

CHARACTERISTICS OF REVIVAL

Huw Priday

HUW PRIDAY, CO-DIRECTOR OF A FILM DOCUMENTARY, 'A DIARY OF REVIVAL', EXAMINES GOD'S CRITERIA FOR REVIVAL, FEATURING THE IMPACT OF THE 1904 WELSH REVIVAL

For most Christians, the Holy Spirit being the third person of the Trinity is self-evident from scripture, beginning with the Spirit of God before creation 'moving upon the face of the waters' (Genesis 1:2). But what is the true role of the Holy Spirit? For some, he is simply an influence, some abstract source of power; but our Lord made it clear that his role was far more important. The Holy Spirit was to be our advocate with God. Our Lord's last words to his disciples in John 16 stated that after he left them, it would be the Holy Spirit who would lead, guide and inspire them. He clearly stated that, unless he went away, the Holy Spirit would not come. In Matthew 12:31 he referred to the fact that sin against

the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was the inspiration for the prophets and other men of God. The church today needs to understand that the Holy Spirit is a vital and essential 'third person' of the Trinity, present with us and enabling us to do God's will. It was the Wesley brothers' encounter with the person of the Holy Spirit long after their call and ordination, which transformed their lives and led to the founding of the Methodist Church.

The great Welsh revival of 1904/05 in which Evan Roberts played a key role, saw a remarkable transformation of the small and seemingly insignificant nation of Wales. Christianity originally came to Wales soon after the crucifixion of Christ. This Celtic land has seen many spiritual revivals over the centuries. Despite this, the Great Welsh Revival of 1904 was unlike anything Wales had ever witnessed. The conditions that enabled God to move through those involved with this revival are crucial in understanding how true, authentic revival begins.



Evan Roberts

The main character in this epic event was a young, largely self-educated coal miner and blacksmith by the name of Evan Roberts. From the age of thirteen, Evan pursued a life of prayer and commitment to God's word that would eventually lead to a mighty outpouring of God's grace and love upon a nation of religious chapel-goers. Just one month before revival broke out, Evan



Left: A cartoon of Evan preaching on the open air in North Wales from John Elais pulpit. **Right:** Moriah Chapel where the young Evan Roberts grew up.



An illustration of an underground prayer meeting near Llanelli.



encountered the third person of the Trinity; the person of the Holy Spirit for the very first time. An encounter that became the catalyst for something much greater to come. It was this unique personal encounter with God, not as Saviour or as the Father, but with the empowering Advocate, whom Jesus had promised would enable his disciples. Prior to this, Evan's worship and devotion had been to God the Father through the saving grace of Jesus. This was an entirely new experience, one which transformed Evan's personal relationship with God, just as it had the Wesley brothers.

This is true of more recent revivals. For example, Dr Billy Graham and his musical Director Cliff Barrows came to Wales in 1946 to visit Moriah Chapel in Loughor, the scene of the outbreak in 1904, searching for the 'holy fire' of God which had fallen across many parts of Wales at that time. Upon arriving in London, they were taken to the Methodist Central Hall where the Revd Stephen Olford preached on the third person of the Trinity. The young Americans had never heard anyone preach about the Holy Spirit in those terms! After speaking with Stephen Olford, he agreed to meet them the following week in a hotel in Pontypridd, Wales, to pray for them. It was there that they encountered the third person of the Trinity in a convicting and transformational power, just as the Wesley brothers had.

Some 15 years ago, I met Mary Peckham in South Africa. Mary was converted in the great Hebridean Revival of 1949 under Duncan Campbell's ministry. Again, this revival was birthed out of the fervent and persistent prayers of those seeking the reality of God with a deep desire to be rightly related to him. I never tired of listening to Mary's testimony of how, in her rebellious youthful state, she was confronted by the living God of the Bible, on the Isle of Lewis in the midst of an incredible supernatural outpouring of his grace and love. She was asked many times what it had been like to experience revival. 'Was it like being in a great big party?' one Dutch reformed pastor asked her over lunch. 'Absolutely not!' she replied. Mary went on to explain how she remembered vividly the great conviction of sin and the awfulness of confronting it. The conviction came from the Holy Spirit who literally stopped Mary in her tracks as she walked home from a youth meeting that evening. She fell prostrate before God in deep repentance, crying out to her Saviour Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Then, and only then, did she know deep within her heart that she had received his forgiveness through the cleansing blood of Jesus and had been set free from her old life. At that point, joy and peace flooded her being in a way that changed her life forever.



Huw Priday visiting Dr Billy Graham

Some months after returning to America in 1947, the very first Billy Graham Crusade took place. (I received this account first-hand from Dr Graham whilst visiting his home in North Carolina. It is substantiated in an article written by David Edward Pike, found at 'thenetcardiff.org.uk' website).

It was not until I had my own personal encounter with the third person of the Trinity that my Christian walk of 28 years was totally transformed. The Holy Spirit is the one who promises to lead us into ALL truth and when we encounter him it is a profound, life-changing experience.

Mary had divested herself of her old nature and God had clothed her in the beautiful righteous robe of Jesus. In Galatians 2:20 the Apostle Paul writing

to the church in Galatia reminds us that we were crucified with Christ and our new life in Christ is now, by definition, a very different life and one that is empowered by the third person of the Trinity. The same transformation was experienced by the Wesley brothers and the young Americans.



We cannot prepare ourselves for the ascent into God's presence. It must be a divine work of grace, initiated and executed by a holy, righteous and loving God but sought prayerfully and earnestly by those seeking it.



So there seems to be a common denominator at work in what we so often refer to as revival. We must fulfil certain criteria in order for the conditions to be possible or conducive for God to work. Revival is God's initiative not our own. Who can ascend unto the mountain of the Lord? Those with clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3). We cannot prepare ourselves for the ascent into God's presence. It must be a divine work of grace, initiated and executed by a holy, righteous and loving God but sought prayerfully and earnestly by those seeking it. One of the pre-requisites of revival is that it requires a heart of repentance in those seeking it. We must come before a holy God, acknowledging our sinfulness (our human propensity for sin), our utter weakness and inability to change our sinful state and our total dependency on Jesus' finished and complete work of atonement. This requires our humility. Jesus is our example. He humbled himself and became obedient; not just obedient, but obedient unto death. If we are to witness a divine work of grace that leads to true authentic revival, it must begin in our hearts. We too must individually and corporately be willing to

'die' to our old way of life and embrace the new and glorious life Jesus offers. For this to happen we need the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Welsh Revival of 1904 transformed not only the nation of Wales, but spread to many other nations including Los Angeles, North America; the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya region of India; Scandinavia; Africa; Latin America; Europe; the city of St Petersburg in Russia and Pyongyang in what is now North Korea. But it all began in Wales with a young man who hungered after God with full determination, faith and obedience.

God used another young Welshman by the name of Robert Jermain Thomas as a catalyst for the spiritual transformation that was to ignite in the great Pyongyang revival of 1906 in Korea. In 1866 God called 27 year old Thomas to take the gospel to Korea. His journey ended in his martyrdom on the beachhead at Pyongyang before he was ever able seemingly to fulfil God's call on his life. Thomas' martyrdom was a powerful illustration of the seed that Jesus talked of in John 12:24 which fell to the ground and died in order to bear much fruit. His martyrdom proved to be the catalyst for the Pyongyang Revival in 1906 which in turn led to the phenomenal spiritual growth across the nation of Korea. Today, there are over 12 million Christians in South Korea alone. Thomas' journey of faith and surrender to God led to his physical death, but for most Christians the Lord requires of us a 'dying to self', a laying down of our will in preference and obedience to his. South Korea continues to be the second largest mission-sending country in the world to this day. Despite the Korean War in 1950 dividing North and South Korea, the Holy Spirit continues to work in and through the hearts of yielded, surrendered followers of Jesus, bringing his light into the darkness of that despot regime. There are countless testimonies of Christians having been used of God in Korea, north and south. The Kingdom of God is advancing in the midst of a brutal, evil regime through his people who carry his presence within them (Luke 17:21).

The church today is in desperate need of renewal and many people are looking for answers in the wrong places. What can we deduce from these well documented accounts of revivals over

the last 150 years? Two things come to mind: firstly, we must take care to come aside with God in our prayer closets and there examine our own personal relationship with him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must be willing to make our lives wholly available to him. Secondly, and most importantly we must seek the heart of God in true humility and surrender to his purposes for us, rather than asking him to 'bless' our own individual vision of what we want to do for God. We are called human beings and not human doings! The Lord Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:18 that he (alone) would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. For genuine revival to happen, it must be a God given conviction that captivates our hearts and leads us into his truth. Are we worshiping the God of Scripture or the god of our imagination? One to ponder!

The Revd Huw Priday is a classically trained musician and tenor singer. Huw has sung the Welsh revival hymn: 'Here is love vast as the ocean' on TV broadcasts celebrating the centenary of the Welsh revival. His film documentary, 'A Diary of Revival', tells the story of Evan Roberts and the events surrounding the Great Welsh Revival of 1904. Huw was ordained in 2016 and ministers to classical singers and musicians around the world.



A recording of Huw Priday singing 'Here is Love Vast as the Ocean' at the Cardiff International Arena to mark the centenary of the 1904 Welsh Revival can be viewed at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/love-song

See over for the love song of the Welsh Revival.

'THE LOVE SONG OF THE WELSH REVIVAL'

Here is Love vast as the Ocean

Written by Welshman William Rees and translated into English by William Edwards

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Loving-kindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout heav'n's eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.

Let me, all Thy love accepting,
Love Thee, ever all my days;
Let me seek Thy kingdom only,
And my life be to Thy praise;
Thou alone shalt be my glory,
Nothing in the world I see;
Thou hast cleansed and sanctified me,
Thou Thyself hast set me free.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
And Thy grace my need is meeting,
As I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and pow'r on me,
Without measure, full and boundless,
Drawing out my heart to Thee.