

# Revival Living

## Micah 6:3-12; Acts 2:37-47; Romans 12:9-18



We are planning and preparing for revival. There are many tasks to take care of in the process. There are tasks of doing publicity, praying, planning hospitality, scheduling music, making invitations, preparing children's activities, and such. We focus attention on the details of the week, our participation in the planning and its execution. What is the point behind it all? What do these activities and investments have to do with our lives beyond one more week of meetings?

Micah reminded Judah that amid their religious activities and worship routines, something more basic needed to take center stage. The whole of their lives and religious expression should display their thanks and confidence in *Yahweh's* care for the nation. Trust in God should free them from selfish concerns to create a natural outpouring of mercy, grace, justice, and humility in our own lives. For Micah, this was the aim of revival. Revival was not an event. Revival was not a series of meetings. Revival was a transformation in the life of a community. It would be a new reality that affected the way we treat others in community.

Micah's concerns were issues of rampant injustice, corruption, oppression, immorality, dishonesty, and deceit. From news reports of our own society, Micah might appear to be addressing our own nation, rather than Judah of nearly 3000 years ago. We hear so much of corporate cover-up scandals, political graft, lobbying run amuck, and an industry of spinning partial truths, that we expect misinformation and greedy deceit to be the standard for corporate and political life in America. Our new brand of survival reality entertainment categorizes selfish ambition as the way life ought to be—win at all costs.

Micah called for revival in remembering our dependency upon God. He labeled using deceit and oppression to advance selfish causes for the faithlessness it displays. He called for a philosophy of life based on confidence in God rather than individual accomplishment. He called for a focus on doing good to others rather than to ourselves at others' expense. He called for the reign of merciful justice, love, and humility. Revival was living as a community under God's care and serving others in obedience to the character of God's love and provision.

Acts records an attitude of sincere fellowship among believers in Jerusalem. The character of their sharing and unity gave them a favorable reputation among the larger community. They came to faith in Christ, allowing this new faith to transform their relationships and sense of self. New life in Christ Jesus meant a new pattern of living that transformed not only individual lives, but also the larger community. They were revived and freed to love others as the result of a growing confidence in God's care and provision in Christ Jesus' death on our behalf.

Revival brought salvation to thousands of new believers. This salvation was so much more than a recording of names in some heavenly membership record. Salvation was about release from living for self in order to live for God and others. This revival was about a new mandate or philosophy of life. It was allowing God to have full sway. They were living the promised new "life of the ages"—God's reign taking over their relationships, routines, and attitudes.

Fellowship took on a new reality. They began living as a community of believers, rather than a hodge-podge of people in proximity. They set aside their rich history of traditions to focus on the new life of Jesus' good news. They began thinking of others rather than of themselves. They began putting in practice Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of God, rather than holding them out as unreachable ideals or unrealistic expectations. Salvation, revival, and daily life were joined together as parts of the same puzzle. Believing became doing, and gospel became reality.

Revival living for Paul has much to do with how we treat people—especially outsiders. This is not revival living, though, this is gospel living. It is what life transformed by salvation in Christ Jesus is all about. Even as Paul would recognize revival living as the standard for Christian practice, he recognizes that it is hardly our norm. He begins Romans 12 talking of the need for transformation—revival as allowing God to restructure our lives as living worship in a practical manner. The gospel is about living with God in eternity, but more so living out God's will from this moment on.

Paul does not begin by talking about outsiders, however. He begins speaking of sincere love for one another within the body of believers. He begins there in part because it tends to be the easier aspect of loving others. Even so, we have to remember that in Paul's day church life was rather different from church life in our context. There was no Rome Baptist Church, nor were there Main Street, nor Memorial Baptist, nor even Second Avenue Baptist churches to whom he wrote. Paul simply addressed his letter to the believers who happened to be in Rome. They met whenever they could, wherever they could, and however they could. Surely there were variously informal groupings of believers around Rome, but the letter does not address individual gatherings. Paul wrote the believers in Rome—all of them as one body.

That makes a difference when we think of applying his words to daily living. Paul's words of living in love and harmony are to transcend the artificial boundaries we place on church life. They apply automatically beyond the distinctions we make in defining church family. We speak of church in terms of mine, yours, theirs, and ours, categories that make no sense from Paul's context. His words urge the believing community to live evidence of their spiritual renewal corporately. As they look to each other's interests, they are to take the genuine love of Christ Jesus even to their enemies.

This is the meaning of justice, mercy, and walking in humility before God. This is the meaning of living the call to full fellowship in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of living lives radically transformed by the grace of Christ Jesus. This is what revival is all about.

Sure, we like to talk about living in heaven for all eternity. Sure, we like to think of living beyond the scope of this life's problems, stresses, and difficulties. That, however, is not an appropriate focus for revival. Revival is living the reality of God's presence in the here and now. Revival is allowing God's grace, mercy, and love to flow through our lives without interruption or obstruction by selfish concerns. Revival is allowing the new life in the gospel to spring forth anew in our lives.

We are preparing for revival. The plants all around us are bursting with the flowering of new life. Are we ready to live the fullness of the gospel in a manner just as radiant? Are we preparing to allow God's love and grace flow through us, transforming our lives from the inside out? Preparing for revival is preparing for new life. Are we ready to begin living the full reality of the gospel of Christ?

—*Christopher B. Harbin*