

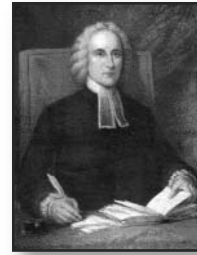
In this work Edwards speaks of the promise of God to bless His people when they come together to pray for revival. Throughout history this little work has influenced thousands of people and spurred countless little prayer groups to come together for meaningful revival prayer. Missionary pioneer William Carey tells in his biography that this work was one of the very things that inspired him to the mission field. Take special notice that Edwards challenges the reader not to seek revival *per se*, but to seek the very presence of God. When God comes, revival is there.

By way of disclaimer, I will say that I believe Edwards envisions more of an end-time “mass revival” movement than I am comfortable with. Perhaps this is due to his understanding of the two kingdoms. From a perspective now of over 250 years later, I would feel that such a “mass-church” concept has propagated an unhealthy ecumenism including such groups as Roman Catholics and sometimes even Mormons. While I believe that in the “last days” a great revival will come, I still believe that comparatively, the church will still look like a remnant—not a mass, one-world church.

Jesus said, “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth” (Luke 18:7-8)? Then there is the Isaiah prophesy, “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:9). Also considering Paul’s thoughts to the Roman Church, “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5).

One more thing...It should not be overlooked that one of the hallmark passages in this litany of revival prophecies quoted by Jonathan Edwards is that the prophecies of this revived church predict that they “will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” I feel that it would be a bit dishonest to take the praying part of the prophecy without the “beating-the-sword-into-plowshares part”. Rival historian, J. Edwin Orr took notice that the progress in the early revivals of the 1900s ended conspicuously when WWI began. Revival did not surface again on a large scale until after WWII. We cannot expect to be praying for revival in the hearts of people in “other lands” if we are shooting them while we pray. Could this be yet one more reason—why revival tarries?

All that being said—regardless of your belief about the size of the end-time revivals, the prophecies of Zachariah and Isaiah still stand; and these passages clearly speak of a praying people who trust the promises of God for His fullness and Holy Spirit outpouring. For that reason, I feel that this work is invaluable for its simple, straight-forward application of God’s design for true heaven-sent revival. The second part of this work is a living example of how revival praying was used to bring about a move of God in Scotland in 1744. I hope to put that in a future issue. ~Bro. Dean Taylor



# REVIVAL PRAYER

by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

## Originally titled:

*A humble attempt to promote the agreement and union of God’s people throughout the world in extraordinary prayer for a revival of religion and the advancement of God’s kingdom on earth, according to Scriptural promises and prophecies of the last time.*

## THE FUTURE GLORIOUS STATE OF CHRIST’S CHURCH

This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.’ And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him” (Zech. 8:20-22).

In this chapter Zechariah prophesies of the future, glorious advancement of the Church. It is evident there is more intended than was ever fulfilled in the Jewish nation during Old Testament times. Here are plain prophecies describing things that were never fulfilled

before the coming of Messiah, particularly what is said in the two last verses in the chapter where Zechariah speaks of “many people and strong nations worshiping and seeking the true God,” and of so great an addition of Gentiles to the Church that the majority of visible worshipers consist of Gentiles, outnumbering the Jews ten to one.

Nothing ever happened, from the time of Zechariah to the coming of Christ, to fulfill this prophecy. It’s fulfillment can only be

in the calling of the Gentiles during and following apostolic times, or in the future, glorious enlargement of God’s Church in the end times, so often foretold by Old Testament prophets, particularly by Zechariah. It is most likely that the Spirit of God speaks here of the greatest revival and the most glorious advancement of the Church on earth, the

blessings of which will benefit the Jewish nation.

Indeed, there is great agreement on this point, between this prophecy of Zechariah, and other prophecies concerning the Church’s latter day glory. Consider Isaiah 60:2-4:

*“See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm.”*

Without doubt, this entire chapter foretells the most glorious state of the God’s Church on earth, as does Isaiah 66:8, Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:1-4:

*“In the last days the mountain of the LORD’S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.”*

*“Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’”*

*“The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”*

Nothing whatsoever has happened to fulfill these prophecies. Moreover, since the prophecy in my text (Zech. 8:20-22) and the following verse agrees with them, there is reason to think it addresses the same times. Indeed, there is remarkable agreement in the description given throughout this chapter with the representations of those times elsewhere in the prophetic books.

Though the prophet is at times referring to the future smiles of heaven on the Jewish nation, yet the Spirit of God doubtless refers to events far greater than these, of which these are but faint resemblances. The Jews had just returned from the Babylonian captivity, Chaldea and other countries, and resettled in Canaan where they were experiencing great increase of both numbers and wealth.

We find it common in the prophecies of the Old Testament that when the prophets are speaking of the favors

and blessings of God on the Jews, attending or following their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Spirit of God takes the opportunity from there to

speak of the incomparably greater blessings on the Church, that will attend and follow her deliverance from the spiritual Babylon, of which those were a type.

The prophet, in this chapter, speaks of God’s bringing his people again from the east and west to Jerusalem (vs. 7-8), and multitudes of all nations taking hold of the skirts of the Jews. Although this prophecy literally refers to the Jews return from Babylon, its fulfillment





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pursued after God;  
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hands unto Him.  
All of God's saints have  
this in common:  
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cannot be seen there for no such things spoken of here attended their return. Therefore, it must refer to the great calling and gathering of Jews into the fold of Christ, and to them receiving the blessings of His kingdom, after the fall of the Antichrist and the destruction of the spiritual Babylon.

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

In Zechariah 8:20-22 we have an account of how this future advancement of the Church should occur. It would come to fruition as multitudes from different towns resolve to unite in extraordinary prayer, seeking God until He manifests Himself and grants the fruits of his presence. We may observe several things in particular:

### 1. THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

Some suppose that prayer includes the whole of worship to God and that prayer is a part of worship during the days of the gospel when sacrifices are abolished. Therefore, this can be understood as a prophecy of a great revival of religion with true worship of God among His people, repentance from idolatry, and growth of the Church.

However, it seems reasonable to me to suppose that something even more special is intended regarding prayer given that prayer is not only repeatedly mentioned, but that this prophecy parallels many other prophecies that speak of an extraordinary spirit of prayer preceding that glorious day of revival and advancement

of the Church's peace and prosperity. It particularly parallels what the prophet later speaks of the 'pouring out of a spirit of grace and supplications' as that which introduces the great religious revival (Zech. 12:10).

### 2. THE GOOD WHICH SHALL BE BROUGHT BY PRAYER: GOD HIMSELF

Scripture says, 'They shall go to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts.' The good that they seek for is 'The Lord of Hosts,' Himself. If 'seeking God' means no more than seeking the favor or mercy of God then 'praying before the Lord,' and 'seeking the Lord of Hosts' must be looked upon as synonymous. However, 'seeking the Lord' is commonly used to mean something far more than seeking something from God. Surely it implies that God Himself is what is desired and sought after.

Thus, the Psalmist desired God, thirsted after Him and sought after Him:

*'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee.  
My flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty  
land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy  
glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary...My  
soul followeth hard after thee...Whom have I in  
heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth  
that I desire besides thee.'*

The Psalmist earnestly pursued after God; his soul thirsted after Him, he stretched forth his hands unto Him. All of God's saints have this in common: they are those that seek God. 'This is the generation of them that seek Him.' 'Your heart shall live that seek God,' etc.





***In short, it seems reasonable to understand the phrase, ‘seeking the Lord of Hosts’ means not merely praying to God...The prophets occasionally represent God as being withdrawn and hiding Himself...The prophets then go on to represent God’s people seeking Him, searching and waiting for and calling after Him.***

If this be the true sense of this phrase ‘seeking the Lord of Hosts,’ then we must understand that God who had withdrawn Himself, or, as it were, hid Himself, would return to His Church, granting the fruits of His presence and communion with His people, which He so often promised, and for which His Church had so long waited.

In short, it seems reasonable to understand the phrase, ‘seeking the Lord of Hosts’ means not merely praying to God, but seeking the promised restoration of the Church of God after the Babylonian captivity and the great apostasy occasioning it is called their ‘seeking God, and searching for Him;’ and God’s granting this promised revival and restoration called His being ‘found of them.’ (See Jer. 29:10-14)

The prophets occasionally represent God as being withdrawn and hiding Himself: ‘Verily thou art a God that hideth thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior. I hid me, and was wroth.’ The prophets then go on to represent God’s people seeking Him, searching and waiting for and calling after Him. When God answers their prayers and restores and advances His people, according to His promise, then He is said to come and say, ‘Here am I’ and to show Himself, and they are said to find Him and see Him plainly.

*‘Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I...’ (Isa. 58:9)*

*‘But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation ... I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right.’ (Isa. 45:17,19)*

*‘The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’ We wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.’ (Isa. 25:8-9)*

### **3. WE MAY OBSERVE WHO IT IS THAT WILL BE UNITED IN SEEKING THE LORD**

‘...the inhabitants of many cities...yea, many people and strong nations.’ Many people from all over the world will unite to seek the Lord.

From the prophecy, it seems reasonable to assume that this will be fulfilled in the following manner: First, God’s people will be given a spirit of prayer, inspiring them to come together and pray in an extraordinary manner, that He would help his Church, show mercy to mankind in general, pour out his Spirit, revive His work, and advance His kingdom in the world as He promised.

Moreover, such prayer would gradually spread and increase more and more, ushering in a revival of religion. This would be characterized by greater worship and service of God among believers. Others will be awakened to their need for God, motivating them to earnestly cry out to God for mercy. They will be led to join with God's people in that extraordinary seeking and serving of God which they see around them. In this way the revival will grow until the awakening reaches whole nations and those in the highest positions of influence. The Church will grow to be ten times larger than it was before. Indeed, at length, all the nations of the world will be converted unto God.

Thus, ten men, out of all languages and nations, will 'take hold of the skirt of' the Jew (in the sense of the Apostle), saying 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' Thus will be fulfilled, 'O thou that heareth prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.'

#### 4. WE MAY ALSO OBSERVE THE MANNER OF THEIR UNITY IN PRAYER

It is a visible and voluntary union that was first proposed by some of God's people with others readily joining in over time. Those who live in one city will declare to those of another city, 'Let us go' etc. Many of those who hear their declaration will not only join with them but will make the call for the unity in prayer known to still others. As a result, the movement will grow, prevail and spread among God's people.

Some suppose that the words, 'I will go also,' are to be taken as words spoken by the one making the proposal. He states this expressing his willingness and desire to do what he is asking his hearer to do. But this is to suppose no more than is expressed in the phrase, 'Come and let us go ...' itself. It seems more natural to me to understand these words as being the consent or reply of the one to whom the proposal is made.



This is much more agreeable to the flow of the text which represents the compliance of great numbers of people in this movement. And though if these words are thus understood, we must suppose something understood in the text that is not expressed: Those of other cities will say, 'I will go also.' Yet, this is not difficult to conceive of as such figures of speech are common in the Scripture (Jer. 3:22; Ps. 1:6,7).

#### 5. NEXT, WE CAN OBSERVE THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY AGREE TO PRAY

'Let us go speedily to pray,' or, as it says in the margin: let us go continually. Literally translated this means, 'let us go in going.' The Hebrew language often doubles words for emphasis (e.g., the holy of holies signifies that which is most holy). Such doubling of words also denotes the certainty of an event coming to pass. For example, when God said to Abraham, 'in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed,' God implies that He would certainly multiply his seed, and multiply it exceedingly.

#### 6. FINALLY, THIS PROPHECY GIVES US A PICTURE OF THIS UNION IN PRAYER BEING AN INVITING AND A HAPPY THING

We sense God's pleasure, and the results prove tremendously successful. From the whole of this prophecy we may infer that it is well pleasing to God for many people, in different parts of the world, to voluntarily come into a visible union to pray in an extraordinary way for those great outpourings of the Holy Spirit which shall advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ that God has so often promised shall be in the latter ages of the world. □

*...such prayer would gradually spread and increase more and more, ushering in a revival of religion. This would be characterized by greater worship and service of God among believers. Others will be awakened to their need for God, motivating them to earnestly cry out to God for mercy.*