

A Burden for Revival



By Dave Butts

Revival comes to those who are desperate for it. Many today are talking about spiritual awakening and even beginning to pray about it. But have we allowed God to place within us the burden necessary to pray desperately for God to show up in our midst? Are we willing to “pray the price” to see God move in a powerful way in the Church today? As I continue to learn how to move my prayers into alignment with God’s will, praying Scripture has become increasingly important. As I pray God’s Word I find myself praying in ways I would never have found myself praying before. So it is as we begin to place ourselves before the Lord in asking for a burden for revival. I have been greatly impacted by the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 79.

This is a powerful prayer for revival. It was prayed from a broken heart that saw the people of God under attack and the promises of God unfulfilled.

O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble. They have given the bodies of your servants as food to

the birds of the air, the flesh of your saints to the beasts of the earth. They have poured out like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead. We are objects of reproach to our neighbors, of scorn and derision to those around us. How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the kingdoms that do not call on your name; for they have devoured Jacob and destroyed his homeland. Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake. Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured of your servants. May the groans of the prisoners come before you; by the strength of your arm preserve those condemned to die. Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at you, O Lord. Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.

Praying through Psalm 79 is a great way to develop a biblical burden for revival. The text breaks down into a great outline for passionate prayer:

1. Recognizing your current situation is a critical place to begin. The people of Israel were oppressed . . . under attack by their enemies. They finally got to a place of desperation—"for we are in desperate need" vs.8. Until the Church today arrives at that place of desperation, we will never develop a burden for revival.
2. Get serious about the glory of God. Pagans were disparaging God because of the sorry situation of the Israelites. "Where is their God?" they asked. The fact that the world would ask such a question should bring great grief to God's people. In a very real sense, this

is exactly what the world is saying of the Church today:
"Where is your God?"

3. Recognition of your current situation and passion for God's glory will lead you to petition. It is at this point that you find Israel praying for mercy, deliverance, and forgiveness. It is a very personal sort of prayer that focuses on the needs of the people of God for restoration into the favor of God.
4. Taking the prayer a step further, we see the Psalmist asking God to step into the situation. In a very real sense, the Psalmist prays, "God, You answer the accusations of the enemy. By Your actions Lord, pay back the reproach that the world has heaped upon You through the sad condition of Your people."
5. The result of such a prayer is worship and praise. It's the natural result of seeing God work. Even before full-blown revival arrives, there is worship erupting from the people of God. And along with that is the commitment to pass it on to the next generation.

Praying such a prayer for revival is not a guarantee of revival. It is merely preparing the ground of the human heart for a fresh work of God. Praying with passion for revival begins to create a burden for revival among the Lord's people. And into such a prepared state, the Lord has often poured His rain from heaven.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks of this preparatory work of prayer in his book, *Revival*: "Our essential trouble is that we are content with a very superficial and preliminary knowledge of God, His being, His cause. . . . We spend our lives in busy activism . . . instead of realizing our own failure, (that) we are not attracting anybody to Christ and that they probably see nothing in us that makes them desire to come to Him.

"The inevitable and constant preliminary to revival has always been in a thirst for God, a thirst, a living thirst for a knowledge of the living God and a longing and a burning desire

to see Him acting, manifesting Himself and His power, rising and scattering His enemies. . . . The thirst for God and the longing for the exhibition of His glory are the essential preliminaries to revival” (pages 90-91).

May our prayers for revival develop a great thirst for God, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those around us.

Dave Butts (1953-2022) was the co-founder and president of Harvest Prayer Ministries. His popular prayer guide, [Asleep in the Land of Nod](#) has been used by hundreds of churches to help their congregations pray for revival.