

The Place of Prayer in Revival

by J. Edwin Orr

Revival begins with prayer, where believers come together to seek God's presence and power, and wait on Him to move.

Duration: 24:10

Scripture: Acts 1:6-8, Acts 1:14-15, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 2:41-42

Topics: "Revival Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a powerful experience of revival in a church. The details of the event were so overwhelming that the speaker struggled to recall them accurately. However, the main highlights were that half of the church fell to the floor in prayer, and the sound of their cries was compared to waves or a strong wind. The speaker mentions that this kind of outpouring of simultaneous audible prayer is a common occurrence in countries like Korea, Latin America, Africa, and India. The sermon also references biblical passages about the Holy Spirit and the disciples being empowered to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Transcript

Our next speaker is an authority on the history of revivals. Dr. J. Edwin Orr is Professor Emeritus of History and Missions in the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary. His writing ministry includes 20 books.

His song, Claims Me, has helped shape hundreds of Nazarene services. There he writes, 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. O Holy Ghost, revivals come from Thee.

Send a revival, start the work in me. Thy word declares, Thou wilt supply our need. For blessing now, O Lord, I humbly plead.

In this address, you will hear Dr. Orr relate the importance of prayer to spiritual revivals. Our thanks to the Nazarene Theological Seminary for making this recording available to us. We welcome Dr. Orr to the Ministry's tape club.

The disciples said to the Lord, You have this time restored a king to Israel. It was in 24 hours. Now in this chapter, verse 14, after in the early days of the disciples who were present, it said all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the woman, and with the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

If you were to ask the average churchman, What was the first institution of the Christian Church after the Ascension? It probably suggests the sacraments, or the breaking of bread, or the commandment, Mass. But the first institution is the prayer meeting. On this one, a good friend of mine says, the Holy Church is the prayer meeting.

Others may attend, but the Holy Church is the prayer meeting. For those of you who get a burden of prayer, remember that this is the seat of power, humanly speaking. But rather, I should say, because you are at the divine throne.

Now we come to chapter 2. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. In the Authorized Version it says, they were all in one place. There has never been a great revival in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer.

In fact, I make so boldly so there has never been a denominational revival. You say, what about the Methodist revival? The Methodist movement was part of a general revival. It included Jonathan Edwards, who was by many a West Wind.

And George Whitfield, who was not a West Wind, either. Some people say, what about the Pentecostal revival? My Pentecostal friends would be greatly surprised to find that the famous Aviva Street prayer meeting began in the aftermath of a worldwide awakening. Awakenings are general.

God sends revival to all his children. It is true that denominations may refuse revival, and by default leave it to one that will accept it, but they must be all together with one accord. So when you pray, be Catholic in your prayers, not only for the Church of the Nazarene, but everybody that knows the name of Christ.

We need to pray not only for the revival of the Church, but for the awakening of the masses. Should we be surprised at this? When he is come, he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Try and go out on Long Isle or some other street here, and try and convict somebody of sin.

Just try it. See how far you get. It will tell you where to go.

But how is it when the Holy Spirit works that way? Let me give another illustration. Again from primary research. This time we'll take Korea.

Now you know, the climate of North Korea is very severe. A bit like Alberta in Canada. The ground is frozen for about three months of the year.

The farmers can't work in the fields. It's simply too cold. So they work in the barns.

The print material missionaries had a wonderful idea. Why not use the worst week of the winter for a Bible school? Invite the farmers and their families into town. Let them stay with friends or other members of the church.

It would be a kind of festival occasion. And teach the world. One remarkable thing about Korea that accounts for the present strength of the Korean church in South Korea is the fact that both Presbyterians

and Methodists, the pioneers to Korea, taught the Bible.

In season, out of season. They were very faithful missionaries. Now, Frederick Franzen, the founder of what is now called the Evangelical Alliance mission, team, visited Korea in 1903.

And some missionaries and national leaders came to revival. In 1905, there was a wind gathering throughout the country. In 1907, there was something utterly out of this world.

One of them, Dr. Graham Lee, was leading. The man was leading. The central Presbyterian church was filled with men.

Perhaps 1,500 men. The south gate church was filled with women. Dr. Lee said, before we get to the business of Bible study, let's have a moment of prayer.

Mr. Kim revealed his prayer. Mr. Lee revealed his prayer. We'll conclude in a few hours, but Mr. Lee, be ready to conclude.

Mr. Kim got up to offer prayer, but there was such a spirit of prayer abroad that about half a dozen students of the church made a return to pray. When Kim finished, the second man prayed. There were 1,200 people made a return.

Then another. After five had prayed, Mr. Lee thought it was his duty to conclude the prayer. He got up and suddenly beat him to it every time.

He couldn't offer the concluding prayer. Somebody else insisted, praying loud voice. And so much so that Dr. Graham Lee, the American, called out, Stop! Everyone, please! And finally he got quiet.

He said, well, apparently you want to pray. All right, then. Instead of Bible study, you can pray.

What happened next, you didn't expect. All 1,500 stood to their feet and poured out their hearts in a simultaneous audible prayer. One of my students, a certain Baptist lady, writing for a master's degree, described this as an oriental custom.

You'll find it all over Korea today. Of course you hear it. You'll find it in Latin America.

You'll find it in Africa. You'll find it in India. Where the Spirit of God is so outpoured in people, they all want to talk to God at once.

They're utterly oblivious of anyone else. Now it said, the effect was beyond description. Not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit like the noise of the surf in a motion of prayer.

As the prayer continued, an intense conviction of sin settled upon an 80, giving way to bitter, weeping, miserable misdeeds. The longer it went on, the more people broke up. For some reason, I cannot fathom it, there was an English nobleman in Korea at that time, Lord William Cecil.

Why he was visiting Korea, I have no idea. But he was so excited about what he saw, he did what an Englishman does when he's excited. He wrote a letter to the Times in London.

And if you want to read about the Korean Revival, you'll find it even in the London Times. Apparently, an elder got up to his feet to confess a grudge against an American missionary. I know an American missionary.

He died just about three years ago, at the age of 97, when I read my letter. He was so taken aback. This was his Korean colleague.

He didn't even know the man had a grudge against him. What shall I do? Shall I offer forgiveness in prayer? Simply thinking, what did I do to offend him? But he began praying. He was going to pray, Heavenly Father, bless our dear brother who so courageously has confessed his fault.

And help me. He was going to pray something like this. But he never got any further than, Heavenly Father.

When, according to Lord William Cecil, with a rush of power from what I seem to have heard about him, the Europeans described his manifestations as terrifying. Nearly everyone present was seized with the most poignant sense of mental anguish. Before each runner, his sins seemed to be rising in condemnation in his life.

Some were springing to their feet, pleading for an opportunity to relieve their consciences. Others were silent, but slowly went with agony. They were clenching their fists and begging their heads.

From eight to a trillion lives went on. The missionaries got together, tried to stop it, but couldn't stop it. They were horror struck.

Until finally, two in the morning, they were able to stop the meeting. They dismissed it, sent everyone to sleep. Most spent the night away praying.

The missionaries had an emergency meeting. They said, Well, we prayed for revival. By the way, this was in the wake of the Welsh Revival.

That's why they were praying. But we didn't expect this storm. But after a storm, we always have a calm.

So tonight, in the calm, we will teach them the word and bound up their wounds. And that night it began again. And the next night it began again.

The control was taken out of the missionaries' hands, night after night. Simply the Holy Spirit fell on one with conviction and the other for praise and so forth. Until their whole body exposed to catharsis.

I asked one Christian there, were there any hooligans? Oh, yes. He said, there were some. There was one elderly who used to get up and mumble something but never come to the point.

Then a woman's confession exposed him. They had to remove him from the office. The last they heard of him was commercializing his vice by running a brothel.

Nine-tenths of all students in Corolla were converted that year. Do you know that 79,221 congregants were added to the Church in that movement? John Wesley died after 50 years of faithful work in Britain and left 70,000 Methodists in his societies. And here is another quote of the Holy Spirit in Corolla that would 79,000.

This woman touched every field, part of Corolla, Methodist, Presbyterian, everywhere else. Then in 1910, an American missionary had a wonderful idea. Why not even a Women's Service for Christ? So they organized the Women's Service Movement.

They allocated a quarter to each group. The Methodist would go in so many, in such and such an area, in such and such a province, and so forth. It was all organized.

What happened? Well, I think I have the figure here. Instead of a million, there were 15,805 converted. Thank God for 15,805.

But it's very disappointing that they only got a million. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit does not surrender his prerogatives to any committee. And nobody can plan a revival.

Nobody. The reason I quoted this was to illustrate the convicting part of the Holy Spirit. Could you imagine, for instance, what kind of spiritual force would be needed to convict the masses of America today? Sin is entrenched.

I don't know if any of you have ever been to a Woodstock-type festival. What goes on there? They're supposed to be there to rock music. But they are injecting themselves with drugs, smoking marijuana.

They learn to pass women around naked. What kind of conviction of sin would overcome the entrenched sin in America? Do you realize what we are up against? Entrenched sin. People who habitually sin.

People who are soaked in sin. We can't do it. Only the Holy Spirit can bring things down.

And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin. That's why I say we need to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the masses. That the Holy Spirit might fall on Timothy Lerner and convict him.

How many of these led astray with his drugs? And the Holy Spirit may fall upon the pornographers. And make them terrified. Because in the time of the Revival, people under conviction of sin feel that their arachnids feel their terror is shaking them.

They tremble. Now sin is so entrenched, we can't do it with our mild methods. It would take an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring such conviction.

How much further do we have to go? When we find it, they respond it. When they heard this, they were stabbed to the heart. They said, brethren, what shall we do? He said, repent.

That's the message for today. Repentance. It means change.

Metropolitan means change. And he promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who received his word were baptized.

And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. Then it says, they devoted themselves to a prosperous teaching and fellowship, to breaking of bread and prayers. That has stuck in my mind.

When the great Governor of the Swept Loaves, the Lutheran theologians in New Orleans, everyone was talking about it, said, we suspect very much any movement is not wholly committed to war and sacrament. That's how the Church moved from that point. But you see, there's a quadrilateral here.

They're devoting themselves to a prosperous teaching, that's word, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and sacrament, and prayers. There are some people terribly foul in word and sacrament. What they need is fellowship and prayer.

But for other people, they're addicted to fellowship and prayer. They have a superficial Christian life. They need word and sacrament.

It has to be a rounded message. And it says, fear came upon all. I wonder if you've ever heard of a missionary called Amy Carmichael.

She's written some of the most exquisite missionary books in print. She's all written. You know, all written service is liturgical.

There's a time to stand, a time to kneel, a time to recite the Creed, a time to offer the Lord's Prayer, and so forth. Here's what Amy Carmichael said of this same revival. This is all taken from the same revival period.

On October 22, to quote one of the literal verses of the Orphanage, Jesus came to Dormervoir. He was there before. But on that day he came in a sort of vivid fashion, and I cannot remember what struck the child as all-conning.

Now, when intercession and service was proceeding, everything was in order, when suddenly, as Amy Carmichael reported, a realization of the unforeseeable was overwhelming. I'm not quite sure what she meant by that. Just that she was so overwhelmed.

It was impossible not to pray. One of the lads in the high school began to pray, and he would just bend one arm over the other. And all at once, many of the young ones began to cry bitterly and pray for forgiveness.

She found it hard to recall the details. She said, it was so startling and so awful, I could not hear what they wrote. That detail escaped me.

Soon the whole upper half of the church was on its face and the floor, crying to God, man and woman, boy and girl, the deadliest of all others. The sound was like the sound of loaves or a string wound in a tree. People poured into that church.

Here's the thing that stuck in my mind. Amy Carmichael said, for the next fortnight, that's two weeks, life is a portion for us, much as it was for the apostles, when they gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Everything else had to stand aside.

It certainly struck me what the scripture meant. They gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word. They were like doctors working in the epidemic.

Night and day. One after another. Praying with people, talking to people.

I'll give you a further illustration from the same revised period, but this time they did in Swaziland in South Africa. Now they say, well, where did you get all this? I had to dig it up and get letters. This is from a letter written by Edwin Richardson, a missionary of the South African generation.

In Swaziland, he said, it was such a revival, that the king humbled himself to the church and asked the people to pray for him. And as a reminder, the power of God came down in the very first meeting. The next two days I shall never forget.

We were in the church 11 and 12 hours a day, dealing with people from 6 or 7 in the morning until midnight. For two days and nights, many could not eat or sleep, either because of conviction of sin or the

great joy that fell in their hearts when sin was forgiven. My interpreter, the outpriest in Soweto, was the granddaughter of that king.

A princess, a Swazi princess. Jane Lele. And she said, yes, my grandfather humbly asked the people to pray for him.

When he came into the church, everyone stood. He said, please sit down. I'm just a sinner like everyone else.

Please pray for me. Edwin Richardson said in a letter, this shows you how bona fide the letter was. One of the king's right-handed men, a henchman, I'm not sure what his title was, one of the old men was Yawaliya, that's the same as Jeremiah.

He studied at Ludlow College, but he had been paralyzed. He had been ill for years. Scarcely able to move.

He was praying under conviction, kneeling at the front. Someone had helped him to come up to the front to kneel. When suddenly he leaped to his feet and started to dance for joy.

King of his infinity. He began jumping over benches and pews, jumped up on the organ and down again, ran around the church, ran around the missionary's home, and as Edwin Richardson said, knocked over her precious vase and broke it. Of course, take a house key and you can do something like that.

Completely healed. Do you know that this revival swept Africa? David Barrett, who ran the big computers for the one Christian handbook, David Barrett of Nairobi, an Englishman, says that since 1910, the growth of the Christian church in Africa is running four times as fast as the growth of the population. Why since 1910? That's when the word of the Welsh revival struck Africa and began spreading throughout the whole continent.

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. That's what we need. So what do we do? How did they begin? They began with prayer.

Continually praying. They waited on God. And the power was in the Holy Spirit himself.

His was the power.

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