

## Encountering the Presence - Colin Urquhart

### Chap 12. Revival & Truth:

#### Restoration of Faith

We will not see the revival we want or the spiritual awakening and harvest among the nations that God has promised until there is a restoration of faith in the Church. Now someone may say, 'Wait a minute! What do you mean 'restoration of faith in the Church'? As the Church, we *are* the people of faith!' *Christians as a whole need to return to a confident, dynamic, living faith that believes that the Bible means what it says and that God really wants to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ and that He will do it through the Church.* Many Christians and churches live with very little expectation of God moving in a mighty way or doing any great works in them or in the world. They neither look for nor expect revival. Consequently, it is unlikely that they will experience it. Revival flourishes in an environment of faith. Remember that Jesus was unable to do any miracles in His hometown of Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people.

There is no substitute for faith. Churches often try to 'stir up' revival through fancy programs or new methods, but without the dynamic of Spirit-inspired faith these efforts are futile. We need more than just faith, but it is the place to start. We cannot receive what God has promised without that dynamic of faith within the life of the church. That's why in recent decades God has raised up the faith movement as a prophetic word to the Church as a whole. We don't have to embrace the particular teachings or manner of the movement lock, stock, and barrel, but we do need to pay heed to what God is saying to us about the importance of a dynamic faith.

Faith alone will not produce the revival, but we will never see revival without it. What the world needs is not more testimonies of our experiences, but the clear message of the truth. That's why Jesus came: to reveal the truth. How can we turn the world back to the truth if we don't believe it ourselves? Only as we believe the truth will we be effective in enabling others to do so. For you see, faith is contagious; if you have it, others can catch it from you.

The tragedy is that so many Christians who want to teach the Word lack a certain quality of experiential faith that could make their teaching really come alive. They are content simply to teach rather than to hunger to be men and women of faith who see the hand of God move in their own lives and in the lives of those to whom they speak in His name. Certainly, we want anointed teachers, but we need teachers who also move in that dynamic of faith so that when they teach, the power of God is released into people's lives. *We have nothing to teach unless we experience ourselves the message we proclaim.*

We might hear someone whose preaching or teaching is doctrinally and biblically faultless and yet lacks life and fire. Someone else could present the same truths, but with a dynamic of faith that kindles faith in the hearts of those who hear. As a result the power of the Holy Spirit moves upon people and dynamic supernatural events take place. There is power in the truth, but we must believe for that power to be released. The Church must be characterised once again by dynamic, expectant faith if we hope to see revival come.

#### Revival Truth: Adaptability to Change

The church in revival is not locked into a mind-set that insists on doing things the way they have always been done. In fact, a revived church looks for and expects God to do new things in new ways, knowing that even though the message of the gospel never changes, changing times call for new methods and approaches for proclaiming that message. The church in revival therefore is flexible and not afraid of change under the direction of the Spirit. One of Jesus' teachings recorded in Matthew addresses this issue:

*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9: 16-17).*

There are several different ways to interpret these verses as applying both to ourselves as individuals and to the corporate Church. For instance, in personal application the old garment represents our old life of sin and the flesh, and the unshrunk patch of new cloth represents the new life in the Spirit which we received at our conversion.

On the corporate level the old garment signifies the Old Covenant of the law, and the new cloth signifies the New Covenant of the Spirit written on our hearts. The metaphor of the wine and wineskins teaches the same thing: The old wineskins represent the Old Covenant and the old life, and the new wine and wineskins represent the New Covenant and the new life in Christ.

A third interpretation, equally as valid as the first two, is that the old garment and the old wineskins represent the *unrevived* Christian and *unawakened* Church; the new cloth and the new wine and wineskins are newly awakened believers and churches moving forward in faith as God does new and wonderful things in their midst.

Jesus' point is that the new is incompatible with the old and must replace it. *We cannot attach the new life of the Spirit to the old life of the flesh.* Our old, hard, fleshly lives cannot contain the sweet new wine of life in the Spirit. The old and the new cannot be reconciled. We must die to the life of the flesh in order to walk in the life of the Spirit or, in other words, deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus.

The undoing of many Christians is when they try to live with a mixture of the old and the new. It doesn't work. It is impossible to improve or reform the old life. That is why Jesus put it to death with Him on the cross and gave us a new one. We have a *totally new* life, not a recycled old one. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (2 Cor.) Don't try to attach the new life to your old life. The new life has to replace your old life. We are brand-new people in Christ.

In the same way it is useless to try to contain the new things of the truth that Jesus proclaimed—the 'new wine'—within the old, hard, inflexible, and lifeless religious structures of the past. The prophet Isaiah recorded the words of the Lord: *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland* (Is. 43:18-19). The Church needs to wake up to the new things that God is doing. That is what happens during revival.

We see this time and again. Every genuine revival has given birth to new churches and breathed fresh life into many existing ones. The existing churches that thrive are the ones that are open to God doing new and different things as well as doing old things in new ways; in other words, churches that are adaptable to change. Unfortunately, in every period of revival there are also churches and individual believers who are not willing to change, whether through unbelief, fear, or simply outright disobedience.

*God will not allow His life to be limited by inflexible structures and traditions or by the disobedience of men.* During revival God often shakes up the old structures, and if they do not move or change, He raises up new ones. We are beginning to see some of that in the current move of God. I believe that in the days ahead God will thoroughly shake His Church, bypassing those who are not open to change and giving birth to new ones who will not limit Him or try to contain Him, but shine His life brightly before the world.

Leading such a church could be uncomfortable. Many pastors want to maintain order and dignity and to contain everything under their control. Such an attitude reflects small faith and is the enemy of revival. *God is too big and mighty and powerful to be contained by the methods and minds of men.*

Revival churches will allow Him to burst out in their midst even if it means moving in new directions that express more fully the truth, the life, and power of Jesus Christ among His people.

Every congregation has to face the fact that if their present way of church was right in God's eyes, they would already be experiencing revival and having a powerful impact on the community. The only church that does not need change is a perfect church!

Adaptability to change will not come without a price. Not everyone in the Body of Christ will welcome or embrace the new things that happen during revival. Jesus broke all conventions in His quest to reach people, which is why He ran into such opposition, even in the synagogue. The leaders were not accustomed to healings occurring in the middle of Sabbath services. They got nervous when dynamic displays of divine power were released into their nice, neat, orderly, and traditional religious rituals. They didn't appreciate someone challenging the way they thought and believed. They didn't like the truth invading their comfortable little world and upsetting the 'facts.'

The same is true with many today. Those individuals and churches who are committed to walking in the truth and living in revival must be willing to pay the price of criticism, misunderstanding, and opposition that will come from many, even from within the community of believers.

God is preparing for the mightiest move of His Spirit in history, and one result will be the birth of many mighty new churches with a dynamic never before seen. Some of them are beginning to rise up already in different nations around the world. These new churches will break with the traditional and the familiar and will be totally different in their concept. In many ways they won't look or act like any churches familiar from past generations. Their focus will not be on meetings as much as on ministry, and their activity and presence will be found more in the marketplace than in a church building. Many of them may not even own a church building. While that is inconceivable to some today, it may very well be the hallmark of the future for the Church. After all, God is not concerned about buildings but about new wineskins—a people possessing a dynamic of truth and the power of the Holy Spirit that will enable great new things to happen throughout the world. Of course, any church will need to meet together for worship and for self-identity as the Body of Christ; but won't it be wonderful if the numbers of people who want to meet together are too great to be contained in a building? Dare we believe for such days?