

MOTIVES FOR REVIVAL

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now the way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.”—Exodus 33:12-17

IF you read the history of the great revivals of the past, you will find that—as you read of the men whom God has used most signally, as you study them in the period before the revival came, when they were pleading and interceding—you will find invariably that they were animated by exactly the same motives as we find here in the case of Moses.

So we must be perfectly clear with regard to this matter of our motives. I am calling you to pray for revival. Yes, but why should you pray for revival? Why should anybody pray for revival?

The answer that is first given here is this: a concern for the glory of God. You will find it at the end of verse 13: “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people.” That is the motive. That is the reason. Moses was concerned primarily about the glory of God. Now, you will find that he constantly used this particular argument with God...He is concerned about the name and, as it were, the reputation and the glory of God.

That is the point he is making here again. “This nation,” he says, “is thy people.” He is saying, in effect, that God’s honor and God’s glory is involved in this situation. They are, after all, His people: they have claimed that, He has given indications of that—He has brought them out of Egypt in a marvelous and a miraculous manner. He has brought them through the Red Sea; is He going to leave them here in the wilderness? What will the Egyptians say? What will the other nations say? Has He failed? He promised them great things; can He not execute them? Can He not bring them to fulfillment? Moses is suggesting to God that His own glory, His own honor, is involved in this whole situation...

This is what matters, is it not? The Church, after all, is the Church of God. “She is His new creation, by water and word.” We are a people for God’s own peculiar possession; and why has He called us out of darkness into His own marvelous light (1Pe 2:9)? Surely, it is that we may show forth His praises, His excellencies, His virtues. Therefore, we should be concerned about this matter primarily because of the name, the glory, and the honor of God Himself. Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that the world judges God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole of the Christian faith by what it sees in us. We are His representatives; we are the people who take His name upon us; we are the people who talk about Him—and the man outside the Church regards the Church as the representative of God. Therefore, I argue that we must emulate¹ the example of Moses as we find it here. Our first concern should be about *the glory of God*...Here is the thing, surely, that we must needs recapture. We are so subjective in our approach, always thinking about ourselves. That is not the way to pray for revival. We must, in the first place, be concerned *about God: His glory, His honor, His name*.

This, to me, is the essence of the whole matter. Go through the great prayers of the Old Testament, and you will find it always there. These men had a passion for God; they were in trouble, they were unhappy because this great God was not being worshipped as He should be. And they prayed God for His own sake, for His glory’s sake, to vindicate His own name and to arise and scatter His enemies. That is the first thing.

Then the second thing—and it must always come in the second place, never in the first—is *a concern about the honor of the Church herself*...It seems to me that there is no hope for revival until you and I, and all of us, have reached the stage in which we begin to forget ourselves a little and to be concerned for the Church, for God’s body, His people here on earth. So many of our prayers are subjective and self-centered. We have our problems and difficulties; and by the time that we have finished with them, we are tired and exhausted, and we do not pray for the Church—[it is only] *my* blessing, *my* need, *my* this, *my* that. Now, I am not being hard and unkind; God has promised to deal with our problems. But where does the Church come into our prayers and intercessions? Do we go beyond our families and ourselves? We stand before the world and we say the only hope for the world is Christianity. We say the Church, and the Church alone, has the message that is needed...

Then, of course, the third reason is that *Moses is concerned about the heathen that are outside*. He wants them to know: “For wherein shall it be known here [in the wilderness, where we are], that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (Exo 33:16).

¹ **emulate** – strive to equal by imitation.

These are the motives in praying for revival: for the name, honor, and glory of God, and for the sake of the Church that is His. Yes, and then for the sake of those people that are outside, that are scoffing, mocking, jeering, laughing, and ridiculing. “Oh, God,” say His people, one after another, “arise and silence them. Do something so that we may be able to say to them, ‘Be still, keep silent, give up.’”

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psa 46:10). That is the prayer of the people of God. They have their eye on those that are outside. You find illustrations of this right through the Bible. And this has been true of all men who have felt the burden of the condition of the Church, and whose hearts are breaking because they have seen the name of God blasphemed. Oh, you will find it in very strong language here in the Bible, sometimes so strong that certain little people are troubled by the imprecatory² Psalms. But the imprecatory Psalms are just an expression of the zeal these men have for the glory of God. “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,” says the man in Psalm 104...It was not a desire for personal vengeance. *It was that these men were consumed by a passion for God and His glory and His great name.* There is something wrong with us if we do not feel this desire within us: that God should arise and do something that would shut the mouths and stop the tongues of these arrogant blasphemers of today, who speak with their mincing³ words upon radio and television—these supposed philosophers, these godless, arrogant men. Do we not feel, sometimes, this desire within us: that they might know that God is God and that He is the eternal God?...

This should make us ask, therefore, whether we are concerned at all about these people who are outside. It is a terrible state for the Church to be in, when she merely consists of a collection of very nice and respectable people who have no concern for the world, people who pass it by, drawing in their skirts in their horror at the bestiality, the foulness, and the ugliness of it all. We not only want the scoffers to be silenced; we should desire that these men and women, who are like sheep without a shepherd, might have their eyes opened, might begin to see the cause of their troubles and be delivered from the chains of iniquity and the shackles of infamy, vice, and foulness. Are we truly concerned about such people, and are we praying to God that He would do something, that they may be influenced and affected?

There, as I understand it, are the three main motives that animated Moses as he offered up these petitions to God.

There is something else for us to notice, and that is *the way in which he prayed.* We have seen what he prayed for; we have seen why he prayed for it; now let us watch his method of prayer. If ever we needed instruction, it is just here.

There are certain elements that always come out in all the great biblical prayers, and the first characteristic of Moses’ prayer is its *boldness*, its confidence. There is no

² **imprecatory** – expressing a spoken curse; invoking evil upon someone.

³ **mincing** – give the appearance of sincerity; pretentious.

hesitation here. There is a quiet confidence. Oh, let me use the term: there is a “holy boldness.” This is the great characteristic of all prayers that have ever prevailed. It is, of course, inevitable. You cannot pray truly, still less can you intercede, if you have not an assurance of your acceptance, and if you do not know the way into the holiest of all. If, when you get down on your knees, you are reminded of your sins and are wondering what you can do about them; if you have to spend all your time praying for forgiveness and pardon, wondering whether God is listening or not—how can you pray? How can you intercede as Moses did here? No, Moses was face to face with God; he was assured; he was bold with a holy boldness. As we have seen, God had granted him intimations of His nearness, and so he was able to speak with this confidence and assurance...

But, there is a second point, which is most valuable and interesting, and that is *the element of reasoning* and of arguing that comes in. It is very daring, but it is very true. Let me remind you of it. “Moses said unto the Lord, See...”—which really means that he is arguing with God. “See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said...” You see, he is reminding God of what He had said. He is having an argument with God: “And yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore,” says Moses, as if he were saying to God, “Be logical, be consistent, carry out your own argument. You cannot say this to me and then not do anything.” “Now therefore, I pray thee, if...”—still arguing—“if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.” Then in verse 16, “For, wherein”—if you do not do this—“wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated...” He reasoned with God. He argued with God. He reminded God of His own promises, and he pleaded with God in the light of them. He said, “Oh, God, can you not see that having said this you must...?”

Is it right, someone may ask, to speak to God like that? Is this not presumption? No, these things go together. The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, who talked so much about our going boldly to the throne of grace, at the same time reminds us that we do so always with reverence and with godly fear. This is all right. What is happening here is this: we are not seeing a man under the Law speaking to the Lawgiver. No, it is a child here speaking to his father. And the little child can take liberties with his father that a grown-up man, who is not his child, would not dare to take. Oh, yes, this is a child speaking, and he knows it. God has spoken to him, as it were, face to face; and Moses knows that. He comes with his love, his reverence, his godly fear, and he ventures to argue. He says, “You have said this, therefore...”

Another thing we should notice about prayer is its orderliness, its *directness*: the specific petition. Notice that Moses here does not offer up some vague, indefinite general prayer. No, he is concentrating on the one great need. Of course, he wor-

shipped God; of course, there was the reverence and the godly fear, yes; but at this point, he concentrates on this one thing: this presence of God. He will not get away from it. He says, "I will not move unless you come. You must come with us." He gives his reasons and plies Him with all these arguments about it.

And if I may speak for myself, I shall not feel happy and encouraged until I feel that the Church is concentrating on this one thing: *prayer for revival*. But we have not come to it. We are still in the state of deciding in committees to do this, that, and the other, and asking God to bless what we have done. No, there is no hope along that line. It *must* be that one thing. We must feel this burden, we must see this as the only hope, and we must concentrate on this, and we must keep on with it—the orderliness, the arrangement, the concentration, the argument, and always the urgency.

Moses here is as Jacob was in Genesis 32. This element always comes into true intercession. "I will not let thee go," said Jacob. I am going on. The morning was breaking; he had been struggling through the night. "Let me go."

"No, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." There is the *urgency*. Read the great biblical prayers; it is always in them. In Acts 4, we read of the Christians asking God to act "now!" "Oh God," they said, "in the light of this, in our situation now: do this. Give us some indication, give us some signs, enable us to witness with this holy boldness, and to bear witness to the resurrection that they are prohibiting us to speak about." See the urgency of the prayer. Moses keeps on coming back to it, repeating it, putting it in different forms and from different angles. But there was just this one thing: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Insisting urgently, "I will not let thee go."

There, it seems to me, are some of the lessons from this passage. We say our prayers, but have we ever prayed? Do we know anything about this encounter, this meeting? Have we the assurance of sins forgiven? Are we free from ourselves and self-concern that we may intercede? Have we a real burden for *the glory of God* and the name of the Church? Have we this concern for those who are outside? And are we pleading with God for His own name's sake because of His own promises to hear us and to answer us? Oh, my God, make of us intercessors such as Moses!

It is no use anybody saying, "Ah, but he was an exceptionally great man." God, as we have seen in the history of revivals, has made use of men who are mere nobodies in exactly the same way as He used Moses here...It can be any one of us. May God make of us intercessors such as Moses was.

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