

*Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

*2 I know thy works, and thy labour; and thy patience, and how thou, canst not bear them which are evil: and thou*

*halt tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

*3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

*4 Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy*

*first love.*

*5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

# "I HAVE SOMEWHAT AGAINST THEE"

*Brother Emerson A. Wilson*

## **We Must Have His Approval**

What Christ had against the church at Ephesus was that they had left their first love. He let them know in verse 5 that unless they repented, He would remove the candlestick. When He takes away the candlestick, there is nothing on which to put the light.

The candlesticks are the congregations where the light shines out. Friend, we need to take this a little more seriously today. When God takes away the candlestick, He is merely saying, "I am going to take away your opportunity of living for God, and of bearing light to the world." This is exactly what we are saved for, to be the light of the world, but when we live short of obedience to God, we cannot shine out any light.

Now it may not be that you have left your first love, but consider this question: What does Christ have against you today? We are in such a deceitful age, when you can deceive people until everybody will clap their hands and acclaim you highly, but does Christ have anything against you? He only needs one thing, brother. We are living in a day and time when much of Chris-

tendom has fallen to a level of feeling that if your good works outshine or outweigh your bad works, you will make it all right. In Christ's balance, however, you can have ninety-nine good things, but if He has somewhat against you, you need to repent.

God doesn't work around the church; He works through the church. Christ is still in the midst of the churches. He is still here, and He is the same Jesus as He was there. He is Jesus who will not overlook sin, a Jesus who demands complete and perfect living by the grace of God. Let's lay aside the good qualities and see if Christ has anything against us. If you have the least thing against any brother, Jesus has something against you, and the message is to repent.

We read in Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Psalm 80:19 says, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." If we ever live a consistent life for Christ, we have to live where Christ's face can shine

upon us, where His approval can rest upon us. This not only is necessary in order to be saved right now, day by day, but we will never be saved in the end unless we are living where Christ's face shines upon us.

## **Religion Today**

Our present religious world is marked basically by three movements: a new surge of religious interest; a wave of mass evangelism; a wave of church activity. There is more going on in religious societies than ever before, but not one or all of these put together has added up to revival in the church.

Religion has even gotten into the movies, and I can tell you right now that the whole move back of them is to take the reality out of salvation, to pull down the standard of the Word of God, to try to prove that a man can live a faulty life and still be used of God. Hollywood is not lifting up the Gospel standard one bit; they never did and they never will.

Religion has even gotten in politics. They take time out to say a good word for God. And they deceive the people by adding a "God bless you," and "God bless Amer-

ica," but why won't they have Him in their hearts? Why won't they sell out to a clear-cut Gospel that brings God into their hearts?

Our thinking can become contaminated. How can real salvation be an instantaneous experience where old things pass away and all becomes new, where a man becomes a new creature and still hold on to sinful things for a year or so? I am making room for weak Christians. I make room for people who have to be dealt with after they first get saved, for a matter of time. I am talking about being moved from the standard of God's Christian living to the place where we feel people can be saved—all but . . . . Brother, God intends for us to come completely clean.

People are talking religion as never before, but there are too many who are not willing to face the Cross of Christ and what it means to the sinner and the saint alike. The preaching of the cross is something that gets on people and close to people. Too many today, even in religious realms, are like those who stood at the cross. Do you know what they said? ". . . let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matthew 27:42).

What is that a picture of? Being willing to accept the joy and the peace that salvation brings, but not willing to deny themselves; not willing to crucify themselves; not willing to build their hope on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. That cross calls for a crucifying of ourselves with all our individual thoughts, ways, and means.

We must come back to the place of realizing that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. Only His blood can cleanse from sin; only His righteousness can make us righteous and keep us righteous. Too much religion today merely is a fad, like reducing; people are trying to reduce their sinful lives. I am here to tell you, real salvation is not a reducing plan. In real salvation, God doesn't reduce you or overhaul you; He

makes you new.

Too many have been overhauled. In an overhaul, you only remove the parts that are badly worn. You leave the good parts in there, and then the new parts wear out the old ones. The first thing you know, you have to overhaul again. God doesn't overhaul. The Bible tells us that He makes all new. There are no old parts left in there to cause friction with the new parts. Thank God, He makes you anew creature; old things pass away and all becomes new.

### **Quality Is What Counts**

In many people's mind, religion is like a flood: there is a great wave of activity. There is great church activity, church building, and church attendance. Church works are at an all-time high, and while church work is at an all-time high, our morals are at an all-time low. Churches are busy; so were every one of the seven churches in Asia, but five of them needed a revival. If they didn't allow God to revive them, He was going to mark them off the slate and cease to use them.

Dear friend, the devil is substituting many things for genuine religion, and he is not doing it all out there; he is doing it right here. It is surprising the reasons people will give you why they know they are spiritual. Sensationalism in religion is at an all-time high. Oh, how far we have been led away from the words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). According to Paul Harvey, if the church keeps perfecting its act, it can soon move to circus life altogether and quit messing around with the Gospel.

As we go dealing with the flesh and catering to the flesh and entertaining the flesh, the Gospel is out of the picture. The Gospel was never given to entertain the flesh. It was never given to satisfy the flesh. The flesh in itself will rise up against the Gospel in its purity today as much as it did when Jesus taught it. The

Gospel didn't come to entertain the flesh; the Gospel came to give you power over the flesh and make you able to live pleasing unto God.

God is more interested in quality than He is in quantity. Certainly we want numbers. Certainly we want people who are honest-hearted and will hear the truth and will obey the truth. Certainly we want to see the church grow numerically, but we also want to see it grow spiritually as it grows numerically.

Too many times today, newborn babes are like hot coals among ice cubes. People are saved today, and it is like putting them in a refrigerator when they go to associate with other members of the church. I believe it was Dwight L. Moody who said, "True revival is where a church hatches and mothers her own chicks." You can test whether a religious campaign is right or not: if any campaign is a work of God, it will feed back into the local church. We have campaigns today where they tell us that thousands made a decision for Christ, but the question is, where are they today? Brother, if a campaign doesn't feed back into the local church and edify the church, it's not a work of God.

It is very true that we need help right here in our country, but we don't have true vision unless our vision reaches distant lands. God loves those people the same as He loves us, and our efforts ought to be equalized between them. The field is the world, and whenever you get any smaller vision than that, you have lost the proper vision. It is sad to realize what is going on right in our own nation, but we have to hold a vision of the world.

### **Revival Spurs Evangelism**

Biblically speaking, revival is an Old Testament term. You will not read about revival in the New Testament. The words *revival* and *evangelism* have wrongly become synonymous in too many peoples' thinking; however, they don't mean the same thing. Evangelism is a procla-

mation of the Gospel in order to win the lost. Revival is a work of the Spirit of God among God's own people where they get right with God, right with each other, and come to a new, higher level of obedience. That is a revival. There never has been true evangelism put forth unless there was a people who were revived and on fire who moved out with it.

Revival should not be necessary. The church did not receive the message to repent until she fell away. John came preaching the beautiful message of repentance to the world. Then Jesus came with the glorious message, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). What a wonderful message is the message of repentance. It tells lost mankind that the kingdom of God is right outside your door, that God is ready to come into your life, set up a new order, and make you able to let God's will be done in your heart like it is in Heaven. What a wonderful reason for repentance. But consider the message to the church; it is not, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; it is "Repent, or else!" I pray that you will take those words seriously.

Friend, you never read of revival in the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus told them to tarry until the work was right in their hearts (Luke 24:49). Why? You cannot work the work of evangelism unless there is a fullness of the Spirit of God in your life. In the Acts of the Apostles, in that Spirit-filled, Spirit-burdened church, there was a continual atmosphere of conviction. Whether they went before the common people, the kings, the potentates, or the captains, there was so much of God in them that conviction fell on the people. Many were saved, and those who were not saved were "almost persuaded" to become Christians.

We can say that we are really burdened for our children to be saved, but are we? You cannot be truly burdened for your children to be saved if God has something against you. You can't really be

burdened for your home to straighten up, for your neighbors to be saved, if you know that you are not living as you ought to. Revival must begin in the heart before the outreach of evangelism works from us.

We read in Habakkuk 3:2, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." The people of God seemingly never get to the place where a revival, definite revival, is not a necessity.

Genuine religion is the work of God in the soul. Too many times we completely miss out on revival efforts because we just try to spruce up a little and put forth a little greater effort, but if you were ever saved, it was a work of God in your heart. It was the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit that revived you. True Christianity is a work of God in the soul. It's not theology, it's not ceremony, it's not the works of man, but it is the supreme love of God shed abroad within our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Thank God, after God cleans us up, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, then He sheds abroad the very love of God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

### **Destructive Influences**

The work of God in the soul is liable to decay. No matter how wonderfully you were once saved, that work can decay. There are many things, in fact, that tend to impair or destroy the supreme love to God and man. If we are not very careful and prayerful and stay very close to God, there are many things which will impair and even destroy the work of God in our hearts. These destroying influences are things such as carnal influences and impure associations.

The Bible tells us to watch and be careful with whom we associate. People are so careless about that today, and the first thing you know, impure associations have an effect on them. Brother, you cannot handle

sinful things or keep association with that which is filthy and corrupt and still keep a real revival fire burning in your soul. The devil is working to put out the fire in many circumstances. So there are many things called our "influences" –impure associations, social influences, engrossing worldly cares, etc.–which lead us to the need of revival.

Only revival can overcome decay. The prophet prayed, ". . . Lord, revive [quicken and energize my love; give it more force] . . ." (Habakkuk 3:2). I know people cherish and testify about the love of God being in their hearts, but in too many cases it is lying dormant. Brother, we need a fresh energizing. We need our love stirred so that it will reach out to others in a greater way, causing them to be brought unto God.

Nowhere do we read of one person in the Acts of the Apostles who said it was hard to win souls. These are some of our expressions today. I can't read one place in there where they said it was like pulling teeth to get anyone out to church. They didn't have any special plans or gimmicks. False religion will offer you all kinds of plans to "hook" people, as they call it. Brother, there isn't any need to get anybody hooked into real salvation. If they ever come into real salvation, they are going to come with their eyes wide open and their minds clear, knowing what they are doing.

Someone may question, "Why do we need revival so much today?" Well, there is too much malarial brand of Christianity: a fever and a chill. Spiritual malaria has hit the congregations. What are the symptoms of spiritual malaria? Well, they have a fever one time, and a chill the next time you see them; they are neither hot nor cold. Actually what we call revival is a simple return to normal Christianity. People have drifted so far that when you begin to lift up the standard of just normal Christianity, they think you are going off the deep end, going too far

out.

We read in Isaiah 62:10, "Go through, go through the gates . . . gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." Gathering up the stones here has another meaning, but let me use it this way: what stones need to be gathered out? Those ones which you throw at each other. Hypocrites throw stones. When someone falls, instead of helping him, in too many cases, stones are thrown at him. We find a mark of true spirituality in Galatians 6:1, ". . . ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness . . ."

We need to gather out the stones. There will be no need trying to lift up the standard if the stones are still there. The stones are the hard places, the hard feelings, and the hardness that you have allowed in your heart which should be soft and tender. Unless the stones are gathered out, it will do no good to lift up a standard for the people of God. They will never attain to it. Friend, if we are going to lift up a standard which is pleasing to God, we have to get all that is offensive, all that is wrong, and all that God has against us out of our hearts.

### **Revival Is . . .**

Revival means a real examination on our part as Christians. How many want to have a revival? All right, the first step will be an opening of your heart and allowing God to examine you as freely as He wants. It will mean coming to the place of asking Christ, "Do you have somewhat against me? Is there anything in my life that would hinder my being used of You?" Where does revival start? With an open examination of the people of God.

Jesus taught it in different terms, but He taught the same truth: "I am the vine, ye are the branches . . ." (John 15:5). How does He do a greater work? By working on the branches, cleaning up the branches. He is the Christ, and we are His followers. How are we going to

have more fruit? By cleaning up the branches. This is the starting point. God help us to see it.

Revival means a real examination on our part as Christians. Revival means repentance, confession, renunciation, and restitution. Revival means full submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. Revival means a greater separation from the world. Revival means being filled afresh with God's Spirit.

Revival is a renewing of the first love of Christians, resulting in the conversion of sinners to God. How did David pray? "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me . . . : Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation . . . Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psalm 51:10, 12-13). The devil would have us feel that God will work around us, the church. Brother, Christ is the vine and we are the branches. He does not work around us; He works through us, or He is not allowed to work. We need to open our hearts to God.

Revival is a new beginning of obedience to God. Revival is a breaking of the heart, giving in the best of humility before God. When revival begins to work, truths to which our hearts have been unresponsive, become living. Where the mind and conscience have consented to truth, now obedience to truth is the only thing that matters. We have to be careful. We can sit right under the teaching of God's Word, our minds and consciences can respond to it. We still say it is truth, "I believe it," and yet not obey it. Revival comes, only when we move beyond that point and obey the truth.

Revival is a time-out to tune up. If we are not careful, we will get so busy building a bigger orchestra that we never take time to tune up. What good is a bigger orchestra, if two-thirds of the members never show up for practice? Or when they do come, they are off key, playing discord. I don't know whether you

have ever thought of this, but the righteous spirit you possess lends a beautiful harmony to the Gospel when it is laid out from the pulpit. On the other hand, when you sit there resisting the Gospel and will not obey it, you bring discord; and the Gospel does not have the beauty, the force, and the power that it could have.

Revival is a time to sharpen our axes. I am afraid there are too many busy chopping with a dull axe, and there are some of them who have nothing but a handle. They have lost their axe, and are still pounding away. God tells us in Isaiah 54:2 not to lengthen our cords without strengthening our stakes. In modern language, our intensive program must match our extensive. As we grow numerically, we must grow spiritually to continue to be the Church of God.

### **Christ's Present Position**

We need to face the Christ of the candlesticks, the Lord of the lampstand, as He calls the church to repentance. Too many have an incomplete, inadequate vision of our Lord. Too many people today are not awake and aware to Christ's position in the church. Where are we? We are where Christ is standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. There are too many trying to follow a Galilean teacher who walked on those shores, full of love, mercy, and compassion. There are lots of things that have happened since Jesus walked on this earth in the flesh. He went through Calvary; the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost followed.

The church is not dealing now with a meek, lowly Jesus who is going around doing good, with nowhere to lay His head. We are dealing with a crucified, risen, ascended, glorified King, and you can get a picture of Him in the first chapter of Revelation. John physically saw Him as the loving, tender Jesus; He laid on His breast. Then when he received the Revelation

and saw Jesus as He really is, he fell as a dead man at Jesus' feet.

When He appears, we are going to see Him as He is. How is He now? His hair is white as snow, showing antiquity and wisdom; His feet are as brass that was tried in a furnace of fire; His eyes are as a flame of fire, discerning eyes, looking for the least thing wrong. The church is a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, and He is the head of it; it is His job to keep it clean. Here is the picture of Jesus that the church needs to behold. This is the Christ who is now standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

John, the eighth chapter, shows Christ's attitude toward the lost world. He still says to the sinner who has been caught in adultery, "I don't condemn you. Go your way, and sin no more." That is still His attitude toward the lost one, but what is His attitude toward the church? "I have somewhat against you." His eyes do not overlook sin in the church. Why? Grace and power have been given us to enable us to live godly and righteously in this present world. God does not overlook sin in a professing Christian's life. You may have ninety-nine good qualities, but if He has one thing against you, the message is, "Repent, or else . . . ."

Jesus' countenance now is as the sun, and His voice is as the sound of many waters. Before Him, John fell as dead; this is the vision that the church needs. There are many things we need to see today, but one thing is vital, that we see Christ as He is. In our Scripture text, He is the Christ of revival, and He is our coming judge who will completely destroy the power of evil, and reign for ever and ever.

He still says to the world, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He still requires us to go and preach the Gospel so that people may be saved. On the other hand, His last words to the church are, "Repent, or else . . . ." Or else what?

It would be well worth your time to read the messages to the five congregations of the church, to whom He said, "Repent." To one He said to repent, or they would go into darkness. To another He said to repent, or He would fight against them. To me, that is the worst expression He made. How terrible it is when Christ turns and fights against us. Friend, it can happen.

Friend, does Christ have anything against you? Friend, it is revival, or else, and we can have revival. God wants it, and He is ready to release the power. He is ready to let His Holy Ghost work in an evangelistic manner on the lost. When? Whenever we are ready. May God help us.

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