



Prayer Resources

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Discerning Genuine And Counterfeit Revival

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:13

It has been said, that when God desires to bless His people, He first sets them to praying. For nearly two decades the Lord has been calling forth a prayer movement that is now erupting into mini-revivals spreading across our land. As with all genuine works of God, there are, unfortunately, false or counterfeit movements. Genuine movements of God will go no further than they are Biblically sound! When they cease to be Biblical, they cease to be of God!

This truth is emphasized in Psalm 119 where the movement of revival is initiated and inspired according to the Word of God. This Psalm clearly weaves together revival and the Word of God. Eleven times the Psalmist refers to God reviving His people (Ps. 119:25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156, and 159) and only a few verses omit the theme of the Psalm—the Word of God. It is well worth the reader's time to pause here and pursue these verses. Unquestionably the Psalmist was declaring that a genuine movement of God among His people ought to be Word-centered.

A study of God's movement among His people throughout history reveals two contrasting focuses on the part of the people: a focus that is Word-centered or a focus that is experience-centered. History also bears record that only a Word-centered movement will bring about the lasting change that is longed for and needed. An experience-centered movement is often short-lived and can be easily counterfeited.

Centuries after the Psalmist's exhortation that revival be rooted in God's Word, Paul utilized God's Word to clarify the revival of Pentecost and to warn his protégé young pastor Timothy against counterfeit movements. In 2 Timothy 3 Paul refers back to the Old Testament revival among the Israelites when Moses came to lead them out of Egypt: *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was (v. 3-9)*. Paul's reference to this historical revival reminded Timothy of several principles concerning a movement of God that we also need to understand in our day.

Paul reminded Timothy how a movement of God is constituted. From the harshness of their captivity in Egypt, the Israelites had cried out to God (Exodus 3:7-9). He heard their prayers and called Moses out of a burning bush to deliver them from their bondage. Moses visited the Israelites and announced to the Egyptian Pharaoh God's purpose and plan for His people. Notice that it is God Who sovereignly took the initiative to move in response to the prayers of His people.

Paul reminded Timothy how a movement of God is counterfeited. Distressed by the possible loss of his Israelite workforce, Pharaoh called for his magicians to see if they could match the

works of God through Moses. The initial acts of God through Moses were counterfeited and imitated by Jannes and Jambres, two magicians of Egypt (Exodus 7:11-22). Paul explained that these two men had resisted the man of God, rejected the truths of God, and reprobated the faith in God. When the truths of God and the tenets of the faith are resisted in the midst of a movement of God, a counterfeit imitation of God's original movement can so easily be manufactured by the flesh. Thus, an experience-centered revival is quite vulnerable to counterfeit movements.

Paul reminded Timothy how a movement of God is concluded. When Pharaoh increased the pressure upon the Israelites because he was hardened by hearing the Word of God through Moses, the Israelites wanted Moses to depart from Pharaoh and cease proclaiming God's Word. Moses recognized that if he yielded to their request to remove both himself and his presentation of God's Word, the movement of God would halt. Often spiritual leaders in an environment where God is moving in revival have jeopardized His continued movement by their repeated absence as they journey about to give revival reports. Without the man of God maintaining his hand on the helm of God's Word, a movement tends to become shipwrecked.

Paul reminded Timothy how a movement of God is continued. Moses was resolved to keep the movement of God among the Israelites on course. He steadfastly remained before Pharaoh faithfully ministering the Word of God and hence sustained the movement of God as a Word-centered movement. God's people are most vulnerable at a time when He is moving in revival among them because the enemy is actively on the move to protect and regain his lost territory. At no time is there a greater need for God's leader among His people to provide Word-centered direction through sermon and shepherding than when God is moving in revival!

In the first verse of 2 Timothy 3, Paul warns that there will indeed also be counterfeits and imitations in the last days. It is important as we see God begin to move among us in revival during our time that we should be alert to counterfeit movements. I believe a distinguishing characterization of what could be counterfeit in our day is taking an exceptional experience in the Bible and turning that into a normal practice—or as we humans are so prone to do, formulating a pro-

gram or method. Allow me to ponder some possibilities:

- Roaring like a lion* – This worship practice popular today in some circles is claimed to picture Christ as the lion of Judah (Ezekiel 1:10 and Daniel 7:4). The experience of roaring like a lion actually has no Biblical precedent, unless it is to imitate Satan (1 Peter 5:8).

- Laughing in the Spirit* – Abraham and Sarah laughed about the news of the prospects of having a baby in their old age (Genesis 17:17; Genesis 18:12-15). This singular example of laughing was not of the Spirit and was rebuked by the Lord.

- Blowing of the Spirit* – Jesus breathed upon the disciples with the prospects of the Holy Spirit descending upon them on the day of Pentecost (John 20:22). This is the only example of such an experience in the Word of God and is not repeated in the book of Acts.

- Prayer Walks or Prayer Journeys* – Joshua's singular example of Israel walking around Jericho serves as the only example of this emphasis (Joshua 6). This method was not the normal approach of Joshua in defeating the remaining cities of Canaan. Many are teaching today that believers should systematically take prayer walks around demonic strongholds and pray for these to come down.

- Spiritual mapping of a city* – Nehemiah's surveying the ruins of the city of Jerusalem was a singular experience in which there was a need to physically rebuild the walls of the city (Nehemiah 2:11-20). Today there are those who are allegorizing this exceptional experience and encouraging God's people to become gatekeepers of the gates of their city.

Today, it seems, the more bizarre the experience, with a slight Biblical reference, the more emotional the response of those who are not grounded in sound principles of Biblical interpretation.

Friends, beware lest we too are caught up in the counterfeit and miss the genuine movement of God in these last days. Paul concludes his warnings concerning the counterfeit to Timothy by encouraging him to continue in the Scriptures which he has learned from his childhood that he might be complete unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:14-17). We should do no more and no less!