

## Revivals And Church History :: 'AGONIZING' PRAYER - VITAL KEY TO REVIVAL -strom

**'AGONIZING' PRAYER - VITAL KEY TO REVIVAL -strom - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/11/2 17:59**

### **'AGONIZING' PRAYER - VITAL KEY TO REVIVAL**

*by Andrew Strom*

I have been concerned lately that despite all our discussion on this site about the key features of Revival, I have still not really put enough emphasis on one of the most vital keys of all - 'AGONIZING' PRAYER. We have spoken about many aspects of true Revival - REPENTANCE, HOLINESS, 'DARING' FAITH, the 'NEW WINESKIN' movement with it's NEW LEADERS that God will raise up to house His new move, etc. But Revival history shows again and again that if there are two key elements to obtaining true Revival, they would have to be DEEP REPENTANCE and 'AGONIZING' PRAYER. Frank Bartleman (a leader in the famous Azusa Street Revival) wrote: "I received from God early in 1905 the following keynote to revival: 'THE DEPTH OF REVIVAL WILL BE DETERMINED EXACTLY BY THE DEPTH OF THE SPIRIT OF REPENTANCE'. And this will obtain for all people, at all times." So we must certainly remember that deep repentance lies at the heart of true Revival. But the other thing that Bartleman emphasised in his book was the hours of agonizing travail and intercession they went through before Revival hit.

Anyone who has studied past Revivals will tell you that above all else, it is the key elements of repentance and also heart-rending, Spirit-fired prayer that first lead to Revival, and then keep the flame burning on. As Matthew Henry stated, "When God intends great mercy for His people, the first thing He does is set them a-praying." And Leonard Ravenhill wrote that "the man who can get believers to praying would, under God, usher in the greatest revival that the world has ever known." What an amazing statement. Yet, all Revival history confirms the truth of it. Truly, if we could get God's people to AGONIZE IN PRAYER for Revival, as did believers of ages past, then the glory of God would surely come down. But there are all too few 'agonizers' today.

Of course, it is always far more powerful if such intercessors can GATHER DAILY to interceed together for a great outpouring, just as did the disciples before Pentecost. As A.T. Pierson wrote, "From the day of Pentecost, there has been NOT ONE great spiritual awakening in any land which has not begun in a UNION OF PRAYER, though only among two or three; no such outward, upward movement has continued after such prayer meetings declined."

Charles Finney is often regarded as possibly the greatest Revival preacher in the history of the church - a mighty preacher of conviction and repentance. But Finney had some very interesting views (-almost 'scientific' in a spiritual sense) on how and why Revival came. He was convinced, through many years of Revival ministry, that God intended the church to live continually in a Revival state - that this was the "normal" state of the church. And he was also convinced that if the church would just meet the basic conditions for Revival - deep repentance and heartfelt, 'agonizing' prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit, then Revival would ALWAYS result. He likened it to a field of

wheat. If a farmer tills the soil (-deep heart-searching repentance) and provides the right seed and conditions, then a great crop will always result. This is normal and expected. Finney said: "Revival is no more a miracle than a crop of wheat. Revival comes from heaven when heroic souls enter the conflict determined to win or die - or if need be, to win and die! 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the VIOLENT take it by force.'" John Wesley was of a similar mind: "Have you any days of fasting and prayer? Storm the throne of grace and persevere therein, and mercy will come down."

Interestingly, when Finney's "Revival Lectures" were published and Finney's "methods" and teachings were put into practice, there were outbreaks of true Revival all over the world. Deep repentance and agonizing prayer - the simple keys to true Revival. Some years later, a missionary to China named Jonathan Goforth, desperate to see God move amongst the seemingly-hardened locals, discovered Finney's writings. Before long he was 'revived' himself, and went on to see mighty outbreaks of Revival wherever he preached in China. Jonathan Goforth became one of this century's great Revival preachers, all through following the simple "methods" of Finney in seeing the convicting power of God unleashed.

When we speak about 'Revival' here, we are not speaking about some mere evangelistic crusade or passing excitement. We certainly are not speaking about the kinds of movements that are sweeping through the church today under the labels of 'revival' or 'blessing'. We are talking about mighty moves of God, where conviction of sin and deep repentance often spread out of the churches and into the communities round about, utterly transforming thousands for Christ. One writer described this latter stage of Revival as being "a community saturated with God". Jonathan Edwards said of the 1735 New England Revival, "The town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love, or so full of joy; and yet, so full of distress as it was then."

When Revival spreads out into the community in this way (as happened with the 1904 Welsh Revival, and many others), it is not uncommon for bars to be transformed into prayer meetings, for large numbers of notorious criminals to be converted, and for judges to even be left without cases to put to trial! Such is the impact of a mighty general outpouring of the Spirit of God. In the Welsh Revival of 1904 under Evan Roberts, the entire nation was literally transformed, with HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS converted in a matter of a few months in this tiny nation. And it was all through prayer and repentance.

One eyewitness said of this famous Revival in Wales that it was not the eloquence of Evan Roberts that broke men down, but his tears. "He would break down, crying bitterly for God to bend them, in an agony of prayer, the tears coursing down his cheeks, with his whole frame writhing. Strong men would break down and cry like children... a sound of weeping and wailing would fill the air."

The following is a typical excerpt from Evan Roberts' preaching: "First, is there any sin in your past with which you have not honestly dealt,- not confessed to God? On your knees at once. Your past must be put away and cleansed. Second, is there anything in your life that is doubtful - anything you cannot decide whether it is good or evil?

Away with it. There must not be a trace of a cloud between you and God. Have you forgiven everybody - EVERYBODY? If not, don't expect forgiveness for your sins..."

This, then, is the kind of Revival that we are talking about. A mighty outpouring, a deluge of the Spirit of God - a 'Pentecost' of God's convicting glory, where His presence floods down amongst men once more. And such outpourings always start with God's people, before they spread out into the community at large. In fact, right at the beginning, Revivals almost always begin with a small 'prayer core' - the believers who are wrestling in prayer - begging God in an agony of Spirit-led travail, to outpour His Spirit upon them, upon their fellow believers and upon their city or nation.

What exactly is 'AGONIZING' PRAYER? Well, it is not too easy to describe. But I know it when it happens. When I was 17 years old, and I was first filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, I had access to many old Revival books which I devoured with a Spirit-driven hunger. It did not take long for me to notice that the keys to these past Revivals seemed to be deep repentance and this kind of 'wrestling, agonizing' prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit. I simply decided that I was going to 'agonize' in prayer for Revival! And I did. Every day would find me on my knees for a period of time, with liquid fire on my lips, begging God to fill me more and more with His Spirit, to glorify Himself in the earth and to bring mighty Revival to our nation. Before long I noticed that there was often an awesome sense of being in the very throneroom of God when I was praying. I could really tell that my prayers were being heard and that they were making an impact. Glory to God! And they were making an impact on me as well. When I look back now, I can see that basically every breakthrough in God that I have experienced has been because of this early, ongoing 'agonizing' prayer. It's been so crucial.

Of course I do not ALWAYS pray this way. I think praying quietly in tongues is very important and effective also (-and you can pray in tongues driving your car or whatever - it is REALLY important). And simply worshipping God and enjoying His presence is also a vital part of communing with God. But I believe that in connection with REVIVAL, this kind of 'wrestling, agonizing' prayer is essential. However, in order to pray this way, we must have the Holy Spirit empowering and leading our prayers. This is why Finney and others would talk about the 'spirit of prayer' coming upon them:- "... unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing. If I lost the spirit of grace and supplication even for a day or an hour I found myself unable to preach with power and efficiency, or to win souls by personal conversation."

I remember a very significant moment in the book 'Anointed for Burial', which is Todd and DeAnn Burke's account of the mighty Revival in Cambodia in the 1970's. It occurred when God had already been moving powerfully for some time. Todd wrote: "I briefly shared with them some of the things God had been showing me through my Bible readings. Referring to Genesis 32, I told them how Jacob wrestled with the Lord until He blessed him. 'If we expect power and blessing from the Lord, we are going to have to be willing to wrestle with Him in prayer and fasting, in self-denial, in taking up our cross,' I said. 'Then I shared with them from a

devotional book by Hudson Taylor, "An easy-going, non-self-denying life will never be one of power." With that, everyone began to wrestle in prayer, and before long, the blessing came.' (Pg 216). Several powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit were the result.

What a difference such concerted, 'agonizing' prayer could make in every city and nation today. God has promised Revival, but I believe that He is waiting for a people who will take hold of His promise and begin to make a stand together in prayer for it's fulfillment. Friends, could we agree together to lay hold of God in this way? Believe me, it could make all the difference in the world.

The key with such prayer is to firstly see the desperate need for true Revival, both in the church and the world, and then to ask God to send His Spirit to help us pray. 'Agonizing' prayer pleads with God that He might glorify Himself and that His Spirit might be poured out. It is for HIS GLORY that we pray in this way.

Another key is truly having "clean hands and a pure heart" before God. No secret sin. No unforgiveness. Only those with clean hands and a pure heart can ascend to the holy place of God in prayer.

My great hope is that God would inspire as many as possible to join in prayer to see His mighty purpose fulfilled in the earth. The fact that GOD IS NOT GLORIFIED in our world is the tragedy of this late hour. Friends, it is high time for this to change. And be assured that we can truly make a difference. The time has surely come to join together in 'agonizing' prayer for a mighty deluge of His grace and mercy in our day. If everyone reading this would simply begin to pray in this way, what glorious outpourings could result!

**Re: 'AGONIZING' PRAYER - VITAL KEY TO REVIVAL -strom - posted by kdbutton, on: 2006/11/2 19:08**

I remember reading George Mueller's biography, how he trusted God through prayer alone to provide all that was needed to buy and equip an orphanage...God had given him all that he asked for but when all was ready there were no orphans to fill it. It occurred to him that he had forgotten to ask for God to provide the orphans. So he prayed and God answered and answered and answered.

We need people who will agonize in prayer in order to usher in a great revival so let's not forget to ask God to provide them for us. He will if we ask.

Father I'm asking, please provide steely-eyed agonizers to unite with us in prayer for revival in my neck of the woods and every place where you are asked for this. And every other part you require and so bring about a Great Awakening such has never been seen before. In Jesus' name.