – and share with others – to seek the Lord for revival. We encourage you to meditate on the psalm, and to pray it throughout the day. For this installment, let’s pray Psalm 119.25:

My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.

2 What is Revival?

*Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.* Psalm 119.154

An ongoing need

We need to clarify what we mean by *revival*. For some, that word may conjure memories of church meetings led by some passionate evangelist, meant to refortify the faithful and snatch a few lost souls for the Kingdom.

For others *revival* may connote great seasons in Church history when the Spirit of God seemed to move mightily on many people, converting multitudes to Christ, turning lapsed sinners back to the Lord, and producing signs and wonders which are not the normal experience of Christians today – seasons not infrequent in the past, but typically, not expected in our day.

I suspect that for many of us the term has fallen out of use, as though either we no longer have use for it, or it no longer holds the kind of promise people are looking for today.

But *revival* – in the Biblical sense – is nothing other than a work of God, beginning in the soul, by which believers recognize their need for a closer attachment to God, confess and repent of all known sin, reach out to God for a greater measure of His saving mercy and grace, accelerate the pace of their journey toward Christlikeness, and bring the reality of the Kingdom to the world in all their words and deeds. In Scripture, God's people seek revival with sorrow and regret for sins; they long for a fresh touch from the Lord, seek elevation to a higher plane of spiritual experience, and cry out for more consistent affections of joy, praise, hope, and boldness in the Lord.

In short, revival is just a fuller and more constant experience of our redemption. As such, revival is the daily need of every true believer in Jesus Christ, and the *ultimate* need of all who do not yet know Him. Without daily and increasing revival, Christian life becomes banal and lacking in power and joy. Without revival, life fills with doubt, dread, uncertainty, disappointment, fleeting seasons of happiness, and an abiding mood of ennui, disappointment, and insatiable self-interest.

We can perhaps understand why the writer of Psalm 119 interspersed those 176 verses of longing to know, delight in, live, and fulfill the Law and Word of God with passionate pleas for God to revive him. Revival is *every* Christian's need, *every* day, for *every* aspect of our life. Without revival, the righteousness, peace, and joy awaiting us in the Kingdom of God become mere words without power; and our experience of the Christian life becomes strained, unenthraling, unreal, dull, and lacking in transforming grace.

Revival is what we need; but, following the example of the psalmist, we must seek it from the Lord, on His terms, and with the expectation of realizing what He promises, and not merely what we might want.

As we contemplate our need for revival – a need so urgent and ongoing that we should seek it daily and throughout each day – let's look to the psalmist to outline what we seek when we come to God for this great blessing.

A work of God

Revival is a work only God can do. We cannot program revival by manipulating settings, arrangements, or an order of events. The Second Great Awakening in America (ca. 1800-1830), which saw so many people converted to faith in Jesus Christ, and birthed a wide variety of Kingdom movements and institutions, began as a mighty work of God's Word and Spirit through the plain preaching of the Word of God. In its later

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stages, men sought to make revival their work, by reducing it to a series of mechanics and techniques, which ultimately had the effect of turning revival into a show, and caused the true spiritual flame of revival to go out.

Only God can do the work of revival, but He does that work through the prayers, penance, and proclamations of His people. As we, like the writer of Psalm 119, seek the Lord in prayer for revival, He prepares the resources we need to know His powerful work in our lives, day by day. God wants to revive us every day, but we must seek Him for it. Happily, in the psalms, God has provided very helpful prayers to guide us in pleading with Him to do the work of revival in our lives.

Revival is a work of God beginning *in the soul*. As our psalmist prayed (Ps, 119.175),

*Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.*

This means that we must *understand revival* with our mind, *eagerly desire revival* in our heart, and make *realizing revival* a continuous priority in our conscience. When we truly *understand* both the need for revival and the vast scope of impact revival can have, realizing daily revival will become a top *priority*, and we will *hunger and thirst* for revival, desiring it to increase in and through us every day. We will know that revival has begun in us when we find these components of the soul – heart, mind, and conscience – stirred and fixed and energized to seek the Lord for revival every day.

Where revival begins

Revival – whether daily and personal, or extended in time, scope, and geographic extent – begins in prayer. And when we begin to pray for revival, earnestly seeking the Lord in prayer, then we can know that God has begun to stir in that direction, for only if God moves us to seek Him for revival will we do so; and when we do, we can know, and we can allow ourselves heightened anticipation, that power for revival is building:

...Revive us, and we will call upon Your name (Ps. 80.18).

What hinders us? What could possibly keep us from seeking the Lord for revival, every day? Add praying for revival to your daily prayers. Pray throughout the day. Let God fill your mind, heart, and conscience with visions of revival occurring in your life, your church, your community, our nation, and our world. Let the prospects of revival thrill you, so that praying for God to revive *you* is as close and constant as your every next breath.

When we get to the place where we're praying for revival like the composer of Psalm 119, then revival – that great transforming work of God – will surely be at hand.

For Reflection

1. What do we mean by saying that revival is a work of God? Does this mean we have nothing to do in preparing for revival?
2. Revival on a larger and extended scale – nations, say, and years – does not occur without daily revival in His people. Explain.
3. What can you do to fill your soul – mind, heart, and conscience – with hunger and thirst for revival?

*Next Steps – Preparation: Let's add Psalm 119.154 to the psalms we are beginning to use in seeking the Lord for revival:
Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.*

3 Why We Need Revival

*My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.*

*Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way.*

*I am afflicted very much;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.* Psalm 119.25, 37, 107

The way into God's Word

Psalm 119 is rightly beloved by all believers. The more we read this psalm and meditate on its themes and teaching, the more we feel our own desire growing to know, understand, enjoy, love, and follow God's Word. For in that Word we find rest for our souls, power for daily progress in God's Kingdom, peace and joy and righteousness wrought in us by the Spirit, and ourselves being formed more completely into the image of Jesus Christ.

The psalmist wants to make certain he covers all the bases in asking God to increase his oneness with and submission to God's Word. While each of the different words he uses to refer to the Word of God has its own special nuance, together they suggest a mind roaming over the whole counsel of God as the psalmist prays, beseeching God to open to him every aspect and part of His Word in bringing joy and rejoicing to His servant's heart (cf. Jer. 15.16)

The psalmist refers to the Word of God as His *Law*. This typically indicates the five books of Moses and the holy and righteous and good Law of God contained therein. He also pleads for God to explain His *precepts* to Him. We might prefer to use the word doctrine rather than precepts, or teachings; either way, this indicates a combining from all the Word of God related to various topics. *Testimony* may refer to the lives of great saints, or even to expressions of their heart's desire and their journey with the Lord, as we see in the psalms and other wisdom literature, and in the prophets. God's *justice* and *judgments* refer to the application of His Word in wisdom for every area of life. And all these facets and aspects of the Word of God, which the psalmist so earnestly sought, lead us into the lovingkindness of God, and along the way or path that sees us drawing ever closer to our eternal home with the Lord (cf. Ps. 84).

And, as Jesus reminds us, all this Word and the path it illumines lead us increasingly to Him (Jn. 5.39).

One small problem

The writer of Psalm 119 wanted to possess the Word, and be possessed by it, so that he would understand and delight in it, love and obey it, and turn his feet to walk in the way it indicates (Ps. 119.59, 60). Over and over, for 176 verses, the psalmist appealed to God for more of the life of His Law and all His Word, thus teaching us, in this longest chapter in all of Scripture, how to shape our own souls in relation to God.

There's just one problem. As Pogo might say, and the psalmist clearly understood, the great obstacle standing in the way of the joy and rejoicing of God's Word is us. We become mired in the law of sin, still festering in our souls, and we lose zeal for God and His Word, and turn away from His path (Rom. 7.21-23). Only a work of God can lift us beyond our puny, sinful, self-centered aspirations into the joy and rejoicing of life in the Word of God.

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The psalmist refers, in rich poetic imagery, to those inclinations of the soul, and those conditions of the world, that rob us of the joy and rejoicing that comes from the Word of God. We prefer too often to wallow in the dust of this material world than to aspire to the heights of Christ in glory (v. 25). We cling to idols of various sorts; we allow our thoughts and desires to drift into unwholesome venues and worthless things (v. 37); we fret and worry over every little matter; and we act like the world should revolve around us and whatever we want. Fear of what others might think makes us inconstant in our testimony (v. 88). And we don't seem troubled by the fact that knowing the lovingkindness of God is not our constant condition (v. 159).

If we could see ourselves as God does, we would look less like the shining lights we tend to think we are, and more like the Peanuts™ character Pigpen, who emits a cloud of dust everywhere he goes. We know God has clothed us with the righteousness of Christ, and we are striving to grow into that. But growing into Christlikeness is a work of revival, and a work we sorely need.

Adding to our misery is the fact that we inhabit a world that afflicts us in all manner of ways (v. 107), foisting injustice upon us at work, in our community, and in the gossip of others (v. 149). We tend to want to fight fire with fire in this unjust world, rather than to turn the other cheek and love our enemies; thus, we need the justice, judgments, and righteousness of God to keep us on the right path (vv. 156, 40).

All these matters cloud our vision, distract us from God and His promises, lead us into temptation and sin, and cause us to fail of the blessings of God's Kingdom for most of our life. We're not made for this sort of existence; God created us to be upright and good and happy in Him; but we and our schemes keep us from knowing the full and abundant life He has in store for us in His Word (Eccl. 7.29).

A work of God

We cannot extricate ourselves from this mess. We must cry out, like the apostle Paul, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7.24) And then say, "I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7.25), Who is revealed to us in all of God's Word, and Who invites us thereby to increase in Him in the full and abundant life (Jn. 10.10; 14.6; 17.3).

We need God to deliver us into the joy and rejoicing of His Word. Only God can *revive* us so that we live again in the condition and for the aims He intends. Like the writer of Psalm 119, let us focus on the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word, and Jesus Christ in Whom all those promises are fulfilled, so that we cry out daily, and throughout the day, "Revive *me*! Show *me* the broad scope and rich promises held out for all who believe in You! Enlarge for *me* the horizons of grace and truth, joy and rejoicing, life and fruitfulness that You have reserved for me in Jesus! Grant me a vision of Jesus increasing in me, and me decreasing, so that it becomes true that for me to live is Christ, and the life I live in the flesh I live by the grace and in the power of the Son and Word of God, Who lives in me! Revive *me*, O Lord, and do so every day!"

And as you pray, consider with wonder and thanksgiving what the combined effect might be of multitudes of believers, just like you, praying and seeking the Lord for revival. This is the way to a world turned rightside-up for Jesus. And as we shall see, the psalms teach us to pray and work for just such an outcome.

Look to God's Word for the vision of life He holds out. Accept your inability to get there on your own power. Confess and turn away from every bit of dust and worthlessness that keeps you from the life God intends. Cry out to God for revival!

And see how He will meet you there, at the height of your pleading, to feed you on His Word, and grant you the joy and rejoicing of your heart.

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For reflection

1. How would you explain the idea of revival to a new believer? Who needs revival? Why?
2. Why is it important that we seek *daily* revival? Will we ever *not* need to be revived daily? Explain.
3. Are you praying for revival? Do you feel as if your vision of revival is growing?

Next steps – Transformation: Let's add to our prayers for revival Psalm 119.156 and 159:

Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord;
Revive me according to Your judgments.

Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness.

4 God's Work

*My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.*

*Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.* Psalm 119.25, 175

Not in our hands

In our day, many churches operate according to the idea that whatever we hope to gain in the way of blessings from God, we must take into our own hands to secure. This is most evident in our fixation on programs as the way to realize the promises of abundant life in Christ.

Churches feature a wide range and variety of programs, designed to address the needs of certain age groups or types of believers. Programs require planning, scheduling, reserving space, preparing leaders, arranging rooms, securing materials, providing refreshments, and accomplishing the business of the program within a preset time frame. Programs are strictly optional; if this or that opportunity seems to address your concern, then sign-up and come along. In most churches, programs are attended by only a portion of the congregation, which prompts church leaders to sponsor more programs to attract more of their members into the quest for a fuller experience of salvation.

Of course, we don't see anything like this in the New Testament, where, typically, local churches existed and flourished with a minimum of coordination and scheduling, but under the continuous teaching, oversight, example, and care of capable shepherds, who were willing to spend and be spent to nurture the souls of God's people (cf. Acts 20.28; 2 Cor. 12.15; Heb. 13.17; 1 Pet. 5.1-3; etc.).

In the case of revival, should we decide to pursue it, our default approach is to sponsor a program to make revival happen. Find a speaker, schedule the meetings, arrange for a song leader and music, advertise and publicize, secure rooms and refreshment – all the usual details of a typical church program, and all to ensure that our revival is a success. And by success we mean, well-attended and imparting some spiritual benefit to at least some people.

Our penchant for programming is one aspect of our captivity to the modern technique-and-technology society. But we cannot program revival. God does indeed use organized activities to accomplish His ends, including revival. But He tells us *which* activities we must engage in and how we must use them. And typically, our activities do nothing more than set the stage for God to do what only He can do in reviving His people, renewing their churches, and awakening the lost world to the Gospel.

In revival, *God* works from the inside-out to bring His people to higher stages and a more sustained experience of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

God's Word and Spirit

Revival is the work of God's Word and Spirit, as Jesus reminded us in John 6.63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life." If we want revival – and that is an *if* we still need to decide – then we must look to God, learn His will and ways, embrace His ends and means, and take up the activities He commands for revival to ensue.

This means we must look to His Word for the meaning of revival and the way God prescribes for us to achieve it. Throughout Psalm 119, the psalmist pleads with God to do the work of revival, crying, over and

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over, “Revive *me!*” If we are to be revived, and to know and sustain a marked improvement in our relationship with God, and greater fruitfulness in His calling, then God must do it. He must show us what revival is. He must impress upon us the need for revival. He must create such a desire for this great work in us that we will “give Him no rest” until He brings the blessings of revival to us (Is. 62.7).

The enhanced, growing, and sustained improvement in our walk with and work for the Lord which accompanies revival can only be realized on *His* terms, and as a work of *His* Spirit.

Beginning in the soul

The work of God for revival begins in the soul of every believer, as we have previously mentioned. God initiates this work by stimulating us to seek Him for revival (Ps. 80.18). Something about revival and our sense of need for it flips a switch in our soul, and we begin seeking the Lord to revive us.

This desire for revival quickens and focuses our mind, so that we want to discover more of what it means to be revived, and why a Holy Spirit-inspired psalmist would desire it so earnestly. As we begin to apply our minds to the Scripture, seeking to understand the promise of revival, our vision of it grows. We may discover, by means other than Scripture, that God has accomplished remarkable seasons of revival throughout the history of the Christian movement. This may further inform and inflame our vision of revival.

As our vision of revival grows, our hearts begin to hunger for it. Revival, we realize, is something we both very much need, and very much desire. God stirs our hearts to long for His reviving grace, that we might know more of the full and abundant life Jesus promised; that we might have more power to love God and our neighbors, and to fulfill our callings to be His witnesses; that we might see God’s Spirit move in the hearts of our lost friends and neighbors, so that many of them become followers of Christ; and that reviving grace can bring newness and restoration to our society and culture. Revival becomes something greatly to be desired, and eagerly to be sought, as God by His Word and Spirit engages our mind and heart for a vision of His reviving grace.

And thus revival becomes a priority in our soul – we *must* have revival; we are *determined* that God shall revive us; we begin earnestly seeking Him in prayer, and urging others to join us in this effort. God establishes revival as a high priority and value in our conscience, so that seeking revival begins to occupy a more prominent place in our lives and schedules.

Thus God begins *in* us, *in our soul*, a great and new work, the scope of which we are only just beginning to envision, and which, the more we learn about, the hungrier and thirstier we become to obtain it, by the grace and power of God.

God must revive us, or we will not be revived. We can’t cajole Him into following our programs, but we can seek Him to lead us into His. And that begins in our soul, where God calls His people to prayer: “Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.”

For reflection

1. Programs are not inherently wrong or evil; however, they can become an obstacle to a fuller experience of the Christian life. How?
2. We have to make up our minds that revival is something we really want. How can we know if we want it?
3. How will you know when God is beginning to revive you?

Next Steps – Preparation: Add Psalm 119.175 to those verses you are already using to seek the Lord for revival:

Revive Me!

Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.

5 Our Work

*You are my portion, O LORD;
I have said that I would keep Your words.
I entreated Your favor with my whole heart;
Be merciful to me according to Your word.
I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.* Psalm 119:57-60

God's work and ours

Revival is the work of God. Only God, by His Word and Spirit, can lift us to that higher level of life where, seeing Jesus and delighting in Him continually, we increase in righteousness, flourish in peace, and eagerly fulfill our calling as bringers of joy to our world.

Revival brings a heightened sense of the Kingdom of God, and of the Presence of King Jesus. When revival catches up a community of believers, it can lead to renewal in their church, so that worship, disciple-making, and mission take on new joy, purpose, and power in the light of Scripture. And renewed churches become a power for awakening in their community, as the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom reaches lost people by the words and deeds of revived believers.

This is God's work, and He has done it very often throughout the course of Scripture and Church history. He teaches us to expect that He will do it again, that He is ready – indeed, always ready – to restore the fortunes of His people and send them as lights of blessing to the world. He is able to revive His people, renew His churches, and awaken the world; and when such a glorious visitation comes to pass in our day, it will only be because God has done it.

But it pleases God to accomplish His work, at least in part, by enlisting His people, and using them as earthen vessels of grace to bless the world (cf. 2 Cor. 4.6, 7). As the writer of Psalm 119 shows us repeatedly, we have work to do, as God's chosen vessels, so that through *our* work He can do *His* work of bringing revival, renewal, and awakening to the world.

Our text provides a broad outline of what God calls His people to do in setting the stage for revival.

Positioning for revival

In the first place, God calls His people to maintain a *general readiness for revival*, a hope and expectation that we may increase and abound in Him, according to His Word, and in the power of His grace. Unless we are first *positioned* for revival, we will not be likely to seek it, nor should we expect God to accomplish it.

We see this indicated in Psalm 119:57, 58. The psalmist declares that the Lord is his portion in life, what he desires, depends on, and delights in above all else. The Hebrew word, *כֶּלֶק*, *chelek*, can mean *portion, tract, territory, or possession*. Our portion is where we live, what we possess, what produces our living, what satisfies and secures us, and what we identify as our native soil. God intends to be our portion in life, so that everything that defines us is bound up in, derives from, depends on, and finds its fullest meaning, purpose, significance, and joy in Him.

Anything other than God to which we look for meaning, sustenance, joy, or satisfaction is an idol, and keeps us from having God alone as our portion. We will not be revived until we learn that only God can meet our

needs, provide for our concerns, delight and satisfy our souls, and fulfill our every hope. This is an outlook on life that we must cultivate continuously, so that longing for God, confidence in Him, and worship and obedience come increasingly to characterize us in all things.

This comes as we work at keeping God's Word, as we see in the second part of verse 57. The more we read, study, meditate on, and incorporate God's Word into our lives, the more He will be the portion we seek. And the more we will realize just how greatly He favors us, and how much we need His favor – His grace – to attend to us at every moment (v. 58). This, in turn, will make us a people characterized by thanksgiving, praise, hope, and prayer, as we rejoice in God's favor, increase in His Word, and cling to Him as our portion in life.

When this becomes our pattern of life, in every aspect of our lives, we'll be *positioned* to seek the Lord for revival. This entails three distinct works on our part.

Working for revival

First, we must *pray*. Let our prayers include, besides crying out specifically for revival, submitting to the searching of God's Word and Spirit, that we might learn our *need for revival* (Ps. 139.23, 24). As we pray through the psalms, listening for God to further elaborate and clarify His Word, we discover the true nature of our ways, and of the ways of God's people and of the world (Ps. 119.59). We will not seek a different way – a *revived* way – until we first discover how our *current* ways have departed from the path God marks out in His Word.

Then we must enter into *penance* for our sin. That is, we must recognize and *confess* any sins the Lord shows us in ourselves, our churches, and our world; and we must *repent* of those sins and turn our feet back to the paths of the Lord. Penance is a discipline by which we put legs on confession and repentance. The monks of the Celtic Revival had a saying: "Contraries are by contraries cured." Should something contrary to God's Law be found in our soul or life, only that which is *contrary* to the sin – and thus in line with God's Word – will cure it. So we must identify those behaviors that will enable us to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12.21), and put those into practice, thus demonstrating to God the sincerity of our repentance and the earnestness of our desire for revival.

Finally, revival comes as we *proclaim* the need for, promise of, and hope entailed in revival. We need to proclaim revival to ourselves, until we actually believe it can happen. Then we will proclaim the promises of revival to our fellow believers, calling them to get in position and take up the work God has appointed for us if revival is to happen. And we will proclaim the promise of revival – new life in Jesus Christ – to our unbelieving neighbors, calling them to repent and believe the Good News of forgiveness, life, and hope in Jesus.

When we take up our work – the work God has appointed for us in seeking revival – then we will find God at work in and through us to do the work that only He can do in bringing revival, renewal, and awakening to our world. So let's follow the example of our psalmist, and embrace the work God calls us to, that revival may come in our lifetimes, and endure for generations to come.

For Reflection

1. What do we mean by "getting into position" for revival? Why can there be no revival without this?
2. What's the difference between confession of sin and repentance? Why do we need both? How does the practice of penance help us "put legs" on repentance?
3. What can keep you from taking up the work God has appointed for you in seeking revival? How can you overcome those obstacles?

Revive Me!

Next Steps – Transformation: Begin praying Psalm 119.59, 60, in addition to those parts of Psalm 119 you have already been praying.

6 The Promise of Revival

*Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way.
Establish Your word to Your servant,
Who is devoted to fearing You.
Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your judgments are good.
Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me in Your righteousness.* Psalm 119.37-40

The question

God promises that revival comes to those who seek it: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33.3). They will seek revival who understand the glorious promise of it, and who desire to attain that promise, even though they have never known it before.

That which we earnestly desire, we diligently seek. The psalms we will be considering in future installments of this study hold out “great and mighty things” which few, if any, of us in this generation have ever known before. The challenge to us, as we read and pray these psalms, will be to let God’s Word form our desires, so that we believe and anticipate the blessings of revival, and seek them – and God Who gives them – with all our hearts: “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 33.12, 13).

The question before us is thus twofold: Do we really understand the promise of revival? And are we committed to seeking that promise in the ways God prescribes?

Let’s look at the first of these questions – in a strictly introductory manner – to see what Psalm 119 – and other places in Scripture – teaches concerning the promise of revival. The other psalms we will consider in this study will greatly enlarge on this outline. But for now, let’s just glimpse the broad parameters – and blessed hope – of the promise of revival as Psalm 119 guides us.

Increased love for God

Revival begins in a greater devotion to God, nurtured through prayer and penance, leading us to know and love Him more. As we have seen, our focus is too much on the things of this earth – our work, our problems, our fears, and our fleeting desires. Our souls drag the dust much of the time (Ps. 119.25); and, when we recognize this, we must allow the Spirit of God to convince us that this is not what God intends. He has higher joys and more lasting values in store for us, where Christ is seated at His right hand (Ps. 16.11).

As Psalm 119 makes clear throughout, God calls us to know Him, to delight in Him and His Word (Ps. 119.70, 103, 127; cf. Pss. 37.4; 40.8), and to know fullness of joy and holy pleasures forevermore, by abiding in Him (Ps. 119.111). Everything in this dusty world militates against our knowing the beauty, goodness, and truth of God with increasing joy and satisfaction; but we must determine that nothing will prevent us from pursuing increased knowledge of the Lord (Phil. 3.7-14).

When God begins to revive us, He turns our hearts and minds to Him, to contemplate His beauty and wait on His goodness (Ps. 27.4, 8-14). As our focus becomes more consistently on the things that are above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places (Col. 3.1-3), then our desires will turn from the fleeting matters of this earthly existence to the eternal priorities and pleasures of our exalted Savior and King (Ps. 119.37). The way of Christ will unfold more clearly before us, and we will delight to walk in it, worshipping the Lord with all

Revive Me!

our soul and strength, with renewed vigor, constancy, and joy (Ps. 119.164, 175).

As God opens spiritual vistas, spreads before us horizons of glory and splendor, leads us more deeply into eternal verities, and draws us more constantly into His Presence, our desire will grow to know these great and mighty things, these heavenly joys, more fully and consistently here on earth, in our lives, and with the people and in the places where we live, move, and have our being (Matt. 6.10).

The heavenly Kingdom on earth

As God revives and enlarges our love for Him, and we participate more consistently and fully in His eternal Presence and glory, we will embrace the work of proclamation – by life and word – which brings the glorious rule of King Jesus to earth as it is in heaven.

Our hunger for God's Word will increase (Jer. 15.16), and we will devote ourselves to spending more and better time in it (Ps. 119.82, 97-99). As we do, our understanding of the Word will grow (Ps. 119.104). As our understanding grows, our love for the Scriptures will increase (Ps. 119.88, 97), leading to greater delight in feasting on the Word (Ps. 119.143), more expansive understanding of its mysteries, greater love for Jesus, Who is revealed there (Jn. 5.39), and more power to obey the Word in every area of our lives (Ps. 119.105, 106, 112).

Through this renewed commitment to and delight in God's Word, we will come to know more of His redeeming and empowering grace (Ps. 119.88, 154, 159). Our souls will fill with God's love for us, and we will gladly give them over – heart, mind, and conscience – to the greater realization of Christ's image in us (2 Cor. 3.12-18). Imagine the effects of this on our outlook, countenance, demeanor, relationships, and work, as well as on our trials, setbacks, and struggles! With Jesus increasing in us, our old, dust-coated way of life will decrease, and the light of glory will sparkle and shine increasingly in and through us (1 Cor. 10.31). We will light up for Jesus, and He will light up the dark world through us, as His Kingdom advances and the darkness flees His growing Presence in us (1 Jn. 2.8).

As grace increase in us, and Jesus takes our thoughts, affections, values, and priorities captive to His will (2 Cor. 10.3-5), we will experience more of the life of righteousness and good works for which we have been redeemed (Ps. 119.40; Eph. 2.8-10). We will throw off chains of fear and rejoice through every hampering affliction (Ps. 119.50, 107), as the power of God's Word yields profit unto every good work in our lives (2 Tim. 3.15-17). We will walk at liberty in the Holy Spirit (Ps. 119.45; Gal. 5.16-23); we will proclaim the Word of God to everyone around us (Ps. 119.46); we will sing the praises of God's Word (Ps. 119.54); we will learn good judgment and whatever knowledge of God we need for serving Him (Ps. 119.66); and we will bring the gladness of the Lord to everyone who knows Him (Ps. 119.74).

Imagine, if you can, what great and mighty things can happen when not just you, but all the people of God in this generation begin to know His reviving power!

Can you say with the writer of Psalm 119 that your soul faints to know this experience of revival (Ps. 119.81)? Seeing the promise of revival, can you be content with your spiritual *status quo*? Are you beginning to see the great depth and breadth of Kingdom transformation the Word of God can bring when revival begins (Ps. 119.96)?

If so, then you are ready to begin the work of seeking the Lord for revival, using His Word to guide you into great and mighty things you have never known before.

For Reflection

1. How would you explain the promise of revival to another believer?

Revive Me!

2. Why is seeking God, and increasing in Him, the necessary first phase of any revival? Can revival be sustained apart from this?

3. How would your life be different if revival began to occur in you today?

Next Steps – Preparation: Add today's verses to those from Psalm 119 that you have begun praying already.

7 Seeking Revival

*I cry out with my whole heart;
Hear me, O LORD!
I will keep Your statutes.
I cry out to You;
Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.
I rise before the dawning of the morning,
And cry for help;
I hope in Your word.
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word.
Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;
O LORD, revive me according to Your justice. Psalm 119:145-149*

Obstacles to revival

Even a cursory reading of the history of the Christian movement will reveal that great periods of revival have occurred in the past. At such times, believers have experienced a fresh upwelling of God's Spirit in their souls, leading them to greater faith and joy, more exalted worship, and more consistent witness for the Lord. Multitudes of people have come to faith in Jesus during such times; churches have been renewed and grown larger and stronger; new churches have started; and powerful Christian endeavors in the areas of missions, education, mercy, social renewal, and publishing were launched, bringing great social and cultural changes to societies.

Revival, and the awakening of lost sinners that it brings, is a good work of God, which is why God encourages His people to seek it. But what can keep us from seeking the reviving power of God's Spirit in our lives and times? Three things, primarily.

First, *complacency*: We just don't see the need for revival. We're happy in our faith, we like our church and our Christian friends, and we think all this talk about revival seems maybe a little fanatical and far-fetched. Best to leave well enough alone.

Second, *unbelief*: We don't believe God can bring revival in our time. Sure, He's done it in the past, but that was *then*; this is *now*. And in our now, God doesn't do such things. Why bother pestering Him for something we're quite certain He's not going to do?

Finally, *seeking revival our way* rather than God's: If we think we can program our way into a revival, we're wrong. God shows us how revival comes, and no amount of trying to shoehorn Him into some schedule of events or raft of activities will accomplish what He promises in His Word. We must be willing to seek revival as *He* defines it, and on *His* terms, not ours.

If we want God to revive us, we must seek revival as He directs. And that means praying for revival, according to His Word.

Praying for revival

All the psalms that lead us to pray for revival are agreed on four basic elements to an approach for praying for revival.

First, we must pray *earnestly*, with our whole heart, sincerely, eagerly, even insistently, calling on God to do

what only He can do in restoring His goodness to the world. Casual prayers for revival – praying when we think about it, dropping in a prayer for revival amidst other prayers, or praying in a perfunctory rather than a passionate manner – will not bring about the revival God promises. As we shall see, the psalmists whom God used to guide us in praying for revival counsel urgency, earnestness, resolution, and eager anticipation as we come before the Lord for revival.

Second, we must pray *individually*, like the writer of Psalm 119, that God would bring reviving grace to each one of us. We must pray each day, “O Lord, revive *me!*” Each of us needs revival, and we need it every day. We must seek the Lord daily for forgiveness, cleansing, strength to repent and walk in His way, and an ever-larger horizon of salvation, together with the faith to believe we can actually realize what God promises.

But we must also pray *with other believers*. The psalms that guide us to pray for revival were meant to be used in worship, in congregations gathered to seek the Lord for His promised blessings. We should bring praying for revival into our existing services of worship, our Bible study and fellowship groups, and our church prayer meetings. But we should also gather for special, focused times of seeking the Lord for revival with other believers. If we want revival, we must pray together as God’s people (2 Chron. 7.14).

Finally, we must *persevere* in praying for revival. In the past, groups of believers have initiated movements of prayer for revival that have lasted 100 years! Some in our generation have taken the torch from previous generations and been praying for many years, and they are not about to give up praying now. We need to stay at it, repeatedly and consistently coming before the Lord, asking Him to do what He has promised, and to do it *now*.

Psalms to pray for revival

God has provided many excellent prayers to guide us in seeking Him for revival. In this series, we’re going to look at some of the psalms which teach us why we need revival (Pss. 12, 53, 102, etc.), what to expect when revival comes (Pss. 72, 85, 96, etc.), and how to persevere in our work of seeking God for revival (Pss. 27, 80, 126, etc.). We will walk through these psalms in detail, learning both what they teach us about seeking the Lord for revival, as well as how to use them in personal and group settings.

But none of this will be of any use to you if you have not made up your mind to seek the Lord for revival. I urge you to do so, to prepare your heart and mind, and to establish it as a priority in all your prayers, and with all the groups you meet for prayer, that you will seek the Lord for revival. Together let us take up the bold challenge God calls us to in Isaiah 62.6, 7:

I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They shall never hold their peace day or night.
You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent,
And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

For reflection

1. What is preventing you from taking up the work of seeking the Lord for revival?
2. Why is it so important that we pray for revival? Why doesn’t God just bring it?
3. Why should we expect the psalms to help us in knowing how to pray for revival?

Next Steps – Transformation: Add today’s verses to the ones from Psalm 119 that you’ve already begun praying.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What do we mean by “revival”, and why is it important that we seek it?
2. How can the psalms help us in seeking the Lord for revival?
3. What can keep us from praying for revival? How can we overcome these obstacles?
4. Why is it important that God’s people pray together for revival? What are some ways you might do that??
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this first installment in our study on seeking the Lord for revival? How are you putting that lesson to work in your daily life?

For prayer:

Revive Me!

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.