

# HOME

## **Obedience: Key to Revival**

Clinging to known sin, while pretending to seek revival is an exercise in futility. No one is totally consistent, but double-mindedness/half-heartedness gains no favor from God. Don't expect the windows of heaven to open up if you are practicing incomplete obedience. God is unlikely to override your defiance.

Years ago my wife and I were privileged to arrive at a "revival-ready" church. This was a New England church where people seldom made public displays such as responding to altar calls. At the first service we saw forty people respond to the invitation. That was just the beginning. During the next fifteen days people responded night after night to the Prayer Room. This was a neutral place where people could go and get on their knees. There they would talk to God about the things He was talking to them about. Some stayed there for three and one half hours. Then they would emerge with the glow of heaven on their face and a powerful testimony. The Afterglow meetings went strong late into the night. Person after person would open their hearts and relate specifically how God had met their need. A spirit of excitement filled the atmosphere. Nobody wanted to leave. Our problem was not getting people to show up—here we could not get them to go home.

These dear people were anticipating great things. So great was the expectation that I don't think someone being raised from the dead would have been a surprise!

Folks were coming to the meetings from two hundred miles away. The atmosphere was so saturated with God's presence that very few made it past the first service without coming under deep conviction of sin. Night after night we would hear some the most unusual, incredible testimonies from people who had been touched by God. After the second day I remember saying to my wife; "God is here. Let's pray we will not get in the way." This meeting was different from any meeting in which I had participated. We knew we did not bring the blessing with us, and our only concern was that we would not mess it up!

Curiosity began to gnaw at me. Why was this meeting different from the others? What took place prior to our arrival? I did some investigating and found that some extraordinary acts of obedience had taken place before this

*time of refreshing.* A young man had assumed the pastorate eighteen months before this downpour. Though outward professions were few, he successfully moved the entire church to submit to the Word of God. One of the “difficult obedience’s” he undertook was confronting an unruly deacon who had run off the previous pastors. This man was a “turf shepherd” who held a tight controlling grip on church affairs. As difficult as it was, this man had to be confronted. Church members realized this was the right thing to do and it was handled in a God-honoring way. The purpose of church discipline is not to kick members out, but rather restore them to fellowship. The first encounter was fruitless and the erring brother refused to repent. In line with Matthew 18, the pastor took another brother with him. At that point the man was told the scriptures required his case be brought before the church should he decline to humble himself. He still refused to repent. As unpleasant as this was they followed the scriptures. Sheep dislike tension, but God’s honor was at stake, and the entire church knew this was what God required in this situation. The matter was brought before the church and he still refused to repent. Shunning this man was the next biblical step. Though grieved, the church body obeyed the Word of God.

Another unusual incident occurred in a prayer meeting. The men were praying when a deacon suddenly yelled out: “STOP PRAYING!” A farmer lived next door to the church and he often drove his farm equipment across the church parking lot. This disturbed the gravels so the church put up a fence to keep the farmer from messing up the gravels in the parking lot. This deacon said, “Here we are praying for revival, but we are more concerned about the shape of the gravel in the parking lot than our neighbor who is on his way to hell. I think we should call off the prayer meeting and go rip the fence down!” In unison, the men said “Amen!” and proceeded to dismantle the fence.

These two key acts of obedience preceded this outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I believe the meeting would have been inconsequential apart from the pastor leading the church to prepare the way of the Lord. **DON’T EXPECT GOD TO WORK IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO OBEY GOD!**

A pastor from the Northwest called our office to order some materials. He related how a “one day” meeting had stretched into two unbelievable weeks. God was working powerfully with people being saved daily. I began to inquire as to what led up to this. A prominent church member got involved

in an immoral relationship. This godly pastor determined to obey the Bible and administer church discipline. Obedience brought blessing!

It has been stated, “Obedience is instantly doing all God tells me to do with a right heart attitude.” Obedience is when you activate your will by immediately acting on all God has commanded with a proper spirit. Personally, I have never witnessed a move of God apart from compliance to the Word and Spirit of God.

Do not doubt that obedience brings blessing! Pastor, you cannot work up revival, but you can prepare the way of the Lord. You can remove hindrances and make His paths straight. Often there is a key issue in churches which holds back the full blessing of God. Once that concern is resolved, a host of lesser matters fall like dominoes once the log-jam is broken.

What is the Lord prompting you to act on right now? For the cause of revival we would do well to heed Mary’s words to those servants at the wedding feast, “Whatsoever he saith to thee, do it.” Will it be business as usual, or the unusual business of revival?

Harold Vaughan