



HUMILITY

Extract from 'Awakening Cry' by Pete Greig

At the heart of every revival is the spirit of prayer (Arthur Wallis)

One of the most remarkable events of the 18th Century occurred on 13th August 1727. The spirit of God fell with incredible power upon a Moravian prayer meeting in Herrnhut, Saxony (modern-day Germany). So great was this outpouring that the meeting continued for a hundred years without stopping. 24 men and 24 women determined that the flame of intercession should burn at the heart of their community continually, and so they divided themselves to pray in succession around the clock. The number of intercessors actually increased as the years rolled on, especially amongst the children, generating a power centre that radiated to the ends of the earth for more than a century.

More than 3000 evangelists were sent out from that small village in the 200 years following that momentous night, taking the gospel to most countries in Europe as well as the Americas, Asia and Africa. It is possible that some Moravians developed such a longing to reach the West Indian slaves that they sold themselves into slavery to take the gospel to them. John Wesley was one of their many converts and 'Mad Moravians' aflame with the gospel, keep popping up in obscure contexts and far-flung countries like a delightful motif running through 18th Century missions.

Twelve years later another prayer meeting detonated and even bigger explosion as the Wesley brothers, their friend George Whitefield and others (including, predictably enough, a Moravian) met in Fetter Lane, London. God visited that unsuspecting group in such glory that the destiny of the 18th Century was rewritten in a matter of minutes.

Ask for it

Prayer has been the universal ingredient common to every revival down the ages and across the world. In fact if you want a formula for revival it is probably as simple as "ask God for it". In 1904 a Wiltshire evangelist visited a meeting of the Welsh revival. He stood up and said "Friends, I have journeyed into Wales that I may learn the secret of the Welsh Revival!." Evan Roberts jumped to his feet and retorted: "My Brother - there is no secret! 'Ask and ye shall receive."

According to the eminent theologian Edwin Orr, the years 1900-1910 hosted the greatest worldwide awakening in human history. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that it all began with prayer on a massive scale before the turn of the century. Significant prayer movements were fanned into flame at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, the Keswick Convention in England and in parts of India, the Far East, Africa and Latin America. These intercessors did not fully understand the scale or prayer that God was calling forth, but together laid the foundations for the revival decade. This should challenge us to pray but also



thrill us with excitement for "never in Christian history has there been such a longing for renewal in so many parts of the world and by people from so many denominational backgrounds as there is today"

Our current potential in prayer is unlimited and if we will take it seriously, we could be heading for an international manifestation of God's power of unparalleled dimensions. The fact is that right now there is more power waiting to be unleashed on the world by the praying church than by the nuclear capabilities of world Super Powers; it is a truly awesome responsibility.

The Hebridean awakening began in focused and faith-filled prayer. On one occasion, in the village of Arnol, the house in which they were praying physically shook. Arthur Wallis reflects that prayer was equally central to Pentecost: "Let it be burned upon our hearts by the Spirit of God that this mighty movement that turned the world upside down was not only born out of prayer, but that it brought forth prayer, and was maintained by prayer."

The promise of revival

Evan Roberts the great revival preacher began working, like many Welshmen, as a coal miner. Everywhere he went he carried a Welsh bible which had been scorched in a mine explosion from which he escaped unharmed. Prophetically the fire had burned the pages of 2 Chronicles 6, the passage in which Solomon as a young man prays for revival. It is in the following chapter that God makes his reply: "70; if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7.14)

God says that if we will humble ourselves, reject sin and pray he "will hear from heaven and will forgive [our] sins and heal [our] land." The one true God does not change his mind or water down such promises and they are as certain today as they have ever been. If we will only take him at his word and fulfill our obligation to humbly pray, God guarantees revival. In the next three chapters we will look at the four vital prayer-keys which unlock revival.

Praying with Humility Praying with Faith Persevering in Prayer Intercessory Prayer

Praying with Humility

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray;

It takes humility to bend the knee and pray. Proud hearts are less inclined to pray because deep down they suspect that they can achieve the desired result independently and when they do pray, it can appear more like approaching God for his rubber-stamp upon their plans rather than seeking his face. Pride (which overestimates self) and unbelief (which underestimates God) tempt us to think that time spent in prayer could be more usefully deployed actually doing something! But when we come to the Lord in brokenness, helplessness and dependency we can be sure that he hears and acts. That is why Paul



identifies a powerful Christian as one who embraces weakness (2 Corinthians 12.9). It is ironic, therefore, that pride actually enforces weakness, robbing us of ultimate power because it keeps us from our knees. When a newborn baby lies on its back and cries, its deepest human instincts are being stirred. It is crying out for food, for love, for its mother without whom it will die. This is a picture of the dependency and humility that stirs God's heart. We seek God's face because we are helpless like a newborn baby without him. But as we grow older it takes increasing humility to admit such dependency. This is just one reason why children are closer to the Kingdom of Heaven than adults; they know how to need.

Learning to need

A friend whose wife is going through terrible pain at the moment recently commented, "I am more and more convinced that people only really pray when they need to". I believe that statement to be profoundly true, although at first I reacted: "What about those with disciplined daily prayer-lives?", I thought, "Surely they pray even when things are fine?" But perhaps such people are just humble enough, or hurting enough, to have a consistent awareness of their need to pray. The fact is that those who are content also tend to be complacent in prayer, while those who suffer cry out to God. I once knew a lady who had prayed for her non-Christian husband for years. She had tried every technique to witness to him without effect. Nothing, it seemed could penetrate his self-sufficient world. Then, one night, he came home and found that the house had been burgled and his family were away. Alone in his ransacked home that night he discovered his sense of need and gave his life to the Lord. One of my best friends is soon to move, with his young family, to Brooklyn, New York to plant a new church. He is leaving behind close friends, his job and his security. These are vulnerable days as he says many goodbyes and prepares for the unknown but in such uncertainty he is finding God in a new way. His prayer times as he walks the beach have been injected with emotion. He has undoubtedly rediscovered his sense of need and it is giving impetus to his personal prayer-life. So many public prayers involve listing off to God things he already knows, or even explaining points of theology to him! I'm all in favour of informality in prayer and I love it when people just pour out their hearts to God. But listen to someone praying with a profound sense of need and there is a raw pleading and a humble reverence springing from that heart-cry. A friend is dying and only God can heal; the money has run out and only God can provide; an unsaved parent is dead to Christ and only he can save them. This is the prayer of the humble heart. As long as we think we can achieve a particular result independently, we will pray shallow prayers, if we pray at all. But God is attentive to the prayers of "the poor in spirit; those who mourn; the meek; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5. 3-6) The prayer that triggers revival and the prayer that revival triggers will always be branded by humility and brokenness before God.