

DR. NEWHEART'S SUMMER CURE

Ezekiel 36:8-38 (p. 1344)

July 28, 2019

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you
And I will put my Spirit in you, and move you to follow my decrees
and be careful to keep my laws.
Ezekiel 36:26-27*

Real Conversion: the transforming work of the Spirit

*Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God
unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.
You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"
John 3:5-7 (p. 1649)*

*Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
Isaiah 55:6-7 (p. 1148)*

1) Regeneration is _____

2) Repentance is _____

A blessing for mountains

*"But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people, Israel,
for they will soon come back home
Ezekiel 36:8 (p. 1344; see Ephesians 1:3-14)*

1) Even grace is all for GOD'S GLORY

2) God is in the RESTORATION/REGENERATION business

3) God both GATHERS and YIELDS (see Ezekiel 36:37-38)

Revival still matters

1) Because I need to be AMAZED

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us
1 John 3:1 (p. 1900)

2) Because I need to be RE-FILLED

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Galatians 5:24 (p. 1816)

3) Because I am prone to WANDER

“You have forsaken your first love Repent and do the things you did at first.”
Revelation 2:1-7 (p. 1914)

3) Because I too easily FORGET God’s grace

*. . . then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord,
who brought you out of Egypt.*
Deuteronomy 6:12 (p. 284)

Resources for the Canons of Dordt

The Canons at <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs>

Tim Keller’s “Conversion and Revival” blog at <https://timothykeller.com/blog/2012/2/1/why-conversion-and-revival-are-biblical> and “The Acid Test of Being a Christian” at <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/acidtest.html>

Spurgeon’s “The Need and Nature of Conversion” sermon on Isaiah 55 at <http://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2797.HTM>

Community Christian Reformed Church of Kitchener, Ontario, has developed a wonderful teaching resource for the Canons at <https://www.ccrk.on.ca/dive-into-doctrine>

John Piper’s “What We Believe” introduction to the 5-Points at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism>

Justin Taylor’s “Tweaking the TULIP” at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/tweaking-the-tulip/>

J.I. Packer has an introduction to Arminianism that is sometimes too harsh at <http://whitefield.freeservers.com/packer.html>. His opening pages of *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1961) are much fairer.

Reformation Theology’s “J.I. Packer on ‘Calvinism’” at http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/10/j_i_packer_on_calvinism.php

Jim Osterhouse has a very helpful “fresh look” at the Five Points in “FAITH Unfolded” (Faith Alive, 1997).

Why Conversion and Revival are Biblical

Timothy Keller , February 1, 2012

<https://timothykeller.com/blog/2012/2/1/why-conversion-and-revival-are-biblical>

As I sat looking at my computer screen at the title I'd written for this article, I was somewhat bemused by the fact that a defense of conversion and revival was even necessary. But so it is. There are quarters of the church now questioning whether or not conversion, the new birth, giving oneself to Christ, etc., are topics that should even be raised. Conversion, and its corporate expression, revival, are thought to be manifestations of Western individualistic thinking. Better simply to call people to join the life of the Body of Christ by inviting them to be baptized and share in the community of believers.

While certainly acknowledging the taint of individualism which has infected the modern church, it seems to me undeniable that the scriptures have always used the language of "both...and" rather than "either...or" as regards individual conversion, revival and community life.

Just as a reminder to myself, I went through some key passages regarding this topic. I want to share them with you as a "pastoral preventative," lest anyone lead you astray on this subject. Good writers and preachers, who I respect when they speak on other subjects such as the resurrection, have, I believe, taken a wrong turning in pitting corporate Body Life against revival and conversion.

A brief Biblical theology of revival:

• Revival and conversion

Revival does not only consist of the renewal of true believers, it also consists of the conversion of those within the covenant community who are only nominal believers. The prophets preach to the circumcised—full members of the covenant outwardly—yet call them to inner conversion: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your *hearts*" (Jeremiah 4:4; cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6; Joel 2:13). In the New Testament, too, it's possible to be baptized and part of the Christian community and still have a heart 'not right before God,' needing conversion. (Acts 8:13, 21-23). Revivals mean stagnant Christians come alive and nominal Christians get converted.

• Revival and inner reality

In Ephesians 3:18ff Paul prays for his readers that the Spirit would "*strengthen you with power in your inner being.*" For what? "*So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*" and so we may know "*the love of Christ... that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*" But elsewhere Paul says all Christians already have Christ indwelling them (Ephesians 2:22) and already have come to fullness in him (Colossians 2:9-10).

This must mean that while these things are objectively true of Christians, the Spirit can make these truths so spiritually real and affecting to the heart it influences how we live. He wants us not just to know the fact of Christ's love, but to have power...to *grasp* the infinity and wonder of it (Ephesians 3:18-19).

This is what happens so often in the New Testament when "the fullness of the Spirit" is mentioned. The truth begins to shine out and we hear in our hearts, "you are my beloved" (Romans 8:16; cf. Luke 3:21-22), and it revolutionizes us, making us effective as ambassadors of his kingdom.

• Revival and being 'filled with the Spirit'

On the day of Pentecost the disciples were "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" and preached the Word of God so boldly that there were many conversions (Acts 2:4ff). This event is in many ways unique—there is no other account in the Bible of all listeners hearing a sermon in their own language (Acts 2:11) nor of visible tongues of flame.

Nevertheless, we read of situations in which the Christians were again ‘filled with the Spirit’ so that their community life and outreach was empowered (Acts 4:7-33; 13:9,49-52) David Peterson says in this context the term ‘filled with the Spirit’: “*suggests a further endowment of the Spirit for boldness in proclamation...a fresh filling of the Spirit so that with great power they were able to continue their work of testifying to the resurrection...*” [Peterson, D. G. (2009). The Acts of the Apostles. The Pillar New Testament commentary]. As in the Old Testament we still see that God’s response to prayer and persecution is the sending of the Spirit to revive individuals and churches.

• **Revival and the cycles of decline**

The books of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles depict constant cycles of decline and revival. In Judges the cycle starts when the Israelites assimilate to the pagan culture around them. The result is some kind of suffering that leads them to return to God in repentance. God responds by sending leaders who spark a revival. (Judges 2:11-20 lays out the pattern. Judges 10:6-16 is a particularly clear presentation of it.)

The cycle continues under the kings (see 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chronicles 34.) Nevertheless, the revivals grew fewer and weaker until the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:15-19).

Thus the Psalms contain prayers to ‘revive us’ and ‘restore us’ (e.g. Psalms 85, 126.) New Testament churches can go through a cycle of decline and revival too; Christ calls the Ephesian church to ‘return to your first love’ (Revelation 2:1-7).

• **Revival and spiritual forgetting**

Israel constantly “forgets” the great salvation they had received from God (Deuteronomy 8:11, 14,19; 25:11; cf. Joshua 4:20-24).

Peter warns that it is possible for Christians to become ‘near-sighted’—“forgetting they have been cleansed from their past sins.” (2 Peter 1:9) Peter does not mean that Christians literally forget that they have been forgiven, but (as the context shows) that the spiritual reality of that forgiveness is not bearing fruit in their lives. There is a need to continually renew the spiritual remembrance of our salvation.

The point of this article is not so that you (or I) can win arguments with those of a different persuasion. Christians throwing theological brickbats at one another is only amusing the Evil One. Rather, we should move forward positively to seek revival in our own lives and churches and to joyfully share the Gospel with those who do not yet know Christ. Changed lives and changed community will both glorify God and fill us with the joy unspeakable.