

## Revivals And Church History :: Unity and Prayer a Revival Team

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### Unity And Prayer – A Revival Team

A little over two hundred and fifty years ago, bickering, quarreling, opinionated followers of Huss, Luther, Calvin and other Reformers, fleeing from the deadly persecutions of that day, found asylum on the estate of a wealthy nobleman, Count Zinzendorf.

While protected here from the outside world, who was there to protect them from their own religious passions which threatened to destroy them? How to unite in faith and love these quarreling Christians who had found a refuge on Count Zinzendorf's estate seemed an utterly impossible task.

But, "they prayed!" On the 5th of August, 1727, a company of them spent the entire night in prayer. Prayer caused them to draw up a Brotherly Covenant "to seek out and emphasize the points in which they agreed" and not to stress their differences. On the 12th of August they entered into solemn covenant to actually dedicate their lives to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, each one in his particular calling and position. Prayer brought hearts together. Prayer brought all nearer to Christ.

On Sunday, August 13th, the power and blessing of God came so mightily upon the entire company that pastor and people sank down together into the dust before God and "in this frame of mind they continued till midnight, engaged in prayer and singing, weeping and supplication."

Prayer united them. Prayer brought a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These blessings in turn brought greater praying, a deeper prayer life. On August 26th, twenty-four men and women made a covenant with the Lord to pray from midnight to midnight, each in turn taking a different hour. The next day this twenty-four hour praying was begun and was continued uninterruptedly for one hundred years!

### Prayer Leads to Action

Bishop Hasse writes as follows: "Was there ever in the whole church history such an astonishing prayer meeting as that which, beginning in 1727, went on one hundred years!"

Prayer of that kind leads to action. In this case it kindled a burning desire to make Christ's salvation known to the heathen. It led to the beginning of Modern Foreign Missions. From that one small village community more than one hundred missionaries went out in twenty-five years.

This was the fruit of unprecedented prayer and heart union. No wonder unprecedented spiritual results came. "Individual work with individuals" was started here following this wonderful prayer revival. This mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost and all that flowed from it down to our day was in answer to earnest and importunate prayer. Out from this little village of Moravian Christians went missionaries to every part of the world, carrying the Gospel fire with them.

In 1736 a group of them were on a ship headed towards America. Two young English Anglican missionaries were on the same vessel. A terrible storm came up and shipwreck was imminent. Let us read what the young man John Wesley wrote in his journal concerning the incident:

"At seven I went to the Moravians. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behavior. Of their humility they had given a continual proof by performing these servile offices for the other passengers, which none of us would undertake, for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying, 'It was good for their proud heart,' and 'their loving Saviour had done more for them.'"

"And every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck or thrown down, they rose again and went away, but no complaint was found in their mouth. Here was now an opportunity of showing whether they were delivered from the Spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger and revenge."

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“In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among us. The Moravians calmly sang on.

“I asked one of them afterwards: ‘Were you not afraid?’ He answered, ‘I thank God, no.’ I asked: ‘But were not your women and children afraid?’ He replied mildly: ‘No, our women and children are not afraid to die.’”

When he returned to England, John Wesley wrote: “I went to America to convert the Indians: but oh! Who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer-religion. I can talk well, nay, and believe myself while no danger is near, but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, ‘To die is gain!’”

#### Wesley Set Aflame

But what of it? Where in the dead formalism of the church life of England is this young man to find this for which his heart yearned? A little band of people, set aflame by a Moravian missionary, were meeting at Aldersgate Street in London, on May 24, 1738.

Wesley attended. It was a prayer meeting. Here he felt his heart “strangely warmed,” felt that he trusted in Christ and Christ alone for his salvation, and assurance came that Christ had borne his sins and that he was saved from the law of sin and death. How unimpressive might this prayer service appear from this brief account.

But Lecky in his “History of Morals” says of John Wesley’s conversion in this Aldersgate Street prayer meeting, “What happened in that little room was of more importance to England than all the victories of Pitt by land or sea.” “The doctrine of salvation by faith began in a prayer meeting!”

But there was another prayer meeting at the close of the year. Wesley writes: “About three in the morning (January 1, 1739), as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty we broke out with one voice ‘We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.’”

Present along with John Wesley at that meeting were his brother and Whitefield and forty or fifty more earnest seekers.

“The next day,” writes F. B. Meyer, “Whitefield took the coach down to Bristol, and began preaching there in the power of the Holy Ghost. After about a month Wesley followed, and for forty years they went up and down our country in the face of every sort of resistance. If you read Wesley’s sermons you will find them interesting, but neither the sermons of Whitefield nor Wesley have any traits of supreme genius. But they had the dynamic, they had the power of the Holy Spirit, given in answer to earnest, importunate prayer.”