

SOUNDINGS

Three Brief Newsletters

on

REVIVAL

and the

RIVER OF GOD

Copyright © 1999
Mark W. Weaver



NO. 1 - THE RIVER OF GOD: STAYING IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S FLOW

Mark twain!"

In the days when steamboats plied America's rivers, their captains took regular soundings to measure the river's depth beneath them. Above all, captains feared running aground. Mark twain means "mark two fathoms" deep.

In 1910, Captain James A. Henderson, owner of the *Pittsburgh-Cincinnati Packet Line*, piloted his steamboat, the VIRGINIA, toward the southern bank of the swelling Ohio River just downstream of Marietta, Ohio where he had a scheduled stop at the Willow Grove Store. By the time his men unloaded the goods and returned to the boat, the river had begun to recede. Within a few short minutes, Henderson found his boat resting on a small rise in a Kentucky cornfield.

For millennia, rivers served as mankind's chief highways of commerce. From the Euphrates and the Nile to the Danube, the Elbe and the Rhine, to the Mississippi, Ohio and Missouri, ships and boats have plied their rivers' waters carrying people and cargo to their chosen destinations.

*The most powerful river in history
is the River of God.*

Rivers are mighty forces of nature. When they outrun their banks they can quickly wipe out towns and take lives. And when they run shallow, towns' economies sometimes dry up and wither away.

The most powerful river in history is the River of God. Its source is found at God's throne (Rev 22:1) and it flows out from under the threshold of God's temple (Ezekiel 47:1). It once passed through Eden, watering Eden's garden (Gen 2:10).

And its waters nourish the tree of life, which brings healing to the nations (Rev 22:2).

But what exactly is the River of God?

Has the River of God coursed through time, from Abraham and Sarah to this very moment? Have saints like Paul and Augustine and Luther and Wesley navigated this River? Has the River of God conveyed the purpose, the will and the power of God through history?

If God's will, purpose and power have been borne upon His River throughout history, then saints in the present-day Church are but Lilliputian voyagers on this ancient flow.

What keeps God's River flowing in its predetermined path? In other words, to what banks does this mighty River conform? Are the banks named the Truth and the Spirit?

As sojourners on the River of God, we should aim to stay in the center of the flow. Let us not stray too close to either bank lest we become snagged on a rock or on a tree root or become inadvertently caught in an

SOUNDINGS A Christian Newsletter

Welcome to **SOUNDINGS**, a Christian newsletter providing a timely word and Biblical teaching to 21st Century Christian believers.

Drawing from the imagery of modern-day boatmen who use sonar devices to take regular "soundings" of the water's depth beneath them, **SOUNDINGS** is published to aid Christians in their challenging journey along the River of God.

eddy. History swells with those whose faith shipwrecked because they did not abide in the center of God's River flow.

Stagnant lagoons that pool outside the River's flow present one of the greatest hazards. Travelers need to look out for the lagoons that form along the banks of THE TRUTH—the lagoons of extreme fundamentalism, hyper-Calvinism, Reconstructionism and legalism. And we should also be on guard for the lagoons that form along the banks of THE SPIRIT—the deadly lagoons of emotionalism, disorder, lawlessness, and of seeking an experience with God over God himself.

Navigating the River of God is particularly treacherous during times of outpouring. When the River of God swells, rushing out of its banks on either side, Christians must take special care not to get grounded on dry land when the river recedes. Remember Captain Henderson and the VIRGINIA.

Many are confused about the River of God. Scripture tells us that the River of God flows "out of" His throne, not towards it. Every river's destination is the sea, which in Biblical imagery represents hell, separation from God and judgment. Perhaps we should consider the River of God in terms of the Sherwin Williams Paint logo—God's glory covering the earth as the waters cover the sea (Is 11:9), washing all who touch it in His grace and goodness.

Modern river men no longer use leaded rods to test the water's depth. They use sonar aids boatmen in maintaining the flow.

Christian leaders, particularly pastors, need to engage their "spiritual sonar" daily to ensure that they captain their flock toward the center of the river's flow.

As we abandon ourselves to God in worship and revival, let us proceed with wisdom,

judgment and discernment. Below is an excellent quote from a saint who lived in a different generation but who no doubt witnessed the same hazards and lagoons that threaten us today.

"Among the gifts of the Spirit scarcely one is of greater practical usefulness than the gift of discernment. This gift should be highly valued and frankly sought as being almost indispensable in these critical times. This gift will enable us to distinguish the chaff from the wheat and to divide the manifestations of the flesh from the operations of the Spirit."

A.W. Tozer

SOUNDINGS

A periodic two-page newsletter published by GROUNDWORKS, providing insight, wisdom, and encouragement to 21st Century Christians.

THEME: WORSHIP

What is genuine Christian worship? From traditional to contemporary, there are nearly as many expressions as there are churches in the Body of Christ today. But true worship comes from the heart and ascends to God's throne. Look for additional themes in other SOUNDINGS newsletters.

Managing Editor: Mark W. Weaver
Editor: Kim O'Hara
Copyright © 2001

SOUNDINGS

A PUBLICATION OF
GROUNDWORKS



NO. 2 - THE SEVEN R'S OF HEALING OUR LAND

TALK OF REVIVAL commands many a conversation in Christian circles these days. And yet revival is but one of several elements of God's plan to heal our nation. Below are seven components of healing.

REEXAMINATION. Old Testament prophets served God and their nation by placing the testimony of God's word alongside the testimony of history. Then they called the past into account. Does God call the Church to play the same role with the nations of the world?

Before a prophetic Church can call the nation's past to account, the Church's prophets must call the Church's past to account. Many things must be reevaluated. Our own attitudes, theology and behavior as well as the sins of our Christian forebears must come under the scrutiny of God's word.

REPENTANCE. During the process of reexamination, as the Holy Spirit and the word of God operate upon the human spirit and soul, God's work of repentance commences. Only under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit can the soul be made aware of the darkening grip of sin.

New Testament repentance involves an informing of the mind with truth, a choice to reject an ungodly lifestyle and a God-breathed commitment to live from this moment forward in a manner pleasing to God. Repentance is more than simply being sorry for one's sins. Repentance is a complete change of direction.

RECONCILIATION. God's creation is diverse. He demonstrates His glory through many unique denominations, races and cultures. All made in His image are worthy of honor and respect. Jesus prayed for His

Church to be one so that the world would know that He is the Christ (John 17:21).

But today's Church is not one. We are divided along denominational, racial, and cultural lines. Jesus is calling us to abandon our prejudices, forgive those who have hurt us, and respect and receive from one another. God is calling His people into genuine, practical working relationships with one another. Until Christians experience reconciliation we will fall short of God's purposes in revival and beyond.

Revival is but one of several components to healing our nation.

REVIVAL. For nearly a generation, the Church has been awaiting world-wide revival. Revival talk frequently dominates Sunday pulpit messages. But what is revival?

Although the word revival cannot be found in scripture, ancient Israel experienced revival on a number of occasions.

“The first step in any healing process is examination. For the Christian in search of a right relationship with God, examination must be continuous. To reexamine means to examine again and suggests a need to review the truth about our own lives in light of scripture over and over again in order to obtain a clearer understanding and a purer heart.”

Historically, revivals, both in Biblical and world history, are accompanied by a heightened awareness of God's majesty and holiness, a fresh mindfulness of the depravity of human nature and the sinner's need for God. Revivals are often accompanied by miraculous manifestations.

REFORMATION. Unless followed by reformation, God's work in revival falls short. *Diorthosis* is the Greek word for reformation. It is found only once in Scripture (Heb 9:10) and means straightening out that which is crooked. Straightening refers to individual behavior as well as cultural and religious institutions.

After meeting God in revival, permanent change must occur in thinking and behavior. If revival affects a great number of people in the land, it is expected that, within a generation, the nation's institutions and cultural mores will become reformed.

RESTITUTION. In ancient Israel, priests handled guilt offerings from those who had committed the offense of fraud Lev. 5:6-7). In addition to offering a sacrificial ram, the offenders were also required to repay those whom they had defrauded plus an additional twenty percent (Num 5:7-8).

A deep wound endures in our nation's soul from the days when Christian men held slaves in bondage and stole land from Native American tribes. The Church must find God's wisdom and guidance in these long standing wounds repairing the breach caused by Christian forbears. Our nation whole, cannot fully return to God, until this damage is repaired.

RESTORATION. From His first promise to a fallen Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21) to this

very moment, God has been in the restoration business. Blessing and abundance are His promises to the faithful and obedient and restoration is His desire (Isa. 32:16; 35:1).

After the Church in America reexamines its selfish conduct, repents of its sin, pursues true reconciliation, experiences revival, reforms its behavior, and makes restitution to the defrauded ones, it will be God's delight to bring restoration to the nation (Deut. 28:1-14).

An eighth R might also be considered—RENEWAL. Once the Church and the nation experience all seven rudiments, regular renewal will ensure that we continue to obey God's commands, enabling His favor to rest upon us.

SOUNDINGS

A periodic two-page newsletter published by **HEAL**, providing strategic insight, timely wisdom and encouragement to Christian leaders.

THEME: HEAL THE CHURCH, HEAL THE NATION

A collection of articles encouraging Christian leaders to ponder and preach about the prophetic role the Church plays in history. Look for additional themes in other **SOUNDINGS** newsletters.

Managing Editor: Mark W. Weaver
Editor: Kim O'Hara
Copyright © 1999

SOUNDINGS
A PUBLICATION OF
GROUNDWORKS



No. 3 – REVIVAL IN OLD ISRAEL

REVIVAL TALK IS ON THE RISE AGAIN.

What is revival? According to Merriam Webster, the word first appeared in 1651 and is defined in the following way:

a period of renewed religious interest; an often highly emotional evangelistic meeting or series of meetings.

When we pray for revival, we don't pray for renewed religious interest, or even a highly emotional evangelistic meeting. We pray for something that lasts—a move of God that changes lives. The Scriptures supply us with God's view of revival. Here are five examples from the Old Testament:

THE PASSOVER. The Israelites experienced a revival just prior to the very first Passover in Egypt. After generations of slavery, the Hebrews cried out to God for deliverance. God sent Moses who proclaimed God's message. In faith the Israelites repented of their sins and obeyed God's word. Then God delivered them from political bondage. Signs and wonders accompanied their miraculous deliverance. (read Exodus 1-15)

ENTERING THE LAND. Revival visited the Israelites again as they entered Caanan and prepared to take the city of Jericho. Joshua spoke the word of the Lord to them and they obeyed in faith, repenting from a generation of unbelief. God gave them miraculous victory over Jericho and many other cities in Caanan enabling them to conquer heathen cultures and dethrone foreign, idol gods. (read Joshua 1-10)

RETURN OF THE ARK. Once again, the Jews of King David's day experienced revival when they heard the word of the Lord, repented, and found their faith renewed after years of apostasy. Following their miraculous victory over the Philistines,

David brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. There the king established the glorious City of David—Zion—and lifted Israel to the zenith of its cultural glory. (read I Chronicles. ...)

KING JOSIAH. Hebrews of King Josiah's day also experienced revival after temple workers found a lost copy of the book of the law. When King Josiah heard it read he rent his clothes and repented. His renewed faith led the nation into a short-lived revival which included the destruction of idols and reformation of Hebrew religious practice and culture. (read II Chronicles)

NEHEMIAH. A Jerusalem remnant experienced revival when Nehemiah's faith and visionary words invigorated them to repent from their apostasy and rebuild

EDWARDS ON REVIVAL

“... THERE HAS BEEN, ESPECIALLY IN SOME PLACES, A MIXTURE OF ENTHUSIASM AND FALSE RELIGION, AND SOME HAVE RUN INTO GREAT ERRORS IN THEIR CONDUCT, AND SOME HAVE FALLEN AWAY, AND THERE IS A DECLENSION IN OTHERS THAT IS TO BE LAMENTED; YET WE THINK THE EFFECT HAS BEEN SUCH, AND STILL CONTINUES TO BE SUCH, AS LEAVES NO ROOM REASONABLY TO DOUBT OF GOD'S HAVING BEEN WONDERFULLY IN THE MIDST OF US ...”

JONATHAN EDWARDS
JUNE 30, 1743

Jerusalem's walls as well as the traditions and ways of their culture. (read the whole book of Nehemiah)

Several common threads appear in these five examples.

- ✓ God used one man's faith to inspire others. (Moses, Joshua, David, Josiah, Nehemiah)
- ✓ A proclamation of the word of the Lord preceded revival.
- ✓ A band of believers responded to the word, repented of their sin and called upon the Lord.
- ✓ Corporate repentance resulted in the destruction of false idols, a return to the orthodoxy of the faith and cultural renewal.

In addition, two other observations can be made. In some cases, signs and wonders accompanied revival. And, in some cases, a revival of faith enabled the Israelites to be victorious in battle.

As the Church of our day seeks God for revival, we should be careful to look for similar threads, for in them we find Biblical evidence of authenticated revival. We should pray that God will raise up leaders to inspire us to God's higher call. We should listen carefully for the word of the Lord to be proclaimed. We should ask God to give us genuine repentance. We should desire a return to the orthodoxy of our faith—those sound and fundamental doctrines which have sustained and guided the Church for generations. And we should be willing and prepared to confront the cultural idols of our day.

In addition, God may choose to include signs and wonders in His revival visitation. As we prepare our hearts for revival, we should be ready to witness supernatural manifestations but remain cognizant that in the Biblical model for revival, signs and wonders are often present but not required.

"... there is another wave of blessing passing over this earth. Tidings are coming from all parts of the world, telling us of the great work God is doing. ..."

D.L. Moody, 1880

Revivals come and go. History chronicles countless instances of the Holy Spirit's movement upon the human race. But what are the long-term effects of Christian revivals upon individuals, cultures and nations?

Read more about revival in other **SOUNDINGS** Newsletters.

SOUNDINGS

A periodic two-page newsletter published by **HEAL**, providing strategic insight, timely wisdom and encouragement to Christian leaders.

THEME: REVIVAL

A collection of articles encouraging Christian leaders to ponder and preach about the prophetic role the Church plays in history. Look for additional themes in other **SOUNDINGS** newsletters.

Managing Editor: Mark W. Weaver
Editor: Kim O'Hara
Copyright © 1999