



Heart Cry for Revival

Stephen F. Olford



CHRISTIAN FOCUS





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FROM THE OLFORD FAMILY

On behalf of all the Olford family, I want to express our sincere thanks to Dr. Ted S. Rendall for his significant contribution to this book. He, not only has written the foreword and the study guide, but he has given sacrificial attention to the manuscript and added helpful quotations and material. We, also, want to thank Mrs. Anita Bosley for her editorial assistance and her attention to detail. Then, we want to express our thanks to William H. M. Mackenzie and to Christian Focus Publications Ltd., for their investment in this project. We appreciate their desire to “further the cause and truth of the Gospel of Christ”.

This book project began before my father went home to be with the Lord on August 29, 2004. I praise God for the legacy of faithfulness left by my father, as well as his burden for genuine revival. I am grateful, also, for the continued commitment of my mother to the Lord, to the ministry, and to the completion of this publishing project.

It is our prayer that this book will be a true spiritual blessing in the lives of many, and that it will contribute to a personal and corporate hunger and readiness for the reviving work of God.

David L. Olford





DR. STEPHEN F. OLFORD

March 29, 1918 – August 29, 2004




Dr. Stephen Olford was the founder of Olford Ministries International and the Stephen Olford Institute for Biblical Preaching. He was best known for his expository preaching and pastoral leadership.

Stephen Olford was raised in Angola, the son of missionaries Frederick and Bessie Olford.

It was in Angola that he committed his life to Christ and witnessed first-hand the transforming power of God and His Word.

Stephen Olford spent his college years in the United Kingdom. A crisis experience led to his full surrender to the Lord and his call into the ministry. After receiving ministry training, Dr. Olford was appointed an Army Scripture Reader during World War II. Later, he launched a Young Peoples Christian Fellowship in Newport, South Wales. After the war, Dr. Olford was involved in extensive evangelistic and preaching ministry throughout the U.K. and overseas.





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In 1953, Dr. Olford's years of pastoral ministry began by serving the Duke Street Baptist Church in Richmond, Surrey England (1953-1959) and then the Calvary Baptist Church in New York City (1959-1973). He pioneered a Christian TV program, *Encounter*, in New York, and his Sunday morning services were broadcast around the world on radio. His weekly half-hour radio program, also called *Encounter*, was aired in the United States and overseas for many years.

Already ministering to preachers through his extensive teaching, preaching and writing ministry, Stephen Olford established the Institute for Biblical Preaching in 1980. Dr. and Mrs. Olford, along with their son David, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1985 to develop a training center that would equip and encourage preachers and teachers of God's Word. In 1988, the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching was dedicated in Memphis. The Center also serves as the headquarters of Olford Ministries International.

Dr. Stephen Olford was recognized nationally and internationally for his powerful exposition of Scripture and his Christ-centered ministry. In recent years, he was known as a mentor and model to thousands of preachers, teachers, and pastors in the United States and around the world. Dr. Olford received numerous awards, honorary degrees and distinctions. As an ordained Baptist minister and a conservative evangelical by conviction, Dr. Olford ministered across many denominational, cultural, and racial lines. In addition to his extensive preaching ministry, Dr. Olford authored numerous books and preaching resources.

Dr. Olford's influence upon thousands of pastors and preachers cannot be measured. He has had a significant role



Dr. Stephen F. Olford (1918-2004)

in the lives of many, including his longtime friend, Dr. Billy Graham. He has been called “The Preacher’s Preacher.”

Dr. Stephen Olford went home to be with the Lord August 29, 2004. He was a beloved evangelist, pastor, teacher, preacher, leader, mentor and friend. Stephen Olford was also a loving father, husband, grandfather and family man in every sense of the word. Dr. Olford and his wife, Heather, were married for 56 years, and have two sons. Dr. Jonathan Olford and his wife, Catherine, live in Fresno, California, with their sons, Jeremy, Justin, and Joshua. Dr. David Olford and his wife, Ellen, live in Memphis, Tennessee, with their daughters, Lindsay and Stephanie.







FOREWORD

Few men are given the honor to instruct, influence and inspire God's people worldwide. Stephen Olford, preacher, author and Christian leader, is one man God has used to accomplish just that.

The messages in *Heart Cry for Revival* represent Dr. Olford's burden and vision, sustained throughout his ministry of 65 years. In a day when there is a new focus on revival, his book defines for us clearly and concisely what are the causes, the characteristics and the consequences of genuine, Holy Spirit-inspired revival.

These messages are Biblical. Each chapter is solidly based on a scriptural account of revival. This approach is absolutely essential if we are to avoid the excesses, extremes and even errors that are being perpetrated on the Church by leaders and teachers who have not sought the mind of the Lord in His Word on the subject of revival.

These messages are not only Biblical; they are enriched by historical materials – glimpses into the great revivals of the past: those under George Whitefield, Jeremiah Lanphier, Evan Roberts, Joseph Kemp, Duncan Campbell and others. This, too, is essential; for it is by studying revivals of the past that we are both enlightened and encouraged to believe God for revival in our time.

These messages are also experiential and personal. There is a wonderful balance between the objective aspects





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of revival and the subjective applications of revival to the reader's mind and heart. It is the desire of Dr. Olford and the design of his book to bring the reader to the place where there is created a true "heart cry for revival," both individually and collectively.

This volume of expository messages is as relevant and refreshing for us today as when first published in 1962. It is our prayer that the God of revival will use it as a part of the preparation for the great awakening that we are convinced is on the horizon.

Ted S. Rendall, Professor in Residence,
Stephen F. Olford Center for Biblical Preaching,
Memphis, Tennessee





PREFACE

Never was a church-wide, heaven-sent revival needed more than at this present time. It is the only answer to the spiritual warfare we face in every part of the world. Bombs, bullets and body bags will never stem the tide of terror and horror that threatens human existence. We must recognize that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4,5).

Even at a personal or local level we need revival. As I write these words, a letter lies before me from a dear lady. I have not heard from her for a long time. She writes:

As a young person, my pastor began talking and preaching about true heaven-sent revival. He encouraged the congregation to read the book *Heart Cry for Revival* by Stephen Olford. As people sought God’s face, the Lord poured His power out upon our church. It was during this time that I came to assurance of my salvation. I began to live out my life not as an activity at church, but as a relationship to Christ. I was compelled to write to you, after hearing you on radio, to ask if the book, *Heart Cry for Revival*, is still in print. There is so





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little expository preaching in the Church today, and so much shallowness in the lives of Christians.

This is why I am encouraged that this new edition of *Heart Cry for Revival* is being published.

Initially, the following expository sermons were preached at Calvary Baptist Church in New York City, where I was pastor for fourteen years. The one message they spell out is that of a “Heart Cry for Revival.” This explains why prayer is the recurring theme throughout these chapters. Whatever aspect of revival we survey, the focus of our attention irresistibly returns to the centrality of prayer. The study of God’s Word, the stirrings of the Holy Spirit and the desperate need of the Church today are the means that God uses to make us long for revival. This is how these messages came to be written in the first place. As a matter of fact, the sermons are typescripts from tape recordings of my preaching. This will account for their sermonic style and personalized application.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ted S. Rendall for graciously consenting to write the Foreword. He is truly a holy man of prayer and passion for a spiritual awakening in our time.

It is my sincere hope that the burden which God has given me for a spiritual awakening in our day may become the “Heart Cry for Revival” of all who read these pages.

Dr. Stephen F. Olford





INTRODUCTION

“I am profoundly convinced that the greatest need in the world today is revival in the Church of God.”

-D.M. Lloyd-Jones

For my readers to understand the burden of this book, I feel that they should be acquainted with the frame of reference from which I write. Without a definition of terms and an explanation of aims, I might well be misunderstood. So by way of introduction, I want to state briefly what I consider to be the nature of, the need for, and the nearness of revival.

The Nature of Revival

The term “revival” is one which is grossly misunderstood. In many quarters today, primarily in the United States, it is employed to describe evangelistic meetings. Now, while the salvation of sinners and the restoration of backsliders are both by-products of revival, these spiritual experiences cannot be said to define revival.

In seeking to find an answer to the question, “What is revival?” I take the liberty of quoting freely from several authorities who have written on the subject. William Sprague wrote in 1832:





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Wherever you see religion rising up from a state of comparative depression to a tone of increased vigor and strength; wherever you see professing Christians becoming more faithful to their obligations, and behold the strength of the Church increased by fresh accessions of piety from the world; there is a state of things which you need not hesitate to denominate a revival of religion.

Although of a different theological persuasion, Charles G. Finney rightly defined revival as “nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God. Just as in the case of the converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down into the dust before God, with deep humility, and a forsaking of sin.”

Joseph W. Kemp, in a presidential address to the Baptist Union of New Zealand, declared:

Revival, strictly speaking, means the reanimating of that which is already living but in a state of declension. It has to do principally with the Church as a whole and Christians as individuals. Evangelism, in our usage of the word, as well as in its derivative sense, refers primarily to the proclamation of the gospel to the unsaved. To make evangelism a synonym of revivalism is untrue to the teaching of the New Testament. The Church is responsible for evangelism and not for revival. We are summoned to evangelism; for revival we are cast upon the sovereign grace of God.





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G.J. Morgan put it this way:

It is reviving humanity, strictly speaking, to the sense of God—through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—to reanimate the life of the believer, not to the unregenerate, as they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” There can be no reviving, as there was no life to revive. But whenever Christians are revived, there will always be the conversion of men. It has a twofold meaning, implying the revival of spiritual life and vigor among Christians and the conversion of sinners. It is God manifesting Himself through human life, His redeeming power bursting forth in fruits of righteousness and holiness, in the constitution of His Church, the reproduction of spiritual life, a fresh incarnation of the gladness, the rapture of the gospel of the Galilean fields, of the anguished cry of Pentecost rising into a doxology of redeeming love.

Arthur Wallis, in his book entitled *In the Day of Thy Power*, wrote:

The meaning of any word is determined by its usage. For a definition of revival we must therefore appeal to the people of God of bygone years, who have used the word with consistency down the centuries, until it came to be used in a lesser and more limited sense in modern times. Numerous writings on the subject that have been preserved to us will confirm that revival is divine intervention in the normal course of spiritual things. It is God revealing Himself to man in awful holiness and irresistible power. It is such





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a manifest working of God that human personalities are overshadowed, and human programs abandoned. God has taken the field. It is the Lord making bare His holy arm, and working in extraordinary power on saint and sinner.

J. Edwin Orr, who wrote so extensively on revival and whose notable work, *The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain*, should be read by all, summed up our theme in this fashion: “The best definition of revival is the phrase, “Times of refreshing...from the presence of the Lord.”

In a booklet entitled, *Rend the Heavens*, Geoffrey King summarized the concept of revival in these words: “Revival is a sovereign act of God upon the Church whereby He intervenes to lift the situation completely out of human hands and works in extraordinary power.”

We gather, then, that revival is that strange and sovereign work of God in which He visits His own people, restoring, reanimating and releasing them into the fullness of His blessing. Such a divine intervention will issue in evangelism though, in the first instance, it is a work of God in the Church and among individual believers. Once we understand the nature of heaven-sent revival we shall be able to think, pray and speak intelligently of such “times of refreshing...from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

The Need for Revival

There has never been a time in the history of the Church when God's people have not had a heart-cry for revival. Even in the midst of appalling moral darkness and spiritual declension there have always been those whose heart-cry has been:

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Oh, that You would tear the heavens open
And come down
–at Your Presence the mountains would melt,
as fire sets brushwood alight,
as fire causes water to boil–
to make known Your name to Your enemies,
and make the nations tremble at Your Presence,
working unexpected miracles
such as no one has ever heard of before.
(Isaiah 64:1-3, The Jerusalem Bible)

Speaking for our time, however, I see absolutely no hope apart from a mighty spiritual awakening. This conviction was expressed in unmistakable language sometime ago by outstanding leaders of the Christian Brethren in an open letter published in the *Harvester* magazine. Ponder carefully this appeal:

It is doubtful whether, in this history of the world, there has previously been a period of difficulty so complex in character and so widespread in effect as that through which we are at present passing. A feeling of uncertainty and instability prevails in every circle, and the future seems to hold no sure promise of peace or prosperity. It was never more true that “upon the earth” there is “distress of nations, with perplexity...men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.”

In the midst of change and unreliability, spiritual values alone remain immutable, and there never was a greater need for the reminder of their reality,





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security, and stability. Yet the Church, which should be proclaiming the glorious news, seems totally inadequate to meet the need. Generally speaking, the lives of Christians do not differ, to any great extent, from the lives of other folk around them. They share the same fears, express the same doubts, feel the same uncertainty, show the same confusion. The peace of God and the joy of Christ are little in evidence. The dynamic power of the Holy Spirit is not appropriated.

Unparalleled opportunities present themselves, but there seems a moral and spiritual inadequacy to respond to their challenge.

If there is to be a revival of spiritual life and power, it must originate with the individual believer, and there is a great need for a personal searching of heart and exercise of soul in this matter. The sin, which is spoiling the life of the Christian, must be judged, and put away. The selfishness, which is robbing Christ of the love and devotion which are His due, must be confessed and removed. The ambitions and desires, which are hindering the work of God, must be uprooted and thrown on the refuse heap. A renewal of blessing is dependent upon the restoration of communion and the reconsecration of hearty and life.

Many of God's people are longing for a reawakening of the Church and for a revival of the work of God, and not a few are praying that the very difficult conditions of the present day may lead to a reassessment of values and a fresh stirring of love for the Lord.





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A renewal of evangelistic fervor and zeal might even yet result in an amazing harvest of souls, and we appeal to all Christians to unite in daily personal prayer, not only for a solution to the pressing problems of the present day, but for a definite spiritual revival.

If I understand the contemporary scene at all, then it closely resembles the days of General William Booth, illustrious founder of the Salvation Army, when he analyzed the chief dangers of the twentieth century. As I review his words, I cannot but be struck by their aptness and accuracy. He enumerated six such dangers:

1. Religion without the Holy Spirit. Religion can be found everywhere, for man is a “religious animal.” Even atheists have their religion, whether their emphasis be on things or men. But the tragedy is that this type of religion has invaded the Church; so most of our religious centers have become institutionalized systems that most people distrust. The size of a denomination is no indication of its reality or spiritual power. Further, a local church may go through the correct motions and express biblical beliefs, yet lack the presence of the Holy Spirit. No amount of orthodoxy can guarantee that God is in or with the congregation, if it lacks a sense of dependence upon Him for all its needs. It can only become another church like that in Laodicea. Such religion is without the Holy Spirit.

2. Christianity without Christ. That great expositor, W.H. Griffith Thomas, said that Christianity is Christ. Without the Lord Jesus being central Christianity is only bare bones. Its doctrines may be known, and even understood, and yet Christ can be left out. This is what has happened in history. Christendom has departed from the Christ of the Bible. The “liberal” Christ is a strange person;





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he is not the Christ of the apostles. Men have divested Jesus of all His unique characteristics, and yet claim that they are presenting Christ. The Jesus we hear about today is not the eternal Son of God whose atoning death and triumphant resurrection make possible the redemption of sinful men.

3. Forgiveness without Repentance. This is the day of easy forgiveness. “God is so kind and loving that of course He must forgive us,” we like to think and say, but such concepts have no place in the New Testament teaching. God’s love is no syrupy, sentimental thing. It cost all the agony of Calvary. Evangelicals, in their desire to become involved with people on the earth level and to identify themselves with their lives, are sometimes in danger of encouraging this “easy forgiveness,” forgetting the need to maintain the fullness of the gospel message. We must preach repentance, as did John the Baptist. There is no forgiveness without repentance.

4. Salvation without Regeneration. There cannot be genuine salvation without regeneration. This has been one of the criticisms of mass evangelism, that people have followed others without themselves being moved upon by the Spirit of God. We must, however, beware of laying down rules where Scripture does not. Conviction sometimes comes to people in a far stronger sense *after* they have come to Christ than immediately before. Yet we need to be careful not to press for decisions from those to whom we witness lest they are brought into a false position for which we rather than they, are to blame. We must give way always to the Holy Spirit, regarding ourselves merely as His tools, that He may accomplish His purposes through us, even in spite of our failings. Salvation must involve and include regeneration.





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5. Politics without God. There was a day when people in the United Kingdom spoke of the “nonconformist conscience,” and leading ministers and men in public life stood firmly for Christian principles in the realm of social and political activity. Alas, this is not the normal course in our day. The Church is often silent where it should be vocal, not only in its service to men and women but also in its proclamation of the Ten Commandments, the sinfulness of man, and the gospel of salvation. Politics can become thoroughly corrupt when God is left out. When Christian men enter into public life, whether locally or nationally, they can do great good, so long as they follow God’s call and walk in the light of God’s Word.

6. Heaven without Hell. C.S. Lewis was one who stood firmly for the truth of the righteousness of God. He maintained that God is Judge, as well as loving Father. Yet the normal attitude today is to deny the gravity of sin and, often, the existence of the Devil. Sin is explained away; God is all-merciful and will pass over our sins. Universalism is widely held and taught, that all men will ultimately be saved. The reality of Hell is ignored. Just as people are prepared at times to talk about God but ignore Jesus Christ, so they are willing to talk about Heaven but to pass over Hell as no more than a myth.

As William Booth saw it, these are the dangers that would affect the twentieth century, and looking back now, we can see how right he was! The question rises, then, as to how these trends can be reversed. Very simply: the answer is revival. Yes, we need revival.





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The Nearness of Revival

I still remember the spiritual awakening which visited the Scottish Hebrides islands in 1949. God's servant used in this gracious movement of the Holy Spirit was the Rev. Duncan Campbell. In recounting the story of God's dealings with His people, Mr. Campbell stated:

I personally believe in the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men, but I do not believe in a concept of revival that eliminates man's responsibility. Here were men and women who believed in a covenant-keeping God, who believed that the God to whom they prayed could not fail to fulfill His covenanted engagements; but they also believed that they too had to do something about it. God was the God of Revival, but they were the instruments, the agents through which revival was possible.

The real issue, then, is how to get ready for revival in the day of His power. To help us in our thinking and praying, and also to condition our hearts for the chapters that follow, I want to quote Dr. A.W. Tozer, in his own right a prophet of righteousness and revival:

1. Get thoroughly dissatisfied with yourself. Complacency is the deadly enemy of spiritual progress. The contented soul is the stagnant soul. When speaking of earthly goods Paul could say, "I have learned...to be content" but when referring to his spiritual life he testified, "I press toward the mark." So stir up the gift of God that is in you.

2. Set your face like a flint toward a sweeping transformation of your life. Timid experiments are tagged for failure before they start. We must throw our whole soul





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into our desire for God. “The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

3. Put yourself in the way of blessing. It is a mistake to look for grace to visit us as a kind of benign magic, or to expect God’s help to come as a windfall apart from conditions known and met. There are plainly marked paths which lead straight to the green pastures; let us walk in them. To desire revival, for instance, and at the same time neglect prayer and devotion is to wish one way and walk another.

4. Do a thorough job of repenting. Do not hurry to get it over with. Hasty repentance means a shallow spiritual experience and lack of certainty in the whole life. Let godly sorrow do her healing work. Until we allow the consciousness of sin to wound us we will never develop a fear of evil. It is our wretched habit of tolerating sin that keeps us in our half-dead condition.

5. Make restitution wherever possible. If you owe a debt, pay it, or at least have a frank understanding with your creditor about your intentions to pay, so your honesty will be above question. If you have quarreled with anyone, go as far as you can in an effort to achieve reconciliation. As fully as possible make the crooked things straight.

6. Bring your life into accord with the Sermon on the Mount and such other New Testament Scriptures as are designed to instruct us in the way of righteousness. An honest man with an open Bible and a pad and pencil is sure to find out what is wrong with him very quickly. I recommend that the self-examination be made on our knees, rising to obey God’s commandments as they are revealed to us from the Word. There is nothing romantic or colorful about this plain downright way of dealing with





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ourselves, but it gets the work done. Isaac's workmen did not look like heroic figures as they dug in the valley, but they got the wells open, and that was what they had set out to do.

7. Be serious-minded. You can well afford to see fewer comedy shows on TV. Unless you break away from viewing contemporary sitcoms, every spiritual impression will continue to be lost to your heart, and that right in your own living room. The people of the world used to go to the movies to escape serious thinking about God and religion. You would not join them there, but you now identify with them in your own home. You are accepting the Devil's ideas, moral standards and mental attitudes without your knowing it. And you wonder why you can make no progress in your Christian life. Your interior climate is not favorable to the growth of spiritual graces. There must be a radical change in your habits or there will not be any permanent impressions in your interior life.

8. Deliberately narrow your interests. The Jack-of-all trades is the master of none. The Christian life requires that we be specialists. Too many projects use up time and energy without bringing us nearer to God. If you will narrow your interests God will enlarge your heart. "Jesus only" seems to the unconverted man to be the motto of death, but a great company of happy men and women can testify that it became to them a way into a world infinitely wider and richer than anything they had ever known before. Christ is the essence of all wisdom, beauty and virtue. To know Him in growing intimacy is to increase in appreciation of all things good and beautiful. The mansions of the heart will become larger when their doors are thrown open to Christ and closed against the world and sin. Try it.

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9. Begin to witness. Find something to do for God and your fellow men. Refuse to rust out. Make yourself available to your pastor and do anything you are asked to do. Do not insist upon a place of leadership. Learn to obey. Take the low place until such time as God sees fit to set you in a higher one. Back your new intentions with your money and your gifts, such as they are.

10. Have faith in God. Begin to expect. Look up toward the throne where your Advocate, the Lord Jesus, sits at the right hand of God. All Heaven is on your side. God will not disappoint you.

If you will follow these suggestions you will most surely experience revival in your own heart. And who can tell how far it may spread? God knows how desperately the Church needs a spiritual resurrection. And it can only come through the revived individual.

