

# The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 8:4 - 9:1

Topic

Jeremiah's heart grows faint as  
he longs for revival among God's people

Title

*"The Revival of the Faintest"*

## Introduction

Evan Roberts was born in the village of Loughor near Swansea in Wales in 1878. He grew up in the church and as a young man he attended meetings six days a week and was deeply committed to praying for revival.

He worked in the coal mines for twelve years and then became a blacksmith. In 1903 Roberts entered school to prepare for the ministry. He crossed paths with Reverend Seth Joshua, an evangelist, who called for a deeper obedience to the Holy Spirit. During one of Joshua's meetings Evan Roberts came to the front, kneeled, and cried in agony, "Lord, bend me." While some observed it as an ecstatic emotional experience, Roberts later gave testimony that a wave of peace flooded his soul and that he felt ablaze to tell all of Wales about Jesus.

In October 1904 Roberts suspended his studies and went home to preach the Gospel. So began the Welsh Revival.

The second night the church service lasted three hours and within a week the crowds were staying until three o'clock in the morning. The second week the small church was overflowing with 800 people.

It spread and soon South Wales was ablaze and within two months conversions numbered 34,000. Within six months 100,000 converts were added to the Welsh churches. Spirit-filled gatherings were held in homes, barns, coal mines, quarries, and even a pig-sty.

The revival effected Welsh society. J. Edwin Orr writes,

Drunkenness was immediately cut in half, and many taverns went bankrupt. Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying that there were no cases of murder, assault, rape or robbery or the like to consider. The police became unemployed in many districts. Stoppages occurred in coal mines, not due to unpleasantness between management and workers, but because so many foul-mouthed miners became converted and stopped using foul language that the horses which hauled the coal trucks in the mines could no longer understand what was being said to them.

Fast-forward about a century. According to an article by *The Independent*,

England and Wales have one of the worst crime rates among developed nations for rapes, burglaries and robberies... The study for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found England and Wales had more burglaries and robberies per 100,000 people than the United States in 2006.

A 2001 census showed that in Wales fewer than one in ten people regularly attend a church or chapel. It simultaneously showed that over 70% of Welsh people see themselves as Christian.

Wales is a post-revival country. **So was Judah in the sixth century.** After a brief revival under King Josiah, the Jews were again mired in sin.

If some of the consequences of a genuine revival are massive positive changes in the morals of a society, **then we are definitely post-revival as well.** But rather than look out, at our society, let's look at ourselves to see if **we** remain revived or have grown post-revival.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Check Yourself For Post-Revival Apathy, and #2 Check Yourself For Post-Revival Ardor.

#1 Check Yourself For  
Post-Revival Apathy  
(8:4-17)

In verse eight of chapter eight Jeremiah quoted the people as saying, “the law of the Lord is with us.” It’s a reference, probably, to the discovery of the Law - the Book of Deuteronomy specifically - by King Josiah. It sparked a revival. But the description of their society in these verses reveals that revival was a thing of the past.

The signs that a people are no longer revived are pretty obvious. The Jews, however, wouldn’t acknowledge their backsliding. They acted as though everything was fine.

That’s what we want to focus on - **how it is a believer can be obviously post-revival but not admit it!**

Jeremiah 8:4 "Moreover you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "Will they fall and not rise? Will one turn away and not return?"

We sometimes make fun of the phrase, “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up.” The Jews were depicted as falling down and *not wanting to get back up!* It’s absurd to think that if you trip you’ll just stay down and even think it’s normal to live on a horizontal plane.

Same with “turn and not return.” As if a person is set upon a desired destination then, for no good reason, they turn away. It isn’t logical.

Sometimes believers don’t act logically. You look at something they are doing or saying and you say, “Where did that come from?” They act as if nothing has changed when, in fact, they’ve fallen and won’t get up. They act like they are still headed in a godly direction when, in fact, they have turned around.

Jeremiah 8:5 Why has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return.

If a person is sinning, “refus[ing] to return,” acting illogically, then they are deceiving themselves. *Self-deception is a major reason believers fail to recognize and admit they are backslidden.*

If you can make excuses for yourself for what you once understood to be wrong and sinful, **you are self-deceived.**

Jeremiah 8:6 I listened and heard, But they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course, As the horse rushes into the battle.

Here we see the self-deceived person who is excited about their new “course” when it is clearly not godly. They are like a horse bred for battle - rushing headlong into danger.

Jeremiah 8:7 "Even the stork in the heavens Knows her appointed times; And the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow Observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD.

Animals always follow God’s proper order for them, whereas God’s people sometimes ignore His ordering of their lives by His “judgments,” meaning His Law. If a person ignores the clear directives of God’s Word, *he or she is dumber than a stork or a turtledove!*

Jeremiah 8:8 "How can you say, 'We are wise, And the law of the LORD is with us'? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.

Jeremiah 8:9 The wise men are ashamed, They are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; So what wisdom do they have?

Jeremiah 8:10 Therefore I will give their wives to others, And their fields to those who will inherit them; Because from the least even to the greatest Everyone is given to covetousness; From the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely.

Jeremiah 8:11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace.

The impact of these verses is to say that those who ought to be teaching God’s Word by precept and example were purposely misinterpreting it to allow for their own sin and for the sin of the people.

There are two things to point out here:

1. First, you don't get a pass if you are a leader. Instead, you are held to a higher standard.
2. Second, a post-revival believer will often leave a church where people know them and will honestly reprove them in favor of another group where they can hide or where the message is watered down.

Jeremiah 8:12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; In the time of their punishment They shall be cast down," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 8:13 "I will surely consume them," says the LORD. "No grapes shall be on the vine, Nor figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them." ' ' "

It's becoming more common for a person to openly admit their behavior but have no sense of sin and shame about it. Maybe they'll quit; maybe they won't. They act like there's no urgency.

Jeremiah 8:14 "Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, And let us enter the fortified cities, And let us be silent there. For the LORD our God has put us to silence And given us water of gall to drink, Because we have sinned against the LORD.

Jeremiah 8:15 "We looked for peace, but no good came; And for a time of health, and there was trouble!

Jeremiah 8:16 The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan. The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones; For they have come and devoured the land and all that is in it, The city and those who dwell in it."

Jeremiah 8:17 "For behold, I will send serpents among you, Vipers which cannot be charmed, And they shall bite you," says the LORD.

The Jews were "sit[ing] still," thinking that nothing would happen to them since they were in Jerusalem and had the Law and the Temple. God, however, wouldn't sit still. He would discipline them by bringing the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to destroy the city and the Temple and to carry them away captive.

When a believer is continuing to live in sin, refusing to deal with their backsliding, there is a lack of peace and health in their relationships. You feel awkward around them; they sense it but blame you for being judgmental. It's very, very sad because you love them and want God's best for them but there's a problem that needs acknowledging.

The question to ask yourself is, “Do I fit this profile?” Working backwards, if I am comfortable being backslidden in a behavior I once identified as sin and am therefore acting illogically, then I am self-deceived and need to heed the judgment of the Lord about my situation rather than my own thoughts and feelings.

***I - you; we - need to repent!***

#2 Check Yourself For  
Post-Revival Ardor  
(8:18-9:1)

I don't know of anything, right now, in the United States or California or Central California or Kings County that could be called 'revival' in the historic sense.

That isn't to say that believers or local churches are all blowing it; *not at all!* It's just an honest assessment of the bigger spiritual landscape.

What is revival? Scholars who have studied it give this working description:

An evangelical revival is an extraordinary work of God in which Christians repent of their sins as they become intensely aware of his presence in their midst, and they manifest a positive response to God in renewed obedience to the known will of God, resulting in both a deepening of their individual and corporate experience with God, and an increased concern to win others to Christ.

Scholars go on to say that a genuine revival impacts positively the wider society in which it occurs - a city, a county, a country, even the world.

Should we pray for revival? I came across this quote in a book summarizing ten great revivals in history:

Usually when we pray for revival, we're thinking about the bad guys, and we're telling God to “sic 'em.” Little do we realize that revival begins with us, the people of God. As a matter of fact, we've got a suggestion for those who want revival: **Don't pray for revival.** Just repent of all known sin, do everything you're supposed to do, give God all - not part, but all - your time, and you'll experience revival.

What we might say is this. Don't seek revival; seek God with a new passion, a fresh ardor, and see what happens.

That seems to be the general theme of the remaining verses.

Jeremiah 8:18 I would comfort myself in sorrow; My heart is faint in me.

Jeremiah 8:19 Listen! The voice, The cry of the daughter of My people - From a far country: "Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her?" "Why have they provoked Me to anger With their carved images - With foreign idols?"

Jeremiah 8:20 "The harvest is past, The summer is ended, And we are not saved!"

In verse eighteen it seems that Jeremiah has "sorrow" for the sin all around him and that his "heart" has grown "faint" from his concern for God's glory and the people's welfare.

Do I have sorrow for sin - mine as well as all the sin around me? Is my heart really faint from talking to God about it so much that it wearies me?

"We are not saved," it says in verse twenty. So many people around us remain lost, dead, perishing. Soon the "harvest" will be past!

Am I concentrating my efforts on spreading the Gospel? Do I understand that I am one of the workers in the harvest? Am I thinking about the day I meet with my Lord to have Him review my life to reward me for the things I did in His name and for His sake?

Jeremiah 8:21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I am mourning; Astonishment has taken hold of me.

Jeremiah 8:22 Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery For the health of the daughter of my people?

Jeremiah speaks of "mourning" and "astonishment." In other words, he was gripped by the spiritual condition people were in. He was astonished they could be so far from the Lord; but he mourned for them. He didn't hate them; he knew they needed the Lord.

In verse twenty-two he recognized that there **is** a Great Physician who can save and heal.

These verses describe a heartfelt ardor and passion for the lost. Yes, they are involved in terrible sin; yes, they are ruining society, bringing judgment upon themselves. But the solution was salvation - **not** political reform or economic reform or judicial reform or moral reform; **not reform of any type.**

The First Great Awakening had tremendous political effects. When the revival emerged in the 1740's, the churches of New England were supported by property taxes and the church controlled community life. George Whitefield encouraged itinerant preaching and many evangelists ended up establishing new churches without government affiliation. These churches involved lay people in ministry, but more importantly, they gave lay people a voice in the affairs of their churches. It wasn't long before lay people were wanting a voice also in the affairs of their government and society in general. According to some historians, this development did more than anything else to lay a foundation for the American Revolution.

**Revival came first.** Everything else was a result of genuine evangelical revival. That's why, as a church, we concentrate on the Gospel.

Jeremiah 9:1 Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!

Jeremiah had exhausted his own tears crying over the people. He wanted God to open a fountain of tears so he could go on weeping day and night for lost, dead, perishing sinners. No wonder he is called 'the weeping prophet.'

A. T. Schofield noted, "Since the days of Pentecost there is no record of the sudden and direct work of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men that has not been accompanied by events more or less abnormal."

While revival is often accompanied by enthusiastic experiences, like uncontrolled weeping, just crying isn't revival. I guess what I'm saying is while revival is an experience, **you can't bring it on by encouraging experiences. And just because there may be a few weird experiences, it doesn't mean you are in a revival.**



Whether you and I weep until we have no more tears, we can set our hearts toward seeking Jesus and sharing with the lost.

If you study historic revivals you find that there are as many differences as there are similarities:

- Some are instigated by a crisis, such as when the banks collapsed before what is called the Laymen's Prayer Revival. Others come at peaceful times, such as the Great Awakening.
- Some start with one extraordinary leader while others begin as a group seeks the Lord.

What is always true, however, is that revival involves prayer. The first great revival, the mother of all revivals, was on the Day of Pentecost. God sent His Holy Spirit and the world was turned upside down for Jesus.

What were those 120 disciples doing in the upper room? *They were praying.*

Does fervent prayer bring revival? Or is praying a sign revival has come?

Either way... ***We ought to pray!***