

ISAIAH 58:6-14

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF HIS PEOPLE

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.
And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”¹

[ISAIAH 58:6-14]

Human nature inevitably seeks to reduce the Faith to rite and ritual. If we can sleepwalk through the various parts of what is commonly called “worship,” we can allow ourselves to feel that we have done all that God expects. This proclivity to reduce worship to ritual rather than relationship is not unique to this present generation—it was described frequently and condemned by the Prophets of God. These bold, underappreciated men universally condemned rite and ritual performed for the sake of the ritual, performed simply to make those performing the acts feel good about themselves. At the outset of the message, underscore in your mind the consistent condemnation of mankind’s effort to replace relationship with ritual.

Seven hundred fifty years before the Advent of the Saviour, the Living God commissioned His prophet, Isaiah:

“Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to My people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.”

[ISAIAH 58:1]

What is especially tragic from the standpoint of the faithful is that the prophet’s commission was given at a time when the nation could claim—legitimately, I might note—that they were fulfilling all the prescribed rituals presented under the Law. The people were confident that they were doing the will of God because the priests told them they were doing well. Their religious devotions were icily precise and utterly devoid of warmth. The populace, not unlike many adherents of Christendom in this day, were focused on what was done rather than focusing on Whom they would meet. Literally, worshippers focused on their own lives rather than focusing on whether they had actually met the True and Living God. God said,

“They seek Me daily
and delight to know My ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgement of their God;
they ask of Me righteous judgements;
they delight to draw near to God.”

[ISAIAH 58:2]

The people were offended by the prophet’s charge levelled against them and their efforts at what they called worship. They pouted,

“Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?”

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Then, God through His prophet responded,

“Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.
Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.”

[ISAIAH 58:3]

The results of religion without transformation is exposed when the LORD God says,

“Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?”

[ISAIAH 58:4, 5]

God shows us our failings, our foibles and faults; however, He never leaves us wallowing in the futility of our error. He shows us the remedy for our sinful actions, drawing us heavenward, encouraging us by telling us what He will do to bless us when we are obedient. What He seeks from us and the divine encouragement of what is promised are revealed through the verses of our text this day.

GOD’S DESIRE IS REVIVAL FOR HIS PEOPLE — God, speaking through His prophet, raises the question, “Is not this the fast that I choose?” God shows what He expects of our religious exercises. God shows what He seeks from those who would worship Him in Spirit and in truth. It is not ritual that is needed in this day—it is a vibrant relationship with the Living God that is missing from the service of the churches of our Lord. We professed people of God are woefully confused. We say we are seeking revival, meaning that we want to see sinners converted to fill our churches, though we are less certain that we want to be changed.

Over fifty years ago, a man named Owen Murphy wrote, “When men in the streets are afraid to open their mouths and utter godless words lest the judgments of God should fall; when sinners, overawed by the Presence of God tremble in the streets and cry for mercy; when, without special meetings and sensational advertising, the Holy Ghost sweeps across cities and towns in Supernatural Power and holds men in the grip of terrifying Conviction; when ‘every shop becomes a pulpit, every heart an altar, every home a sanctuary’ and people walk softly before God—This is Revival!”²

² Owen Murphy, **When God Stepped Down From Heaven**, (Murphy, 1955)

Modern Christians have confused revival with evangelism. Evangelism is the ongoing responsibility to point lost people to life in the Beloved Son that is entrusted to each Christian. Evangelism is the responsibility of each child of God. Evangelism is an issue of obedience imposed because we know Him who rescues from death and gives new life to repentant sinners. Revival is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit moving in power on God's redeemed people. Evangelism will not produce revival, though revival will assuredly ensure evangelism.

Evangelical churches are prepared to hire an evangelist and announce a series of revival meetings. Though scores and even hundreds of people respond to the invitations of the evangelist, the church seldom enjoys either a sustained influx of individuals coming to faith or continued growth in those seeking to hear the message of life. However, when revival comes, the Spirit of the Living God will deal thoroughly with the hearts of God's people. When we are revived, confessing and forsaking our sins we will bring many to life in the Son as we realise the reality of Peter's words, "In your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" [1 PETER 3:15].

What we must realise is that God must do the choosing. We turn matters around. We imagine that we can schedule the Spirit of God much as we schedule our appointments throughout the days of our lives. Though we know the words Jesus spoke, we are less certain of what they mean or how we should apply them in our lives. Jesus cautioned a religious leader, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" [JOHN 3:8].

Speaking of the divine gifts distributed by the Spirit of God, Christians have been taught, "All these [divine gifts given for the benefit of all] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills" [1 CORINTHIANS 12:11]. God's Spirit works *as He wills*, not as we will. God's Spirit moves at His pleasure and not at ours. Still, it seems to delight the LORD God to employ mere men to accomplish His will.

Ezekiel was brought by the Spirit of the LORD to a valley that was filled with bones. The Spirit then led the prophet among the bones; Ezekiel noted that "there were very many (bones) on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry." What I would have us to see is the exchange between the LORD and Ezekiel from this point. "[The LORD] said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD'" [EZEKIEL 37:3-6].

Note God's language: "I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live." "I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD." The language reveals that God is consistent in declaring His sovereignty. The LORD God says, "I will do this"; He does not say, "You shall work at this." He is the one who sends revival; He refreshes the barren heart. And hearts are barren today!

If revival is even discussed in this day, it is in a perfunctory manner, much as if we were discussing the weather. Revival is seen as an interesting topic, but of no particular concern. Among the churches of our God, to say nothing of in the lives of far too many Christians, the Spirit of God is relegated to the role of a distant entity that does not have much impact in our daily considerations. We will speak of our willingness to be guided by Him, but we seldom seek His guidance as we move through our daily routines.

God's desire is that His people would live as His children, revealing the divine parentage. The divine desire is revealed repeatedly throughout Scripture. Listen to a few instances, beginning with statements the Master made when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount. "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" [MATTHEW 5:13-16]. The point Jesus made is vital to spiritual health—how I live reveals the reality of my relationship to the Living God.

Soon after He had said these words, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" [MATTHEW 5:43-48]. Perfect! Not good, but perfect! Jesus made no allowance for wiggle room; we are called to strive to honour Him through lives that are godly and righteous.

I do not wish to belabour the point, but I do want to call attention Peter's challenge that was delivered to any individual who would follow the Master as His disciple. Peter wrote, "Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" [1PETER 1:13-21].

REVIVAL REVEALS THE TRANSFORMED HEART —

"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

[ISAIAH 58:6, 7]

Revival cannot be scheduled; revival cannot be marked on a calendar as we might mark a holiday or as we might mark a date for special meetings. Revival is sent by God according to His will and in His time. We can prepare ourselves for revival and plead with God to revive us; however, He alone can renew our lives, refreshing our hearts as we receive the blessings He gives. What is important is to note that those who are revived reveal the gracious work of the Spirit through lives that are indelibly marked with Heaven's imprimatur. Those who have been revived do not speak of their righteousness—they show their righteousness. The revived saint so lives that his transformed heart is revealed to all who know that believer.

The Word of God probes deep into the heart, exposing who we are and revealing who we can be. It is important to note that the transformed heart is not merely a religious heart—it is a compassionate heart. I almost hesitate to say this because so many today attempt to generate compassion in order to be the people of God. However, relationship leads to righteousness, and not *vice versa*. We do not attempt to be compassionate in order to be righteous; rather, because we are righteous we will be compassionate.

The Christian Faith is messy. We cannot be Christians without becoming involved in the lives of broken people. We recoil from the filth of broken lives, not wishing to soil our hands. This is the impact of Jude's closing words to the people of God. "You, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire, to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh" [JUDE 20-23]. Notice, then, that in the text before us God speaks of loosing the bonds of wickedness, undoing the straps of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free while breaking every yoke. He speaks of sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked and accepting your own people. God says quite pointedly that the revived heart will dare risk reputation and even self-esteem to rescue others and to serve them as Christ served.

In our community are souls desperately needing to be rescued. Wandering the streets each night are men and women who are lost. The homeless man stumbling along the streets to find a bench on which he will stretch out in a drunken stupor is in need of the love of Christ. Our inclination is to draw back, disgusted at the caricature we see before us. "That man does not deserve our pity," we say; "he made his choice." I'm so glad Christ did not say that about me. When He found me, I was lost, embittered, angry and acting wickedly. Rather than berating me—turning in disgust at what I was, Christ drew me to Himself and saved me.

In our community are people whom we have written off because they don't measure up to our standards. We dismiss them as lazy, as worthless, as people unworthy of love—certainly unworthy of our love. Aren't you glad that the Saviour did not treat you in that way? What did you possess that would make Him love you? What could you present that would make Him desire you? Like Israel of old, you were wallowing in your own fallen condition, covered in filth and dirt. Jesus rescued you, dirtied His hands lifting you and cleansing you from all evil.

We see them every day. The young couple that bravely attempts to stand up. Their child was born horribly disfigured and injured. Now, they struggle to make sense of this situation, wondering if God—if anyone—loves them. Did we stop to pray with them, asking that God encourage them and perhaps offering to lift even momentarily the burden from their soul.

The woman deserted by her husband who now works at a job that pays far too little so she can survive and provide for her child; her eyes are always sad and her life is hard. What would it mean if she was to hear a kind voice or receive a helping hand so she could stand?

Yonder is a young man who overspent, having bought into the lie of this age that more toys means greater worth; now, the jobs have dried up and he can't meet the debt he has incurred. "He doesn't deserve our pity—he brought his situation on himself," we say. Is there no compassion in our heart? Could we not speak a word of instruction to him?

The teenage girl seeking love and finding instead exploitation has soiled her life. Perhaps someone advised her to correct her "mistake" by killing the child she now carries. Where is the compassionate voice that will offer to take the child, to provide for that young mother if need be, welcoming her into their home so that she can begin anew?

Revival reveals the transformed heart; revival expresses the mind of the Master.

REVIVAL ENSURES DIVINE BLESSING —

"Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.
And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

[ISAIAH 58:8-14]

In the estimate of many, revival means happiness. However, in the Word of God, revival speaks of divine blessing—blessing that cannot be otherwise explained. Note the blessings that Isaiah specifically points out. Intimacy with God, recognition of God’s righteousness in one’s life, answered prayer—all flow from revealing oneself as godly. Perhaps we do not esteem such divine gifts; nevertheless, they are precious—they are precious because they are given only by the hand of the Living God and they are precious because we cannot otherwise possess them.

Let me say that I have deep concern for modern Christendom. Too many wealthy employers give generous gifts, doing so ostentatiously, even as they fail to pay a living wage to their employees. Too many women are busy about the trappings of the church building, failing to take time to listen to the sobs of the neighbour who just buried her mother. Too many of us who stand behind the sacred desk invest hours in polishing our Sunday speeches—for that is what they have become—and yet will not take thirty minutes to speak with a sinner to point them to life in the Beloved Son.

Do not such actions and attitudes point to our need for revival? Do not our self-centred lives expose the poverty of our souls? If I lack divine guidance, is it because I am not yet revived? If I have no satisfaction in my religious exercises, is it because I need revival?

Let me address more broadly still the state of the churches, and in particular the condition of our own congregation. God, through Isaiah, promises,

“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.”

[ISAIAH 58:12]

Does not the promise speak to the congregation that has grown senescent, complacent as she awaits her inevitable demise? I am humbled as I consider the words the Risen Saviour addressed to the Ephesian congregation. “I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent” **[REVELATION 2:4, 5]**.

“Ah, Lord, your church is in ruins, we desperately need Your intervention to rebuild what has fallen down. Sinners, many of them religious but lost, ridicule the Faith and seek to use it as a means to advance themselves. Others treat the holy Bride of Christ as a tawdry trollop, crudely slapping her on the back and addressing her in vulgar terms. Lord, God, repair the breach! Restore the church! Let us be those who are used to the praise of Your glory! Let me be one who begins a new, old work. Revive us; and let the work start in me. Amen.”

One statement may frequently be overlooked in Isaiah’s words. It must not be ignored. Let me preface what I am about to say with a disclaimer. I am not a Seventh Day Adventist; neither am I a Seventh Day Baptist. I am not a Sabbatarian, demanding that keeping a Sabbath is somehow mandatory to being redeemed. I am, however, deeply concerned that in this day, the Lord’s Day, the day normally set aside for worship, has become just another day. We have no time for God because we are so busy pursuing our own desires. Sunday has become a day for sports, a day for partying, a day for doing what we want to do, instead of being a day set aside to refresh our spirits in the presence of the Lord. Listen to God and tremble before Him.

“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth.”

[ISAIAH 58:12, 13a]

On Sunday, we can always find time for skiing, got sledding, for hiking in the mountains, for hunting or time just for vegging because we had such a busy week and we are so exhausted. We justify missing worship for these activities because we need family time or because we need time for ourselves. We need to be reminded that we are tripartite beings—we possess a body, we are a living soul and God has placed His Spirit within us.

We are physical beings; I know we need rest for our bodies. Teenagers really do need eight hours of sleep each night. Those who labour with their tools will find that they do need physical rest and down time to refresh the body. We are also emotional beings, soulish entities. Therefore, we do need to refresh our minds. Reading a good novel can be a marvellous means of restoring the edge to an otherwise dulled life. We benefit from time to speak quietly with our spouse or to escape the hubbub of life for restoring our soul in a mountain setting, in a sylvan glen or on a mountain tarn. What is often neglected is that we are also spiritual beings in need of refreshing our spirits. I do not expect pagans to seek spiritual refreshment—their spirits are dead; I do, however, marvel that the professed people of God do not pursue more avidly spiritual refreshment. Certainly, we can refresh the spirit through hearing the voice of the Master through His Word and through time spent in prayer. However, God created us as beings requiring fellowship. We absent ourselves from the House of God at the expense of our own spirits. Tragically, a primary reason for the spiritual lassitude of this day is spiritual exhaustion arising from lives that have focused on the soulish and physical aspects of life to the exclusion of the spiritual parameter of life. The congregation of the Lord is a blessing from God.

A PLEA FOR REVIVAL — The Living God has a claim on the life of each follower of the Christ. The Master calls each Christian to live and to speak in such a way that the believer glorifies the Name of the Risen Saviour. Do you long for His glory? Do you live to do His will? Do you recognise the need for holy refreshment in your own life?

We have so many excuses, and they seem valid when we first offer them up. In the glare of God’s holiness, each excuse evaporates. “Ah, Lord Christ, I would serve you more ardently, but it may offend my family.”

I heard a voice warning, “A person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” [MATTHEW 10:36, 37].

Jesus also cautioned those who would resort to this excuse, “From now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law” [LUKE 12:52, 53].

“Ah, Lord Jesus, I would speak to my neighbours, but they might think I am a fanatic! Surely You do not want me to be a fanatic, do You?”

Did I not hear the voice of Jesus warning, “Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” [MATTHEW 10:32, 33].

“Ah, LORD God, I would read Your Word, but You know how busy I am. I would spend time in prayer, but I really have all I need so I don’t need to call on Your Name as I once did. You can see that, can’t you Lord? If I ever get in a bind, I will be sure to call on You.”

Did not the Living God command those who would follow Him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” [DEUTERONOMY 6:5].

“Master, I would honour You, but I fear what people might say about me. I would be faithful to Your church, but I really, really need time for myself. Surely You understand, Lord.”

Jesus confronts our pitiful, puerile protestations when He challenges, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you” [LUKE 6:46]?

When we confront our evasion of responsibility to the Holy One, viewing our excuses in light of His Word, we are horrified. If I am a child of the Living God, He has a rightful claim on my life, my love, my service. I call Him Master—either He is sovereign or He is nothing to me. If I claim to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, my life will reveal the reality of that claim or it will condemn me as one who is false. Isaiah pleaded with God to revive His people. His prayer is a model for the prayer that still rises from broken hearts.

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
You meet him who joyfully works righteousness,
those who remember you in your ways.
Behold, you were angry, and we sinned;
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

“But now, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Be not so terribly angry, O LORD,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.
Your holy cities have become a wilderness;
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
Our holy and beautiful house,
where our fathers praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.
Will you restrain yourself at these things, O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?”

[ISAIAH 64:1-12]

I am fully aware that revival will disrupt our lives; but when we are revived, we will do great things in the Name of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Revival, when it comes, will destroy our puny efforts to promote our self-centred goals; nevertheless, revival will advance the cause of the Saviour. Revival will strip away our pride, trampling in the dust our vaunted sense of self-worth that enables us to treat fellow Christians as enemies or worse, that we begin to see our fellow saints as those who must serve us because we are great in our own eyes. When it comes, revival will exalt the Name of the Saviour above all else.

That is my plea; that must be our plea. The account of the Moravian missionary movement is one of the bright spots recorded in the annals of the history of the Faith. Two young Moravian Christians had heard of an island located in the West Indies. A British plantation owner had over three thousand slaves to work his land on that island. He had vowed that no preacher or missionary would ever set foot on his land to preach to those enslaved souls. These two young men sold themselves into slavery, ensuring that they would never again be free. They used the money they received to arrange to transport themselves to that island, an island from which they would never return. This was the only way they would ever reach the slaves with the message of life.

Family and friends, many no doubt in tears and deeply grieved as they witnessed the selfless sacrifice of these two young men, came to see them off. As the ship departed the pier, the two young men locked arms and one of the men lifted his hand to Heaven, shouting over the weeping of those gathered, “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.” That sentence became the catalyst for the great Moravian missionary movement. No sacrifice is too great for the Lamb that was slain.

Revival tarries because we are in love with ease. We have forgotten the Lamb Who was slain, treating Him as a distant entity of no particular concern to us in our selfish condition. We desperately require revival. Let us seek revival now. Amen.