

*Continuous
Revival*

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The Secret of Victorious Living

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Preface

THESE few pages are an attempt to describe a revolutionary experience in my own life, and in that of many others, regarding the way of continuous revival. I am aware of no other truth from God which so simply and thoroughly reaches down to where ordinary folks live as does the secret of victorious living. By no means is this something which God has personally revealed to me alone. It is the working secret which has been bringing continuous revival to thousands in East Central Africa over a period of sixteen years.

The fact that there was such a thing as continuous revival first caught my interest some years ago when I heard of a constant movement of the Spirit in the area of the Ruanda Medical Mission (a field of the Church Missionary Society), for I felt that was exactly what we, in the ranks of our own mission, needed both at home and abroad. Various personal contacts with Africans

and missionaries from the revival area deepened my conviction that God had given them the key we needed. In fact, I saw some of our own staff transformed and quickened into marvelous newness of life and ministry through quite short contacts with them. Finally the door of opportunity was opened to me in 1950 to pay a short visit myself to Ruanda and Uganda. As I had worked in Central Africa with C.T. Studd over a period of years, I had some understanding of African ways of life. What follows is an attempt to put into words what God taught me personally through that visit and what I have since found to be a blessing to many others.

First, there has been a new discovery by me and many others of what is meant by “revival.” When we come down to it, in simplest form it means *the reviving of dead areas in our lives*. I remember when I first heard two men from Ruanda speaking very quietly and simply for two days in our London WEC headquarters to about ninety of our staff. At the last meeting, they very quietly opened the door for any present to say anything that was on their hearts. Very soon one and another were bringing to the light areas in their lives where they had come face to face with sin—unobserved by them before—and were bringing these transgressions to the cleansing

blood. I got a real shock at the end when one of the two quietly said, “I don’t know if you realize it, friends, but this is revival!”

The transforming truth of that statement took time to sink in—and is still sinking in! It began to shake me out of the misconception of years—that revival could come only in great soul-shaking outpourings of the Spirit. Thank God for such torrents when they do come; they have been the great and precious hurricanes of the Spirit in the history of the Church. But I saw the defeatism and almost hopelessness that so many of us had fallen into by thinking that we could do nothing about revival except pray (often rather unbelievably) and wait until the heavens opened and God came down. But now I see that “revival” in its truest sense is an everyday affair right down within the reach of everyday folk—to be experienced each day in our hearts, homes, churches and fields of service.

When revival does burst forth in greater and more public ways, thank God! But meanwhile we should see to it that we are being ourselves constantly revived persons . . . which, of course, also means that others are getting revived in our own circles. By this means God can have channels of revival by the thousands in all the churches of the world! And this is just what I found in Africa, and

what I am attempting to describe in these pages; not, all glory and praise to God, just the passing on of a mere theory, but what has come to me by living with and seeing continuous revival in action among communities of hundreds in Africa; by experiencing the same working of the Spirit in my own life; by examining and grasping in some measure the Scriptural basis of this continuous revival; and finally, by seeing God move in revival in many others through the presentation of the message and testimony. It has been a matter of seeing, learning, experiencing and transmitting, and now endeavoring to outline the reality in print.

The truth is that revival is really *the Reviver in action*, and He came two thousand years ago at Pentecost. Revival is not so much a vertical outpouring from heaven (for the Reviver is *already* here in His temple, the bodies of the redeemed) as it is a horizontal outmoving of the Reviver through these temples into the world. It is a *horizontal* rather than a *vertical* movement, and the importance of this fact will be seen later.

Norman P. Grubb
1952

The Walk

NOW to go into the matter point by point. I learned first a wholly new emphasis on the WALK of the Christian. I learned that in our evangelical and rightful zeal to bring sinners to the crisis of the new birth, and to lead the saints on to further crises of separation, consecration, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or whatever might be the special emphasis of our various Christian communities, we have often made too much of the spiritual *crises* and too little of the *walk*.

But the Scriptures leave us in no doubt of their emphasis. In almost every epistle the Holy Spirit leads us on *through* the crises—the way into Christ—to the WALK with Him. Thus in Romans we are taught the way of justification and sanctification from chapter 1 through 7; then in 8 it says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who *walk* not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” In Galatians there is the battle of justification by faith as against

works; and then Paul says, "This I say then, *Walk* in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." And later, "If we live [have come alive] in the Spirit, let us also *walk* in the Spirit." In Ephesians he introduces us into our glorious union with the ascended Christ, and then says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye *walk* worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"; and later, "*Walk* not as other Gentiles walk . . . *walk* in love . . . *walk* as children of light . . . *walk* circumspectly." In Colossians he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk* in Him." In I Thessalonians he rejoices in the saving power of the gospel in the lives of the young converts, and then says, "As ye have received of us how ye ought to *walk* and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

Finally, to mention only one more passage, John in his first epistle takes us to the very heights when he says we are to "*walk* as He walked," for "as He is, so are we in the world." Indeed, John here does not even discuss how to be born again or how to abide in Christ, but, taking these for granted, now talks about the walk and life which is the outcome. (See also verses in II John and III John.)

Now to walk is a step-by-step activity. Given the main destination, all that matters is the next

step. Christian living is concerned, therefore, just with the implications of the *present* moment, not with past or future. But we tend to live in the past and thus to avoid the keen edge of the challenge of the immediate moment. Thus, as things arise in our hearts and lives which are not consistent with our Christian testimony, we say, or imply, "Well, I know these things are not right, but anyhow I have been born again, I have been cleansed in His blood, I have received eternal life; Christ lives in me." Thus I circle around the raw facts of my immediate condition by leaning back in dependence on my past crises. We make too much of past happenings but too little of the present walk. Thank God we are born again and have received other impartations of grace, but now let us forget those, as it were. Let us remember that all we are asked to do is to "WALK WITH JESUS," and that means simple concentration on things as they are with me just this moment . . . then the next . . . then the next . . . and so on.

There is something else also that much affects our Christian experience when we get confused between looking back to crises and just living moment by moment. One of Satan's favorite weapons is false condemnation. He loves to make us look back at our past failures, or into the future at our probably equal failures (so he says), and

then put us into a tailspin of despair or depression. “Look at your pride, coldness, sensuality, worldliness, fruitlessness. You say you were born again or sanctified. Look at yourself! And if you have been that in the past, believe me, you will be exactly the same in the future!” In other words, Satan likes to talk in long-term generalities, based indeed on an element of truth, but built up into a huge lie; for God does not look on His children in a general sense as proud, cold, fruitless, and so on. He sees them in Christ, being conformed to the image of His Son. The difference between Satan’s condemnations and God’s convictions is that where Satan uses generalities pointing back to the past or forward to the future, God sees past and future in Christ and just deals with the present, and deals specifically. We *walk* moment by moment, step by step with Him, the past under the blood, the future in His keeping. We are in Jesus and He in us. Now then, if our walk at this moment is darkened with clouds because of the rising up of some motion of sin in us, then God just points to that. “There,” He says, “look at that, *just* that. Just get that quickly under the blood and then walk again with Me.” So simple, so free from these condemnations from the past (or excuses through leaning back on the past crises) and from those fears for the future.

So now we have the *first point* in continuous revival. We “walk with Jesus.” We are concerned only with the step-by-step life. We live in the present: “Today, today, today,” as it says five times in Hebrews 3 through 4. We do not excuse the present by leaning back on past spiritual crises, nor do we get under false condemnation or fear through looking back at the past or forward into the future.

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Brokenness

THE next point is BROKENNESS. “Broken” is a picturesque word, a key word, indeed *the* key word, in continuous revival. It is not a word that is found a great deal in Scripture (though more often than we think, should we examine a concordance), but it occurs frequently enough to show that it is a picturesque as well as true way of describing the sinner’s only and constant relationship to his Savior.

We first learn that salvation is only possible for lost men through a *broken* Savior: “This is my body which is *broken* for you”; “Reproach hath *broken* my heart.” In Gethsemane Christ had a broken will, and on Calvary a broken fellowship even with His Father; for the One who is our Substitute and who was made sin for us had to take upon Himself the proud, unbroken ego of fallen man, and had to be broken at Calvary in his place. But man also has to be “broken.” He sees his sinful condition before God as he realizes the coming judgment and wrath, and as he

is pointed to the slain Lamb he has to “break” at the foot of the cross. The proud, self-justifying, self-reliant, self-seeking self has to come simply as a lost, undone sinner, whose only hope is a justifying Savior. David said it well when, at the supreme moment of his own total brokenness, in Psalm 51, the Spirit caused him to comment, “The sacrifices of God are a *broken* spirit; a *broken* and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

Here we come to a crucial point concerning the way of brokenness, as indeed concerning all relationships of the Christian life. It is the most crucial point in this whole way of continuous revival—the point, as we shall see later, that needs to be relearned by twentieth-century Christians surrounded by all their respectability. It is this. All Christian relationships are *two-way*, not *one-way*. They are *horizontal* as well as *vertical*. That is to say, we are a two-way people. We are not just isolated units living in a vertical relationship with an isolated God; we are members of a human family also, with whom we live in horizontal relationships, and our obligations are two-way all the time.

We cannot, for instance, say that we have become righteous before God through faith in Christ and yet continue unrighteous among men. The Bible says that would be living a lie.

Equally, we cannot say we love God and yet hate our brother, for the Bible says, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” This comes across particularly in John’s first epistle, where the two-way fellowship is mentioned in the first chapter at verse three, two-way righteousness in the third chapter at verse seven, and two-way love in the fourth chapter at verse twenty.

Even more does this apply to the way of brokenness, that is, with regard to repentance and faith. “The word of faith,” we read in Romans 10:8–10, is two-way, with the heart towards God and with the mouth before man. Indeed, Paul takes it further and says that to experience in our hearts and lives the full benefit of our faith, we must express it *both* ways, for “with the heart man believes unto righteousness” (that is to say, the heart-believer is accounted righteous before God) but it is “with the mouth” that “confession is made unto salvation” (that is to say, we thus realize in our experience the joyful fact that we are saved).

Confession before man does something in our hearts that heart-faith alone can never do. There are many sincere believers who attend churches where they are not taught to witness before men or to expect assurance of salvation. These people

truly trust in the mercies of God through Christ, yet do not really know for sure in their hearts that they are saved; and they have none of the joy of the Lord because there is no *mouth confession*. But when such believers do the much- more-costly thing of telling men that Christ has become their Savior, something happens in their hearts. They are saved and *know* they are saved!

Any soul-winner with spiritual insight understands that if a seeker were to say, “Yes, I’ll accept Christ now, but I don’t think I’ll let anybody know,” he would respond, “Brother, that’s not genuine faith or brokenness. If you really mean business and are really committed as a lost sinner to the mercies of your Savior, the proof is that you are committed before men as well as God. If you don’t confess before men, we Christians may rightly doubt the genuineness of your faith and the reality of your salvation.”

So saving faith—the attitude of brokenness—is a two-way activity, towards God and man, as are righteousness and love and indeed all the relationships of Christian living. Let me put it this way. We can liken a man to a house. It has a roof and walls. So also man in his fallen state has a roof on top of his sins, coming between him and God; and he also has walls up, between him and his neighbor. But at salvation, when broken at the

cross, not only does the roof come off through faith in Christ but the walls fall down flat, and the man's true condition as a sinner-saved-by-grace is confessed before all men.

Unfortunately, the trouble soon begins again after conversion—and here lies the basic hindrance to continued revival. Continued revival is continued brokenness; but brokenness is two-way, and that means walls kept down as well as roof off. But man's most deep-rooted and subtle sin is the subtle sin of *pride*: self-esteem and self-respect. Though hardly realizing it, while we are careful to keep the roof off between ourselves and God through repentance and faith, we soon let those walls of respectability creep up again between ourselves and our brethren. We don't mind our brethren knowing about the successes we have in our Christian living. If we win a soul, if we lead a class, if we have a prayer answered, if we get good ideas from the Scriptures—we don't mind if they hear about these things, because we get a little reflected credit because of them. But where we fail, in those many, many areas of our daily lives—that is a different question! If God has to deal with us over our impatience or temper in the home, over dishonesty in our business, over coldness or some other sin, by no means do we easily bear testimony to our brethren of God's faithful and gracious

dealings in such areas of failure. Why not? Just because of pride, self-esteem, although we would often more conveniently call it reserve! The fact is, we love the praise of men as well as of God, and that is exactly what the Scriptures say stops the flow of confession before men (John 12:42–43). But let us note that the key to the reality of the whole of the Scriptures is the openness of the men of the Bible. We know of God's most intimate dealings with them, their sins and failures every bit as much as their successes. How do we have knowledge of the details of Abraham's false step with Hagar, of Jacob's tricks with Isaac and Esau, of Moses' private act of disobedience concerning speaking to the rock? Of Elijah's flight and God's secret rebuke, of the inner history of Jonah? How did the disciples acquire the inside story of Jesus' temptations to record them for us? Only because they were all open before their contemporaries. They lived in the light with each other as with God.

All through history, when buffeted by fears and sorrows and doubts, men have turned to the psalms. Why? Because these detail the heart experiences of men in fear and doubt and guilt and soul-hunger, describing how they have felt and how God has met them.

Why was David's repentance acceptable to God, and yet Saul's—for a much less apparently

carnal sin of failing to slaughter all the Amalekites—unacceptable? The reason is plain. Both kings, when faced respectively by the accusing finger of the prophets Nathan and Samuel, admitted their guilt before God and said, “I have sinned” (I Samuel 15:24 and II Samuel 12:13); but Saul’s repentance was demonstrated to be insincere because he desired that his sin be hidden from the people (I Samuel 15:30), whereas the proof of David’s utter brokenness was that he told the whole world in Psalm 51 what a sinner he was and that his only hope was in God’s mercy. Openness before man is the genuine proof of sincerity before God, even as righteousness before man and love to man are the genuine proofs of righteousness before God and love to God.

Note also that hiding the truth about ourselves before men—pretending to be better than we really are—is the supreme sin which Jesus drove home to the Pharisees, the sin of hypocrisy, and was the direct cause of their crucifying Him. It was not the open harlot or publican but the religious men who pretended to be holy and covered their inner condition who drove Jesus to the cross. They did this rather than have the truth about themselves exposed any more. Note also that the first sin judged in the early church was the sin of hiddenness before men: Ananias

and Sapphira pretending before their brethren that they were making a bigger surrender than they really were.

Finally, note that in every dealing of the believer with God recorded in the Bible—every step taken in the walk of faith—Scripture shows that that transaction of inner faith had to be expressed in the spoken word: the faith had to be *confessed* before men. It was the clinching act which sealed the faith and committed the believers. See it in the lives of all men of faith—from Abraham right through to the apostles. What they had believed in their heart, they declared with the mouth as something God had said to them and which would assuredly come to pass.

So far, then, we have learned *these two lessons*: that continuous revival is a simple daily walking with Jesus, and that it means walking in a two-way brokenness which is expressed in the heart to God and by the mouth before men. We will see in a moment, in practical detail, how this works out more fully in our daily life.