

# The Korean Pentecost

by David Smithers

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*The sermon explores the purpose and power of revival, highlighting the Korean Revival of 1907 as an example of God's merciful purposes in revival.*

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Joel 2:28, Matthew 5:10, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Church Revival"

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## Description

David Smithers delves into the purpose and significance of true evangelical awakenings, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in reviving the Church to embody New Testament Christianity. While the primary purpose of revival is to purify and empower believers for witness, secondary purposes may include preparation for times of suffering and tribulation. Smithers highlights historical revivals like 'The Great Awakening' in America and the Korean Revival of 1907, showcasing how God's merciful revival often precedes periods of hardship and challenges.

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## Transcript

J. Edwin Orr has accurately described a true evangelical awakening as, "a movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of New Testament Christianity in the Church of Christ and its related community." What is the purpose for such outpourings of the Holy Spirit? Are God's purposes in reviving His Church always the same? Without question, God's primary purpose for revival is first and foremost; the purifying and empowering of the saints to be a witness to the ends of the earth. Yet, there are several possible secondary purposes for the Church to be revived. Many today when speaking of the need for revival in North America seem to focus mainly on the restoration of America's former glory and prosperity. However, God often sends revival in order to prepare His Church for times of great suffering and tribulation. Have we forgotten about "The Great Awakening" that radically transformed the American colonies and prepared our forefathers for the Revolutionary War and the founding of our nation? In 1857-58 our nation was once again shaken by a mighty revival. This revival prepared thousands of men to face death and eternity on the killing fields of the Civil War in the years 1861-1865. At the turn of the last century revival broke out again in Wales, India, China and America, only to be shortly followed by World War I in 1914. The coming of a revival is not always a guarantee for national peace and prosperity, but rather revival is often the providence of God to prepare us for suffering.

The mighty Korean Revival of 1907 is another clear example of God's merciful purposes in revival. In 1905 Japan defeated Russia, and gained control of Korea's foreign affairs as the spoils of war. The Japanese

annexed and occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945. For the next 35 years Japan manipulated and oppressed the Koreans for their own profit. Many who suffered at the hands of the Japanese during these years were the newly revived and converted saints of God. God in His foreknowledge and mercy, revived the Korean Church in 1907 and thus prepared thousands to be thrust into eternity only a few years later. Let us now consider this revival that prepared a whole nation for years of suffering and tribulation.

#### News of Revival Encourages Fervent Prayer

In 1906 Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston brought news of the awakenings in Wales and in India to the missionaries in Korea. Soon many were continually praying for a fresh work of the Spirit. Of this time William Blair and Bruce Hunt stated, "We had reached a place where we dared not go forward without God's presence. Very earnestly we poured out our hearts before Him, searching our hearts and seeking to meet the conditions. God heard us and gave us an earnest that week of what was to come. Before the meetings closed the Spirit showed us plainly that the way of victory for us would be a way of confession, of broken hearts, and bitter tears." Of this season of prayer, Jonathan Goforth said, "The Early Church did great honor to God the Holy Spirit by dropping everything and spending ten days in prayer to prepare for His coming. I have told how the missionaries spent one to several hours each day for months in preparing a way in their hearts for the Holy Spirit. . . They honored God and appreciated the gift of the Holy Spirit by meeting in the church for prayer at five o'clock - not five o'clock every evening, but every morning through the fall and winter of 1906-7. They honored God the Holy Spirit by six months of prayer and then He came as a flood."

#### God Answers Prayer

"At Monday noon, we missionaries met and cried out to God in earnest. We were bound in spirit and refused to let God go till He blessed us. That night it was very different. Each felt as he entered the church that the room was full of God's presence. Not only missionaries but Koreans testify to the same thing. I was present once in Wisconsin when the Spirit of God fell upon a company of lumbermen and every unbeliever in the room rose to ask for prayers. That night in Pyongyang, the same feeling came to me as I entered the room, a sense of God's nearness, impossible of description. After a short sermon, Mr. Lee took charge of the meeting and called for prayers. So many began praying that Mr. Lee said, 'If you want to pray like that, all pray,' and the whole audience began to pray out loud, all together. The effect was indescribable - not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne. It was not many, but one, born of one Spirit, lifted to one Father above. Just as on the day of Pentecost, they were all together in one place, of one accord praying, 'and suddenly there came from heaven the sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.' God is not always in the whirlwind, neither does He always speak in a still small voice, He came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Mr. Lee's account, written at the time of the revival, gives the history of that night better than any words, however carefully penned three years later, can do. Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. My own cook tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it, and cried to me across the room: 'Pastor, tell me, is there any hope for me, can I be forgiven?' And then he threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and almost screamed in agony. Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer,

and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping, and we would all weep, we could not help it, and so the meeting went on until two o'clock a.m., with confession and weeping and praying."

"Only a few of the missionaries were present on that Monday night. On Tuesday morning, Mr. Lee and I went from house to house telling the good news to all who were absent, (and to our Methodist friends in the city). That noon the whole foreign community assembled to render thanks to God. I wish to describe the Tuesday night meeting in my own language because a part of what happened concerned me personally. We were aware that bad feeling existed between several of our church officers, especially between a Mr. Kang and Mr. Kim. Mr. Kang confessed his hatred for Mr. Kim on Monday night, but Mr. Kim was silent. At our noon prayer-meeting on Tuesday, several of us agreed to pray for Mr. Kim. I was especially interested because Mr. Kang was my assistant in the North Pyengyang Church and Mr. Kim an elder in the Central Church, and one of the officers in the Pyengyang Men's Association, of which I was chairman. As the meeting progressed, I could see Mr. Kim sitting with the elders behind the pulpit with his head down. Bowing where I sat, I asked God to help him, and bolting up, I saw him coming forward. Holding to the pulpit, he made his confession. 'I have been guilty of fighting against God. I have been guilty of hating not only Kang You-moon, but Pang Mok-sa.' Pang Mok-sa is my-Korean name. I never had a greater surprise in my life. To think that this man, my associate in the Men's Association, had been hating me without my knowing it! It seems that I had said something to him one day in the hurry of managing a school field day exercise which gave offense, and he had not been able to forgive me. Turning to me, he said, 'Can you forgive me, can you pray for me?' I stood up and began to pray, 'A-pa-ge, A-pa-ge' ('Father, Father,') and got no further. It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and the Spirit of God came down from heaven in a mighty avalanche of power upon us. I fell at Kim's side and wept and prayed as I had never prayed before. My last glimpse of the audience is photographed indelibly on my brain. Some threw themselves full length upon the floor, hundreds stood with arms outstretched toward heaven. Every man forgot every other. Each was face to face with God. I can hear yet that fearful sound of hundreds of men pleading with God for life, for mercy. The cry went out over the city till the heathen were in consternation."

"As soon as we were able, we missionaries gathered at the platform and consulted, 'What shall we do? If we let them go on like this some will go crazy.' Yet we dared not interfere. We had prayed to God for an outpouring of His Spirit upon the people and it had come. I know now that when the Spirit of God falls upon guilty souls, there will be confession, and no power on earth can stop it. The Christians returned to their homes in the country taking the Pentecostal fire with them. Everywhere the story was told, the same Spirit flamed forth and spread till practically every church, not only in North Korea, but throughout the entire peninsula had received its share of the blessing. In Pyengyang, special meetings were held in the various churches for more than a month. Even the schools had to lay aside lessons for days while the children wept over their wrongdoings together."

### Reaping the Harvest

"A burning zeal to make known the merits of the Savior was a special mark of the Church at Pentecost. The same is not less true of the Korean Church. It was said that the heathen complained that they could not endure the persecution of the Christians. They were evermore telling of the strong points of their Savior. Some declared they would have to sell out and move to some district where there were no Christians, in order to get rest." "Drunkards, gamblers, adulterers, murderers, thieves, self-righteous,

Confucianists and others had been made into new men in Christ. In five years of rapid growth, 1906-1910, the net gain for all the churches of Korea was 79,221, which was more than the total members in Japan after half a century of Protestant effort, or twice the number of the Protestants in China in the first eighty years of mission work. By 1912, there were approximately 300,000 Korean church members in a total population of twelve million."

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