

# *Revivals in the Confederate Armies*

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The Lord was pleased to bless the Confederate States Armies with revivals. The words “spiritual revival” or “spiritual awakening” mean the same thing. Revival is a divine act at work when the Lord is pleased to use the ministry of His inspired Word, the Bible, to awaken people to their spiritual lethargy or their lost spiritual condition and bring them to Christ.

Prior to the War for Southern Independence there were revivals as common occurrences in the local churches. Often the Lord was pleased to visit His people with a reviving and an ingathering of lost souls. This was among the orthodox Bible- believing congregations making up about ninety percent of Christianity.

The Lord’s people are concerned about their relationship to their holy Lord lest they offend Him by their sin. Their prayers were compatible with the Psalmist, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee” (Ps. 85:6)? There is a danger that needs to be avoided; there is a faulty understanding of many today regarding what constitutes a true revival, and that is thinking of revivalism as revival. Revivalism is the human attempt at producing revival, but revival is an act of God not man.

During that era of 1861-1865 there was a consensus among the believers regarding the need for God to bring salvation and/or revival. This consensus was shared among the Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, etc. Ministers, chaplains, evangelists, colporteurs, Christians

from all walks of life, and Christian officers desired spiritual awakenings. General Robert E. Lee noted, “Our great want is a revival which shall bring these young men to Christ.”

As noted, revival is not something that human effort or emotion produces! Revival is a work of God the Holy Spirit in blessing the ministry of the eternal Word of God to the souls of men, whether saved or lost. Those who are Christians, in times of revival, are renewed in their care, fervor, and love for the holy things of God. During a time of revival, there is a great ingathering of souls by men coming to Christ for salvation from their sins.

Revival, as noted, was an object of prayer. This was true for the Confederate chaplains, the visiting ministers, and other Christians who knew the need for God’s presence and power among them. Those preaching determined not to know anything among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The unsaved soldiers faced the prospects of death in battle or by disease, so the Lord’s servants greatly longed for God to regenerate the spiritually dead, to effectually apply His Word to their hearts, to convict them of their sin and bring them to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever a time could be found to have a service, the men often collected in a pre-arranged place or gathered where they heard the sound of the singing of hymns. Then they were presented with the eternal demands of God on them. One chaplain said to the men under his voice, “How know you but that ere to-morrow’s sun shall rise the long roll may beat, and this brigade be called to meet the enemy? It may be that some of you brave men *are hearing now your last message of salvation.*”

When God’s Word was thus blessed by the Holy Spirit, sometimes hundreds of men were converted in a single

service, and when this kind of blessing persisted for a number of days during the preaching of the gospel, they said that a revival had come. However, a true revival was gauged, not by numbers, but by the permanence of the work in the hearts of men. Were they persevering in the ways of the Lord? God's work lasted eternally. They would pray for revival, but never presume to call meetings in advance "revival," because they realized that revival was the prerogative of God. They, as the Apostle Paul, could have said, "my preaching was ... in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4). True revival was evidenced by men's lives becoming Christ-centered.

These revivals that the Lord blessed the Confederate armies to receive were scattered through various divisions sometimes impacting a few and sometimes a multitude. Chaplain J. Wm. Jones, in speaking about these times wrote, "Jesus *was* in our camps with wonderful power, and that no army in all history ... had in it as much of real, evangelical religion and devout piety as the Army of Northern Virginia."

Thousands of men were impacted and transformed in these outpourings from the Lord. There were never enough Bibles, tracts, or Christian literature to satisfy the spiritual hunger manifested during those times of refreshing from the Lord. As a result of these spiritual awakenings there were many men who became ministers, Christian educators, local church founders, and good sound Christian leaders. "Rarely, if ever, since apostolic times, has the world witnessed more precious revivals than those with which the Army of Northern Virginia was blessed.... [T]he 'great awakening,' which made every camp vocal with the praises of God, and went graciously on until over fifteen thousand soldiers in Lee's army had professed faith in Jesus," wrote Chaplain J.

Wm. Jones. Imagine the extent of this when you consider ANV, AOT, and ATM. Yes, the Armies of the Confederate States of America were greatly visited by the Lord in revival!

The content and extent of these outpourings from the Lord can only be realized if one reads *Christ in the Camp* or *The Great Revival in the Southern Armies*.

*Bibliography of Books on Revival in the  
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