



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

As a first year student at Oxford University in 1944, J. I. Packer came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. He was discipled by a group of young Pietists who, in Packer's words, "left no doubt that the most important thing for me as a Christian was the quality of my walk with God." While the goal was right, Packer was told that the means to this holy life was "to empty himself of all sin." Packer said, "I internally scraped myself (figuratively speaking) to rid all my faults . . . but the technique was not working." It was through reading the sermons on Rom. 8:13 by John Owen that Packer learned the truth: a holy life is predicated on *both* a submissive will to Scripture and the power of the Spirit. Just as Packer was properly introduced to holiness through Paul's short, but powerful words, so we too need them: "If by the Spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body, you will live!"



Both Garrett (M.Div, 2007) and Amanda (MBS, 2005) are valued graduates of VBTS. God not only brought them to Virginia Beach for their theological education, but he also brought their lives together in marriage in 2006 for the good of the larger Body of Christ. This godly couple partnered with another VBTS graduate (Jonathan Matias, M.Div, 2007) to plant Grace Bible Church in Alexandria, VA in 2007. After over ten years of pastoral ministry, the Lord opened the door for Garrett to serve full-time as a *Revivalist and Team Leader* with one of Life Action's ministry teams. It has been a joy to watch God use and bless this dynamic family. Garrett says their passion is "to come alongside local churches and convince them that our powerful, loving God is ready for weak, broken, failures like us to join him in his world-changing work through our relationship with Jesus Christ in the power of his Holy Spirit." Thank you, Garrett and Amanda, for manifesting a ministry of grace!



Should We Pray Today For Revival?

Guest Author: VBTS Alumnus Garrett Lee

In 1959, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones interrupted his series in Ephesians to address the topic of “Revival.” This was to commemorate the great Ulster and Welsh revivals of 1859. He began with Mark 9:28-29, where Jesus teaches his disciples that some demons can be cast out *only by prayer*.

Throughout Scripture, revival is more a phenomenon observed than a doctrine formally taught. However, one clear hallmark of revival in Scripture and church history is captured in Matthew Henry’s statement: *When God intends to bless His people, the first thing He does is to set them a-praying.*

When we consider biblical examples of God’s special presence associated with revival, Acts 2 often comes to the forefront. However we define revival, at minimum we have to admit the significant overlap of what happened at Pentecost and those times in church history that J. I. Packer describes as God’s “reviving visitations.”

There’s no space to delve into what this visitation looked like or what the aftermath was, but in light of Lloyd-Jones’ emphasis, it’s crucial that we not overlook how Acts 1:14 sets the stage for Pentecost: “They all were continually united in prayer.”

For what were they praying? We can’t be certain, but these Jewish Christians remembered when God had visited his people — the Passover lamb was slain, and God rescued his people; Elijah’s sacrifice was accepted, and Israel turned from idolatry; the Temple was finished, and God’s glory descended. God had repeatedly worked in unplanned and unpredictable ways.

These were men and women whose expectations for the Messiah had been completely turned upside down; who had seen their Master executed and then raised in power; who had witnessed him ascend into God’s holy presence; and who now had his promise that they would soon receive the Spirit of Christ. So I think their prayers were in keeping with the biblical model of remembering God’s past action and beseeching him *to do it again!*

Should we pray for revival? Certainly, but we’d better understand what we’re asking for. J. I. Packer describes revival in *A God-Entranced Vision of All Things* (pp. 100-101):

- “Revival is God touching minds and hearts in an arresting, devastating, exalting way, to draw them to himself through working from the inside out rather than from the outside in.”
- “It is God accelerating, intensifying, and extending the work of grace that goes on in every Christian’s life, but is sometimes overshadowed and somewhat smothered by the impact of other forces.”
- “It is the near presence of God giving new power to the gospel of sin and grace. It is the Holy Spirit sensitizing souls to divine realities and so generating deep-level responses to God in the form of faith and repentance, praise and prayer, love and joy, works of benevolence and service, and initiatives of outreach and sharing.”

We should ask God to act as he has before, but we really need him to start with renovating our own hearts. When I read from Packer “arresting” and “devastating,” I get nervous. I prefer my comfort zone, my little kingdom, and my own way. But, what I desperately need is Jesus’s prayer to flow naturally from my heart: “Your Kingdom come; your will be done . . . *Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me.*”