

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL, THE WANT OF THE CHURCH

NO. 2598

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“O LORD, revive thy work.”
Habakkuk 3:2

ALL true religion is pre-eminently the work of God. If He should select out of His works that which He esteems most of all, He would select true religion. He regards the works of grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature, and He is therefore especially careful that this fact shall always be known, so that, if any dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies that God is indeed the Author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of grace, and is the work of God.

I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to anyone but Himself. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is aught in the heart which can be acceptable to God, save that which He Himself has first created there.

When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one truth, but when I deny that He works grace in the heart, I deny a hundred truths in one, for in the denial of that one truth that God is the Author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the doctrines which make up the great articles of faith, and I have run in direct opposition to the whole testimony of Sacred Scripture.

I trust, beloved, that many of us have been taught that if there be anything in our souls which can carry us to heaven, it is God's work, and moreover, that if there be aught that is good and excellent found in His church, it is entirely God's work from first to last. We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively “dead in trespasses and sins,” that it is God who maintains the life of that soul, and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter.

We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God. We dare not for a moment think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own efforts or by the efforts of others, we know that there are means and agencies employed by God, but we also hold most firmly that the work is, from its alpha to its omega, wholly the Lord's. We believe therefore, that we are right in applying our text to the work of divine grace, both in the heart of man and in the church at large, and we think that we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the prayer of the text, “O LORD, revive thy work.”

Trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text, first, *to our own souls personally*, and then, *to the state of the church at large*, for it greatly needs that the Lord should revive His work in its midst.

I. First then, I will apply the text TO OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY.

In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the church, when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar, we bind her hands fast, and try to execute her at once, or at least, we find fault with her where there is none, and magnify her little errors, while we too often forget our own imperfections. Let us therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are a part of the church, and that our own want of revival is in some measure the cause of that want in the church at large.

I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians in these days—and I take the charge to myself also—with a need of revival of piety. I shall lay the charge very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of nominal Christians in this age need a revival, and my reasons are these.

In the first place, look at *the conduct* of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the pulpit to flatter his hearers, and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with those who unite themselves with Christian churches, and then practically protest against their own profession.

It has become very common, nowadays, to join a church, go where you may, you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's table or other, but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find morality more prevalent? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not.

The age is as immoral as any that preceded it, there is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter, but within, the bones are just as rotten as before, society is not one whit improved. Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing, and the picture which they give of the immorality of this great city is positively appalling. It is a huge criminal, full of sin, and I fearlessly assert that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is, it could not be, by any manner of means.

My brethren, it is well known—and who dares deny it who is not too partial, and who will not speak willful falsehood?—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guarantee even of a man's honesty that he is a member of a church. It is a hard thing for a Christian minister to say, but I must say it, someone must say it, and if friends do not say it, enemies will, and it is better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we are ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must know to be true.

O sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them at all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and grasping there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that treading down of the workman, and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be?

God in heaven knows that what I speak is true, and too many here know it themselves. If they be Christians, at least they want revival, if there is any spiritual life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes, it needs to be fanned, ay, and it needs to be stirred also, that perhaps some of the ashes may be removed, and the spark may have a place to live.

The church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian churches are not what once they were. It is fashionable to be religious now, persecution is taken away, and ah! I had almost said that the gates of the church were taken away with it. The church has, with few exceptions, no gates now, persons come in and go out of it, just as they would march through St. Paul's Cathedral, and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth, in whom is God's delight.

If this be not true, you know how to treat it, you need not confess to sin you have not committed, but if it be true, and true in your case, oh! humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, ask Him to search and try you, that if you be not His child, you may be helped to renounce your profession, lest it should be to you, but the gaudy pageantry of death, and mere tinsel and gewgaws in which to go to hell. If you be His, ask that He may give you more grace, that you may abandon these faults and follies, and turn to Him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where *the conduct* of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, does not *the conversation* of many a professor lead us either to doubt the genuineness of his piety, or else to pray that

his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of too many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December, and you would never be tired of their religion by what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all. On Sabbath afternoon, all the ministers are talked over, faults are found with this one and the other, and conversation takes place, which they call religious, because it is concerning religious places and Christian people, but do they ever—

*“Talk of all He did, and said,
And suffered for us here below;
The path He mark’d for us to tread,
And what He’s doing for us now”?*

Do you often hear the question addressed to you by your Christian brother, “Friend, how does your soul prosper?” When we step into each other’s houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from heaven to listen to the conversation of His church, as once He did, when it was said, “The LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name”?

I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough, and I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it cannot be condemned on the score of morality, must often be condemned on the score of Christianity. We talk too little about our Lord and Master.

That ugly word “sectarianism” has crept into our midst, and we must say nothing about Christ now, because we are afraid of being called sectarians. Well, brethren, I am a sectarian, and hope to be so till I die, and to glory in it, for I cannot see, nowadays, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself the title.

Why, we must not talk of this doctrine because, perhaps, such an one disbelieves it, we must not mention such and such a truth in Scripture because such and such a friend doubts or denies it, and so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk, and begin to speak of anything else because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual. Is not that the truth? And is it not so common a sin with some of us, that we have need to pray unto God, “O LORD, revive Thy work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christlike, more seasoned with salt, and more pleasing to the Holy Spirit”?

My third remark is, that there are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part as becomes the Gospel of Christ, and savory of truth, but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that *there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ*. If, thanks to divine grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent, and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves because of our lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the mark of the true child of God!

Brethren, let me ask you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ—how long since you could say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.” How long is it since He brought you into His banqueting house, and His banner over you was love? Perhaps some of you will be able to say, “It was but this morning that I saw Him, I beheld His face with joy, and was ravished with His countenance.”

But I fear the most of you will have to say, “Ah, sir, for months I have been without the shining of His countenance!” What have you been doing then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? “No.” Then you ought to have been. I cannot understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order, if you can live without the sunlight of Christ, and yet be happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus, the connection between themselves and Christ will be at times severed, as to their own conscious enjoyment of it, but they will always groan and cry when they lose that presence.

What! is Christ your Brother, and does He live in your house, and yet you have not spoken to Him for a month? I fear there is little love between you and your Brother, if you have had no conversation with Him for so long. What! is Christ the Husband of His church, and has she had no fellowship with Him for all this time? Brethren, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your own conscience speak. Mine shall, and so shall yours.

Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without Him? Have we not been contented with the world, instead of desiring Christ? Have all of us been like that little ewe lamb that did drink out of its master's cup, and feed from his table, and lie in his bosom? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home?

I fear that many of the troubles of our heart spring from lack of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, learn His secrets. Oh, no! we live too much without the light of His countenance, and are too contented when He is gone from us. Let us then, each of us—for I am sure we have each of us need, in some measure—put up the prayer, "O LORD, revive thy work."

Ah! I think I hear one professor saying, "Sir, I need no revival in my heart, I am everything I wish to be." Down on your knees, my brethren, down on your knees, and plead for him! He is the man who most needs to be prayed for. He says that he needs no revival in his soul, but he needs a revival of humility, at any rate. If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be, and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be, and very untrue ideas concerning himself. Those are in the most hopeful condition that, while they know they need reviving, yet groan under their present sad state, and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge—I fear with too strong arguments, so now let us notice that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. There is not only an evil implied in these words, "O LORD, revive thy work," but there is an evil evidently felt. You see, Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. "O LORD," he said, "revive thy work." Ah! We many of us need reviving, but few of us feel that we need it. It is a blessed sign of life within when we know how to groan over our departure from the living God.

It is easy to find by hundreds those who have thus departed, but you must count by ones and twos those who know how to groan over their departure. The true believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy, he will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will at last prevail with God, and bring the blessing of revival down. He will, days and nights in succession, cry, "O LORD, revive thy work."

Let me mention some groaning times, which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan *when he looks upon what the Lord did for him of old*. When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God's lovingkindness of old.

Whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it cannot bear to think of "the chariots of Amminadib," it cannot endure to remember the King's banqueting house, for it has not been there for so long, or when it does think of them, it says—

***"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"***

"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!"

***How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”***

When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the believer who is in a healthy condition, he puts his hand upon his heart and says, “Ah! such was my experience once, but those happy days are gone. My sun has set, and those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched, oh, that I might again behold my Lord! Oh, that I might once more see His face! Oh, for those sweet visits from on high! Oh, for the grapes of Eshcol once more!”

If this is your condition, my friend, you will sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon, you will mourn when you remember your goings up to Zion when the Lord was precious to you, when He laid bare His heart, and was pleased also to fill your heart with the fullness of His love. Such times will be groaning times, when you “remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

Again, to a Christian who needs revival, *ordinances* will be also groaning times. He will go up to the house of God, but he will say to himself when he comes away, “Ah! how changed it all is! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day, every word was precious. When the song ascended, my soul had wings, and up it flew to its nest above the stars, when the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, “Amen.”

The preacher now preaches as he did before, and my brethren are as profited as they used to be, but the sermon is dry and dull to me. I find no fault with the preacher, I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony, but ah! my heart is heavy, my harp strings are broken and I cannot sing.” So the Christian will return from those blessed means of grace, sighing and sobbing, because he knows he wants revival.

More especially at the Lord’s supper, he will think when he sits at the table, “Oh! what seasons of communion I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine, my Master was most blessedly present.” He will remind himself how his soul was lifted even to the seventh heaven, and the building became to him “the house of God, and the gate of heaven.”

“But now,” he says, “It is only bread, and dry bread, to me. It is simply wine, and tasteless wine, with none of the sweets of paradise in it, I drink, but it is all in vain, for I have no precious thoughts of Christ. My heart is so heavy that it will not rise, my soul cannot heave a thought even half way to Him!” And then the Christian will begin to groan again, “O LORD, revive thy work.”

Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but who feel that you are not in a healthy spiritual condition, because you do not love Him enough, and have not that faith in Him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this—Do you groan over it? Are you groaning over it now? When you feel that your heart is empty, is it, “an aching void?” When you see that your garments are stained, are you ready to wash those garments with tears if that would do any good? When you realize that your Lord is gone, do you hang out the black flag of sorrow and cry, “O my Jesus, my precious Jesus, are You gone forever?” If you can, then I bid you do it, and may God be pleased to give you grace to continue to do it until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of your soul!

I remark, in the last place, upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad estate, because of its declension and departure from God, is *never content without turning its groaning into prayer*, and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter, “O LORD, revive thy work.”

Some of you, perhaps, will say, “Sir, I feel my need of revival, I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul.” Do not say it, and above all things, do not try to do it, for you will never do it. Make no resolutions as to what you will do, your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made, and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins.

I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayer to God. Say not, “I will revive myself,” but cry, “O LORD, revive thy work.” And let me solemnly tell you, you have not yet felt what

it is to decline, you do not yet know how sad is your estate, otherwise you would not talk of reviving yourself. If you did know your own position, you would as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battlefield heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as you would expect to revive yourself without the help of God. I bid you not do anything, nor seek to do anything until first of all you have addressed JEHOVAH Himself by mighty prayer, and have cried out, "O LORD, revive thy work."

Remember, He that first made you must keep you alive, and He that has kept you alive can alone impart more life to you. He that has preserved you from going down to the pit, when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon the rock, and establish your goings. Begin then, by humbling yourself, giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian, but also begin at once with earnest supplication to God, saying, "O Lord, what I cannot do, do Thou! O LORD, revive thy work!"

Christian brethren I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in aught judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly, but if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts, and turn your houses into a Bochim. Weep as in the olden time, men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep, weep, my brethren, for it is a sad thing to depart from the living God. Weep, and may He bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn liturgy, "O LORD, revive thy work."

In the present era, there is *a sad decline of the vitality of godliness*. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago, when there was laid the first stone of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life divine, and of power sent down from on high. God had clothed Whitefield with power, he was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable, not because he was anything in himself, but because his Master girded him with strength.

After Whitefield, there was a succession of great and holy men, but now, sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. *Men* are the rarest things in all this world, we have hardly any men in the government to conduct our politics, and we have scarcely any men in religion. We have the *things* that perform their duties, as they are called, we have the good, and perhaps, the honest things, who, in the regular routine go on like pack horses with their bells in the old style, but men who dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age.

Compared even with the Puritan times, where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I might mention about fifty at a time? I think not. Nor could we bring together such a galaxy of grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady, and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention. They are gone, their venerated dust rests in the grave, where are their successors? Ask where, and echo shall reply, "Where?" God has not yet raised them up, or if He has done so, we have not yet found out where they are.

There is nowadays, much preaching, but how is it often done? The preacher says, "O Lord, help Your servant to preach, and teach him by Your Spirit what to say!" Then out comes the manuscript, and he reads it!

We have other preaching of this order, it is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in a sense, but where is there now such preaching as Whitefield's? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent, you cannot think so. His expressions were rough, frequently unconnected, there was very much declamation about him, it was a great part indeed of his speech, but wherein lay his eloquence? Not in the words he uttered, but in the tones in which he delivered them, in the earnestness with which he spoke them, in the tears which ran down his cheeks, and in the pouring out of his very soul.

The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means, he was eloquent because he spoke right out from his heart, he caused the truth to flow out of the innermost depths of his soul. When he spoke, you could see that he meant what he said, he did not speak like a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the truth, and what he could not help preaching. If you had heard him preach, you could not have helped feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach, and that with all his might he called to men, "Come to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him."

That kind of preaching is just the lack of these times, where is earnestness now? It is neither in the pulpit nor yet in the pew, in such a measure as we desire it, and it is a sad, sad age when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism. I pray God to make us all such fanatics as most men laugh at, such enthusiasts as many despise.

To my mind, it is the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to hell, and the worst folly upon earth to love sin better than righteousness, and I think that they are anything but fanatics who seek to obey God rather than man, and to follow Christ in all His ways. To me, one sad proof that the church needs revival is the absence of that solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

The absence of sound doctrine is another proof of our want of revival. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan forefathers, to the Articles of the Church of England, and to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of their doctrine, it is the very thing we love, and the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very same doctrines that we proclaim now.

But because we proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange, and the reason is, because sound doctrine has to a great degree been abandoned. It began in this way. First of all, the truths were fully believed, but the angles of them were taken off a little. The minister believed in election, but he did not use the word for fear it should, in some degree disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all were by nature depraved, but he did not say so positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the chapel who would not come again, so that, while he did believe it, and did preach it in some sense, he rounded it off a little.

Afterwards, it came to this, ministers said, "We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true, free grace is true, the great doctrines of grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin, and down to this age by their successors, are true, but they had better be kept back—they must be very cautiously dealt with, they are very high and dreadful doctrines, and they must not be preached, we believe them, but we dare not speak them out."

After that, it came to something worse, they said within themselves, "Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach, perhaps they are not true at all," and going one step further, they did not actually say so perhaps, but they began to hint that they were not true, and then they went on to preach something which they said was the truth, and now, if they could, they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it, and we were the intruders.

So they have gone from bad to worse, and if you read the standard divinity of this age, and the standard divinity of Whitefield's day, you will find that the two cannot by any possibility be made to agree together. We have, nowadays, what is called a "new theology." New theology? Why, it is anything but a *Theology*, it is an ology which has cast out God and enthroned man, it is the doctrine of man, not the doctrine of the everlasting God. Therefore, we need a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the church at large also needs *a revival of downright earnestness in its members*. You are not the men to fight the Lord's battles yet, you have not the earnestness, the zeal, which the children of God had once. Your forefathers were oak men, but you are willow men. Our people, what are they, many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men, but they waver when they get with others, and they alter as often as they change their company, they are sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake, and die for the truth, they are not the men who know how to die daily, and so are ready for death whenever it comes.

Look at our prayer meetings, with only here and there a bright exception. There are possibly, six old women present, scarcely ever do enough male members come to pray four times. Prayer meetings they are called, *spare* meetings they ought to be called, for sparsely enough are they attended. And very few there are who go to our fellowship meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all as they should be?

I would like to see a newspaper printed somewhere, containing a list of all the persons who went to those meetings during the week in any of our chapels. Ah! my friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a very few chapels would hold them all. We have not earnestness, we have not life, as we once had, if we had, we should be called worse names than we are now, we should have viler epithets thrown at us, if we were more true to our Master, we should not have all things quite so comfortable, if we served God better.

We are getting the church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution, some think it a grand thing when the church becomes an honorable institution, but it shows that the church has swerved from the right course when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world. She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil, and still be despised, until that day when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored Him—when He shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of His appearing.

Beloved, do you think it is true that the church needs reviving? Yes, or no? “No,” you say, “at least, not to the extent that you suppose. *We* think the church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry ‘The former days were better than these.’” Perhaps you are not, you may be far wiser than we are, and therefore you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are to us so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the church is in a good condition, if so, of course you cannot sympathize with me in preaching from such a text, and urging you to use such a prayer as this, “O LORD, revive thy work.”

But there are others of you who frequently cry, “The church needs reviving.” Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the church, to cry, “O LORD, revive thy work.” “Oh!” says one, “that we had another minister! Oh, that we had another kind of worship! Oh, that we had a different sort of preaching!” Just as if that were all, but my prayer is, “Oh, that the Lord would come into the hearts of the men you have! Oh, that He would make the forms you use to be full of power!”

You do not want fresh ways or new machinery, you want *life* in those that you have. There is an engine on the railway, but the train will not move. “Bring another engine,” says one, “and another, and another.” The engines are brought, but the train does not stir. Light the fire and get up steam, that is what you want, not fresh engines.

We do not want fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented to make the church better, we only want life and fire in those we have. With the very man who has emptied your chapel, the self-same person that brought your prayer meeting low, God can yet make the chapel to be crowded to the doors, and give thousands of souls to that very man. It is not a new man that is wanted, it is the life of God in him. Do not be crying out for something new, it will no more succeed of itself than what you have. Cry, “O LORD, revive thy work.”

I have noticed in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan, and thought that would succeed, then he tried another, but that was no good. Keep to the old plan, my friend, but seek to get life into it! We do not want anything new, “the old is better,” let us keep to it, but we want life in the old. “Oh!” men cry, “We have nothing but the shell,” and they are going to give us a new shell. No, sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell, we will have the old plans, but we must, or else we will throw the old away, have the life in the old.

Oh, that God would give us life! The church needs fresh revivals. Oh, for the days of Cambuslang again, when His Word was preached with power! Oh, for the days when, in this place, hundreds were

converted under Whitefield's sermons! It has been known that two thousand credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary discourse. Oh! for the age when eyes should be strained, and ears should be ready to receive the truth of God, and when men should drink in the Word of life, as it is indeed the very water of life which God gives to dying souls! Oh, for the age of deep feeling—the age of thorough-going earnestness!

Let us ask God for it, let us plead with Him for it. Perhaps He has the man or the men somewhere who will yet shake the world, perhaps even now He is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon man, which shall make the church as wonderful in this age as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.