

Episode 123

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

- Romans 6.1-2

Since the birth of the New Testament church, historians tell us of revivals, renewals and awakenings across the world. Sometimes they tell of a church or a preacher who sees revival through their ministry for a few years, and then the dust seems to settle, and life continues as it was before, but with a rich renewed release of the presence of God. At other times the impact is so great on the cities and towns in the surrounding areas that the effect of God's work in their midst is felt across the nation, changing the nature and character of the greater population, leaving an afterglow that can be felt for decades to come.

However, whatever the measure of the movement, they all begin with one common factor - a holy discontent.

"Well then," asks Paul, "should we just keep on sinning?!" This, in many ways, was the kernel of thought that grew to become holy discontent for those at the centre of revival and renewal throughout history. Essentially, this thought simmered beneath the surface, gnawing at the hearts of members and ministers alike, as the Holy Spirit began to draw them to himself, as the slight unease eventually grew into a deep dissatisfaction with the low state of their faith, the church, and the culture. Here, their disgruntled dismay between the hunger for something more - a life saturated with the presence of God, coloured with the spaciousness, peace and purposes of the Kingdom of God - and the reality in which they were living coalesced from frustration and lament into a holy discontent.

Their desires began to align with God's desire to renew the world. As they meditated on scripture as we've done recently, they became discontent with the state of their world, perceiving its injustices, sinfulness, brokenness, and hopelessness. Its failings became painfully real to them. They began to ask if God could do again in their time, what he had done in the early church.

This in turn led to a growing discontent with the state of the church. Not in a critical nit-picking sense. Instead, they experienced a genuine hunger for the church to be released into its full potential and power in their broken world.

These nudges from the Holy Spirit then fermented into a deep dissatisfaction with the state of their own lives and the level of their faith. No longer pointing fingers of concern outward, they were humbled by their inadequacy, wrestling with their hollow faith and empty relationship with Christ and his people, grasping that change must begin within their own hearts. And here, everything changes. Instead of falling into self-condemnation or paralysis, they began to cry out to God to change their lives, to start His renewal in their hearts, and so began revival.

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