

PRAYING FOR A REVIVAL.

This is the season when most religious awakenings occur. The business of the old year has been wound up. The festivities of Christmas and the New Year are past ; a period of comparative leisure has arrived. The evenings are long ; the shops close early, and people have no excuse for absenting themselves from the prayer-meeting, unless they have no heart for it, and choose to remain away. The "week of prayer," too, has not unlikely aroused many slumbering Christians to a sense of their deadness and need of quickening ; and almost every one who leads in prayer repeats the cry, "O Lord, revive Thy work !"

But, dear brethren, do you know what you are praying for ? What is a revival ? Where must it begin ? Whence does it come ? Many persons use the term as if it were a synonym for an awakening among those "dead in trespasses and in sins,"—the conversion of the impenitent and unbelieving. But while that is almost invariably one of the precious fruits of a revival, it is only a fruit of it, and not the thing itself. Most professors of religion would be glad of *such* a revival. It brings the Church into notice, increases the congregation, makes the finances easy (for there is nothing that has half the power of true religion to open the pocket), and besides, it saves sinners and glorifies God ! Who could not pray for *that* ?

But a revival, as we understand it. Ah ! that is a very different and a much more *personal* affair. That means the infusion of new spiritual life into those who have been born again. You cannot *revive* a thing that never was alive before, and so there can be no *revival* among those who have never "passed from death unto life." The term can be properly applied only to the awakening of Christians,—the quickening of the Church !

Now, dear brethren, is *that* what you are praying for ? A revival that will make *you* more earnest, more self-denying, more spiritual ? A revival that will touch your social life, that will call into exercise new motives in business, and that will make you to feel that your relationship to the Church is not that of "honorary membership," but that of "a laborer together with God ?" If so, you will be ready to humble yourself before Him, and confess and bewail your past unfaithfulness and shortcoming. You will be prepared to give up every habit and worldly amusement that conscience condemns, or even holds to be of *doubtful character*,—everything that would "grieve the Holy Spirit of God," and hinder you from the attainment of your desire. We need not name these ; they will suggest themselves to you if you are really in earnest for a revival. And above all, you must ask for a renewal of that blessed consciousness of God's forgiving love, which was once your joy and strength. All our springs are in Him ; and to those who thus return to Him is the promise addressed,—"Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Speaking of such an awakening, the Rev. Theo. L. Cuyler says :— "Nothing feels the approach of a revival so palpably as a place of prayer ; a revival commonly begins there." The deserted seats are filled. Those who "could not leave their business" now find but little difficulty in closing the doors of their shops or their counting-rooms.