

Post-Exile Prophets
HYMN STORY: CLEANSE ME

Saturday, September 20

Reading: Psalm 139

Psalm 139:23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

*[1] Search me, O God, and know my heart today
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray
See if there be some wicked way in me
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free*

*[3] Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine
Take all my will, my passion, self and pride
I now surrender, Lord, in me abide*

*[2] I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin
Fulfill Thy word and make me pure within
Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame
Grand my desire to magnify Thy name*

*[4] O Holy Ghost, revival comes from Thee
Send a revival, start the work in me
Thy Word declares thou wilt supply our need
For blessings now, O Lord, I humbly plead*

James Edwin Orr (1912-1987)¹ was a famous minister, historian, lecturer, and author. Billy Graham called Dr. Orr “one of the greatest authorities on the history of religious revivals in the Protestant world.”² Not only was he an expert on revival movements in history, he was a sought after revival speaker himself. In his lifetime he held revivals in over 100 countries, bringing the good news of Jesus to the world. In 1936, he had just been part of revival meetings in New Zealand and was on his way home. He was encouraged by how the Holy Spirit had moved during these meetings. Revival was starting to happen! Just before his departure four Aborigine girls sang for him the native Maori Farewell Song, ‘Po Atu Rau.’ Orr was impressed by the beauty of this folk melody and was inspired to write Christian words to fit the music. While waiting five minutes at a local post office he jotted down some words on the back of an envelope. These words with the Maori melody would become the hymn ‘Cleanse Me’ (or sometimes it’s called ‘Search Me, O God’). The opening verse is based Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

At its heart, ‘Search Me’ is a cry for revival. The lyrics remind us of some important points.

- (1) Revival must be personal! Notice the personal pronouns throughout the song. Revival begins in the individual heart that seeks for God to “cleanse me from every sin and set me free.
- (2) Revival is all about giving glory to God! Verse 2 reminds us that when we realize we have been cleansed from sin, then the burning desire of our heart should be to praise God and “desire to magnify Thy name.”
- (3) Revival requires surrender! As verse 3 states, we must wholly surrender our life, heart, will, passions, self, and pride to the Lord.
- (4) Revival is the work of the Holy Spirit! We sometimes have what we call ‘revival meetings.’ But it is not a preacher or an event that brings revival. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in individual hearts that brings about the change. That is why verse 4 says, “send a revival, start the work in me.”

If we want to honor the Lord with our lives - - - if we want revival - - - there are several things this song encourages us to pray.

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| 1. Search me | 5. Take my life |
| 2. Cleanse me | 6. Fill me with Your love |
| 3. Set me free | 7. Surrender |
| 4. Fill me with fire (passion) | |

‘Cleanse Me’ (3 verses) on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ab28SssHA8>

1 <https://hymnstudiesblog.wordpress.com/2008/04/26/quotcleanse-mequot/>
<http://barryshymns.blogspot.com/2014/03/search-me-o-god.html>
2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Edwin_Orr