

# The Revival We Need

By Armin R. Gesswein

CLASSICS  
Time-tested Truths



Shall we see revival again in our land?

Many were asking this question when I returned from my first ministry in Norway's revivals in 1937–38. The apostasy doctrine had taken over in many minds, the thinking that we were in the “last days,” that the great falling away from the faith that was predicted had come and that few would be saved, as in Noah's day.

But, fresh from the fires of revival, my response was quick. “Yes, I do expect revivals, even in these ‘last days,’ God says, ‘It shall come to pass in the last days, . . . I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh’” (Acts 2:17, KJV). New movements have come—the massive Billy Graham Crusades, for example—and as people started to see multitudes (not just a handful) come to Christ, the thinking changed. Revival again became an acceptable word. It even became popular.

But another question kept getting louder: Can we expect to see revivals in our churches again? My answer is, “Yes; where else?” We live in exciting times and the most exciting thing is to see God at work in many congregations. Many are coming alive in new ways now. Wonderful!

## Passing and Permanent

The big question is, What is the revival we need? The revival we need is a return to normal New Testament Christianity as it was experienced in the Jerusalem congregation. That church presents to us God's normal pattern of church life—ongoing, not something pumped up or pepped up or stepped up by promotion. Rather, it gives us the normal, the standard for the church—not something special.

At Pentecost both the passing and the permanent were displayed. The passing was not the normal: the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of fire. What continued was the normal: a church membership filled with the Spirit, on fire for Christ, every member strong in prayer and in the prayer meetings, a power-filled, witnessing church. A congregation to which “the Lord added . . . daily those who were being saved” [Acts 2:47, amp], one that “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine . . . and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” [v. 42, KJV]. And one where the reverential awe of God rested over the assembly.

Normal, Not Special This is the day of the special and the specialist. We are all geared to this thinking, even in the church. We have “special meetings,” and add on an “extra-special,” a “super” and finally a “super-duper.” But the problem is that most all of our specials put together leave us below the New Testament norm; our “supers” still leave us superficial.

The Jerusalem congregation did not need the many “special” meetings we have. I am not against them; I am involved in them myself. But the Jerusalem church had a normal which was higher than our special. People were converted and “added to them” all the time.

They did not hold a series of special evangelistic meetings or depend on a special evangelist. Apart from Philip, one does

not even read of evangelists. This is not to say they did not have them. But their evangelism was not evangelist-evangelism. It was church-evangelism, the strongest and deepest kind. It produced and reproduced converts "after its kind," so that the thousands added to it were all "of one accord." The power of the Holy Spirit and the bringing forth of spiritual children took place within the congregation, the burdened, praying assembly.

We do not read of special revival meetings in the Jerusalem church. Their normal was better than that. Even when their preachers were in jail, the work continued as powerfully as ever. Why?

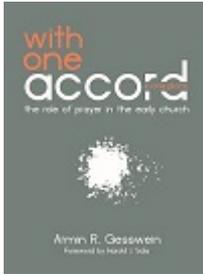
Because the power was not only in the preacher or the pulpit, but also in the pew. Because of this there was tremendous dimension of power in the pulpit as well.

Don't Settle In the New Testament it is the church—especially the local congregation—and not some kind of revival that is the major unit of the action of the Holy Spirit.

A good assembly—like a good jet engine—is meant for great altitude and for a strong, normal cruising speed. Many of our churches have "engine" problems. They lack power. The prayer life is so low that they do not even have enough prayer-thrust to get airborne!

We should not settle for anything less than normal New Testament churches.

Is not this the revival we need? God's Word calls us to our knees for it, and gives us faith to expect it.



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