

# The Necessity for Revival, or The Difference Between Revival and Renewal

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Is there a difference between “revival” and “renewal?” “Revival” should be the stronger word. In English it means “life again,” implying that the church has been almost dead and needs to come back to life. Unfortunately, both in English and in Korean this word has come to mean a short period of emotional exhilaration that produces no lasting changes. The word “renewal” is being used more and more to describe a long-term change for the better that may or may not be emotional, but will produce the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the Christians.

There is an important difference between what the lay people of the church need and what the clergy need. It is a shame that we even have to use the word “layman,” because there is no such word in the Bible (at least, not in the New Testament). This word means that the professional church workers, the salaried people, have taken over the church from the members and have undermined the members’ self-respect and self-confidence. If we want the church to be renewed, we should hope and pray for the professional church workers to become humble and to encourage the ordinary members to grow in the Spirit and to produce the fruit of the Spirit in their lives as well as to be witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. A healthy renewal movement will see the ordinary church people reading their Bibles carefully and hungrily and coming to realize that they are the church and that it is up to them to do the job.

To what job do I refer? The job of making our nation a Christian nation, the job of getting our people and our government eager to do things God’s way instead of the world’s way, the job of telling the world that Jesus came to proclaim good news for the poor, that there is good news for the poor. The paid leaders are refusing to tackle this job because they are afraid it will make them unpopular. They do not want to seem to imply that the people in power in the government and in business are not on the right track. Such a stand might cost them their popularity. It might even bring about the kind of showdown that John the Baptist and Jesus had with the leaders of the world--both the religious world and the secular world--in their day. Real renewal will result in a willingness to take up the cross, that is to say, to be persecuted by those in power for challenging their corrupt practices and their selfishness.

If we had no paid clergy the problem might be simpler, but now we are “stuck with” a huge body of paid, professional church “leaders” and they are making good money, enjoying immense social acceptance and have nothing to gain by any renewal movement. Real renewal will be a threat to their safe and secure position.

What, then, do we need to pray for? We have to pray for the ordinary Christians to start thinking for themselves, to ask for the Holy Spirit and to expect the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, as Jesus promised, to really study their Bibles to find out God’s will both for the church and for the nation. There is a danger, of course, that when the ordinary church members begin to realize what the Bible is saying that they will become angry and start some sort of upheaval in the church. Church history shows us that angry upheavals have never brought

renewal. Only prayer brings about renewal, because real renewal must be on the inside and that means that it must be God's own sovereign work, in his time and in his way. In the past, when the ordinary Christians have become sufficiently burdened over the state of the church and the state of the nation and have poured themselves out in prayer, God has answered those prayers with his own direct intervention. Suddenly a new determination to live by God's will has spread through the church and many of the paid leaders, themselves, have repented and have begun really ministering to the sheep instead of devouring them.

After such a renewal movement has begun, however, it is not a time to sit back and think, "We have arrived! It has happened!" Satan will do his best, not having been able to block the movement, to sidetrack it, to make people think they have arrived and they can now sit down and rest. When this happens the movement peters out in one generation. We have to fire our children with dissatisfaction, with eagerness to see something better than we have ever seen before, something more Biblical, more Godly, more holy, more powerful, more world-shaking: a church that stands equally for justice in national life (according to God's rules for economic and social justice), and for proclaiming Christ's good news to the poor all over the world so that there will be no tribe or people who have not had a chance to hear and clearly understand that Jesus is the King and that he has sent his Holy Spirit so that we can spend our lives seeking his rule and his justice.