

SUGGESTED HOME GROUP QUESTIONS

For week beginning 28th April 2008

This week Tony presented an overview of revival during the 18th and 19th centuries, specifically looking at the first five 'waves of worldwide revival' beginning in 1727, then 1792, 1830, 1859 and 1880. The next one was the Welsh revival in 1904.

Many people are aware of something called 'revival' as it crops up all the time in conversation, books, sermons and prayers. Tony began by giving a definition of revival which was best summed up by the expression 'a visitation of God.' Revival is when God turns up and reveals His awesome holiness and man's pitiful sinfulness. It creates conviction and repentance, a hunger after God, church attendance, prayer, the Bible and witnessing. In times of revival preaching takes on a new dynamic, usually affecting the hearers by deep solemnity, wholehearted penitence, great joy, sometimes physical manifestations like crying out, swooning, shaking, trembling, prostration, laughter or tears.

Every pre-revival period reveals similar characteristics: prayer, conviction, confession, repentance, unity, reconciliation, steps towards holiness, passion for the lost and a desire to know or please God more. All these characteristics are not found in every revival, but there are elements of most of them in all revivals, varying in degree and intensity in different revival times. One can only assume that God knows what each generation or group of Christians need at the time.

Tony used Jonathan Edwards insightful statement to make a plea for putting the issue of prayer for revival at the top of our agendas – especially in prayer: "Though there be a more constant influence of God's Spirit always, in some degree, attending His ordinances; yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work, always has been by remarkable effusions of the Spirit at special seasons of mercy..."

If the statement is true then our responsibility is enormous!

Revival injects new life into flagging Christians, enflames new passions in their hearts towards God, His word, His house and His cause. Evangelism becomes effective and converts abound. Missionary work increases astonishingly and the work of God is revitalized for its immediate future.

Suggested home group discussion questions.

1. Please comment on your observations and response to the message. Did God speak anything in particular to you and what do you intend to do about it?
2. Do you think revival is possible in our society in the 21st century? If so, what would we need to do as a church for it to flow our way?
3. Regarding yourself, imagine that there are two extremes. One is completely 'revived' and the other is 'barely alive at all' or 'totally backslidden.' If the space between was graded 1 to 10, at which number would you put yourself? In the light of your answer what main thing would you need to do to go up a number?