

A LOOK AT REVIVAL IN THE CONTEXT OF JOSIAH'S REVIVAL
AND THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING IN NORTHAMPTON

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ABSTRACT
A Look at Revival in The Context of Josiah's Revival
and the First Great Awakening in Northampton
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Revival is needed in our present time as in times past. The term revival can mean different things to varying individuals, and groups, so revival will be defined in the introduction so that a common frame of reference will be understood as we analyze revival through the prism of history to our present time. This topic was chosen due to the decline of membership of my home church, as well as the changing demographics and dynamics within the American Church.

In chapter 2, Josiah's revival in the Old Testament was chosen to evaluate how God moved amongst his people in one of their darkest periods of history. We will consider the events leading up to the revival, what happened during the revival, and the effects at the conclusion of the account. Chapter 3 will look at the First Great Awakening with an emphasis on Northampton in New England. The analysis of this awakening will begin with understanding the times prior to the Awakening, along with those who immigrated to New England that took part in these events. As part of this revival, various figures will be introduced and the impact they had on the awakening. The persons chosen for their major contributions to the First Great Awakening include Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield. Next in chapter 4, we will look at the role of prayer in the Awakening with the focus on Jonathan Edwards' view of prayer and his emphasis on prayer

as a local and international prayer, under the concept of his 'Concert of Prayer.' Then, in chapter 5 we will look at some examples of issues within the American Church that displays a need for revival. These areas include church attendance, the view and gaining acceptance of both same-sex marriage and homosexual relationships, and the prevalence of pornography by clergy and laity alike. Finally, the conclusion will look at the areas discussed in this paper to give recommendations on what it would take to see another revival based on the historical, biblical, and theological examples within this thesis.

ABBREVIATIONS

ESV	English Standard Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NKJV	New King James Version

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The desire to experience revival has been a passion of mine for most of my adult life. This passion has followed me from my former church, to the one I now attend. I have only regularly attended two churches in forty-three years. In both cases, the churches were declining in attendance. The members were generally faithful in both congregations, but new converts were few and the exuberant passion for God, his word, prayer, and motivation to evangelize the lost was lacking. The congregation I am presently a member, have people deeply committed to the Lord, but the zeal to evangelize is not a primary focus. Observing this issue and the gradual lack of morality in our nation was the catalyst for this topic.

There is a deep desire in my soul to see an awakening first in my congregation and then our nation. This desired result would see the lost come to Christ, to witness freedom for those shackled by sin and addiction, and the church to have a renewed passion for God. Though this is a true desire and could be the result revival, the purpose of this research is to observe how God has worked in the past and determine if there are actions the church can take to prepare for a new awakening.

The primary issue in both congregations was the inability to keep college aged persons in attendance once they entered college. This has a direct impact on church attendance in the long-term if a congregation is not active in evangelism and discipleship. This was not just a problem in these two congregations but is a problem nationwide.

Research shows that church attendance, and/or church membership in America is declining. Additionally, negative societal mores are creeping in the church, with recent examples such as changing attitudes toward the acceptance of same-sex marriage, and the widespread use of pornography by clergy and laity. To have a cogent conversation and seek revival in our churches, we must define what revival is, and what it looks like.

Definition of Revival

Revival like salvation is a work of God that is desperately needed in our present time as it was in the past. The concept of revival can be conceived in different ways. We will consider revival as a means of spiritual renewal for the Church that is exhibited through increased frequency and fervency of prayer, hunger for God's Word, repentance, and salvation of the lost. Revival will be considered as a means of breathing new life in the Church. We must ask God to rekindle a burning passion to love Him and evangelize the lost. Once we have experienced revival and see lost humanity as God does, then passion to reach the lost will be restored. Only a Holy Spirit initiated revival can save and restore our evangelical churches, and ultimately the nation.

R. C. Sproul in his introduction to the book, *The Spirit of Revival*, by Jonathan Edwards said this about revival:

Revival describes a renewal of spiritual life, while reformation describes a renewal of the forms and structures of society and culture. It is not possible to have true reformation without having true revival.¹

Sproul gave two reasons why it is not possible to have reformation without revival when he said:

¹ R. C. Sproul, introduction to *The Spirit of Revival* by Jonathan Edwards (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 17-18. Note: This book is a complete, modernized text of, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*.

Revival brings with it the conversion of souls to Christ, who are at the moment of conversion spiritual babes. Infants have little impact on the shaping of cultural institutions. . . . The second reason concerns the scope and intensity of the revival. If the revival is limited in scope and intensity, its impact tends to be restricted to a small geographical area and also tends to be short-lived.²

I will examine what it would take to experience revival in the present-day American church based on historical examples of past revivals. To consider this concept we will examine the biblical account of Josiah's revival in the Old Testament, the First Great Awakening in North Hampton, and Jonathan Edwards' view of prayer. The commonalities of the two revivals will be examined, as well as God's role in these events. Then, we will consider the present condition of the American church in the three areas previously listed, and then discuss in the conclusion those things we can do to prepare for another awakening.

To proceed, some limitations need to be outlined. Given the number of past revivals and amount of material, only Josiah's revival in the Old Testament, and the First Great Awakening in North Hampton will be considered. Prayer was a major factor in Josiah's revival, and that of the First Great Awakening. Further, this thesis will examine Jonathan Edwards' view of prayer as he was central to the awakening in North Hampton. Finally, Edwards' book on the role of prayer in revival, will be utilized as the primary basis of his understanding of corporate prayer. His views and experience with private prayer will be taken primarily from his *Faithful Narrative*.

If revival occurs in the local church, societal change is likely to follow, but at the writing of this paper, wide-spread revival has not yet begun in my local congregation, or America. The American church needs to examine the Word of God, our history, and our

² Ibid.

present condition and prayerfully ask God for a new awakening. The evaluation of revival will commence by examining Josiah's revival in the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 2

JOSIAH'S REVIVAL

Revivals are not a new concept in modern centuries. Throughout history, when times were dark, and the faith of His people are waning, God stirred their hearts to repent and return to fellowship. The time of Josiah was no exception. Josiah was the great grandson of King Hezekiah who led a revival of worship to Yahweh after a period of spiritual darkness in the land of Israel. His father Ahaz forsook worship of Yahweh. “He made images of Baal, sacrificed (presumably his oldest son) to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, had the pagan altar he saw in Damascus copied by Uriah the priest in Jerusalem, which he then placed instead of the brazen altar prescribed by the Mosaic Law.” He closed the temple doors and forbid the people to worship except where he would allow.¹ As Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 2:11,² “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after the wind and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.” He was saying that apart from the hand of God, nothing we do in this earth will stand the test of time. When mankind erects monuments to himself, or of things in the created order and forsakes God, it is all vanity; nothing to be gained. This is the attitude of

¹Walter C. Kaiser, JR, *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 371-372.

² All Bible verses quoted will be from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

the nation when Josiah was elevated to the position of king. It was a time of apostasy and despair.³

The apostasy present when Josiah became King started with his grandfather Manasseh. Manasseh did not follow in the ways of his father Hezekiah. 2 Chronicles 33:2 says this about Manasseh, “And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.” The practices that Manasseh instituted in the land of Israel were, “among the taboos borrowed wholesale from Canaanite culture are idolatry associated with the fertility cult deities Asherah and Baal, astral worship, infanticide, and the occult.”⁴ It is not clear why Manasseh did not learn from his father regarding true worship of God. A tragic aspect of his evil reign is that he served as the longest reigning king in Israel’s history. He ruled for fifty-five years.⁵

Detestable Practices

To understand the miracle of Josiah’s revival and reforms, the depravity of the nation must be properly understood. Frequently, the bible lists the sins the people committed in defiance of God’s law, but the depths of their transgressions are not descriptive enough for the reader to properly understand why these practices were detestable to God. When the

³ The term apostasy defined as, “The act of rebelling against, forsaking, abandoning, or falling away from what was once believed.” This reference further says, “The Old Testament speaks of “falling away” in terms of a person’s deserting to a foreign king. Taken in this context, apostacy in the Old Testament would constitute abandoning God and following other idols or false gods. Michael Fink, “Apostasy”, in *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed., Trent C. Butler; 1991; Available from: <https://www.studyLight.org/dictionaries/hbd/a/apostasy.html>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2017.

⁴ Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 614.

⁵ Kaiser, 381.

people worshipped other gods and forsook Yahweh, they were violating God's law. It says in Exodus 20: 3-5:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, of that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. . . .⁶

To worship or make an idol is to violate the commandments of God which he instituted as a guideline of worship and how one should live in obedience to His holy character. There were several detestable practices listed in II Kings 21 under the rule of Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather. These practices he reinstated was, "rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them." (21:3)

The first defiant act of Manasseh listed was his erecting the high places again (2 Kings 21:3), after his grandfather Hezekiah had torn them down during his revival. Tenney says, "In Canaan these high places had become the scenes of orgies and human sacrifice connected with the idolatrous worship of these imaginary gods. . . ."⁷ These depictions were an affront to God's character. He should have been the object of their affections, not depictions of raunchy sex acts, appendages, or human sacrifice. God expects fidelity in human relationships, especially in the marriage covenant, as well as in our relationship with

⁶ The concept of God's jealousy is not one of sin as in when one is improperly jealous of someone else without cause. In fact, the note for Exodus 20:5 in the *Reformation Study Bible*, ed. by R. C. Sproul says, "When used of God, this word describes His passion for His holy name, a zeal that demands the exclusive devotion of His people. It is employed when that claim is threatened by other deities" R.C. Sproul, ed., *Reformation Study Bible*. (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 121.

⁷ Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 354.

Him.⁸ He did not condone orgies as he intended marriage to be one man and one woman. Nor, did He approve of human sacrifice. These were the ways of pagans, not God's covenant community.

The second act of defiance on part of Manasseh and God's people were to erect an altar to Baal and set up an Asherah. To understand why this was forbidden by God, we must understand in brief, who Baal and Asherah were. Baal was, "the Babylonian Belu or Bel, "Lord," which was the title of the supreme god among the Canaanites. Baal was a title for a territorial god, such as over a "piece of land or soil." The Babylonians considered Baal to be a sun-god. The Phoenician's saw him as the "Lord of Heaven." They considered him to be equivalent to Zeus in the Greek culture.⁹ "Baal" was not meant to be a term to depict one god but was a title for a god over a general location. During this time, people looked at the 'gods' as territorial, with some being greater, and others lesser. Over time in the land of Canaan, the concept of Baal morphed into the concept that he was one god. The most common way to worship Baal was to offer him sacrifices and burnt offerings, which occasionally included children. Additional ways Baal was worshipped were by priests feverishly dancing around a statue of Baal, slashing themselves with knives, and committing "lascivious" acts.¹⁰

⁸ God's design for marriage is seen in Genesis 2:18-25. It says in verse 24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Becoming one flesh has a connotation that the two come together in marriage and become one. This would logically conclude that there isn't room for others, therefore a call to a monogamous fidelity in our marriage relationships. This same concept can be seen in our relationship with God. He expects fidelity from us in our relationship with him. There isn't room for other "gods."

⁹ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online*, s. v. "Baal"; Available from [http://www.interanationalstandardbible.com/B/baal-\(1\).html](http://www.interanationalstandardbible.com/B/baal-(1).html); Internet; accessed 11 November 2017.

¹⁰ Tenney, 87.

Asherah and Molech were two other “deities” worshipped in Canaan and surrounding territories. Asherah was considered a “goddess” of fertility. She:

Represented the Babylonian Ishtar in her character as goddess of love and not of war. Her symbol was a tree trunk with branches to symbolize the tree of life. Manasseh erected one of these in the temple, which was placed in honor next to the “altar of Yahweh.”¹¹

Manasseh had specifically requested her image to be carved and then placed into the temple. (2 Kings 21:7) This was a conscious, deliberate, premeditated act of rebellion. The temple was the place to worship Yahweh. To defile it with idols of false gods angered Yahweh and was one of the reasons that judgment was promised to Judah and Israel.

Molech on the other hand was, “a heathen god worshipped especially by the Ammonites with gruesome orgies in which little ones were sacrificed.”¹² One of the most detestable acts of worship to Molech was the way they sacrificed children. They would heat up the statue of Molech and would place the bodies of dead children that were sacrificed for them to burn on the arms of Molech.¹³ Manasseh was so evil, he even had his son burned on the altar.¹⁴ Though 2 Kings does not explicitly say he was burned in worship to Molech, it can be implied based on the information already presented. It is undeniable why God was angry with Manasseh and the people of Judah as they held worship to the one true God in disregard and worshipped pagan “deities.” This contempt for God showed their cold heart toward Him and his ways, which exhibited their need for repentance and revival.

¹¹ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online*, s. v. “Asherah”; Available from <http://www.interanationalstandardbible.com/A/asherah.html>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2017.

¹² Tenney, 550.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ 2 Kings 21:6.

Finally, the last area of detestable actions undertaken during the reign of Manasseh, and then his son Amon was the setting up of altars, “for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.” (2 Kings 21:5) Konkel says:

The host of heaven is worshipped in two temple courts and on the roof of his palace. . . . Worship of astral deities also occurs—A Canaanite practice that Israel has warned about before their entry into the land.¹⁵

Walton, Matthews and Chavalas says, “The stars were believed to be mediators between gods and men, and able to control events on earth.”¹⁶ Barker and Kohlenberger says that Manasseh “practiced sorcery and divination and consulted purveyors of demonic activity.”¹⁷ These things were an affront to God and forbidden in his law. The Lord prohibited this type of behavior in the Book of Deuteronomy. He warned against idolatry and following the detestable acts of the nations they would defeat.¹⁸ Yahweh desired his people to have faith in Him and look to Him for guidance. There was no reason to look to the stars, sun, or moon for answers. They could have inquired of the creator of those stars. They did not have to appease territorial gods such as Baal, Asherah, or Molech as they were false gods. Yahweh was the

¹⁵ Konkel, 622.

¹⁶ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, eds., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), 456.

¹⁷ Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger, *The Expositors Bible Commentary, Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 571.

¹⁸ Two passages of scripture in the Book of Deuteronomy that addresses these issues can be found in Deuteronomy 13:29-32 and Deut. 18:9-14. Deut. 13:29-32 is a warning against idolatry and not to be tempted to serve the “gods” of the nations they conquer. God instructs them to do exactly the things he instructs them to do, and nothing further. He mentions the abomination of burning sons and daughters in honor of their ‘gods’. Deut. 18:9-14 warns against using sorcerers, diviners, mediums, necromancers, etc. God is very clear that his people are not to participate in the dark arts and seek wisdom apart from Him. God stresses again in this passage the prohibition against burning children to foreign “deities.” These were many of the terrible things Manasseh did in the years before Amon and then Josiah would become king.

one true God. He was jealous for the affections of his people. To place any of these “deities,” or astral bodies next to, or above Yahweh was blasphemy. Barker says:

The wicked reign of Manasseh had become the capstone of the wall of sin that Israel had built between herself and God. God now had taken its measure and marked Judah for destruction.¹⁹

This heinous sin had to be dealt with by God. He could not let it go on without judgment.

Reign of Josiah

Josiah’s reign started when he was an eight-year old boy. His father Amon was killed by his own servants two years into his reign. Amon was a wicked king who “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done,” II Chronicles 33:22. Not much is said about the early life of Josiah besides that he became king at age eight and began to seek the Lord in the eighth year of his reign, when he was sixteen. With a king as young as Josiah, it is suggested that, “Regents from this group must have been responsible for the king during the years of his minority.”²⁰ Officials in the king’s court would help him govern until he was able to make decisions alone. It is not known who oversaw his spiritual formation.

Josiah Institutes Reforms

Just as God placed the desire in Josiah to seek him, he placed in his heart the desire to rebuild the house of the Lord and to restore right worship in Judah and Jerusalem. Four years after beginning to seek God, Josiah began to cleanse the land of idolatry.²¹ Josiah began these

¹⁹ Barker, 572.

²⁰ August H. Konkel, *1 & 2 Kings, The NIV Application Commentary*. ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 634.

²¹ 2 Chronicles 34:3.

reforms when he was twenty years old. The age of twenty is significant in the history of the Hebrew people. At the age of twenty, it was the “age of majority in Hebrew culture and, more than coincidentally for the Chronicler, the age when the Levite began His service to Yahweh.” This is important because, though Josiah was not a priest, the revival began with him as he sought to please Yahweh. In a sense, he was the spiritual leader out of the darkness that Manasseh and Amon plunged Judah and Jerusalem into with their idolatrous ways. Many believe that Josiah began the work of restoring the temple building prior to his finding and hearing the Book of the Law.²²

According to 2 Chronicles 34:3, Josiah began some considered his early reforms prior to the finding of the book of the law. In the second half of this verse, it says, “and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high place, the Asherim, and the carved and metal images.” The purge of the Asherim, the high places, altars of the Baals, and other items of foreign worship were destroyed in the presence of the king. Josiah even had the bones of the priests to these false gods burned as part of this early purge.²³ Josiah had the zeal of Yahweh as his motivation. He was on a mission to destroy anything that would be considered an affront to the holiness of God. To restore right worship, the sin that was prevalent in the Land had to be eradicated.²⁴ That he had not yet found the book of the law

²² Hill, 618-619.

²³ 2 Chronicles 34:1-7.

²⁴ When both accounts of Josiah’s reforms are read in 2 Kings 22:1-: 23:30 and 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27, the chronologies seem misaligned. The passage in 2 Chronicles 34:3b-7 describes a purification of the land of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, and the territories of Manasseh, Simeon, and Ephraim that is not in the account in 2 Kings 22:1-2. In 2 Kings, after the opening salutation and description of Josiah doing what was right in the sight of God, the account goes straight into Josiah’s refurbishing of the temple. It is after this point that the two accounts start to run parallel. Both show that the Book of the Law were found while repairing the temple. After being pierced by the Book of the Law, Josiah instituted reforms in the temple and throughout Judah and Jerusalem. His reforms would continue by eradicating all forms of pagan worship through the territory he ruled. When looking the potential chronology difference, Andrew Hill says, “There is a growing consensus among scholars that Josiah’s form movement predates the finding of the law book by Hilkiah the

points to his passion being a gift from Yahweh. Though Josiah was king in Judah and Jerusalem, his reforms reached as far as the tribal lands of Manasseh and Ephraim.²⁵

Josiah's reforms did not end with the first purge of idolatry but continued when he ordered the repair of the temple. The condition of the temple was in disrepair. It had been nearly 200 years since the last major renovation of the temple under the rule of Joash. In fact, Josiah's approach to the restoration of the temple reflects that of Joash.²⁷ This pattern was to take a collection from the people. Inrig says:

It involved in a public collection system, with money given to the care of supervisors who would oversee and pay the workmen. The repairs were extensive, requiring carpenters, the builders and the masons, and using timber and dressed stone.²⁸

This was part of Josiah's desire to fix what his father and grandfather had neglected.

While repairs were taking place in the temple, the Book of the Law was discovered. It is unclear why or how it had gone out of sight and worship, but it had. There is speculation that it could have been lost or hidden. One consideration is that perhaps it was hidden in case of an invasion by a foreign military. It was also possible that it was taken out of the worship by the rulers or religious leaders during the time of apostasy, which could have easily happened during the time of Manasseh and then Amon.²⁹ Whatever the reason, both passages suggest the memory of the Book of the Law had fallen out of memory with the people.

priest. It seems we can speak of Josiah's early reforms prior to the discovery of the law scroll in 622 B.C. and his later reforms associated with the temple renovation and eradication of false worship centers." *1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003), 619.

²⁵ Barker, 674.

²⁷ Gary Inrig, *I & II Kings, Holman Old Testament Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 345-346.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 346.

²⁹ Hill, 621.

It is not clear the identity of the Book of the Law in the context of the story of Josiah. It likely contained at least the book of Deuteronomy, and perhaps all five books of the Torah. When the high priest brought the Book of the Law before Josiah, he listened to the reading of it. In 2 Kings 22:11 it says, “When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.” The reason for the tearing of the clothes is that Josiah realizes the utter spiritual depravity of his people. Hill commented, “Recognizing the message of the scroll is the very word of God, Josiah tears his clothes—a tangible expression of his grief in response to personal or national crisis.”³⁰ This is one of the purposes of the law; to show the utter depravity and sinfulness of mankind and illumine our need for salvation. The apostle Paul says in Romans 3:20, “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” In Galatians 3:10 Paul refers to Deuteronomy 27:26 when he said, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’” When Josiah heard the words of the law, he was cut to the core, realizing how far his people had strayed from the ways of Yahweh. This caused Josiah to inquire of the Lord through the prophetess Huldah to understand the fate of he and his people.³¹

After hearing the Book of the Law, and being convicted of the sin of he and his people, it drove Josiah to repentance and confession. This contrition is shown in 2 Chronicles 34:21, which says:

Go inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ 2 Kings 22:13-20.

Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book.

This displayed God inspired contrition, repentance, and confession. It showed in his expression of grief that he was deeply moved by the Word of God and was driven to his knees in repentance. Inrig says:

The Word of God has innate power and is self-authenticating. This is especially true when one's heart is sensitive to the Lord. The message of God's word penetrated immediately and deeply into the heart of Josiah. . . .³³

This is needed prior to revival. One cannot know a change is needed until the problem is exposed and understood. Josiah could not have led a true revival of right worship without repentance, the Word of God and God moving upon his heart to respond in humility.

Next, Josiah asked for a correct interpretation of scripture. When one comes to Christ after hearing the word and has repented, they must be disciplined to grow in the faith and understand the word of God. It was common in the context of their society to think that Josiah sought divination as that was practiced by his father and grandfather. His purpose was to understand the law of Yahweh and give an accurate interpretation of scripture. Not much is known about the prophetess Huldah who they inquired of to understand the Book of the Law.³⁴ However, Josiah sent the high priest Hilkiah, and other people from his court by the names of Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah to inquire of the prophetess. Josiah displayed the importance of this endeavor by sending high officials from his court to gain

³³ Inrig, 346.

³⁴ Andrew Hill discussed Huldah being a female prophet and why she may have been selected as the one to convey God's message to Josiah. He said, "Hilkiah's visit to Huldah seems to be based on his relationship with Shallum, her husband. Shallum is "keeper of the wardrobe" for the priests and the Levites, which means he has oversight of the production and maintenance of the vestments and robes of the Levites. Thus, Hilkiah is in regular contact with Shallum." Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles, The NIV Application Commentary*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 621-622.

instruction from God. Inrig says, “the careful listing of their names suggests that this was an official, formal delegation.”³⁵ Josiah wanted knowledge from the Lord on how to proceed, which was seen through sending this delegation.

Huldah revealed God’s judgment. She confirmed that the nation would be judged, and disaster would befall them according to:

All the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.³⁶

The harsh reality was clear. God would pour out his wrath on the people for their idolatry and rebellion. What was not clear, is if the outcome was certain whether the people of Judah and Jerusalem repent and turn from their wicked ways. By Josiah’s repentance and desire for reforms, perhaps he thought the judgment could be averted. God revealed that Josiah would not suffer the same punishment as his people. He said, “because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you declares the Lord.”³⁷ The Lord informed Josiah that he would be buried with his fathers and shall go to his grave in peace. It can be said that Josiah had faith in God and his Word because of his response to hearing the Book of the Law. Thus, it is through his faith that he has peace with God.

³⁵ Inrig, 347.

³⁶ 2 Chronicles 34:24b-25.

³⁷ 2 Chronicles 34:27.

Josiah undertook a holy mission to eradicate false idol worship in the land and restore proper worship in the temple. His first act after receiving the message from the prophetess was to summon all the elders from Judah and Jerusalem. He then reads the Book of the Covenant to the people from the pillar in the temple.³⁸ This “pillar” was a standing place in the temple. It was the “royal station in the ritual.”³⁹ He renewed the covenant before Yahweh to walk in his ways and keep his commandments, statutes, and testimonies.⁴⁰ Josiah had taken his place as their king to lead them in the ways of God. In a sense he was a type of Christ, as king and priest, but not completely. He in a sense took the mantle of both in leading his people in revival.

Josiah continued the reforms that he previously started and instructed that all the high places, idols, and wrong worship be expelled from the land. He commanded items in the temple devoted to idol worship to be carried out and burned them outside of Jerusalem. Among the items removed and burned was the Asherah that was erected in the temple by Manasseh. He also tore down the house of the male cult prostitutes that has been added to the temple. These rooms of the cult prostitutes were likely part of the cult of Asherah.⁴¹ Josiah didn't stop there. He had all idols eradicated from the land, even at the city gates. He had the bones of false priests removed from their tombs and burned. The altars to Molech in Topeth were torn down. He removed the horses that were dedicated to the sun and destroyed the chariots. His final act of cleansing the idolatrous ways was to kill the priests that had led the

³⁸ 2 Kings 23:1-3; 2 Chronicles 34:29-30.

³⁹D. J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1993), 299-300.

⁴⁰ 2 Kings 23:3.

⁴¹ Konkel, 636.

people in worship of the idols.⁴² He sought to reverse the apostasy of his father and grandfather.

Following this time of purging Josiah cemented the turn from idolatrous worship to correct worship of Yahweh. He restored the celebration of Passover. During this process, he also put away the mediums and necromancers. This was the final act of his revival that started when he was the age of twenty. The reinstatement of Passover was important to revival in Judah and Jerusalem as it was part of the covenant renewal. This renewed the worship forsaken under Manasseh and Amon. The last person to initiate covenant renewal of this magnitude was Joshua.⁴³ 2 King 23:22 says, “For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or during the days of the kinds of Israel or the kings of Judah.” Josiah purposed in his heart to restore proper worship of Yahweh, as could be seen in this grand act of obedience.

Following these reforms, Josiah died in battle, in peace, like God had promised him. Though he died in battle, he never saw the captivity that would come to his people because of the sins of his fathers. The tragic result of the reforms that Josiah brought at the inspiration of God, was that God’s wrath would not be averted. God kept his promise to Josiah to allow him to be buried with his fathers but did not keep Judah from future captivity.

This account of Josiah demonstrates many truths that can be seen in our culture today. The first thing to consider is that it was when the Word of God was out of the public domain in that day, and missing in the house of worship, the people and the leadership experienced a time of apostasy. This biblical account suggested that Josiah was not even aware that the

⁴² 2 Kings 23:4-20; 2 Chronicles 34:33.

⁴³ Konkel, 638.

Book of the Law existed. Without the Word of God, how do we know how to live according to the will and holiness of God? Today, America still considers itself to be a “Christian” nation. However, there are many who have never heard the gospel, as will be seen later in this paper, and as such, our society reflects many of the type of sins experienced in Josiah’s day. Second, as the people existed in a time of apostasy, they did what was evil in God’s sight by worshipping false gods, erecting idols in the land and in the house of worship, and committed gross sexual sins, and the sacrifice of infants. These items are all being done in different ways in America. Some places of worship have placed societal mores or social issues above the gospel, such as the issue of same-sex marriage, which will be discussed later. Sexual sins such as same-sex relations, and pornography are rampant in our land and considered normal, which shows a misconception or denial of the holiness expected in the Bible. And, the sacrifice of children is also taking place in our nation. We may not place children on hot, burning statutes as in the times of Manasseh, but they are sacrificed on the altar of abortion in the womb. Unfortunately, this is seen as a normal practice and treated as a “right” of the female instead of an abomination and murder.

Josiah’s account of how to counteract cultural decay is instructive in our day. First, there must be a resurgence of the study of and application of the Bible. It is only when we know what God expects that we can obediently follow his commands. Along with this is a need for godly leadership in our churches. There must be solid, biblical teaching in our pulpits. The unadulterated Gospel must be preached to the glory of God, salvation of the lost, and for godly living by God’s people. There is no substitute for rightly dividing the Word of God. Second, there must be a sovereign move of God to place the desire to obey his Word in our hearts. We must have our eyes opened to our own sin before we can repent and ask for

God's forgiveness. This will come as we hear the Word of God and pray. Prayer is the key to hearing the voice of God and setting our minds and will to the will of God. Third, we must repent of the ways that we have rebelled against God and make the declaration to do what is right in his sight. It is through repentance that we have peace with God, and fellowship restored. Fourth, we must obliterate all the idols that we have erected in the place of God. The idol is not necessarily a "graven" image like seen in the Bible. It may be how we spend our time, money, or efforts in our own glory instead of what God would have us to do, or for His glory. Once we have put these "idols" out of our lives, we must restore proper worship in our personal lives and in our churches. Our focus must be on God, not our selfish wants or desires. When we do these things, revival is possible, as was in Josiah's time.

This account of Josiah's revival was selected as it is a pattern for us to consider when seeking revival in our day. This is not to say, God works in a "cookie-cutter" way, or that we can institute some "formula" to follow that would "coax" God into a new awakening. No, what is seen here is the progression of revival in the life of an individual, group, city, state, or nation. Thus, the pattern we see in Josiah's revival is one that should be considered for those who desire a new awakening in our day. Considering the need for revival, we will look at a more recent occurrence in the First Great Awakening in America that took place in the first half of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING

The Puritans left Europe, primarily England, and came to America, as they sought to conduct themselves in a manner faithful to the mandates in scripture, and their conscience. Their ideology regarding church membership will be briefly studied in the context of the events leading up to the First Great Awakening. Prior to the Puritans immigrating to New England, they went through events in Great Britain that helped them shape their beliefs, practice, and relationship with the Church of England. It was a divergence in these three areas that led to the events that saw the Puritans decide to immigrate to America.

Puritans in Great Britain

The term ‘Puritan’ was not intended as a term for a positive portrayal of their movement. It was originally meant as a pejorative term. They were called ‘Puritans’ because they sought reforms in England after Queen Elizabeth had begun to reform the Church of England away from Roman Catholicism. Because they wanted more radical reforms, they were called, “Puritans” to pigeon hole them as being too radical and rigid. This title was derogatory because they were accused of being Donatists. A Donatist is one who is “seeking a church of perfect purity in the world.”¹ The apparent goal was to remove as many “tares”

¹ Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 4-6.

from the “wheat” as possible.³ Their intent was to ascertain those who exhibited evidence of saving faith and include them in their congregation as a full participating member.

The Puritans sought reform in the church from the time of Queen Elizabeth until the crescendo of events leading to their decision to set sail for America under Charles I, and then the final straw under the rulership of Charles II. Under Charles I, the Puritans had an adversarial relationship with the king. Not only did he not agree to reform as the Puritans wished, “together, Charles and Laud imposed an extremely High-Church system on the entire English nation, fining and even jailing those who resisted.”⁴ Many decided to adhere to the rules imposed by the Church of England, rather than cause division. At the same time, others would refuse to submit to this authority and decided to break away from the Church of England. In some cases, they decided to flee the country, as did the Pilgrims that came to America.⁵

When Charles II ascended to the throne, he spent the next two decades making life difficult for the Puritans. He approved laws that outlawed Puritans making it illegal for them to dissent with the Church of England. Approximately two thousand ministers rebelled and lost their ministerial licenses. Crawford says:

None who would not receive Communion according to the rites of the Church of England could be a member of a municipal corporation. Heavy penalties were levied for attendance at worship not according to the Book of Common Prayer.⁶

³ The reference to the “wheat” and “tares” is in Matthew 13:24-30.

⁴ William Laud was the Archbishop of Canterbury. Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶ Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25.

It was at this point, many Puritans decided to set sail for America.

Puritans in America

There were two groups of Puritans that migrated from England. The first group remained loyal to the Church of England. They were non-separating Puritans, as they did not believe in separating from the Church of England. The second group were called Separatists. They left the Church of England, so they could organize their churches in line with their theological and ecclesiastical convictions. In the beginning, these two groups were one in basic beliefs. We will look at the Separatists first.

Separatists

The Separatists were the wing of Puritans that did not believe they could adequately and faithfully operate as a church as a member being connected to the Church of England. The first Separatists in New England were the Pilgrims that came over on the Mayflower and established the Plymouth colony.⁷ To the Separatists, they were not a complete church if they were not allowed to discipline their membership utilizing proper church discipline. Morgan says:

The Separatists thought that it took more than the preaching of true doctrine and the administration of the sacraments to make a church. If a church did not have the power to correct its own faults by discipline, it was not a church.⁸

While their non-separating brethren sought reforms through political means, they chose a different path. These men were at times in conflict with the non-separating Puritans because

⁷ Morgan, 58.

⁸ Ibid., 22.

the non-separatists did not believe splitting with the Church of England was the answer. Morgan says, “ these non-separating Puritans repudiated those who left the church and argued that it was the duty of all Christians to support and sustain any church of which they were members.”⁹ One area both wings of the Puritan movement agreed was St. Augustine’s distinctions between the visible and invisible Church.¹⁰ It was the goal of Separatists to have a church comprised of as many of the invisible church as possible.

For the Separatists to get as close to a “pure” church of “invisible” saints as possible, they instituted a membership standard used to determine who could be included as members. Because God chooses only a few among the elect, in their mind, it was the job of the local church to determine who had saving faith. They decided that they, “should admit to membership only those who appeared to be saved, only those who could demonstrate by their lives, their beliefs, and their religious experiences that they apparently (to a charitable judgment) had received saving faith.”¹¹ This demonstration of faith would go beyond that of the Anglican Church. It would not be a mere statement from a book of prayer. The Separatists believed that if you possessed these items and lived a life of holiness, then there would be sufficient proof of saving faith.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 16-20.

¹⁰ Morgan discussed St. Augustine’s view of visible versus invisible saints. He said, “There were according to Augustine, two churches. One was pure but invisible; it included every person living, dead, or yet to be born, whom God had predestined for salvation. The other was visible but not entirely pure; it included only living persons who professed to believe in Christianity. Not every member of the visible church was destined for salvation, for not every man who professed belief would actually possess the true belief, the saving faith necessary for redemption.” Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 3.

¹¹ Morgan, 33-35.

¹² Ibid., 41-42.

Children of parents who were members were allowed the rite of baptism. This did not depend on the faith of the child. However, as the child grew older, they would reach an age where they were able to determine in their heart if they are converted. They would need to determine in their heart if they believed and understood “Christian doctrine” to declare a determined profession of faith. Once they demonstrated their profession of faith, and they are recognized as possessing saving faith, they could participate in the Lord’s Supper.¹³

The final aspect to the distinctiveness of the Separatists is their emphasis on church discipline. Once they found you to be part of the “invisible church”, and you were a church member, you still had to live a life of holiness and sinlessness before God. Morgan says:

A church, the Separatists insisted, must be composed entirely of persons who understood and accepted the doctrines of Christianity, submitted voluntarily to the church, and led lives free of apparent sin. And the church must have the power to admonish or expel those who fell into open sin.¹⁴

This is why they desired self-governance.

Non-Separatist Puritans

The second group of Puritans were those who did not wish to break with the Church of England but pushed for reform. They did not believe in separating from the Church of England because, “schism from a true church violated the principle of uniformity and dishonored God. . . .”¹⁵ These non-separatists were those who settled colonies in Massachusetts Bay and then to New Haven and Connecticut. Initially, they were not much

¹³ Ibid., 42-46.

¹⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹⁵ Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 3.

different than the Separatists in the way they conducted organized and administered their congregations. They elected and ordained their own ministers and took responsibility to admit and expel members based on their standards.¹⁶

The Puritans in the New England colonies like the Separatists sought to admit those into full membership only if they could demonstrate they were among the elect. Morgan says, “The Puritans, like all Protestants, especially of the Calvinist variety, believed in predestination; God, they maintained, had determined in advance who was to be saved and who was to be damned.”¹⁷ The difficult issue was how to know if one was truly part of the elect. However, they believed it to be essential to do their best to determine those who belonged to the invisible church. They believed that if one possessed saving faith, and were justified, they would be on the path of holiness through the process of sanctification.¹⁸ This still was not easy to determine, therefore those who wanted to become members would have to go through a period of examination. This process would still not give people a sense if they were truly part of the elect. Lambert says:

Though admitted to communion, visible saints were anxious saints because they could not know for certain if they were of God’s elect. Their uncertainty motivated them to greater heights of piety that included intense self-examination, diligent bible study, and searching prayer.¹⁹

The missing component in discussion here is that of God’s saving grace. Salvation is a work of God, not works.

¹⁶ Morgan, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 32.

Though the non-separating Puritans did not officially break from the Church of England, they had different membership requirements and ecclesiastical organizational structure. They would be congregationalist in nature, which would lend to more local autonomy over church governance. Pope says:

Unlike comprehensive Anglican parishes, congregational churches restricted church membership to those who gave reasonable evidence that they were among the “elect”. Only these visible saints qualified for the sacraments and were subject to church discipline.²⁰

They went even further than this after immigrating from England. Pope says:

Good behavior and acceptance of Calvinist Christianity no longer sufficed. By 1640 most of the churches expected candidates for membership to relate the process of their conversion to the assembled congregation.²¹

Thus, the church leadership would accept a simple profession of faith. Only God can truly know if one was truly saved.

The problematic aspect of this format for church membership is that ongoing propagation of the church would have to be done through procreation and not evangelism. This is because, “only communicants and their children qualified for baptism, and this became the source of Congregationalisms quandary; for the continuing life of the church was predicated on hereditary growth of faith.” This “quandary” is best considered with this question, “If these children were members in their infancy, albeit incomplete, what happened to their church if conversion failed to materialize?”²² This is a good question if future church vitality and growth is dependent on the descendants of prior members. This position assumes

²⁰ Pope, 4.

²¹ Ibid., 4-5.

²² Ibid., 6.

that the future of the church would be dependent on whether children possessed saving faith and thus become full members. Their desire is that many would be among the elect to keep the church growing and vibrant. As they did not know who was truly elect, the vitality and perpetuity of the church could be in peril within just a few generations. They had to address this important issue, which is why they called a synod to explore a solution to this situation. This synod would be called, The Half-Way Synod.

The Half-Way Synod of 1662

The Half-Way Synod was convened to address these perplexing issues within the New England churches. They were compelled to address who could become church members and who would be permitted to participate in the sacraments of baptism and communion. The stringent terms of membership in the New England churches and exacting requirements that entailed began to take their toll leading up to the Half-Way Synod. Pope said this about the attitude of some ministers regarding the tighter restrictions on church membership prior to the Half-Way Covenant:

But even at the outset several ministers realized the profound effects this policy might have on the life of the churches and the meaning of the covenant. They feared that church membership would shrink markedly in relation to the total population and that excluding the children of so many godly, but not visibly regenerate, person from the churches would betray their “errand into the wilderness.”²³

This was a legitimate concern. Morgan says this about this issue:

By the late 1650’s, the preaching of the word was generating few conversions, and with the end of the Great Migration, the overseas supply of saints had been cut off. As the first generation of Puritans died, the churches declined rapidly in membership, and it appeared that a majority of the population would soon be unbaptized.²⁴

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Morgan, 129.

Participation in the sacraments or membership in the church as one of the elect was not to be taken casually. The Puritans were prudent regarding who they accepted into membership and who participated in the sacraments. Declining church membership was a primary concern to many ministers in New England, so “In March 1662, more than eighty ministers and laymen gathered in Boston’s First Church for the opening of the Half-Way Synod.”²⁵ This was the first of three meetings that would take place before the conclusion of the Synod.

There were seven propositions proposed at the Half-Way Synod, but the most controversial was proposition number five. This was the fulcrum point of contention of the Half-Way Covenant. According to Morgan, one of the issues not addressed by the synod was that of evangelism; how to “convert the unconverted”. Rather, the focus of the synod was on who may receive baptism. The fifth proposition of the Half-Way Covenant reads as follows:

Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the Doctrine of Faith, and publickly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the Covenant before the Church, wherein they give up themselves and their Children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the Government of Christ in the Church, their Children are to be baptized.²⁶

One problem with this proposition was that it did nothing to address whether, the one who is baptized is saved or not. Morgan said, “All the actions prescribed by the fifth proposition could be performed without saving faith.”²⁷ Thus, this “covenant” was a temporary solution to promote the perpetuity of family members of church members to maintain membership

²⁵ Pope, 43.

²⁶ Morgan, 130.

²⁷ Ibid., 131.

numbers, even if there they were “half members.” This was the primary focus instead of evangelizing the communities around the local congregations.

Those who opposed the Half-Way Covenant did not agree that the unconverted could “own the covenant” as they did not possess saving faith. Pope said, “Owning the covenant, the critics charged, was a mockery, since only persons with saving faith could fulfill the required pledges.” One of the greatest assertions described by Pope was, “Children of the church, by their failure to take up the promises offered in baptism, had deserted the covenant and were incapable of passing membership to the next generation.”²⁸ Converted members cannot pass on membership spiritually as it is God who regenerates the heart and the Holy Spirit who calls one to faith. Morgan summed up his outlook on the covenant in this statement:

The halfway covenant, taken by itself, was a narrow tribal way of recruiting saints, for it wholly neglected the church’s evangelical mission to perishing sinners outside the families of its members. But it did turn attention, in however limited a manner, to the problem of propagating the church.²⁹

This was the issue at hand. Churches that embraced the halfway covenant were relaxing their standards to keep numbers up, but had neglected the mission of the church, which was to evangelize the lost.

It would be almost a decade or more later before the effect of the Half-Way Covenant would take hold in the New England region. Prior to the Half-Way Covenant, the Puritans had decided to utilize the power of the civil government to require those in a town to listen to the preaching of the scriptures by passing laws that required church attendance. At the same

²⁸ Pope, 57.

²⁹ Morgan, 138.

time, they restricted membership to those possessing saving faith, while keeping the unregenerate from becoming members. This was supposed to help them complete their mission to share the gospel, while keeping a “pure” church. These laws were instituted in Massachusetts, New Haven, and Connecticut. This tied the mission of the church to civil government.³⁰

This method was problematic. If you require religious participation and adherence, it is unlikely that participation would be heart felt and any obedience to the directive would be out of compulsory duty. This artificial command would not guarantee a genuine change of heart or community. This is not the piety that the Puritans needed for lasting change. They needed a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit to draw the unchurched to Christ and help those that already possessed saving faith to have a renewed fervency for God, the Holy Scriptures, and an unquenchable desire to evangelize the lost. No form of government control can change the heart, only God can accomplish this outcome.

Covenant Renewal and Pre-Awakening Preparation

There is disagreement among those who saw the Half-Way Covenant as a detriment to the church, and those who saw it as a tool of evangelism to the community. Pope’s view was mostly positive. He said, “The increase in full communicants, the implementation of the Half-Way Covenant, the mass covenant renewals, and the inclusion of formerly unchurched inhabitants in the church covenant are signs of an awakening, not a decline.”³¹ As we witnessed the history of the New England churches unfold, we beheld a movement that

³⁰ Ibid., 122-123.

³¹ Pope, 273.

migrated from an inward focus on those that already believed and are members of the church, to those in the community that may be unchurched and likely unsaved. There was a progression toward a more evangelical form of church polity after the implementation of the Half-Way Covenant.

The timing of the movement from an “inward focus” to an “outward focus” is hard to pinpoint with accuracy. Pope suggests that the beginning of this process came because of the Puritans losing their charter in the civil government in Massachusetts. Without the mandate that those in the colony must adhere to the covenant, the responsibility would fall on the church to reach out to the community to be more evangelistic. Pope says, “The old “tribalism” no longer sufficed; the churches became evangelical.”³² The church had to reach out to the community from the necessity to survive as a congregation and make a difference in the society. Dependence on civil government was never meant to be the means of evangelism. The church cannot depend on the civil government for its vibrancy or survival. This trust needs to be focused on our Triune God. The revocation of the charter was the beginning of the evangelical movement. As the Half-Way Covenant mostly failed to produce revival, pastors and church leaders began to understand the need for a heart-felt return to a passion for God and their need to rekindle their commitment to Christ. They began to proclaim the need to renew their covenant with God.

³² Ibid., 274-275.

Covenant Renewals

According to Kidd, the covenant renewals started in the 1670's and was the precursor to the revivals of the early to mid-eighteenth century in New England.³³ Crawford suggested that the New England Puritans looked at revival or reformation as a “national covenant” between God and his people.³⁴ Kidd says, “As promoted by Boston’s Increase Mather covenant renewal process usually featured the pastor reminding all church members of their “promises to God and each other.”³⁵ Mather was one of four preachers who proposed the need for reformation at the end of the seventeenth century. He saw three areas that would need to take place before reformation could take place. These items were, “civil magistrates zealous for reformation; public renewal of church covenant; and the maintenance of the requirement of evidence of regeneration for full church membership.” He lost confidence in the magistrates and “looked to the people as the source of reformation.” This too disappointed him and he eventually decided that only God could bring lasting change. It was the believer’s responsibility to pray to petition God for conversion of lost souls to usher in the millennium.³⁶

Mather was not alone in calling for renewal. Others simultaneously called for renewal which showed God’s work in the process of revitalizing the New England colonies. Lambert says:

³³ Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 3.

³⁴ Crawford, 29.

³⁵ Kidd, *Roots*, 3.

³⁶ Crawford, 42-43.

By definition, revival follows decline. The fact that people call for revival means that they believe something lofty and good has been lost or diminished, perhaps purity of faith or fervency of piety.³⁷

That pastors were calling for covenant renewal means they believed something had been lost and restoration was needed.

To have lasting covenant renewal, the heart would need to have a change in disposition. Those like Samuel Torrey preached the need for “heart-reformation or making of a new heart.” His emphasis was more on prayer and heart-felt conversion than covenant renewal. However, both activities were taking place at the same time within the colonies.³⁸ It is evident that the Half-Way Covenant was not the comprehensive answer to the issues within the church. It was a step toward the greater goal, which was renewal of vital religion and heart-felt conversion. This can be understood in Kidd’s statement, “The covenant renewal presented an opportunity to consider whether they were truly right before God and also for half-way members to seek conversion and full admission into church membership.” Prior to this call for covenant renewal, there were several weeks of preaching on the topic of salvation in preparation for the renewal.³⁹

Covenant Renewals in the colonies occurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century to the early part of the eighteenth century. One of the changes brought on by the covenant renewals was the Puritans emphasis or idea on how one is converted to Christ. Beginning in England, they saw the process of conversion over a long period of time. However, as the covenant renewal process moved through the colonies, they started to

³⁷ Lambert, 32.

³⁸ Kidd, *Roots*, 1-2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

understand conversions as a “single event” as opposed to a lengthy process. The “single event” concept would be more aligned with the modern day, evangelical concept of conversion.⁴⁰ Though many churches had instituted the Half-Way Covenant, there was a sense that more needed to be done to bring revival.

The Need for An Outpouring of The Holy Spirit

Along with the need for covenant renewal, pastors believed that for revival to commence; a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit was crucial. Preaching alone would not bring revival. There was a need for a fresh outpouring of God’s Spirit. Lambert says:

What distinguished revivalists was their belief in periodic extraordinary outpourings of God’s grace. Though they accepted that most of the time God’s work was performed through such ordinary means as preaching, praying, and bible reading, they also believed in seasons of unusually powerful redemptive showers.⁴¹

When the Half-Way Covenant and covenant renewals did not bring the lasting change that the pastors trusted God for the needed change. Crawford says:

These ministers believed the techniques had failed because they had not been accompanied by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. They believed that the Spirit was more likely to accompany and make effective evangelical preaching.⁴²

William Cooper in the beginning of his preface to Jonathan Edwards’ *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, presented his case regarding the need for an outpouring of the Spirit of God for revival. He says:

Now for a great while, it has been a dead and barren time without fruit in all the churches of the Reformation. The showers of blessing have been restrained. The

⁴⁰ Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: A Brief History with Documents*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 4.

⁴¹ Lambert, 27.

⁴² Crawford, 107-108.

influence of the Spirit stopped. The Gospel has not had any famous success. Conversions have been rare and dubious.⁴³

Therefore, according to Cooper, an outpouring of God's Spirit was critical to foster change in the church. This caused the church to cry out to God in Prayer. He says:

This sad state of the church is a constant petition in our public prayers. From Sabbath to Sabbath we pray, "God, pour out your Spirit upon us, and revive Your work in the midst of the years." Our government has appointed annual fast days. Besides these, most churches have set apart days in which to seed the Lord by prayer and fasting, that He would, "come and rain down righteousness upon us."⁴⁴

Cooper proceeded to illustrate how God poured His Spirit on the land and began to alter the demeanor of the town; how people were changing, and how worship services were more plentiful after the outpouring. Thus, God had answered their prayer when they cried out for His help. As was seen in Cooper's comment, prayer and fasting was part of the solution to the need for revival.

Prayer

The next chapter will focus on Jonathan Edwards' theology of prayer regarding revival. However, we will briefly look at how prayer unfolded in the time preceding the Great Awakening. Kidd said, "In the 1720's many pastors began calling for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which would energize the churches and bring about large numbers of conversions, perhaps simultaneously."⁴⁶ The growing consensus was that revival needed to come and, but the ways previously utilized to bring revival, had not lasted. It was

⁴³ William Cooper, preface to *The Spirit of Revival: Discovering the Wisdom of Jonathan Edwards*, by Jonathan Edwards. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 43.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁶Kidd, *Brief History*, 5.

time for a fresh infusion of God’s Spirit. Kidd says, “Traditional Pastors, growing ever more desperate for a return to what they saw as the original godly devotion of the colonies began praying for a new season of grace that would turn people’s hearts back to God.”⁴⁷ By now they realized revival will not come without the genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

Men like Cotton Mather, Samuel Danforth, Solomon Stoddard, and others began to pray that God would bring needed revival and conversions of lost souls. Crawford says, “These men prayed that the God of Christians would descend on New England, like a *deus ex machina*⁴⁸ producing a harvest of converts, and a moral reformation, if not the millennium.”⁴⁹ This desire itself was a movement of the Holy Spirit. This many people seeking the same thing at the same time is a sign of the move of God. They arrived at the same conclusion. They understood that revival would only come if God authored the movement.

During this pre-awakening time, there were ministers that organized prayer groups to pray for revival. Crawford explained, that Danford followed Cotton Mathers example by encouraging the formation of “societies for prayer, and regularly scheduled neighborhood family worship meetings.”⁵⁰ This was a practice that Edwards also employed in his activities that led up to the Great Awakening. Edwards expressed in his Faithful Narrative that he:

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, “*deus ex machina*” has more than one reference. However, in this context, it means, “a person or thing (as in fiction or drama) that appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly and provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty.” In other words, the pastors praying were looking for God to dramatically intervene with a solution not seen to fix the problem of lax religiosity and piety in the colonies. They saw the need for a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, God’s help to bring revival. *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary*; s. v. “*deus ex machina*,” available from <https://www.merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/deus%20ex%20machina>; Internet; accessed 8 January 2018.

⁴⁹ Crawford, 50.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 46.

Strongly urged the young people to agree among themselves to spend the evenings after lectures in social religion. To that end, I suggested that they divide themselves into several companies to meet in various parts of the town.⁵¹

What Edwards instituted in this example were small groups in homes where folks could have intimate times of fellowship, prayer, and bible study.

Preaching

Just as prayer was instrumental for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so preaching was to spread the gospel and to cultivate the hearts of those hearing the word. Stoddard, Edwards, and Whitefield were instrumental in preaching to inspire folks to convert to Christ. Stoddard had a focus to spread the gospel through preaching impending doom if those who heard his message would not respond to the gospel and proclaim Christ as their savior.⁵² This was somewhat new at this point in history but preceded the awakening in New England.

Crawford says, “Preachers appealed to the affections principally as a means of arousing the hearer to implement that which he has been convinced was the good and the true.”⁵³ The appeal to the emotions would help aid the will in determining how to respond to the gospel.

Crawford also says, “Since the preaching of the Gospel was the principal means God used to covert sinners, good preachers would be needed to bring about a revival of religion.”⁵⁴ This would prove to be true in the ministries of Stoddard, Edwards, and Whitefield. Their

⁵¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Surprising Work of God*. (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1997), 15.

⁵² Kidd, *Roots*, 7.

⁵³ Crawford, 81.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

preaching in respect to their impact on the Awakening will be discussed in the sections to follow. We will first look at the ministry of Solomon Stoddard.

Solomon Stoddard

Solomon Stoddard was Pastor in Northampton from the 1670 until his death in 1729.⁵⁵ As a minister he demonstrated agreement with the Half-Way Covenant as a positive factor in the religious life of the church. He confirmed this agreement with the way he led his church. Stoddard, “who in 1677 began to practice what came to be known in New England as open communion, that is, admission of candidates to full membership (including the right to the Lord’s Supper) without any attempt to discern saving faith. . . . He thought it impossible anyhow to determine who had faith and who did not.”⁵⁶ In the early days of Stoddard’s ministry, he could have been considered somewhat “liberal” theologically compared to his contemporaries, in that he saw “the sacraments, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, were converting ordinances.” However, he later repudiated that notion. Crawford says, “After 1710, Stoddard began to argue that the Gospel was the sole means of conversion and ceased publicly defending the sacraments as converting ordinances.”⁵⁷ Stoddard was different from the Puritans that sought to keep a “pure” church. His primary goal was the evangelism and conversion of the unregenerate in the surrounding community. Crawford says, “According to Stoddard, the power of religion had declined in the land not because the churches had been defiled by unregenerate members but because too many people had been excluded from the

⁵⁵ John E. Smith, Introduction to *Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 57-58.

⁵⁶ Morgan, 147.

⁵⁷ Crawford, 48-49.

means of grace.”⁵⁸ In fact, one of his desires was to evangelize the Native American population in New England.⁵⁹

The conversion of sinners was the primary focus of Stoddard’s ministry. He saw the conversion of sinners as only being possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. Kidd says this about Stoddard’s view of the Holy Spirit’s work in the conversions of sinners, “Stoddard insisted that conversions would not happen without the catalyst of the Holy Spirit.” He further quoted Stoddard who says, “The Spirit of the Lord must be poured out upon the People, else Religion will not revive.” Over time, he moved away from the sacraments as converting ordinances. He primarily focused on the proclamation of the Holy Scriptures as the principal means of conversion. According to Kidd, Stoddard believed that the “Spirit allowed ministers to preach effectively the threat of God’s judgment. . . .”⁶⁰ In fact, Stoddard was one of the first ‘hell fire’ type preachers. Morgan addressed Stoddard’s preaching style as he said, “The ardent preaching of men like Stoddard, who frightened sinners with vivid pictures of hell, was well designed to stir religious zeal.”⁶¹ Kidd says, “Stoddard recommended that preachers should warn of the threat of damnation, on one hand, and offer the hope of salvation through Christ’s grace on the other.”⁶² The proclamation of impending judgment would stir the hearts of those in Stoddard’s time. During Stoddard’s ministry, he saw at least five smaller revivals taking place starting in 1679 and the last one in 1718.⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁹ Kidd, *Roots*, 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Morgan, 151.

⁶² Kidd, *Roots*, 6.

⁶³ Crawford, 110.

Stoddard's contribution to the process leading to the Great Awakening were due to several things. First, was his break with the conventional Puritan tradition, and liberalizing the requirements for membership. Though one may argue he went too far, he enlivened the debate how the church should both interact with its own members, as well as those in the community. Second, his emphasis on heart-religion regarding instantaneous conversion, in opposition to a longer process would be the catalyst for the modern-day evangelical movement's view of the process of salvation. His appeal to the emotion and heart of the person was revolutionary and would set the stage for his grandson, Jonathan Edwards, and for others like George Whitefield. They appealed to the will of the person hearing their message and challenged them to trust Christ for their salvation. Third, his use of "hell fire" preaching complemented his approach to appealing to the will and emotions of the person in the pew. This method warned the hearer of the impending judgment of God if they did not repent, thus setting the stage for the work of the Holy Spirit in their heart. This led the hearer to the fulcrum where a decision would need to be made whether to place their faith in Christ. Finally, his desire to evangelize the Native American and those in the community was groundbreaking. This was not common Puritan practice in the American colonies. He helped pave the way for those like George Whitefield who would itinerant preach to the masses in public locations. The work of Stoddard was instrumental to pave the way of his grandson Jonathan Edwards as the lead proponent of the Great Awakening in North Hampton.

Jonathan Edwards

After completing seminary and two years of teaching at Yale University, Edwards moved to North Hampton in 1726 to be employed as the assistant pastor at his grandfather's

church. He served in this capacity until the death of his Stoddard in 1729. At the age of twenty-five, his church boasted a membership roll of approximately seven hundred members.⁶⁴ His approach to the pastoral ministry, preaching, and his view of church membership was vastly different than Stoddard.

The primary way Edwards differed from Stoddard was in the concept of church membership. He resembled the Puritans who preceded he and his grandfather. Edwards repudiated the inclusiveness of members to the Lord's Supper that were not known to possess saving faith. He sought to allow access to the communion table to the regenerate saints, much like the Puritans did upon arrival from Great Britain. Morgan says this about Edwards' stance on the changes Stoddard made during his tenure as pastor of the North Hampton Church:

But the new movement for purity gained sudden respectability in 1748 when Jonathan Edwards, the grandson of Solomon Stoddard and Stoddard's successor in the influential pulpit at Northampton, announced that he could no longer admit candidates to full communion without proof of saving grace. The next year, in a treatise defending his view, he denounced not only Stoddardeanism but also the granting of baptism to any but visible saints and their children.⁶⁵

He rolled back most of the changes Stoddard made in the Northampton church regarding membership. This was the primary divergence between he and his grandfather's approach to ministry. One point of commonality between Edwards and Stoddard was the conversionist concept of salvation. Goen says, "The Great Awakening revived his pattern of conversion . . . this pattern of conversion to be widely accepted as the normal mode of entry into the Christian life."⁶⁶ He goes on to say, "Credit for such a development goes chiefly to Jonathan

⁶⁴ Sweeney, 46.

⁶⁵ Morgan, 151.

⁶⁶ Clarence C. Goen, Introduction to, *The Great Awakening* by Jonathan Edwards, vol 4, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* ed. C.C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 26-27.

Edwards. . . .”⁶⁷ Though he resembled the Puritans regarding church membership, he saw conversion as instantaneous not a long, drawn-out process.

Edwards’ contribution in the First Great Awakening was pivotal, and his contributions to the religious life of the church in America is still relevant today. One of his greatest contributions were his writings. He penned many works regarding the Great Awakening that are still in circulation today. McClymond and McDermott lists these work as:

Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God* (1737), *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival* (1743), *Religious Affections* (1746), and *Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer* (1748).⁶⁸

His first volume on the events of the Awakening was *A Faithful Narrative*. This was his detailed, eye-witness account of the beginnings of the Great Awakening in North Hampton with the revival that took place in 1734-1735.⁶⁹ In response to some of the unusual occurrences within the awakening that caused some to question the authenticity of the revival, he wrote *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. In this work Edwards’ explained the distinctions that demonstrated a genuine move of God, versus aspects of the revival that do not necessarily point to the genuine move of the Holy Spirit. Kidd says, “in late summer 1741, a more widespread protest began to rise against two key features of the revivals: the bodily agitations and vocal outbursts of some penitents, and the aggressive tactics of some itinerants, particularly, James Davenport.”⁷⁰ Sproul in his

⁶⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁸ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 424.

⁶⁹ Kidd, *Roots*, 17-23.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 117.

Introduction to *The Spirit of Revival*, talks about Edwards' basis of the Distinguishing Marks. He says, "Edwards bases his assessment of revival . . . on an application of the exhortation of 1 John 4:1.⁷¹ . . . This text functioned as the normative benchmark for Edwards."⁷² In his letter to Deacon Lyman of Goshen, Connecticut, Jonathan Edwards wrote the following:

Concerning the great stir that is in the land, and those extraordinary circumstances and events that it is attended with, such as persons crying out, and being set into great agonies, with a sense of sin and wrath, and having their strength taken away, and their minds extraordinarily transported with light, love and comfort, I have been abundantly amongst such things, and have had great opportunity to observe them. . . . If this ben't the work of God, I have all my religion to learn over again, and know not what use to make of the Bible.⁷³

So, as confirmed in this quote, Edwards believed that the work in his church and throughout New England was a genuine work of God. Kidd quotes Edwards concerning the revivals and some of the questioning its genuineness. He says, "He also conceded that the revivals occasionally produced "imprudences and irregularities," "delusions of Satan," and "gross errors or scandalous practices," but so did all great new movements of God." He further quoted Edwards when he says, "Authentic religious experiences might manifest themselves in various ways, but Edwards argued that they would always produce enduring, godly

⁷¹ 1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

⁷² R.C. Sproul, Introduction to *The Spirit of Revival* by Jonathan Edwards (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 22. Note: *The Spirit of Revival* is a reworking in modern English of Edwards' work, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*.

⁷³ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. C.C. Goen, vol 4, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 533.

effects.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, a genuine move of God will exalt Jesus and the change the life of the believer to be more like Christ.

Edwards was concerned for the status of the religious environment and the spiritual condition of those in his charge. One of the threats that he saw to genuine religious piety and fervency was that of Arminianism. Knoll explains his view of Edwards’ perception of Arminianism. He says, “to counter what he considered the Arminian tendency to rely on self and natural abilities for obtaining salvation before God, Edwards in November preached a two-sermon series on the theme ‘Justification by Faith Alone.’”⁷⁵ According to Crawford, Edwards started preaching this series at about the same time as the revival started in North Hampton in 1734.⁷⁶

This was not the only sermon instrumental to the proliferation of the awakening. One of the key sermons that caused a fervency for the Lord and pierced those in attendance regarding their need for repentance was, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” The following excerpt is from that sermon:

The Wrath of God burns against them, their Damnation don’t slumber, the Pit is prepared, the Fire is made ready, the Furnace is now hot, ready to receive them, the Flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the Pit hath opened her Mouth under them . . . The God that holds you over the Pit of Hell, much as one holds a Spider, or some loathsome Insect, over the Fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his Wrath towards you burns like fire. . . .⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Kidd, *Roots*, 119.

⁷⁵ Mark A. Knoll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 77.

⁷⁶ Crawford, 125.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” *Edwards: Writings from the Great Awakening*, ed. Philip F. Gura (New York: Library of America, 2013), 627-628, 634.

This sermon had such a profound impact on Edwards' congregation it is said that, "Edwards' preaching elicited 'a great moaning & crying out' in the meetinghouse, and that 'shrieks & crys' of the assembly were so "piercing & Amazing," in fact, that Edwards "was obliged to desist."⁷⁸ This "hell-fire" preaching had a profound impact on the hearts and lives of those present.

His sermons were not of the fire-brand style of Whitefield's, but they were descriptive and powerful. McClymond and McDermott says, "If his imagery made his sermons memorable, their clear and compelling logic left his auditors 'little room to escape his web of arguments.'"⁷⁹ This validates that one does not have to be great in oration of popularity for the Holy Spirit to empower the message and messenger to effect change within men and women. Edwards was used mightily by God to further the awakening in New England through his preaching, writings, leadership in the North Hampton congregation, and in prayer. We will see in the next chapter his focus on prayer. He was also instrumental in the revival by the invitation for George Whitefield to come and preach in his church in North Hampton. This leads us to the discussion of Whitefield's contribution to the Great Awakening in New England.

George Whitefield

George Whitefield was a major contributor to the success of the Great Awakening and was somewhat controversial in the manner he conducted his ministry. His ministry began in Great Britain. His spiritual journey began as a teenage preparing for eventual entrance into

⁷⁸ McClymond, 427.

⁷⁹ McClymond, 507.

Oxford. It was in college where he met and became friends with Charles and Samuel Wesley. Both men were Methodists who would be great figures in the Methodist church. It was during his time at Oxford that he believed he was converted to Christ after a time of intense fasting and prayer that caused him to suffer in his health and studies. His suffering was partly from worry. Kidd says, “He began living in an austere and unhealthy manner and worried that Satan meant to destroy him, fearing sometimes at night that any turned corner might bring him face to face with the devil.”⁸⁰ However, through this all, he believed God was using this to “purify his soul.” Kidd quotes Whitefield as saying:

Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. . . . Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul, and, as I humbly hope, seal me unto the day of redemption.⁸¹

It was after this time of anguish and then release from his burden that he was ready to proceed with ministry.

Whitefield’s ministry began in Britain prior to his time in the colonies. His style of preaching was quickly noticed and became popular. Kidd says:

His dramatic flair made him an instant sensation, and the press quickly caught on, reporting widely on his fervent preaching. He also began publishing a number of his sermons, which sold quickly.

Following this time of discovery, he was invited by the Wesley brothers to go to the new colony in Georgia in America to help with their mission. Prior to Whitefield joining the Wesley’s they left America to return to England. Whitefield then proceeded to help the poor

⁸⁰ Kidd Root, 42-43.

⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

and open an orphanage. Three months later he returned to England, where he would start the greatest part of his ministry: open-air preaching.⁸²

This open-air preaching style would be the hallmark of Whitefield's ministry. He was not a conventional preacher. He revolutionized the way we would evangelize the masses in the modern, Western world. He was tireless in ministry. Lawson says:

In his thirty-four-year ministry, Whitefield preached some eighteen thousand sermons, often to multiplied thousands. . . . Three sermons a day were common; four were not uncommon.⁸³

Whitefield's revolutionary approach to evangelism was the preach anywhere, and wherever people would listen helped to get the word out to the masses. Lawson said, "He preached wherever he could draw a crowd, whether in open fields, bustling marketplaces, churchyard cemeteries, or aboard seafaring ships."⁸⁴ This would greatly aid his ministry in America leading up to the Great Awakening as the Puritans as shown earlier, were not interested in evangelism outside their local parish.

Like Billy Graham of the twentieth century, Whitefield was well received partially because of this straightforward and understandable message. Noll says, "Whitefield's great effect arose from what he proclaimed about the need for the new birth, but even more from how he proclaimed it—urgently, immediately and as the great question for every hearer *right now*."⁸⁵ Part of the effectiveness of His message was his ability to make it interesting and relatable to the common person. He was a former stage actor, so his proficiency in the

⁸² Ibid., 43-44.

⁸³ Steven J. Lawson, *The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield*. (Sanford: Reformation Trust, 2013), 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸⁵ Noll, 88.

dramatic helped him to “entertain” the masses. Kidd says, “He used the dramatic techniques of the theater to deliver powerful, emotional sermons that produced thousands of reported conversions.”⁸⁶ These sermons were not just theatrical presentations to gain popularity. Whitefield was genuine in his passion for the gospel and to see the lost come to faith in Jesus Christ.

His sermons were not the typical fare for the New England ministers like Jonathan Edwards or his contemporaries. His sermons were full of dramatic flair and were simple enough for lay hearers to understand. This is partially because of the preparation that went into his sermons. White suggests that Whitefield, “refused to write his thoughts down in the form of notes, because he believed that the use of notes in preaching was an indication of insufficient religious zeal.”⁸⁷ Whitefield’s primary thrust was to get the simple gospel message to the masses. He spent a short time in “meditation” [prayer] before a sermon, and then go out and speak. Some of the reasons he did not prepare in detail before a sermon was due to his writing out complete sermons when he was younger prior to his evangelical mission. He thought of himself to be adequately prepared. He was an itinerant speaker; therefore, he would speak a similar message in various locations.⁸⁸ This did not lessen the message or the veracity in which he gave it, just an increased frequency of a similar message.

Whitefield’s theatrical sermons were not only to produce excitable orations that would grab the attention of the hearer, it was out of a great and abiding passion for Christ and the gospel message. Lawson says:

⁸⁶ Kidd, *Brief History*, 9.

⁸⁷ Eugene E. White, “The Preaching of George Whitefield During the Great Awakening in America,” *Speech Monographs* 5, no. 1 (June 1948): 37.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Whitefield's passion arose from the depth of his biblical convictions. Strong beliefs were first ignited in his heart at the moment of his conversion.⁸⁹

Lawson did not attribute his "fiery zeal" to his time on the stage as Kidd. He says,

"Whitefield was full of fire and fervor in his preaching because he was so full of God."⁹⁰

Lawson goes on to say, "Whitefield's intense passion was kindled by his own deepening love for God and Jesus Christ, which in turn ignited his compassion for lost sinners."⁹¹ His

'theatrics' were not to entertain, but effectively convey the message of the gospel.

Another way in which Whitefield was effective is in promoting the awakening through the printing press. When he arrived in America in 1739, he first came to Philadelphia to preach. Benjamin Franklin was a friend of Whitefield, and as such, Lawson says:

Franklin set out to make Whitefield famous in the colonies. He printed ten editions of Whitefield's journals. . . . During 1739-1741, more than half the books published by Franklin were by or about Whitefield.⁹²

Some might say that this helped to "work up" a frenzy or popularity for Whitefield's benefit. It is possible that God used Franklin to help promote this important work in the colonies. The printing press would have been the most effective means of communication on a large scale in those days. This was an advantageous way to get the message to the public. Lambert showed the pessimistic side by alleging that the print media was used by the promoters as they, "shaped the "supply" of religion—how it was packaged and delivered-by lay people determined "demand."⁹³ Though some may see this as self-promotion, others saw this as the

⁸⁹ Lawson, 93.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁹¹ Ibid., 103.

⁹² Ibid., 17.

⁹³ Lambert, 13.

means to “get the word out” so that as many could hear Whitefield’s message as possible. Kidd showed that it was the newspapers that begin to cover Whitefield’s exploits in the colonies, and this helped to establish his popularity. Whitefield would also use the written word to announce his coming so that more would come to hear his message.⁹⁴

In all, Whitefield used the tools at his disposal to complete the work God called him to do. This really is no different than in our present day in using Facebook, websites, Twitter, radio, or television to promote an event in our area. These venues are not utilized to “work up” a frenzy but offer an opportunity for people to hear the message of the gospel. This seemed to be what had occurred during the awakening. Overall, the message of Whitefield was crucial. He demonstrated the importance of sharing the Gospel with the masses.

The Great Awakening in North Hampton

The awakening in North Hampton had seeds of revival from the 1720’s. This was a time when “Traditional pastors, growing ever more desperate for a return to what they saw as the original godly devotion of the colonies, began praying for a new ‘season of grace’ that would turn people’s hearts back to God.”⁹⁵ There was a sense that a new work of the Holy Spirit was needed. Prior to this time of prayer, the pastors had called people to repent of their sins, but it was not working because they were attempting this on their own power. These pastors realized this would only work if directed by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Kidd, *Roots*, 84.

⁹⁵ Kidd, *Brief History*, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Seven years after these pastors called for revival, an earthquake hit New England in 1727. Many saw this as God trying to wake his people up and call them to repentance. This shook the people to their “spiritual bones” in that they began to repent of their sins and were converted to Christ. Kidd says:

People had abandoned their grievous sins and had “vastly thronged” the churches. Many hundreds had come forward for baptism, covenant renewal, or admission to Communion.⁹⁷

It is not unusual for persons during times of crisis to flock to God. Though we cannot know the secret counsel of God’s will, it is logical to think he could and would employ the means of calling people to himself through natural disasters or times of crisis.

Between this time and the start of the Great Awakening in 1734, the populace was in a time of spiritual apathy in North Hampton. Edwards says:

Just after my grandfather’s death, it seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion. Licentiousness prevailed among the youth of the town; many of them were addicted to walking the streets at night with evil intentions, to frequenting the taverns, and to lewd practices.⁹⁸

This was not the end of the story for the youth. According to Edwards two or three years after Stoddard’s death the disposition of the youth began to change. He adds, “The young people showed more of a disposition to listen to counsel, and little by little they abandoned their silly meetings.”⁹⁹ That their behavior had improved showed that God worked in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit in regard to the sermons they heard from Edwards and by two sudden deaths in town. Edwards says this concerning the death of a young man who

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Surprising*, 12.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

died with pleurisy, “He died in about two days, which (along with what was preached publicly on that occasion) affected many young people.” There was also a young woman who died. These deaths for some reason, troubled some in town. Edwards says, “This seemed to contribute to sobering the spirits of many young people in town, and more of a religious concern began to occupy people’s minds.” However, before this woman died, she was converted to Christ. Her soul was saved for eternity.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes God allows tragedy to challenge us to question our eternal destination. Only God can change the disposition of the heart. Edwards was faithful to preach during these tough times, but it was the Holy Spirit that brought the increase.

The work of God can be surprising and remarkable. Sometimes one event can change the course of history. Such a time came at the beginning of the Great Awakening in December 1734. Kidd said, “In December 1734 the excitement broke loose with numbers of conversions that Edwards found surprising.”¹⁰¹ One such example was a woman who came to Edwards to describe her conversion. Kidd quotes Edwards as he called this woman, “one of the greatest company-keepers in the whole town.”¹⁰² This suggested that she was either a prostitute, or someone who was less than chaste in her dealings with men. Edwards said, “She told me that God had given her a new heart, truly broken and sanctified.”¹⁰³ This was the remarkable result of the sovereign grace of God at work in the heart of this woman. Only God can perform a task such as this in the life of the unregenerate heart.

The account of this woman demonstrates the meaning of Ezekiel 36:26 which says:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁰¹ Kidd, *Roots*, 17.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Edwards, *Surprising*, 21.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

God replaced the hardness of this woman's heart and inclined her will to His. She was enabled by God's Spirit to accept the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. This woman's conversion and testimony was a catalyst for the awakening of others in her town. Kidd says, "She received visits from many of the young people inquiring about what happened to her, and many of these friends were also converted."¹⁰⁴ Richard Lovelace says, "Real Christianity requires encounter with truth, but that truth must be illuminated by the presence of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁵ This is what happened in the life of the woman and those whom she shared her testimony. God used her conversion as a catalyst of one of the greatest revivals to come to America.

This move of the Spirit of God continued throughout the colony. Edwards says:

Soon after this, a great and earnest concern about the things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town, among people of all social positions and all ages. . . . Although people did not ordinarily neglect their worldly business, religion was the great concern among all sorts of people.¹⁰⁶

This is a definite sign of revival. When worldly affairs are seen in their proper context to supply earthly needs so that we can accomplish our purpose which is to glorify God and make disciples. This is the result of a heart that is properly affixed on our Lord Jesus Christ. Edwards says, "There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned with the great things of the eternal world."¹⁰⁷ The effect of the Holy Spirit on

¹⁰⁴ Kidd, *Roots*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁵ Richard F. Lovelace, "The Surprising Works of God", *Christianity Today* (September 11, 1995), 28.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *Surprising*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

the awakened person can have a profound effect not only on the soul revived, but also those connected to that person. Lovelace shared three effects of the 1734-1745 revival in

Northampton. He says:

Intense conviction of sin was nearly universal . . . congregational worship was enlivened . . . personal witnessing was enlarged on a scale unprecedented among Puritans. Lay witnessing rose to a new prominence.¹⁰⁸

When the Holy Spirit moves in the hearts of the people, hearts and lives will change as people grow in their faith and become more like Jesus.

The effect of this revival was quick to spread to the surrounding communities. Kidd says:

Edwards's account mentioned thirty-two communities besides Northampton that experienced awakening in 1734-1735. About half were in Massachusetts, and half in Connecticut. . . .¹¹⁰

This revival was short lived but had a dramatic impact as it awakened many souls who responded to the Gospel in faith. McClymond and McDermott says, "From 1736 to 1740, Edwards observed that many of the "high professors" who had once spoken volubly of their lofty spiritual experiences had lapsed back into sin."¹¹¹ Edwards would continue to preach during the time between 1736-1739 to instruct his congregation how we are to live and act as one who possesses saving faith. It was in 1739 that Edwards began to become aware of the revivals in Britain, as well as hear of the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield. Once he

¹⁰⁸ Lovelace, 30.

¹¹⁰ Kidd, *Roots*, 18.

¹¹¹ McClymond, 432.

heard this, he began to share the news with his congregation hoping to inspire them as he was similarly inspired.¹¹²

Awakening of 1740-1741

George Whitefield returned to the American colonies in 1739 and began his preaching circuit. He was invited to preach by Benjamin Colman, who was the Pastor of Brattle Street Church in Boston. Whitefield thought he would be able to make it to New England by the summer of 1740.¹¹³ He set sail for New England from Savannah Georgia in April 1740. During his itinerant preaching circuit in New England, he was invited by Jonathan Edwards to preach in his church. Whitefield preached four times in the Northampton Church. During these services, the people in the pews were affected, as was Jonathan Edwards. Lawson quoted Whitefield who wrote this in his *Journals*:

Preached this morning, and good Mr. Edwards wept during the whole time of exercise. The people were equally affected.¹¹⁴

This visit by Whitefield inspired this great revival by the end of 1740.

This new awakening “rivaled” the previous awakening in 1734-1735. As in that awakening, there was a great religious fervor as demonstrated in some of the manifestations of the exuberant happenings. McClymond and McDermott said, “By this time, some were crying out and fainting during worship, and the people were affected ‘more sensibly and visibly . . . by external effects’ in this revival than previously.”¹¹⁵ These exuberant

¹¹² Ibid., 434.

¹¹³ Kidd, *Roots*, 83.

¹¹⁴ Lawson, 17-18.

¹¹⁵ McClymond, 435-436.

“manifestations” and results of the awakening were not without incident or complaint. This was clearly seen in some of James Davenports meetings where he would hold meetings at Yale during commencement week. During these meetings, some were “disruptive” by, “some praying, some exhorting & terrifying, some singing, some screaming, some crying, some laughing and some scolding, made the most amazing Confusion that ever was heard.”

Occurrences like these caused Edwards to preach a sermon called the *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Holy Spirit of God*.¹¹⁶ Edwards explained in this work the signs that do not point to a genuine move of God to those that did lead to a move of God. Lovelace says, “Edwards finds five biblical marks of a genuine revival: it exalts Jesus Christ; it attacks the powers of darkness; it exalts the Holy Scriptures; it lifts up sound doctrine; and it promotes love to God and man.”¹¹⁷ McClymond and McDermott shares Edwards’ “evidences” that do not prove genuine revival. These evidences are:

Effects on the bodies of men . . . a great deal of noise about religion . . . great imprudences and irregularities . . . many errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work . . . [some] fall[ing] away into gross errors or scandalous practices . . . [and] ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God’s holy law.¹¹⁸

Some extraneous effects may distract some, but a sovereign move of God will have the greater effect in lives changed and Jesus glorified.

People from all ages were affected in the earlier awakening, but in the awakening in the 1740’s, it was primarily the youth that were affected.¹¹⁹ Edwards’ church in Northampton

¹¹⁶ Kidd, *Roots*, 118.

¹¹⁷ Lovelace, 31.

¹¹⁸ McClymond, 31.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 436.

went through a great period of revival when Edwards was absent from his pulpit as he preached abroad. Samuel Buell filled the pulpit and the revival intensified under his leadership. Edwards' wife Sarah, "experienced her most dramatic religious raptures under Buell's preaching." She said, "I seemed to myself to perceive a glow of divine love come down from the heart of Christ in heaven, into my heart, in a constant stream, like a stream or pencil of sweet light."¹²⁰ This demonstrated that a genuine revival is greater than the person leading the way. It's about exalting Jesus and evangelizing the lost.

There is much that could be said concerning the awakening that is not covered in this paper. However, we have seen the effects of prayer, unadulterated preaching of God's word, the move of the Holy Spirit, and folks like Stoddard, Edwards, and Whitefield who were obedient to carry the word of God to the people. Undergirding this revival was prayer by clergy and laity alike. Lovelace says:

For Edwards, the primary human catalyst for revival was always dependent prayer. He would be especially happy that prayer movements are now focused on broadscale outpouring of the Holy Spirit and not just on support for individual ministries and campaigns.¹²¹

Prayer was the primary catalyst to the Great Awakening in North Hampton. Whether it was private, corporate, or international prayer, all of it was crucial to the success of the awakenings in Britain and America. This subject will be covered in-depth in the chapter to follow.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Lovelace, 32.

The Beginning of the Evangelical Movement

One of the major results of the first Great Awakening was the start of the evangelical movement. The Puritan form of church died out before the Great Awakening. This new movement that would forever change the course of Western Christianity. Bebbington defines what evangelical means as a term regarding the individual and as a movement. He suggests, “evangelical, with a lower-case letter is occasionally used to mean “of the gospel,” the terms “Evangelical,” with a capital letter, is applied to any aspect of the movement beginning in the 1730’s.” Specifically, Bebbington introduces four qualities or aspects that embrace what it means to be “evangelical.” The four listed qualities are: conversionism, activism, Biblicism, and crucicentrism. In brief, these terms mean as follows: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrim, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.” Bebbington calls these, “the quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.”¹²² These actions comprise the result of the First Great Awakening.

Conversionism speaks to the aspect that one must be converted to Christ to be saved. This refers to a conscious decision to follow Christ. The means of the conversion experience is the calling of the unregenerate to faith in Christ through preaching. This is seen as an instantaneous occurrence.

Activism sees putting faith to action. This term points to an active faith. One does not believe and stay in that place in their life. At the most basic level, it means one must be active in living for Christ and sharing the gospel with others. Bebbington quotes Edwards as

¹²² D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 2-3.

saying, “Persons— after their own conversion, have commonly expressed an exceeding great desire for the conversion of others.”¹²³ Thus, the desire of the converted should naturally to want others to be converted as well. If the gospel is truly the “good news,” then we should want to share this news with others.

Biblicism is the view that the evangelicals see the bible as the only source as the way of salvation. Evangelicals have a:

Belief that all spiritual truth is to be found in its pages. The Bible alone, John Wesley contended, was the source of his doctrine of salvation.¹²⁴

This points to a belief that the bible is the final and only authority of “thus saith the Lord.” It is the basis of our faith. The Bible must be reliable and trustworthy to stake our eternal destiny. To the Evangelical, the bible is source of truth in which we base our faith in Christ. It is the Word of God.

Finally, crucicentrism is the aspect that sees the cross as the “focus of the gospel.” This is the basis of the Christian faith. Jesus died on the cross to pay the sin debt we could not pay so that we can have eternal life. Bebbington adds, “The reconciliation of humanity to God, that is to say, achieved by Christ on the cross is why the Christian religion speaks of God as the author of salvation.”¹²⁵ If Christ was not God and man; if he did not live a sinless life; if he did not die on the cross and rise again as he said he would; we have nothing in which to base our destiny. This is the crux of the gospel message. Belief that Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient for our sins once and for all is the message of the gospel. It is what makes Evangelicalism distinct. This was the message of the awakening.

¹²³ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 14.

CHAPTER 4

PRAYER AS A CATALYST OF REVIVAL

Definition of Prayer

Prayer is a term that is consistently mentioned in sermons, Sunday school classes, bible studies, and many other places. But, how many disciples of Christ really understand or contemplate the concept of prayer? To look at prayer as a catalyst of revival, a definition of prayer should be presented as a common frame of reference. John Bunyan shared a definition of prayer that speaks volumes for the passionate, personal nature of prayer with God, and the scope of its effectiveness. He says:

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to his Word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.¹

This definition shows that prayer is much more than a “wish list” for God, or a solemn ceremony of liturgy during a worship service on Sunday morning. Prayer is effective, passionate communion with God. It is the place where the believer connects with God in a direct and focused manner. Prayer is vital in the life of a believer and the church. As such, it is of paramount importance to revival.

It is important to understand that prayer is effective as God uses prayer to carry out his sovereign plan for the world. Just because God is sovereign and has planned the course of

¹John Bunyan, *Prayer* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 13.

events from eternity past, does not mean that prayer is not important as a daily discipline for the believer, for an assembled local congregation, or unified prayers of the saints worldwide. Prayer is part of God's plan for the body of Christ. Douglas Kelley said this about God's sovereign plan and prayer, "The sovereign God on His throne, who has planned all things from the beginning to the end, has arranged his plan in such a way that the prayers of the saints are one of the major means he uses to accomplish His final goal."² Sproul affirmed prayer as part of God's plan. He said:

All things are not only working together for our good, but they are also working together for the accomplishment for God's eternal purpose. His providence not only extends to the end but also to the means to those ends.³

It is a sobering, yet delightful thought that God incorporates the prayers of His people in the progression of his eternal plan. There is nothing God cannot do, nor anything deficient in himself to "need" the prayers of his saints. Yet, God in his mercy chooses to work through His people. He chose in eternity past to incorporate us into his plan through prayer, especially as he calls His people to renewed prayer for the sake of revival. For this paper, the focus on prayer for revival will be in the teaching and thoughts of Jonathan Edwards. His views on personal, corporate, and international prayer will be considered.

Edwards' Biblical Examples of Prayer

Jonathan Edwards used some examples from the Bible to demonstrate the power and effectiveness of united prayer. The subject of united prayer will be fleshed out later in this paper. However, it is important to see that the concept of prayer is based on Edwards'

² Douglas F. Kelley, *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 1995), 53.

³ R.C. Sproul, *The Invisible Hand: Do All Things Really Work for Good?* (Dallas: Word, 1996), 201.

understanding of scripture. In an Old Testament example, Edwards looked at the story of Esther. Esther was a Hebrew woman in exile in the nation of Persia.⁴ Her people were under threat by Haman and was set to be annihilated without outside intervention. Prior to Esther approaching her husband, the Persian king, she called for the Jewish people to fast for three days and three nights. She requested this in preparation of her petition to the king to spare her people. There was no guarantee he would hear her request or withhold punishment her for approaching him in court without being first invited. Edwards said this about Esther's predicament:

Esther, when she had a yet more important request to make, for the saving of the church of God, and the whole Jewish nation, dispersed through the empire of Persia, when on the brink of ruin, sends to all the Jews in the city of Shushan, to pray and fast with her and her maidens; and their united prayers prevail; so that the event was wonderful. Instead of the intended destruction of the Jews, their enemies were destroyed everywhere, and they are defended, honored, and promoted; their sorrow and distress is turned into great gladness, feasting, and triumph, and mutual joyful congratulations.⁶

This account of God's people being saved by directed and corporate prayer is an example of the hand of God's providence working through the prayers of his people. We do not know what the result would have been if Esther had not called a national fast [and prayer]. Maybe God would have raised someone else up or delivered his people in another manner. What

⁴ The story of Esther is found in the Old Testament. Though the book doesn't specifically reference God, it is a good example of the providence of God over the events of his people. Since Queen Vashti had offended the king and he looked for a new queen, it opened the door for Esther to be able to be the "deliverer" of her people from certain death, by unmasking the plot of Haman, one of the king's high officials. Haman sought to kill the Jews through subterfuge when he told the king of a people who would not follow his decrees. He received the king's permission to kill those who would not obey. This is when Esther realized this and agreed to stand in the gap for her people after Mordecai convinced her that if she did take a stand, not even she would be spared. Esther then went to the king and presented her petition to him. The king became angry at Haman's deceit and had him put to death. He did not put the Jews to death, and Mordecai was promoted. Then finally the Jews destroyed their enemies and the Feast of Purim was instituted to commemorate these events.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Praying Together for True Revival*, ed. T.M. Moore (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2004), 104.

must be understood is that God had purposed Esther to be in this place and time for the deliverance of His people. God also used Mordecai as part of His plan.

Mordecai said this to Esther:

For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?⁷

Mordecai understood the providence of God in the history of his people. He believed that Esther had been granted this position in the palace to be an instrument of deliverance.

Though it was the will of God, she had to be a willing participant, and decide to act. It is possible that when she took her petition to the king, that he could have banished or killed her. It was not certain that he would listen to her request, but she stepped out in faith, and did what she believed was the right course of action.

Edwards also referenced a teaching by Jesus concerning being united in prayer. His reference was Matthew 18:19. This verse says, "Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." Edwards comments on this verse by saying, "Christ is pleased to give this great encouragement to the union of his followers in this excellent and holy exercise of seeking and serving God."⁸ Thus, it is understood that Christ calls believers to prayer as a proper way to seek God and to see his will accomplished. Central to Jesus' teaching in this passage is the importance for believers to be united in common purpose through prayer. The context of the passage preceding Matthew 18:19, was referring to church authority and discipline. However, to exercise church discipline, there would need to be unity in prayer and thought of the

⁷ Esther 4:14.

⁸ Edwards, Praying, 104.

believer's present. This unity would come as they had the heart and mind of God on the matter. A supreme way to understand the heart and mind of God besides the study of the Scriptures, is through prayer. It is through those times in prayer that we come to know God in a deeper way and can be of one mind and one accord.

Edwards' Example of Personal Prayer

Jonathan Edwards authored a book on the necessity of prayer for revival in *Praying Together for True Revival*. This is a modern reworking of his original work, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer, for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth*. This book called for united prayer to bring about revival. Most of the focus in this book is for corporate prayer, both in churches and a "concert of prayer" internationally. To get a good view of Edwards' view of personal prayer, we will draw primarily from his *Personal Narrative*. One of Edwards' major themes were the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and in the church. It was during times of prayer that one would relate to the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, we would experience revival.⁹ Revival on a personal and corporate level will be seen in the examples from Edwards. He experienced times of his own personal revival before he became the chief proponent of the First Great Awakening in North Hampton as we will see in the passage to follow.

Edwards gave an account in his *Personal Narrative* of the importance of prayer in both his initial spiritual formation, in the conviction of personal sin, and in deepening his fellowship and affections toward God. Though his personal reflections on his own personal

⁹ Ibid., 69.

journey is not teaching per se regarding prayer, it lends to his philosophy of prayer and how it would shape his view of revival and his actions to promote revival. Edwards called these episodes in his life “awakenings.” He mentioned having “two more remarkable Seasons of Awakening, before I met with that Change, by which I was brought to those new Dispositions, and that new Sense of Things, that I have since had.”¹⁰ So, it was through prayer that Edwards was “awakened” to the work of God in his life.

Edwards’ journey began at an early age as a person worshipping in his father’s congregation. He said, “I had a variety of Concerns and Exercises about my Soul from Childhood.”¹¹ So, from a young age, God called Edwards to a remarkable faith as we know that none of us seek after God on our own device, as Romans 3:10-11 states, “as it is written: None is righteous, no not one, no one understands; no one seeks for God.” God in his sovereignty was working faith in Edwards’ heart from the time he was young. It is God who draws us to salvation. It is God who gives us a hunger and thirsting for His Word and fellowship with himself. Edwards experienced this at a young age according to the providence of God.

In this work, he recalled his youth when he would go to be alone in the woods to pray and at other times with a group of five other boys. These were times of seeking God through prayer. He also mentioned being alone with God five times a day to pray in solitude. As with most believers, he was not without his struggles. He mentioned, “But in the process of time, my Convictions and Affections wore off; and I entirely lost those Affections and Delights,

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Writings from the Great Awakening*, ed. Philip F Gaura, *Personal Narrative*, (New York: Library Classics, 2013), 681.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and left off secret prayer, at least to any constant Performance of it; and returned like a dog to his Vomit, and went on in the ways of Sin.”¹² This is an example of what can happen in the life of a believer that goes through periods of elated, joyful fellowship with God, and then the valleys of spiritual dryness and sin. Persons endure these peaks and valleys because we are sinful and imperfect. This is not just in the lives of individuals, but also in corporate bodies such as congregations or denominations. In fact, Edwards stated, “The reason why the church in this world is in a suffering state is that the world is subject to the sin and corruption of mankind.”¹³ This is one of the reasons the believer must be both fervent and consistent in personal prayer. We need the help of God to live the Christian life and follow God according to His will. Jesus was a great example of one who understood that he needed time alone with God.

As Jesus would withdraw from the crowds to meditate and pray, so Edwards spent times in private meditation and prayer before God. He says, “I had vehement longings of Soul after God and Christ, and after more Holiness; wherein my Heart seemed to be full, and ready to break. . . .” He also adds:

And used to spend abundance of my Time, in walking alone in the Woods, and solitary Places, for Meditation, Soliloquy and Prayer, and Converse with God. And was almost constantly in ejaculatory Prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me; as the Breath, by which the inward Burnings of my Heart had vent.¹⁴

Thus, to Edwards, this time alone with God was vital and as natural as breathing. This demonstrated his joy and was an example of one of his “awakenings.” In his writings he

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Edwards, *Praying*, 65.

¹⁴ Edwards, *Writings*, 685.

would equate the prevalence of sin in his life, in those times that he was lacking in his prayer life or personal piety. Prayer helps to keep us connected to God by the power of the Holy Spirit. There are times one does not know how to pray. It is during these times when the Holy Spirit will aid us, by interceding for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.¹⁵ This help by the Holy Spirit would seem to be during times of personal prayer.

This is much in the example of Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:6. Jesus said:

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Not only did Jesus instruct us to pray in secret, he made practice of this himself. One such example is found in Mark 1:35. Matthew said this, "And rising early in the morning, while it was still dark, he [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed." If Jesus both instructed us to pray in private and practiced it himself, then we must take notice that this is part of what God expects from believers.

Revival is likely to begin in the lives of individual believers as they commune privately with God in prayer. This is the time that God can speak to us in his quiet way while our focus is on Him alone. There is no guarantee of revival on a corporate scale, but this is the place where we connect personally with God and can have Him align our hearts with His. Also, if we experience personal revival, perhaps our churches would on a corporate level as well. Edwards understood this concept, which is why he spent plentiful time in private

¹⁵ The aid of the Holy Spirit in prayer is found in Romans 8:26-27, which says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." It is not clear as to the nature of the "groanings," but the truth is that the Spirit helps us pray when we have no words to express what needs to be expressed. He helps us on a level that is unknowable. We just need to be thankful and be aware of his faithfulness to help us commune with our Triune God on a deeper level.

prayer. Personal prayer needs to be consistent and meaningful if we expect to see revival in our own lives, let alone in our day.

Confession of Sin

Confession of sin was also important to Edwards. It was apparent in his writings that sin was abhorrent to him. Much like Martin Luther in times past, Edwards had a deep sorrow over his sinfulness. He mentioned in his *Personal Narrative*, “I have often since I lived in this Town, had very affecting views of my own Sinfulness and Vileness; very frequently so as to hold me in a kind of loud Weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together; so that I have been forced to shut myself up.” Some may think that Edwards was too hard on himself, especially with statements such as this, “When I look into my Heart, and take a view of my Wickedness, it looks like an Abyss infinitely deeper than Hell.”¹⁶ However, Edwards’ conviction of his sin increased as he became closer to God. In one of Paul’s last letters, and after a lifetime of maturing in Christ, he says, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”¹⁷ The more one considers the holiness of God, the more one sees their own sinfulness. This is a good starting place for revival. We must be aware of our sin to be able to confess it and be clean before God. Once we confess our sin and repent, we are cleansed and ready to be used by God for His glory.

To Edwards, repentance before God has was a heart-felt, meaningful coming to God that was not just the person wanting pardon due to their coming punishment, but it was part

¹⁶Edwards, *Writings*, 692-695.

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 1:15 (NASB)

of a person's faith in God and true sorrow for this sin.¹⁸ In his sermon, "Justification by Faith Alone," Edwards says this about repentance of sin:

Evangelical Repentance is an Humiliation for Sin before God; but the Sinner never comes and humbles himself before God, in any other Repentance, but that which includes an hoping in his Mercy for Remission: If this sorrow be not accompanied with that, there will be no coming to God in it, but a flying away from him.¹⁹

Edwards displayed the contrast between the natural inclination of man, which is to flee from his creator due to the depraved nature of his soul prior to conversion, to one who has been converted and has lasting faith in Christ. That person will run to God in humble repentance and sorrow seeking pardon and salvation. Coming to God in confession and repentance when we have become aware of our utter sinfulness reminds us of David after he sinned with Bathsheba. David said in Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from sin!²⁰

This is the heart of one truly penitent before God. Another place in the Psalms shows the type of person who will be with God in His holy place. The psalmist said:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his hold place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.²¹

¹⁸ Edwards, *Writings*, 506-507. In this section, Edwards talks about repentance and faith. He answers an objection that repentance and faith are two distinct things. His argument is that both are conditions of justification. You cannot have one without the other. In other words, one cannot have true repentance apart from faith. Likewise, one cannot be said to have true faith without repentance. Therefore, the argument Edwards was making was that both are necessary conditions of conversion, which means coming out of sin and into faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, confession of sin would be vehicle by which repentance was made.

¹⁹ Edwards, *Writings*, 508.

²⁰ Psalm 51:1-2.

²¹ Psalm 24:3-4.

This is the type of person that the Lord seeks. One that will come in an attitude of humbleness, contrition, repentance, and genuine love for God and his fellow man. When we confess our sins, and come before God in humble contrition, then we have a heart that is ready to hear from God; a heart ready for revival.

Corporate Prayer

The intent of Edwards' book, *Praying Together for True Revival*, was that prayer would usher in the millennial reign of Christ. In fact, Kidd says this about Edwards' belief in prayer for revival:

Edwards' belief in the efficacy of prayer for bringing revival and the millennium emerged most clearly during the height and aftermath of the awakenings, from approximately 1739 to 1748. . . . Edwards also made clear that prayer played a major role in the revivals and that a great movement of prayer might bring in the Kingdom of God.²²

Edwards believed that bringing in the Kingdom of God was possible if we were to usher in the great revival that would happen toward the end of the age. He did not believe all of the Old Testament prophecies had their complete fulfillment yet, therefore, he was eager for a great revival to occur as he hoped to usher in the Kingdom of God in the millennium. This can be seen in this quote from Edwards:

Thus God's people seeking, by earnest prayer, the promised restoration of the church of God, after the Babylonian captivity, and the great apostasy that occasioned it, is called their SEEKING GOD, and Searching for him; and God's granting this promised revival and restoration is called his being Found of them.²³

²² Thomas S. Kidd, "The Very Vital Breath of Christianity: Prayer and Revival in Provincial New England." *Fides et Historia*. 36, no. 2 (2004): 29-30.

²³ Edwards, *Praying*, 19.

Thus, Edwards suggested the coming revival would bring the promised restoration of the church right before the return of Christ.

Edwards' primary text which he based the primary thrust of his book *Praying Together for True Revival* was Zechariah 8:20-22. These verses state:

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself are going. Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord.

Edwards did not believe that prior to the time of Christ this prophecy had been fulfilled. Nor did he after his time on earth through Edwards' lifetime in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Edwards attributed some of the Old Testament prophecies considering what we would call "the already and the not yet." He understood some of the Old Testament prophecies may have a somewhat limited fulfillment when the Jews returned to Canaan from Babylonian Captivity but saw a greater fulfillment in the last days.²⁴ These beliefs encouraged Edwards to call for united prayer.

Concerning Edwards' belief in the "concert of prayer," Crawford says:

In 1743, Believing that the millennium would begin in America, Edwards had suggested a day of fasting and prayer for the millennium to be observed throughout America. Five years later, he promoted a Scottish plan for an empire-wide concert to pray for the millennium.²⁵

After the American days of fasting and prayer had begun, Edwards joined the Scots in an international "Concert of Prayer." Edwards greatly believed in the united prayers of the saints to the point that he had prayer societies in Northampton have "quarterly days of prayer and

²⁴ Ibid., 13-16.

²⁵ Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 228.

pressed his friends in the ministry to support the concert.” Edwards wrote his *Humble Attempt* during his promotion of this Concert of Prayer.²⁶ Edwards believed that God was ready to pour out his Spirit and restore his church as evident in his writings. He longed for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to restore the church and usher in God’s Kingdom. Concerning God’s restoration of the church through prayer, Edwards said, “God speaks of himself as standing ready to be gracious to his church, and to appear for its restoration, and only waiting for such an opportunity to bestow his mercy, when he shall hear the cries of his people for it, that he may bestow it in answer to their prayers.”²⁷ This restoration that Edwards sought would be through the work and person of the Holy Spirit acting through the prayers of his people.

Prayer for An Outpouring of The Holy Spirit

Aside from calling for a “Concert of Prayer,” one of the most desirable outcomes of united prayer for Jonathan Edwards, was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Edwards called for prayer to bring about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when he said this:

The Scriptures do not only direct and encourage us, in general to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else; but it is the expressly revealed will of God that his church should be very much in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Spirit, which is to be in the latter days, and for what shall be accomplished by it.²⁸

Thus, the power of revival would come through united prayers of the church asking God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. His desire for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit was in

²⁶ Ibid., 229-230.

²⁷ Edwards, *Praying*, 78.

²⁸ Ibid., 69.

keeping with the ministers of his day who sought revival. Kidd said, “During the 1720’s and 1730’s, pastors regularly reminded their hearers that they should ask God to send the Holy Spirit, especially on special days of prayer and fasting.”²⁹ The wide support and desire by the clergy for revival shows that the Holy Spirit had laid this their hearts. Revival was a God given desire.

The ministers and laity understood from Scripture that revival begins with prayer, and using the Day of Pentecost as an example, the Holy Spirit was poured out after the one hundred twenty gathered in the upper room to pray, just as Jesus had instructed. After the Day of Pentecost, the Church was forever changed. The Apostles were empowered to share the gospel and perform miracles. People would come to faith in Christ and spread the gospel after their conversion. This was a good example that prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can bring revival.

Edwards commented on this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles during the Day of Pentecost. He says:

And in that great outpouring of the Spirit that was in the days of the apostles, which was attended with such glorious effects among the Jews and Gentiles, the Spirit came down first on those that were engaged in united prayer for it. A special blessing is promised to them that love and pray for the prosperity of the church of God.³⁰

He called this outpouring, “The greatest effusion of the Spirit that has ever been.”³¹ Edwards tied prayer with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, Kidd says, “He emphasized that the outpouring of the Spirit caused a great increase of prayer rather than prayers bringing the

²⁹ Kidd, *Vital Breath*, 28.

³⁰ Edwards, *Praying*, 83.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

Spirit.”³² In this statement, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is based on the sovereign will of God. We do not affect revival by “coaxing” God to move. We are moved to pray because God intends to act, and he acts because we pray. This is consistent within Scripture of God being the one who takes the divine initiative in the accordance of His divine will. We are surely the responder. It is God who sent his son to die. It is God who moved upon the various authors of the books of the Bible to write his words for posterity. It was Jesus who instructed the disciples to go to the upper room to seek the gift of the Spirit. Thus, Edwards’ presupposition of how the Spirit was poured out is consistent with Scripture.

It is evident after looking at Edwards in his example of personal prayer, his attitude of contrition, confession, and corporate prayer he recognized how vital prayer is in the life of the believer and the church. To experience revival, it will take serious time and effort in prayer. The prayer that is needed is not spurious or cursory. These times in prayer should be episodes of deep devotion, contriteness, and seeking God’s will be done, not ours. Since we know that prayer is meant to align our heart with the heart of God, our prayers need to be both fervent and effective.

Prayer that is fervent and effective is taught in the book of James. It says in James 5:16 (NKJV):

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

What does this mean? First, before one can expect to have a prayer life that is powerful and effective, one must repent of their sins before the Lord. The Holy Spirit shows us our sins and bids us to repent in godly sorrow and contrition. One cannot come before the Lord with

³² Kidd, *Vital Breath*, 19.

dirty hands and expect to be fervent in prayer. Kidd referenced John White in his statement of a private prayer life. Kidd says:

White argued that one of two practices characterized people's private lives: secret prayer or secret sin. Those that engaged in one would almost never engage in the other, because a person would embrace their true inclinations in secret despite their false public shows.³³

Thus, the connection between personal confession and power in prayer are certainly connected. Prayer is not to be taken lightly or with spurious attention. Powerful prayer is intentional and honest.

The passage referenced in James talks of prayer being effective and fervent. Sproul offered some thoughts regarding these concepts. He said, "Effective prayer is prayer that "works"; James says it "avails much." This promise does not apply to prayer that is cavalier or full of empty phrases or recited dispassionately." He goes on to say:

Fervency calls attention to a sincere and steadfast focus upon God; this kind of prayer is serious. It comes from the core of the soul, from the heart of the saint who means business.³⁴

Thus, to be effective in prayer, one must have a razor-sharp focus and sincerity of heart. It is not to be flippant or casual. Prayer is of vital importance in the life of the believer. It is the believers primary point of connection with God. Therefore, we must be effective in personal prayer, confession, and corporate prayer to see revival. This is not as much a formula as it is what is needed for God' people to align with His will, to know the heart of God, and to fulfill our mission to evangelize the world.

³³ Ibid., 19-33.

³⁴ Sproul, *Invisible Hand*, 203.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

We have examined Josiah's revival in the Old Testament, and the First Great Awakening in New England during the eighteenth century and have seen the results of the sovereign move of God in both scenarios. Josiah's revival and the awakening in New England started with the leadership and then moved through the people. This brings us the twenty-first century America. It can be argued that another awakening needs to occur in the United States. The evaluation of the condition of the American church will be narrow and focused to three areas. The three indicators that point to a need for revival/awakening in the American church are: declining church attendance, acceptance of same-sex marriage and/or the homosexual lifestyle, and the use of pornography of those within the church. While our focus is primarily on the problems of these areas within the church, there will be some statistics from the overall society as a means of displaying the differences and commonalities that will display how close the church is to the society and thus showing the need for revival in the church.

Church Attendance

Church attendance in America is declining amongst the Millennials at an alarming rate. There are likely many reasons why it is harder to connect with this demographic. This thesis will not cover individual reasons for the decline, but that it is a symptom of needed

revival. Pew Research conducted a study called the *Religious Landscape Study* in two installments. The first study was in 2007 and the one referenced in this discussion is from 2014 and had a polling sample encompassing thirty-five thousand Americans from all fifty states.¹ This study covered church attendance, and other types of religious patterns of behavior, as well as social and political views.

One of the most concerning trends is in the Millennial age group. According to the *Religious Landscape Study*, the category growing the fastest in America, are the “nones.” The “nones” are the section of our population that do not have any religious affiliation or belong to any type of organized faith. The so called “nones” now comprise 23% of the American population, which has increased from 16% in 2007. Growth in the “nones” category is primarily in the Millennial generations, who are those born from 1981 through 1996. This age group is the lowest in church attendance in America as it pertains to weekly attendance. Attendance for each generation from the Silent Generation through the millennials has declined through the decades. The range of attendance starting with Millennials, through the Silent Generation ranges from 27% to 51%.² If we were to graph these results concerning each succeeding generation; weekly church attendance by generation is progressively less than the previous generation. As a percentage of the population, if less of each generation attend church regularly; over time, the church in America will be less

¹ Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study*, “About the Religious Landscape Study”. 2014. Available from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/> Internet; accessed 28 November 2017.

² Pew Research Center. *U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious*. Nov 3, 2015. Available from <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>; Internet; accessed 30 September 2017.

relevant in society and can potentially die out. The decline of societal mores is already evident as church attendance declines and social issues change.

Same-Sex Marriage & Homosexuality

One of the most highly debated issues in recent times is that of same-sex marriage, and/or same-sex romantic relationships. The Religious *Landscape Study* also looked at societal issues, which included attitudes on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. There has been a sense of normalcy attached to this demographic in America and has begun filtering into the church. It is staggering how quickly views have changed surrounding this topic. This study did not have information on attitudes toward same-sex marriage from 2007, but there is comparative information on attitudes toward homosexuality in general.

The numbers regarding same-sex marriage in 2014 was shocking to see how far the attitudes of Americans have changed. Of those polled, 53% of those strongly favor same-sex marriage, while 39% strongly oppose, and 8% do not know what position to take. Surprisingly, 28% of Evangelical Protestants are in favor of same-sex marriage. While this is a better figure than the overall society, this trend is disturbing. Belief in God has a role in worldview regarding same-sex marriage. Of those who strongly approve of same-sex marriage, 48% believe in God and are “absolutely certain” of his existence. Those that strongly oppose same-sex marriage and are “absolutely certain” of God’s existence is 82%. Those who do not know if they support same-sex marriages and who say they are “absolutely certain” of God’s existence comprise 68% of that demographic.³ It appears there is some

³ Pew Research Center. *Views on Same-Sex Marriage*. 2014. Available from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/views-about-same-sex-marriage/>; internet; accessed 29 November 2017.

confusion and soul-searching regarding this matter by those not sure of their position on this subject.

The result is even more concerning when one looks at the concept of homosexuality in general. The Pew study shows a changing trend from 2007 to 2014. Evangelical Protestants still have more that oppose homosexuality, but 36% are in favor of this type of relationship. Mainline denominations are more accepting as 66% believe that this practice should be accepted. This is an alarming trend in the body of Christ in America.

S. Donald Fortson & Rollin G. Grams in the Foreword of their book, *Unchanging Witness*, say this about the struggle in the church:

The body of Christ is experiencing severe fracture. Schism is taking place on a scale not seen since the sixteenth century, and the primary culprit is the claim that the church has been wrong all along in its belief that homosexual practice is a sin.⁴

This threat to the church is real and if revival does not occur soon, we face further schism in the church and nominalization of the faithful evangelicals and others who hold to a traditional, conservative view of scripture that confidently affirms homosexuality as a sinful practice, and cannot be condoned by the church. Another quote by Fortson and Grams says, “The reason homosexuality has struck such a divisive chord is that essential sexual ethics are at stake when the so-called Gay Christian movement gives its blessing to homosexual practice.”⁵ The threat that Fortson and Grams mention in the Foreword of their book has a practical example as shown in a recent Washington Post article titled, “Polls shows a dramatic generational divide in white evangelical attitudes on gay marriage.” In this article, the author shares a short biopic of Julie Rodgers, a former employee of Wheaton College

⁴ S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition*. (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), xi.

⁵ Ibid.

who was part of an “ex-gay ministry,” who is now a confirmed lesbian and is engaged to her “partner.” She gave this opinion of gay marriage,

I think a shift is inevitable. It’s just a matter of how long.

During her time working in the chaplain’s office for Wheaton College, she became gay marriage affirming, and resigned her post in 2015. She talked of the process of becoming gay affirming after seeing the topic interpreted in a different way from the Bible. She says this:

When pastors and leaders begin to come out [as LGBT affirming], people are going to move. They just need permission. . . . It gives people another perspective and permission to say, ‘I feel that way too.’⁶

Thus, without revival, this trend is likely to continue and the churches, and denominations that continue to hold to classical Christian doctrine will continue to come under fire in public opinion, and potentially legislatively. In fact, the uphill battle is understood by Glenn Stanton, director of Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family. He says:

When young people see an issue legalized, they begin to believe it must be right. . . . We see that with pot in Colorado. . . . There’s a legitimizing and institutionalizing when you make something legal.⁷

This is a reason for the consistent promotion by the homosexual community. If you change the legal status of something, you can change public perception. If you change the perception, behavior will follow. If the church does not lead in the classical, biblical sense, and it gives in to the mores of the secular society, we will be irrelevant, and our witness nullified. This suggests a need for revival.

⁶ Sarah Pullam Bailey. “Polls Show a Dramatic Generations Divide in White Evangelical Attitudes on Gay Marriage,” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 27 June 2017; available from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/06/27/there-is-now-a-dramatic-generational-divide-over-white-evangelical-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/?utm_term=.7cb669b6228c; Internet; accessed 28 November 2017.

⁷ Ibid.

Pornography

The final area of concern that will be addressed is in the usage and viewing of pornography by individuals in the church compared to the overall American culture. This is a growing problem both for clergy and laity. Like the topic of homosexuality, this too has different degrees of acceptance among various age demographics. *Christianity Today* recently published an article regarding the struggle with pornography among pastors. 770 pastors were polled as part of a study by Josh McDowell Ministry and Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ). Among this sample, 432 were pastors, and 338 were youth pastors.

The responses to some questions were surprising. Of those who responded, 57% percent of pastors and 64% percent of youth pastors admitted to struggling with porn at some point in their life. Approximately 12 percent of youth pastors and 5% of pastors are presently addicted. According to this report, “A solid majority of pastors currently using porn said that it negatively impacts their ministry (75% of youth pastors, and 64% of pastors), though twice as many youth pastors (44%) as pastors (18%) said that was ‘very true’”⁸ Given these numbers, we as Christians have a real problem with the culture pressing in and crushing us under the weight of sin and temptation. Additionally, we cannot expect to experience revival, if we are harboring sin in our lives as Christians, which will affect our families and our churches as well.

More than just pastors struggle with pornography. A study conducted by Barna studied a wider range of persons than did the previously mentioned study as reported in *Christianity Today*. Barna’s sample included, “thousands of American teens, young adults

⁸ Morgan Lee. “Here’s How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle with Porn,” *Christianity Today*, 26 January 2016; available from: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/january/how-pastors-struggle-porn-phenomenon-josh-mcdowell-barna.html>; Internet; accessed: 28 November 2017.

and older adults about their views on and use of pornography.”⁹ In general, older adults are more likely to view porn as wrong in comparison to the younger population. Older adults view more porn, but also feel the worst about viewing.¹⁰ In this same report, researchers found that on average one in three Americans “seek out” porn at least once per month. The age demographic that uses porn the most are those aged 18-24. Approximately 57% seek porn out “either daily, weekly, or monthly.”¹¹ There is a battle for the heart and soul of our young people. Revival is needed to reverse this course.

The topics adolescents are taught and exposed to within our secular culture affect their morality and value judgments as seen in the following statistics. Teen and young adults rank eight other items as more immoral than porn viewing/usage. The first three on their list are violations of the ten commandments, so that is understandable of those being high on the list. They include stealing, adultery, and lying. The shocking statistic that shows the indoctrination of our society is more than half of those surveyed, saw not recycling as more immoral than porn usage/viewing. Slightly less than 1/3 of those surveyed thought pornography was immoral. They also saw, overeating, “significant consumption of electricity or water,” or coveting someone else’s belongings as worse than porn. Those that conducted the study, said this as part of their conclusion about this set of statistics:

While it may seem crazy that younger generations see not recycling as a greater evil than watching pornography, it’s also true that not recycling—as well as most of other activities ranked above pornography—has societal impact— Watching pornography, on the other hand, is perceived by many as simply an individual choice.¹²

⁹ Barna Group, Inc., “Porn in the Digital Age: New Research Reveals 10 Trends”, 6 April 2016; available from: <https://www.barna.com/research/porn-in-the-digital-age-new-research-reveals-10-trends/>; Internet; accessed: 28 November 2017.

¹⁰ Ibid.,5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 12.

Finally, the guilt aspect of porn must be discussed. Of those sampled, about 18% had feelings of guilt while partaking in pornography. Practicing Christians felt more guilt than non-practicing Christians at 29% compared to 12%. Of those surveyed, Christians are those that would like to be able to stop, or would like to use porn less. The concern is that only 29% of Christians polled felt guilt associated with porn usage/viewership.¹³ Where are we in the American church when less than one third of those who view porn see it as wrong, or feel guilty? Have we become so calloused that our sin does not bother us any longer? This is a sign that revival is needed in the American church.

What do these trends in church attendance, changing of views of the homosexual lifestyle, same-sex marriage, and the use of pornography mean for the church and society? These trends show the gradual decline of morality and that the public does not appear to view God or the Church as needed or relevant in the moral issues of our day. It shows that our nation is sliding into the abyss of sin and bondage, with the church participating in the decline. We cannot be effective as the body of Christ if we harbor sin in our personal lives, which will affect the local congregation and the church overall. We must seek God's forgiveness through repentance and contrition and cry out to Him for revival in our land.

¹³ Ibid, 8-9.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Revival like salvation is a work of God that is desperately needed in our present time as it was in the past. This has been true throughout history as we saw in Josiah's revival, the First Great Awakening in Northampton, and in the present condition of the church in America as presented in the areas of church attendance, attitudes of same-sex marriage/homosexual relationships, and the use of pornography by those in the church. What we saw in Josiah's time was a lack of spirituality in relation to God, his Word, and in temple worship. The people had followed idols and went their own way. In the time leading up to the Great Awakening, we saw the relaxation of membership standards to admit people into church membership to keep numbers up, true spirituality was lacking, and sin was prevalent, especially among the youth. In both examples, a fresh infusion of God's spirit was needed to bring revival.

God was the initiator in both revivals. It was God who caused the lost Scriptures to be discovered in the temple and started a chain of events that led to revival. When Josiah heard the Book of the Law, he was cut to the core, repented before God, and instituted reforms. Part of these reforms was confession of sin, renewal of the covenant, tearing down idols, and restoring proper worship. These items were instrumental to revival and delayed God's judgment. In the time leading up to and during the Great Awakening, it was God who initiated the various ministers to begin praying for revival, and the desire to renew the

covenant in their churches. It was God that inspired the various preachers to fervently preach the gospel and evangelize the lost.

The commonalities to revival in the past are still relevant today. First, for revival to take place, it must be God initiated for it to be effective. Only God can change the disposition of our hearts, to “seek” revival, God must place the desire within us. When we pray, it is primarily to alter our perspective to mold to God’s will and purpose, not the reverse. But, we must understand, that prayer is key to revival. God has sovereignly chosen to use the prayers of his elect to move in history. We do not coerce God but align with his will and desires.

Second, we must renew our commitment to Christ. Both in Josiah’s day, and the time leading up to the First Great Awakening, covenant renewal was instituted with God. Josiah and the clergy during the Great Awakening realized the importance of public renewal of their covenant with God. We must openly acknowledge our need for God and promise to live according to His Word to have a heart ready for revival. We need to be in right standing with God. When our perspective is in line with God’s, our hearts are primed for revival.

Third, we must confess our sins before God. When Josiah heard the Book of the Law, he was convicted of his and the people’s sin. He understood the need for confession to obtain God’s forgiveness. True repentance comes through confession of sin and the decision to turn from it. The same was true in the time of the Great Awakening. Edwards and Whitefield were both aware of their sin and languished over them until God gave them a sense of pardon in their spirit. As they preached to congregations and the unchurched, they called people to repentance and confession. Being clean before God is a prerequisite to revival.

Fourth, we must proclaim the Word of God and the Gospel with boldness. It was the Word of God that provided Josiah with the encouragement and authority to destroy the idols

in the land and restore proper worship. Without the proclamation of the scriptures, these reforms would not have taken place. In the time of Stoddard, Edwards, and Whitefield, preaching had a profound impact on the revival. It was the strong preaching and exposition of God's word that pricked the hearts of the hearers and brought them to a point of repentance and decision to follow Christ. If the preachers of this day had not been bold in their proclamation of the Gospel, it is possible the revival would not have occurred. Preaching, through the power of the Holy Spirit, drove people to repentance and faith.

Finally, it was the Holy Spirit that provided the power for both revivals to take place. Without the illumination of the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit, these revivals would not have occurred. If the Holy Spirit had not called people to faith, or placed the desire to pray within them, revival would not have taken place. Only God can bring to life, that which is dead or dying. Only God can inspire us and inwardly call us to faith.

This brings us to the present-day church. To keep the church from falling into deeper decline, we need to exhibit all these practices into our lives and that of our congregations. First, God must want to move for revival to take place. That people such as myself and others seek revival, shows that God is moving in this direction. As we realize this, we must be in fervent prayer asking for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who calls us to repent and be saved. We also need to repent of our sins, preach the gospel, and evangelize the lost. If we are faithful to the call of God, and walk in his ways, we will experience awakening in God's time. As we draw closer to Christ, and awakening takes place, attendance should rise, attitudes toward sins such as homosexuality and pornography should change, and our witness to the world will be restored as an example of God's grace, mercy, and power. Then, our churches will revive, souls will be saved, and our society changed one life at a time.

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