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WE MUST GET OUR EYES OPEN TO THE FACTS

By Paul S. Rees

To the keen eyes of the prophet Ezekiel there once appeared the moving picture of the Almighty coming down to search the streets and dwellings of Jerusalem. God looking for a man! A man who will lead out, who will return to the altars of the Lord, and call others to accompany him! A man, in short, who will pioneer the way to revival! Amazingly enough, God could not find that key man. Therefore Jerusalem and Judah went on to their doom in 586, spiritually unawakened and unrenewed.

Now change the historical setting. Come down to the present. In place of the Temple, think of the Church. Then recall Ezekiel 22:30 "I have looked for a man among them to build up the wall and man the breach on behalf of the land." (Moffatt). Are there not numerous "gaps" or "breaches" today? Remember that God is looking for men—men who are alerted to the peril and sensitive to the need, men who will close the gap, and who will stand staunchly for spiritual recovery against all the forces of anti-Christ and apostasy.

The question I now raise is simple and searching; how can we—you and I—answer this call of God?

First, we must get our eyes open to the facts. "Show her all her abomination," is the command that came to Ezekiel.

But would Jerusalem be shown? No! She preferred to live on in her fool's paradise of godless prosperity.

Consider these flashes of arraignment from Ezekiel: "You are guilty, befouled by the idols you have made . . . The leaders of Israel within you have been overbearing . . . you scorn what is sacred to me, you desecrate My Sabbath . . . Within you men live lasciviously . . . The local leaders are roaring lions that tear their prey . . . The priests violate My law and profane what is sacred to me."

The Spirit of God takes no delight in publishing or parading these mean and mischievous failures of society and the church. He brings them up for one reason only: to ram them home to the conscience. We must be stabbed awake to them, or the bells of doom, soon or late, will toll above our helpless heads.

Since revivals always begin within the church, it is indispensable to its coming that we who are "insiders" face up to the facts. Big church councils and conferences meet, pass resolution after resolution, issue pronouncement after pronouncement, fill the air with high-sounding words and then what? The "princes of this world" have learned that the so-called "sons of God" do not really mean business. If they did, they would begin to clean up their own back yards.

Face the Truth About Yourself

Furthermore, if you are going to be one of God's instruments for revival, you must begin with yourself. One of the proverbs might be taken, with all its bluntness, and applied to us who are called of God to further revival. It is the proverb that reads, "The eyes of a fool are in the

ends of the earth" (Proverbs 17:24). He refuses, in other words, to face the realities of his own life. A popular writer on practical psychiatry has said, "Though you are more interested in yourself than you are in anything else in the world, yet you have another characteristic equally strange—an unwillingness to face the truth about yourself."

If we are to have spiritual revival in our churches, we must somehow counteract this mania for confessing other people's sins rather than our own. In our criticism of other people we are trying to hide from our own failures. It is deadly to our soul's good. It is fatal to the rise and on-going of revival.

About 1830 Charles G. Finney was the agent of the Spirit of God in bringing revival to the city of Rochester, New York, and its environs. As a result, more than 100,000 persons united with the churches as newly converted believers. He declares: "A revival of religion may be expected when Christians begin to confess their faults one to another . . . that ye may be healed." (James 5:16).

Allow God To Give You An Overhauling

Praying for revival is costly business. Before we can have spiritual exhilaration we must have spiritual humiliation. And it begins not with the other brother but with me! "Let us be clear once and for all," says Cecil Rose, "that honest self-examination and introspection are not the same thing. 'Introspection' is looking inside yourself and doing nothing about it. 'Self-examination' means allowing God to give you an overhaul with a view to a radical cure."

It's the "radical cure" that we need, else we shall continue to be part of the problem instead of part of the answer.

A third thing required of us, if we are going to be pioneers of revival, is that we give God a sacrificial obedience. Listen again as God say, "I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land." This job is not going to be easy. It demands the heroic, the willingness to endure hardship.

The trouble with nine-tenths of us church members is that we have joined the cult of comfort, and we'll let the world go to hell before we will inconvenience ourselves for the Gospel's sake. We are the deluded victims of religious sentimentality, as shown, for example, in the way we burst forth with enthusiasm over some project with which we are officially connected or which favors some friends or relatives of ours, while at the same time we blandly by-pass the normal responsibilities of church membership and the constant call to soul-winning.

The ecclesiastical world is full of churchmen who, even for the sake of the crucified Son of God, will not put themselves out of comfort's way to get a job done that only dead-in-earnest Christians can do!

The pioneers of revival must see the shallowness and hollowness of such pretended discipleship. They must stop their attempt to beg off from a total obedience cost what it may.