

Going From Bad to Better in 2024

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“How could things get any worse?” When stated as a declaration, this question is a classic line in movies and books quoted by one of the characters immediately before things worsen, to their dismay. These moments serve as a sort of comic relief for the audience. However, it’s not so funny when it comes to real life.

I don’t have to tell you that 2024 is a presidential election year, and considering the woke madness, deceptive media, and political corruption we have endured since the last election, one can expect we are in for a wild ride as a nation. How will it turn out? Where will we be as Americans by this time next year? Are we as a nation destined to continue going from bad to worse morally, spiritually, and politically, or is there a way off this road to societal suicide?

I believe there is, based on the historical record of how revivals and awakenings have done just that – changed the current trajectory from bad to worse to become “bad to better.” Here are just a few examples of going from bad to better.

Consider the culture-altering events of the 1960s. The “Hippie” movement (anyone remember the “Beatniks”?) removed the moral boundaries around sex, drugs, and alcohol while embracing a life of hedonism. Things went from bad to worse for many young people, and our society took a step downward in morality and decency. American culture is still negatively influenced by this movement.

Can things get any better? Yes. In that same decade, we saw a spiritual awakening among many of these same youth and young adults in the hippie movement. Literally thousands of them found new life in Christ and freedom from the hellish consequences of the debased drug and “free love” culture. As chronicled in the movie, “Jesus Revolution,” this awakening birthed a vibrant international church fellowship that continues today called “Calvary Chapel.”

The history of American revivals and awakenings records how things went from bad to better. Starting with the First Great Awakening in the 1740s to the almost fifty-year-long Second Great Awakening in the early 1800s, the Prayer Meeting Revival in the mid-1850s, and the Azusa Street Revival in the early 1900s, among others, they were all preceded by a society going from bad to worse.

Historians have stated that America would not have survived if it had not been for these revivals and awakenings. In each case, the revival of the Church and awakening of the lost pulled American society back from the precipice of collapse. Things went from bad to better.

Going “across the pond,” at the beginning of the 20th Century, the people of Wales were far from God, resulting in a declining culture. However, through the praying of a young 20-something miner named Evan Roberts, a revival swept through the region and eventually to other nations. Bars went out of business, husbands became responsible providers, people came in

crowds to pay their debts at the police station, crime dramatically decreased, and families stayed together.

Then there was the 1949-53 Hebrides Islands revival (off the northwest coast of Scotland) that went from island to island and transformed the entire society and culture – from bad to much better! As in Wales, the drinking houses closed because of a lack of business, and the young people left the dance halls to fill the churches as they surrendered their lives to Christ with repentant hearts and tear-stained faces.

Also, in Wales, so many miners got saved that they had to retrain the mules who worked in the mines because the newly saved miners no longer used profanity; consequently, the mules could not understand the miners' commands without their foul language. In addition, in Wales and the Hebrides Islands, crime went down so much that when the magistrate came through to try the criminal cases, he received a white glove to indicate no crimes had been committed since his last visit.

You can read more about the many moving stories of transformation from the primary preacher during the Hebrides Islands Revival, Rev. Duncan Campbell, on the Revival Library website (revival-library.org) under the title, "When the Mountains Flowed Down." You can also hear a recording of him speaking to the Prairie Bible Institute in Canada about the revival on multiple platforms, including the "Sermon Index" website.

One final example is from the other side of the world, the southern hemisphere. The islands of Fiji experienced a coup in May of 2000 that continued for almost two months as the world watched to see what would happen. George Speight led an actual insurrection, and the nation's military was unsure what side to take in this crisis.

One of the critical turning points for the nation (and I am not suggesting that everything became perfect) was when a highly placed government official called the pastors into his office and told them that their well-known division and competition between pastors was not helping the nation at a time where they needed a unifying voice and example. Many pastors heeded his words and repented to God and one another. What followed is truly miraculous.

As people began to call upon God out of a repentant heart, He began to answer them. The political landscape changed dramatically, and in a short time, many Christians were elected into political office or placed on the Cabinet, including pastors in positions overseeing specific departments. There are multiple stories from the different islands of how things went from bad to better after the people turned to God, put away their sinful ways, and made reconciliation as God directed.

Please note I did not say from bad to perfect, just better. You will never find a story of perfection in all the countless stories of past revivals and awakenings. However, these real-life accounts reveal how the power of prayer, repentance, and surrendered hearts to God can transform a community, region, or nation from bad to better.

What could God do in our region if pastors responded as the pastors in Fiji? What could happen if professing Christians of this region humbled themselves before God and one another to seek Him together for revival and awakening? We have an idea from the historical record, so what are we waiting for? The “ball” is in our court now.

(The Sentinel Group has created multiple documentaries about these more recent community-transforming revivals - sentinelgroup.org - which I encourage you to check out.)