

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Smithers:

On the heels of the First Great Awakening in America came the French and Indian War, the War of Independence, false French philosophies and widespread infidelity. It was a time of great discouragement for the Church in America. Yet, when things seemed the darkest, the fires of revival once again broke forth. From the rough western frontier of Kentucky to the halls of Yale and Princeton, the country suddenly seemed to be consumed with only seeking Christ. Beginning in 1790 and continuing for the next 45 years, America entered into a remarkable era called the Second Great Awakening.

One of the forgotten giants of this age of continuous revival was Edward Griffin. "The history of his life seems little less than the history of one unbroken revival; and it would perhaps be difficult to name the individual in our country since the days of Whitefield who has been instrumental of an equal number of hopeful conversions." Had Edward Griffin lived at an earlier time, he would have certainly been recognized as a true man of God, yet he came into God's harvest fields during the springtime of revival. He burst upon the scene at the precise moment when all was made ready by divine providence and prayer. Mr. Griffin's ministry was blessed from its inception with great success.

A hearer of Mr. Griffin in New Jersey in 1829 gives us a description of his preaching and of the love and brokenness which gave that preaching its power. "During most of the sermon his face was wet with tears, and for nearly an hour he spoke to us with such tender and appealing sentences that it seemed as if his hearers must cry out in an agony of fear and trembling . . . But what a climax the ending was! It was a wonder how he endured the strain so long and that he had not given up physically exhausted. The mental agony, the heartbreaking sympathy, were enough to break an angel down! When he fell on his knees as if he had been knocked on the head with an ax, with outstretched arms, tears coarsing down his face, he cried out; 'Oh! my dying fellow sinners, I beseech you to give your heart to the Savior now. Give your life to Jesus Christ, do not put it off! Do not leave this house without dedicating yourself to His service, lest you be left at last to cry, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.'"

The instruments of true revival are always fashioned by God in the secret place of prayer. Edward Griffin was always aware of his own need of gaining a daily glimpse of Jesus in prayer. Describing the transforming effects of such moments Mr. Griffin writes, "it is only when with open face we behold the glory of the Lord that we are changed from glory to glory. A view of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, is the faith which purifies and produces good works. When God is seen in all the majesty of His glory, in the awful purity of His holiness, the Christian cannot, dare not willfully sin. He pants after universal purity with groanings that cannot be uttered. This is the faith 'which worketh by love.' Under the influence of these views the Christian knows what it is to be moved to action by the love of God in Christ. . . "

Even as an old man Edward Griffin was still pursuing a greater degree of intimacy with Christ. Thirsting for more of Jesus he wrote, "I long and pray for high communion with God and for affections more ardent and delightful than I ever felt before." This is the kind of revival we need, a revival of loving and longing for Jesus. As a nation our walls are broken down and our gates are burned. This nation is crumbling from within because the very foundation of the Church has slipped. No longer is Christ alone all-sufficient for all our needs. Jesus has become far less than preeminent among the very ones who claim His name. The brick and mortar of our fleshly methods have failed to repair the spiritual breaches of our walls. How long shall we try in vain to repair our outer walls while God's house of prayer still lies neglected and in ruins?