

Making the Music of Revival

Texts:

Psalm 137:1-4

Psalm 85:6

The Psalmist said, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:1-4). These inspired words are the lamentation of a man and a people who have been carried away captive due to disobedience. They could not sing the Lord's song because their hearts were far, far away. Today, there are, no doubt, some hearts reading these words that are far away from where they need to be. May the Lord help us not to leave harps "upon the willows." Today, I ask you to let the song of the Lord arise in your heart, give your praise to the Lord and observe Him as He manifests Himself among us! If we are to make the music of revival we need to:

1. Play our part.

Compare the church to an orchestra. We have violins, violas, cellos, flutes, harp, bassoons, tubas, trumpets, trombones, clarinets, etc. In the church we have the gift of helps, mercies, teaching, administration, exhortation, etc. It takes everyone playing their part to make beautiful music. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body" (I Corinthians 12:18-20).

2. Let others play their part.

For twenty years the tuba player of a city orchestra had played every season and every concert without missing even a practice. One day, the unimaginable thing happened--he received an injury to his lip that required extensive and intricate stitching. The doctor informed the tuba player that in order for his lip to heal properly and to restore full use again, he could not play the tuba for at least three months. He was disappointed to say the least. Many of his friends were surprised when he showed up at the first concert in which he was unable to perform. They were even more surprised when at the end of the performance he was the first to arise out of his seat and give his peers a standing ovation. When approached by his friends and asked how he could have such enthusiasm about the first concert in twenty years in which he could not participate, his answer proved unforgettable. He replied, "I had forgotten how beautiful the violin was and I did not even remember the sound of the delicate piccolo! For twenty years my whole life was um-pa-pa, um-pa-pa. I could not have enjoyed the symphony more!

Like the tuba player, we get so wrapped up in our own individual goals that we forget we must play with others. We must give them space to operate in

their giftings. There is no room for player-envy in the kingdom of God. May we remember the kind words of correction of Jesus to Peter: "Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:21,22). Let us not be pre-occupied with directing others' lives or how others play; let them be free to play their part. We should enjoy their music and play our part. "What is that to thee?"

3. Be thoroughly acquainted with the score.

Great music is played not by those who rest upon the laurels of their raw talent, but rather by those who labor on studying their music with tenacious practice until they know every timing and every rest. How stirring it is to hear an entire orchestra pause and rest at the exact split-second time! How unnerving and chaotic it sounds when even one player with discordant madness ignores the score and makes even one sour note.

There is another widely told story in which pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff and violinist Fritz Kreisler were performing. Kreisler gets lost in the score, and whispers to Rachmaninoff, 'Where are we?' And Rachmaninoff — without missing a beat — replies, 'Carnegie Hall,' and keeps playing. Do we realize what we have in the Bible? It is the only Book God ever wrote! Should we get lost in the proverbial score, remember what we have and Who we have in the Bible.

Great Christianity occurs when we know the Bible so well, that we are in perfect timing with the Master and we start when He raises the proverbial baton and we stop when he stops us and we solo when He tells us. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

4. Keep your eyes on the Maestro.

Arturo Toscanini had just conducted the NBC Orchestra in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Each musician and vocalist played and sang their parts with perfection. When the performance came to an end, the crowd was left in total awe. The famed Toscanini saw the pride swelling in the performers and whispered to his orchestra, "Who is Toscanini? Who are you? Toscanini is nothing! You are nothing! Beethoven is everything!"

And may I ask - Who am I? Who are you? We are nothing! Jesus is everything! Not only is He the maestro conducting us, He is the composer of this beautiful music called Christianity. Our mistakes, mishaps and sins will soon diminish if we keep our eyes on Jesus! "Looking unto Jesus..." (Hebrews 12; 2).

5. Make resolution.

In the history of music few families have had such a prolific display of musical compositions and performance as the Strauss family. Can you imagine what it was like to have Johann, Johann, Jr., Josef and Eduard all under the same roof? In the midst of the great creative personalities lay an equally great sense of humor. The traditional practical joke of the family occurred when the last Strauss would come in from an evening performance while the others had already gone to bed. Just before retiring, the last Strauss awake would go to the

piano and play the ending portion of his own or his brother's or father's composition and stop just one measure or note short of completion and walk upstairs and go to bed. Sometimes the response was immediate, but usually there would be a long wait, maybe up to an hour or longer until inevitably one of the Strausses would get up, go to the piano and complete the piece. They all would laugh and then all could go to sleep, but not until resolution took place.

Perhaps today there is one that started out following Jesus faithfully, but you are one measure short of resolution. Today would be a good time to rendezvous with revival! Cross the point of completion. Pick your harp up off the willow where in desperation and defeat you gave up. In victory lift up your praise and song to Christ and finish your piece. The concert is not over yet! Do God's complete will! May we say with our Lord Jesus, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Conclusion:

The Lord Jesus said to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." What was the remedy? Our Lord revealed it in the next verse, Revelation 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The Lord is saying, go back to where you left off. Do again those things that brought you close to me and separate from this world's system.

I return to the music parallel. A 1950s publication recorded this humorous story: "The absent-minded maestro was racing up New York's Seventh Avenue to a rehearsal when a stranger stopped him. 'Pardon me,' he said, 'can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?' 'Yes,' answered the maestro breathlessly. "Practice! Practice! Practice!" Some say this was actually said by Jascha Heifetz or Arthur Rubinstein. Carnegie Hall archivist Gino Francesconi says that the best version he heard involved violinist Mischa Elman.

To make the music of revival, start with the basics. Do you love the Lord Jesus with all your heart? Is daily Bible reading considered optional? Is prayer a vital part of your life or is it merely perfunctory? Do you ever go out of your way to be a witness for Christ? How can the Bible become real to you? How can God magnificently manifest Himself to you in prayer? How can you become an effective soul winner? Practice! Practice! Practice!

-Pastor Pope-