

Denying your ‘self’ The Prerequisite for Spiritual Revival

John 3.30 *“He must become greater; I must become less.”*

INTRODUCTION

Leonard Ravenhill said *“To attempt to measure the sun with an inch tape could hardly be more difficult than attempting to measure John the Baptist by our modern standards of spirituality”*.

Between the Old Testament and New Testament, that is, between Malachi and Mathew, there was:

- 400 years of darkness without any prophetic light.
- 400 years of silence without any prophetic voice.

And then suddenly, dramatically, unexpectedly this strange man, John the Baptist, came streaking across a sky that was totally black.

When God sent Jesus into the world, there was one man who would be His greatest herald, sounding out the greatest news known to man – *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand!”*

He would warn people to repent – to turn away from the darkness of sin and come into the light of God’s forgiveness and love.

That man was John the Baptist

This spiritual giant of a man had come striding out of the wilderness

- wearing different clothing,
- eating different food,
- carrying himself in an extremely different way

and making demands on the people that made them think of Elijah.

His voice thundered until the folks began to come and hear for themselves what it was he was proclaiming.

The religious establishment investigated him, disliked him, feared him, rejected him, and was denounced by him. Herod on his throne was afraid of him.

John the Baptist was a son of a priest who was married to the daughter of a priest.

His birth had been foretold. He had been raised strictly, with a view to his becoming a priest. He had also been raised as a Nazarite, with a view to his becoming a prophet.

There were already priests in the land, more, in fact, than they needed. Few and far between were the prophets of God who stood out like Elijah.

What Israel needed was not another priest. What they needed was a prophet!

John the Baptist is the first soul winner we read of in the New Testament, and he was a pioneer in every sense of the word. His ministry probably covered only six months. He was a unique personality--rugged, strong, yet humble.

John was in the wilderness in every way - geographically, morally, politically and religiously.

The people were so steeped in tradition and ritual that God was pushed to the background. They had laws for this and laws for that, and every portion of their lives was to be governed by these laws.

It is not that laws aren't good, but these weren't God's laws – they were additions to God's law and they were legalistic – and legalism kills.

People's hearts had become so cold to the things of God...They were just going through the motions. Everything had become so mechanical.

They needed to be set free from all of this – turn from it to the Great Liberator of our souls!

1. HOW DID JOHN LEAD THESE PEOPLE TO THE LORD? HOW DID REVIVAL HAPPEN?

When we look at John the Baptist:

He has no financial backing.

He has no program.
He has the favor of nobody.
He has the Roman army against him.
He has the religious people against him.
He has the Pharisees against him.
He has the Sadducees against him.
He has no money (he doesn't need it)
and He doesn't have a miracle ministry.
The Bible says very clearly: "John did no miracle" –
He never unstopped deaf ears.
He never opened blind eyes.
He never cured a withered leg or withered arm.
He didn't raise a dead man -

But He raised a dead nation.

God has had John in the school of silence prior to his ministry.
He'd been talking to God, walking with God and weeping before God in the wilderness.
God calls people individually.
John the Baptist was in the wilderness until the day of his showing forth.
Jesus, the Son of God who had left the Glory, spent thirty years in training to minister!
The apostle Paul was in Arabia for at least 3 years after his conversion experience at Damascus.
Moses at least forty years - God have to remind Moses of what he had learnt from Egypt.
We walk through the doors of a Bible School and come out like a super prophet!
Now no one has the time to wait for the Lord or to learn from Him.
It's the time factor that kills most of us.

Leonard Ravenhill said, "*Tell me how much time you spend alone with God and I will tell you how spiritual you are.*"
Not how many countries you visited.
Not how many gifts you have.
Not how many sermons you preach.

Not how many books you wrote.

Tell me what time you spend alone with God... and I'll tell you how spiritual you are.

John goes out, stands and ministers there. And people come to him.

He is a success any way you count it.

Geographically – people came from the North, the South, the East and the West.

Socially –people came from all levels of society.

You never have to advertise a fire -whether it's spiritual or a physical fire.

The most self advertising thing in this world is a fire.

The Bible says that John the Baptist was a burning light. Many of us want to be lights for Jesus –shining lights – but hardly any of us are willing to burn for Christ.

John began to preach to whoever came to him.

Luke 3: 7-9 “John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

What happened when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost? The people in the audience were pricked in their hearts.

When Stephen preached, the same thing happened.

Peter on the day of Pentecost said to the men he had ran away from: *“You crucified the Lord of Glory. You killed Him.”*

Stephen said, *“You murdered the son of God.”*

That is PREACHING!

When Nathan the prophet went to David, he didn't say, “Some have done something wrong, some of you are guilty.” Did he? He said, “You are the man!”

When people heard John preaching, they responded and asked, “What shall we do?” That is what revival is.

In all the revivals, whether it is in the Bible or recent history, individual or national, personal or corporate, the Word of God was preached or read. And people were convicted of their sins and prayed for God's mercy.

Josiah found the Word.

Nehemiah read the Word.

Peter preached the Word.

Jonathan Edwards , John Wesley, Charles Finny, Edwin Orr, K E Abraham - they all preached the Word that convicted the people of their sins and caused them to repent.

We have to declare the Truth and the Truth of God will do the rest.

2. WHY GOD DID USE JOHN THE BAPTIST?

I believe there is at least 2 inner qualities that John had which is essential to revival even today:

A humble heart

When the religious leaders came and questioned John, they wanted to know who he was.

“Are you Jesus? Are you Elijah? Are you Moses?”

He answered ‘No’ to all these questions.

“Well then, who are you?” they asked.

Now John could have said, “I am John the Baptist. I am the forerunner of Christ and I have come to prepare a people for the Lord. I am His greatest prophet and the Messiah is my cousin.”

John could have answered any number of ways to draw attention to him, to steal the glory, but he didn't do that at all.

Notice his answer in John 1.23. John said, “I'm just a voice.”

Voice has no personality of its own but it brings the authority of the person who speaks and reveals the mind of the person who speaks.

We should be the voice of God – speaking and revealing the mind of God to people.

We also are to be a "voice", we are to speak, to cry out in the wilderness of this world.

How wonderful to be a "voice" for God, a channel through whom He can speak to others!

Every Christian can engage in this, and on every hand, people are waiting to hear this voice that tells them of the Savior.

And how did John the Baptist use his voice?

In all the records of John's public ministry, and in particular, John 1:19-37, we see that he always pointed people away from himself to the Lord Jesus.

Paul said in 1 Cor.11.23, "...for I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you".

We don't see revival today because we steal the glory from God.

John the Baptist was more interested in testimonies than in titles. John 3.30

God will always desires a testimony over a title.

What you do with your life will outlast your name.

What you do with your life will affect more people than your name

You will be judged by God based on your testimony and not your title.

No body can hold on to the titles forever.. but your testimony will last forever...

No wonder Jesus, God Himself, says, "There was no man comparable to John Baptist."

A Servant's Heart

The second inner quality that must be present is a servant's heart.

When John said that he was just a voice, what he was saying was that he recognized that Jesus was Lord and he was not.

God had called and commissioned him to do this thing; and he did it.

John never changed course, he never decided that this wasn't what he wanted to do – rather, he spent his entire life preparing for this calling and gave his life in pursuit of it.

John said John 3.30 "*He must become greater; I must become less.*"

Duncan Campbell's brief definition of revival is: '*A community saturated with God.*'

It is said about the Wales revival, "The churches were full of people and the people were full of God."

John recognized who Jesus is. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin."

When we have a revelation of who God is, then we will humble ourselves and lift God high.

Ever since Paul had the revelation of God, he talked only about Christ.

While he was with people on the ship, in synagogue, in prison - anywhere and everywhere, to anybody and everybody, he had only one subject - Christ.

So I believe revival is simply 'God's people seeing Jesus again as He really is', which in turn should cause other things to happen

I must decrease, Jesus must increase - that was the mandate and purpose of John.

When we have the glimpse of God's glory and presence, we are filled with His fullness.

The revival will start in us and others will be able to see the Lord.

John had a purpose (**Luke 3:3**)

He knew his purpose and was prepared for it. (**Luke 2:2b**)

He never wavered from fulfilling his purpose.

He did not get tired of serving God.

He did not retire.

He did not take a break or burnout.

His purpose in life was to prepare the way for the Messiah.

CONCLUSION

The message of John is still relevant today -

Mathew 3:11-12 *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

Jesus is going to come back.

The attitude of the average Christian today is - Relax and be Raptured!

But He is coming with flaming vengeance on this world.

II Thessalonians 1.6 says, “He is coming in flaming fire in judgment on this world. “

“Revival is like judgment day.” - Edwin Orr

God isn't looking for people to organize a revival. He is looking for people who agonize for revival

Wake up, Church! Christ is going to come!

Rev 22.10-13 *“Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”*