

“WHAT WILL BE KNOWN AS THE NEPALI REVIVAL”

This is my first Church worship service since I have returned from my fifth consecutive mission trip to Nepal, the small country that lies between China and India and is mostly famous for its most prominent feature, Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. I will take the opportunity this morning to testify of God’s grace and greatness.

Are you like me when it comes to experiencing two parallel reality tracks that come together in your consciousness and you experience in an aha moment? That was the genesis of what will be my testimony to you this morning. Let me explain.

I have been in the Gospel ministry since 1975, when God called me, when my wife and I met and married, and when my serious preparation for my calling began. I had been a Christian for about eighteen months at the time and had been a member of a Baptist Church for about fifteen months. The Church where I was baptized and became a member was a Church in which the pastor scheduled revivals. You heard me correctly; he scheduled revivals.

If you are in a Church in which the pastor schedules revivals you can be assured that it is highly unlikely that you are in a Church that has ever seen revival and that the congregation is led by a fellow who has ever experienced a revival, observed a revival, or read much about revival. Though I have never experienced revival, I know several men who have experienced a revival as Church members or as pastors, I have read about revival from serious students of revival, and now I can tell you that I have observed a revival.

A bit of personal history is in order related to this topic of revival. My reading on the subject of revival over the years includes *Revival* by Brian Edwards, *Lectures On Revivals* by W. B. Sprague, *Revival Sketches And Manual* by Heman Humphrey, *The Great Revival In The Southern Armies*, by W. W. Bennett, *The Revival Of Religion: Addresses by Scottish Evangelical Leaders delivered in Glasgow in 1840*, *The Revival In Indonesia* by Kurt Koch, *Pentecost - Today? The Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival* and *Revival & Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858*, both by Iain H. Murray, *The Welsh Revival: Its Origin & Development* by Thomas Phillips, *Flame Of God: Distinctives Of Revival* by Gilbert Egerton, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the time of Edwards & Whitefield* by Joseph Tracy, *Revival* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Fire From Heaven: Times Of Extraordinary Revival* by Paul E. G. Cook, *Revival* by Richard Owen Roberts, and *God’s Harvest, The Nature Of True Revival* by my late friend I. D. E. Thomas.

In addition to those books, I have read biographies about the key individuals in notable revivals, men such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Asahel Nettleton, Gilbert Tennant, the Marshalls, Charles Spurgeon, Evans Roberts, and Duncan Campbell.

Of course, none of these books do anyone any good apart from the underlying truths about revival that are found in God’s Word, especially the careful reading of the Book of Acts, the record of the revival of religion that was launched on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two and resulted in the spread of the Christian faith and the Gospel message from the British Isles to India in less than a century. Turn to Acts 2.1. When you find that passage, please stand for the reading of God’s Word:

- ¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
- ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
- ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
- ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Thus, launched the revival that began the Christian era.

May I summarize a bit about revival from what I have learned from God’s Word, picked up from the books I have read from credible authors, and learned from men I have known who have experienced genuine revival? These comments are certainly not comprehensive, but they stick out in my mind: *First*, revival is a

sovereign act of God. You can ask God for revival, and you should pray for revival, but unlike the heretic Charles G. Finney and the well-intentioned but ignorant men who think revival can be scheduled, it is God and God alone who determines the where, the when, and the extent to which He visits revival upon a people and a region.¹

Second, real God-given revival is not so much, as is so often thought in our day, characterized primarily by something akin to a rejuvenation of Christians so much as it results in the conversions of those previously thought to be Christians who had false hopes, as well as the conversions of those known to one and all to be unconverted. That real Christians are encouraged and enthused during revival can also take place, but this is by no means guaranteed. I know genuine believers in Churches where astounding revival was poured out by God during which time they were mainly unaffected, according to their own regretful testimonies.

Third, surprising to many who have never experienced or seen revival, the Devil always works during God-sent revivals, and it is not unusual for spiritual leadership to be needed during revival to quash disruptions by Satan-inspired unsaved people and even by carnal Christians. Sometimes it even becomes necessary for individuals to be removed from services and for others to be confronted and rebuked for malicious gossip and slander that would cause harm to a revival.

Fourth, and finally, at this time, no two revivals are precisely the same, with such variables including the intensity of the revival, the duration of the revival, the geographical spread of the revival, and even the subjects of the revival. Some revivals are of short duration (a matter of weeks), with others lasting years. Some revivals are low-intensity, with but a small percentage of the population affected, while other revivals affect a much larger percentage of converts, such as during the First Great Awakening in the American colonies. Some revivals are nationwide, while other revivals are not. The Fishermen's Revival in which Jock Troup and Peter Connolly were greatly used of God occurred on the Eastern coastline of Scotland and England in the 1920s.

Of course, I refer only to genuine revivals and do not for one moment countenance counterfeit revivals such as the so-called Azusa Street Revival that occurred here in Los Angeles from 1906-1915, which was mainly a demonstration of the flesh and featured fake healings and counterfeit tongues-speaking during an extended emotional frenzy.

I suppose the best working definition of revival was penned by my good friend the late Kenneth Connolly. He wrote,

“Revival is the SOVEREIGN, SUDDEN, SELECTIVE AND SENSATIONAL operation of the Spirit of God. It descends amid PRAYER, creating PURITY and reaching the PERISHING.”

These things considered, let me rehearse to you a very superficial account of what I hope will come to be known as the Nepali revival. I divide my comments under three main headings:

First, THE MAN USED BY GOD

I was introduced to him and his wife by Dr. Peter Masters in his office at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London during the week of the School of Theology in July 2013. He was introduced to me as Samuel Rai and his wife as Mangali Rai. The meeting was very brief, but it led to a telephone call in September of that year and an invitation to preach at a Bible conference in his city of Pokhara, Nepal, culminating in the graduation of men and women from his Canaan Ministerial Training Center.

When I flew to Kathmandu that November, he met me at the Kathmandu International Airport to accompany me by a short flight to Pokhara, while we sat at a table with a cold drink, my new friend for life began the first conversation we ever had by asking me if I was political. It was in that conversation that he revealed to me that before his conversion to Christ he had been a committed Maoist. I was intrigued. It was only the beginning of his story.

¹ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures On Revivals Of Religion*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1868), page 32.

He was born into a low caste (but not the lowest caste) Hindu family on June 28, 1964. At the age of seven, he became curious in his school classroom and wondered what it must be like at the front of the classroom. Walking to the front of the classroom, he was slapped across the face by his teacher and told to return to the back of the classroom as was befitting his religious station in life. From that moment the young lad hated religion, with a resentment that would intensify over time.

When the lad was fourteen years of age Maoist revolutionary fighters carrying AK-47s entered his school and kidnapped him, pressing him into the service of the revolution. When I asked him if he embraced Maoism after being kidnapped, he responded that he had fully embraced Maoism, its atheism, and its violent efforts to overthrow the king and queen of Nepal. Over time he was not only trained to be a skilled propagandist for the revolution but also rose to the rank of general in command of 14,000 armed fighters. It was also during that first visit to Nepal that I encountered two of his bomb makers from the old days, not yet believers in Christ but still friendly toward their former commander.

Though he had been among the youngest in the revolution, he ranked fourth among the leaders. God, however, had other plans. Seriously wounded in a firefight, he went into hiding. "To avoid capture by the government," I asked him? "No," he answered, "To avoid execution by my superiors for having lost a battle." In hiding, he sank into a slough of alcoholic despond.

One night while drinking he spied out a man who worked where he had gained employment and invited the fellow to join him. The coworker refused his offer. "If you were my friend you would drink with me," he insisted. However, the man explained his refusal by informing Rai that he was a Christian, something my friend had never previously heard of in his Hindu and Buddhist and Maoist culture.

The fellow did give Samuel something to read before he went on his way, a simple Gospel tract which troubled Rai's conscience, preventing him from sleeping comfortably, and thereby angering him. So he sought out the coworker's poor home, woke him and his wife up to complain about his discomfort, and was graciously invited in. It was the result of times spent in that humble dwelling, with two godly believers presenting the claims of Christ, that resulted in the man born Laxmi Prasad Rai becoming a new creature in Christ.

It took six months for the notoriously dangerous man to convince Christians his faith in Christ was real before the congregation would baptize him but baptize him their pastor eventually did. Interestingly, as he came up out of the water, the pastor asked him what he had in his pockets, after that he showed the two 9 mm semiautomatic pistols he kept for protection (remember, he was wanted by the government as well as the Maoists). When the pastor advised him he would no longer need the weapons Samuel offered them to the pastor. When the pastor refused his offer he tossed them in the lake, where they likely remain to this day.

At some point, Samuel felt God's call to the Gospel ministry, traveled to London to receive recommended training from Dr. Peter Masters, and became the first of the supported missionaries sent out by the Metropolitan Tabernacle during Dr. Masters' tenure. Declining an offer from the South Korean military to become their senior military chaplain (they wanted an experienced warfighter as their senior chaplain), Rai went back to Nepal and settled where he had come to Christ, in Pokhara.

For five years after returning to Nepal our friend saw no results. He worked, and he visited, and he witnessed, and he preached and preached and preached. His wife worked as a registered nurse while delivering their two sons. They were so discouraged. But they continued. And he preached and preached and preached. And that is the man God had called into the Gospel ministry and after a half-decade of sowing the seed of the Word began to use to harvest souls. He was not the only man God used, but he was the first of them and the leader of most of them.

Next, THE MESSAGE HONORED BY GOD

Several years ago, Samuel Rai and I talked about what ministry was like for him in the beginning. He told me that he was not the first man to bring the Gospel to his country. On the contrary, there were Baptists of this persuasion and that orientation. There were Pentecostals and Charismatics. There were even extremist Christian groups whose leaders insisted married couples divorce before entering the ministry. Then, of course, there is the

fact that Nepal was the only official Hindu country in the world, the birthplace of the Buddha, and the home of various tribal religions.

The Christians were so happy to see Samuel that they sought to welcome him open arms, so long as he was willing to overlook this doctrine and de-emphasize that doctrine and compromise on matters of the Lord's Supper and Church membership. But Samuel had been genuinely born again and had then been trained by Peter Masters in London, England to be a Gospel preaching confessional Baptist. He was trained to embrace the Bible as God's infallible Word and to adopt the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 as his confession of faith.²

For five years he preached the Gospel here, there, and everywhere in his country; in the cities, in the mountain villages, and among the tribal groups in the high valleys of the Himalayas, without seeing hardly any converts. Then God opened the floodgates of heaven and showers of blessings began. Several times each year he fills stadiums with between 10,000 and 30,000 people and preaches the Gospel to them. Then the pastors he has brought to Christ, disciplined, and trained, who pastor nearby Churches, begin the grueling personal work of following up and bringing to Christ those who first showed interest in the crusades.

For the last twenty-five years (and his first Church, Canaan Baptist Church in Pokhara celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary last September) Samuel Rai, born Laxmi Prasad Rai, has been sowing the Gospel seed by preaching and teaching, baptizing converts, and conducting an astonishingly well-developed discipleship ministry currently numbering in the tens of thousands in the almost one thousand congregations he offers guidance to, more than one hundred sixty of which he planted, and the others founded by men he trained in his Ministry Training Center.

So, what is this message he preaches that is honored by God? It is the same message that Charles Spurgeon preached in London, the same message William Carey preached in India, the same message Adoniram Judson preached in Burma (now Myanmar), and the same message Peter and Paul and James and John preached in their day. It is the Gospel message of a Savior who left heaven's glory to be born of a virgin, who then lived a sinless life and died a sacrificial death, rose from the dead, and ascended to God's right hand on high.³ It is the Gospel of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works of righteousness.⁴

But that's not so much the part the religious compromisers had openly opposed about his ministry. The parts the compromisers and the Charismatics opposed were related to Samuel's Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 and his commitment to God's sovereignty. They objected to his emphasis on the doctrines of grace, the five Solas (Sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"): The Bible alone is our highest authority. Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone. Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King. Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone).

For the five years, I have known him Samuel Rai has demonstrated to me by his conduct that he is not a pragmatist, as so many American pastors show themselves to be on a weekly basis. As he demonstrated to those who observed him during the first five years of his ministry that were relatively fruitless, he is Scripture-driven rather than results oriented. Hence, his commitment not only to God's Word but to his understanding of God's dealings with men concerning matters of sin and salvation as seen by his confessional stance and his emphasis on the five Solas.

Finally, THE FACTS OF THE NEPALI REVIVAL

May I rehearse once more the definition of revival used by my late friend Ken Connolly?

² <https://www.the1689confession.com/>

³ 1 Corinthians 15.1-4; Romans 5.1; Ephesians 2.8-9

⁴ Titus 3.5

“Revival is the SOVEREIGN, SUDDEN, SELECTIVE AND SENSATIONAL operation of the Spirit of God. It descends amid PRAYER, creating PURITY and reaching the PERISHING.”

The Charismatics and the Pentecostals of his country and mine, as well as the Pelagians who so closely identify with Charles G. Finney and others of the schedule yourself a revival mindset, pay only lip service to God’s sovereignty, imposing their unscriptural views in place of God’s self-description in the Bible. They are committed to feelings rather than faith, fancy rather than facts, and prosperity rather than genuinely dying to self so one might live for Christ.

I emphasize these things because of the conclusion it has taken me five years to come to, a conclusion based upon what I have observed and learned rather than personally experienced, but a conclusion I am confident the men I know who have experienced revival, and the other men I have read who have seriously studied revival, would agree with: The Nepali Revival has been given by God for these last twenty-five years. Before deciding whether you agree with my conclusion or not, please consider some objective facts.

Over the last quarter century among the Nepali-speaking people of Nepal and northern India the following verifiable events began and are continuing in what used to be the only formally Hindu country in the world, a country with a large Buddhist population (being Buddha’s homeland), and a country overturned by a violent revolution that ended with the deaths of the king and queen at their own son’s hand and the establishment of a Maoist-Communist country that has effectively made Christianity illegal:

- Over the last twenty-five years, Samuel Laxmi Prasad Rai has established no less than 162 Baptist churches. That is more than six churches planted each year!
- In each of the churches, he has established he has installed a pastor that he has trained in his church-based Canaan Ministerial Training Center.
- The 162 churches he has founded have in turn established more than 800 other Baptist churches, mostly also trained in his church-based Canaan Ministerial Training Center in Pokhara.
- He has also filled villages with young women schooled in his Vocational Training School for Women, who are taught the Bible, advanced first aid, sewing, and midwifery.
- He has founded an orphanage.
- He has founded a Christian day school.
- He has established a print ministry in a new three-story building that translates and prints Christian classics for Nepali-speaking readers.
- The number of people that attend the churches he and his ministry have established approaches 100,000 per week.
- The number of men and women enrolled in his two-phase personal discipleship ministries (each phase being three year’s duration) is more than 10,000.
- Some 50,000 primitive people live in very remote Himalayan range valley caves, with 30,000 of those cave-dwellers attending churches established by Samuel Rai, whose pastors are being trained in a remote mountain valley school Rai has established to meet their needs.
- Additionally, Rai heads to remote mountain tribal groups where some of the churches he has established and pastors he is training are located, where he provides ongoing ministerial training for some of the remotest groups on earth.
- In addition to the activities that are directly related to evangelism and discipleship, Samuel Rai also engages in various enterprises to protect and advance the rights of ethnic and tribal groups who are not Christians, to do good unto all men. He is the president of Voice-Nepal, an organization to advance Justice, Peace, and Equality for all. He is also the Director of Public Relations for Media International in Nepal and holds a United Nations press pass.

If you conclude by what I am saying about Samuel Rai that I am bragging on him, you are mistaken. I point out his activities as a reminder of yet another feature of revival, the astonishing stamina God sometimes gives His people to perform their duties. I am reminded of the workload William Carey in India and Charles

Spurgeon in London carried. Then there were the laymen during the Isle of Lewis revival. Those Hebrides fishermen testified to three years of surviving on three to four hours of sleep each night, while working excruciating jobs and attending Bible preaching services nightly. Yet they woke every morning thoroughly refreshed. Many give such testimonies during times of revival, reminding me of Acts 3.19, where a phrase reads,

“the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

In Puritan times in England and New England, and later on, when the Baptist Church planters in America’s Southeast were so marvelously blessed, revivals of religion were said to occur when hundreds were converted to Christ over a span of months.

But what about 100,000 people in almost a thousand Churches in twenty-five years? What about the effect of so many conversions on the establishing of no less than five schools in impoverished regions? What if God chooses to pour out a revival in remote regions that are far from any observation? Is it not still a revival?

Many Christians in the United States would doubt that a revival took place in the early 1970s in Indonesia, but one effect of that revival was the establishing of a new country, East Timor. Just because few in Los Angeles are aware of a revival at the First Chinese Baptist Church does not mean it did not occur. That revival resulted in a small Church of 75 members becoming the largest Church of its kind in the state of California with more than 3000 members.

Consider Ken Connolly’s definition of revival;

“Revival is the SOVEREIGN, SUDDEN, SELECTIVE AND SENSATIONAL operation of the Spirit of God. It descends amid PRAYER, creating PURITY and reaching the PERISHING,”

along with your reading of respected works on the subject, with the Book of Acts as your starting point.

If a doctrinally sound ministry, led by a godly and principled Gospel minister, sees one thousand Churches established in a quarter century, more than 160 by his hand with God’s help, and some 4,000 faithful, Church-attending, members per year added to the book of life, how can such a thing not be a heaven-sent revival whether you have seen it or not?

Beloved, I did not experience revival. However, I have five trips of accumulated observation and insight into God working in Nepal, along with forty years of Bible study and reading, and knowing that revival is not anything any man can schedule. That is why I declare it to be the Nepali Revival.

I remember sitting in the room in Pokhara and thinking to myself, “My goodness. Aha!” My reading, my Bible study, the testimonies of my friends, comes together with my observations. Not the braggadociousness of the preacher, because you don’t get information out of Samuel Rai unless you ask direct, pointed, questions. He brags about nothing.

“Aha!” “Guys,” I am looking at several other American preachers with between 35 and 45 years’ experience in the ministry. “Guys, I think this is a revival.” They pause, they reflect, and said, “You know, I think you are right.” I said, “I think this is a revival. It’s what I might call if I might create some terminology, this is what I would call a low-intensity, long-term revival.”

Twenty-five years! That’s why I declare it to be the Nepali Revival; something to be prayed for by us, something to be supported by us, and something to be profoundly interested in by us. What child of God would not be interested in what God is obviously doing, even if it is someplace else?