



A nine part teaching series
by Rev. Robert Griffith

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 1

by Rev. Robert Griffith

A farmer went into his Bank Manager and announced that he had some bad news and some good news. *“First, the bad news...”* he said, *“I cannot make my mortgage payments and that crop loan I've had for the past 10 years - I can't pay that either. Not only that, I won't be able to pay you the couple of hundred thousand I still have outstanding on my tractors and other equipment. So I'm going to have to give up my farm and turn it over to you for whatever you can salvage out of it.”* Silence prevailed for a minute, then the Bank Manager said, *“So, what's the good news?”* The farmer smiled broadly and said, *“The good news is I really like you and so I'm going to continue banking here.”*

Sometimes you have to work hard to find the good news in the midst of the bad news. I think that farmer had an uphill battle to find any good news, but he gave it his best shot! Our world certainly has many problems and we don't need to look very far to find the bad news. Everywhere we turn there is bad news – even within the Church. I have read many reports and surveys about the decline in members across the Church in our nation. I have spoken with many other leaders in many denominations who seem despondent and mellow as they watch their Church families shrink and the average age of their members rise day by day.

We switch on the television for some light relief only to be confronted with wars, famine, natural disasters, a global pandemic, political unrest in America, the United Kingdom and even at home here. Almost every day we see the underbelly of fallen humanity in organised crime, domestic violence, poverty and homelessness and the rapidly declining moral foundations of our nation.

It is not surprising therefore to hear the question on many people's lips within the Church, *“What is God doing?”* This is not a new place for we humans to find ourselves. It has happened countless times throughout our history. We get to the end of ourselves and our resources and find our world is still in a mess and we start wondering if God is even there. All of that is normal and very human but it's what we do next that will determine how long we find ourselves in such a helpless place. It's what we do next that is the key to our future.

We have a choice when we get to the end of ourselves in the face of evil and moral decay: **we can complain and blame or we can confess and repent.** We can complain and blame others for the state of the world or we can confess and repent of our sin and the sin of humanity. I may not be personally or individually responsible for all the woes of the world, but as a disciple of Christ and a member of God's family I must share the responsibility for fixing all that is broken. God is sovereign and God could just step in, wave His hand and fix everything in our lives, our Churches and our world. Why doesn't He do that? The simple answer is found in one word: partnership. God has always been committed to a partnership with those who are made in His image and so His plan from before the foundation of the world was that healing, salvation, reconciliation and peace will come to this world as He works in and through His children, His ambassadors, His army of faithful followers who are filled with and empowered by His Holy Spirit.

We all want healing in our land and in our world and God promised a very long time ago (see 2 Chronicles 7:14) that He would bring such healing to our land when we His people, who are called by His name, humble ourselves and pray and seek His face and turn from our sin ... then God will hear, forgive and heal.

God the Holy Spirit always moves in response to God's people and He has not stopped moving at any point since the birth of the Church. We can read the book of Acts and Paul's epistles and see how the Spirit of God moved in response to the obedience, submission and prayers of God's people.

Then in every generation since then the Holy Spirit has continued to move but more often than not we don't notice because we are not looking to the horizon – we are preoccupied with this fallen world and all its problems. If we decide to focus on what God is actually doing in our world rather than on what we, in all our 'wisdom', think God is *not* doing, our whole perspective changes!

First of all, we see the complete truth about our world and not just the dark side. Secondly, we see that in spite of the unrestrained evil unfolding in one part of the world, at the same time, evil is being forcefully driven back elsewhere as the Spirit of God moves with power in an unprecedented way. Our finite minds can't fathom how God can move so definitively in one place and appear to not be moving at all in another. But such challenges are beyond our pay grade, as they say, and we simply need to seek the Lord and ask Him to show us His hand at work in the world and teach us to pray.

So today I begin a series in which I will share some of the good news – to inform you, in case you didn't know; to encourage you, in case you thought God was sleeping on the job; and to challenge you to face the question we all should face every time we hear a sermon, read a Christian book or article or study the Bible. At every point we need to be asking, "*How then shall I live?*" In other words, "*What is God saying to me, to my family, to my church and to my community?*" What is my response to this teaching, this revelation, this unfolding reality before me?

Are Christian Churches shrinking everywhere? Are radical Islamic extremists really taking over the world? Has God forgotten us or turned His back on us? What in the world is God doing? Is the Holy Spirit still moving like He did in the beginning? Well over the next few weeks or so we will take a look and see.

Today I want to take you to a place where God has been very busy for a long time and the fruit of this move of the Holy Spirit is almost beyond belief. Let's see what happens when the Holy Spirit moves in the largest nation in the world: China. But let's also ask God to speak to us and our situation as we grasp the magnitude of His work in the least likely place in the world. Follow the link below and watch this video with me before reading on in this sermon.

<https://www.gunnedahbaptist.org.au/files/videos/CBN.CHINA.mp4>

So how do you respond to a report like that? What does that say to us today, here, in our little patch of the kingdom? What does that say about God's ability to transform hundreds of thousands of lives in one of the most traditionally anti-Christian nations in the world? How do we comprehend the magnitude of this move of God across communist China? At the very least it should strengthen our faith and remind us that the Holy Spirit is still moving. But of course, the underlying question will always be, "*Why there and not here?*" Some of us already know the answer – others will find out soon if you continue with us on this journey.

So how many people do you think are coming to faith every week right now in China? Would you be amazed to learn that 5,000 people every week are coming to faith in China? Yes? Well, perhaps you would be gob-smacked to learn that over 10,000 people are coming to faith in Christ every week in China! Yes? Well, friends, believe it or not, the Spirit of God is moving far more than even that! The latest reports coming out of China put the conversion rate at 30,000 people a week. That is 130,000 people a month or over 1.5 million people a year who are becoming Christians. That would equate to the entire city of Brisbane turning to God in less than two years!

How has that even been possible, especially in a country which is still officially anti-Christian? Well, I will let our friends at Open Doors ministry answer that question. Watch this next video:

<https://www.gunnedahbaptist.org.au/files/videos/OPEN.DOORS.CHINA.mp4>

Somebody once said, *“You don’t need God until you **need** God.”* The millions of people in China who are now part of the family of God really needed God. They were without hope, living under communist oppression and even the hint of them turning to a foreign religion would mean death to so many of them. But they cried out to God for their nation, day and night, for years and years and years, because they needed God and only God could do something about their plight.

Outside of China, in the comfort of Australia, New Zealand, America, Great Britain, Canada and many other western nations, I fear that we don’t really **need** God. Our countries are built on Judeo-Christian foundations and until recently, we would have all referred to ourselves as ‘Christian’ countries. Persecution, of the kind the Chinese have endured, is almost non-existent and we can run the Church week by week without the manifest presence of a miracle-working God. We’ve been doing it for years! Perhaps this is one reason why the Holy Spirit is moving in such a deep and profound way in China more than our nation.

Of course there is no formula for revival. These sovereign moves of God throughout history have always been somewhat unpredictable and yet there is one common thread running through every single revival in history, including the one happening as we speak right now in China, and that is prayer! Persistent, persevering, passionate, believing prayer. Deep down we all know that prayer is important, but most of us have little understanding of just how important?

Sometimes people prayed for years, even decades, before the dam wall finally burst and the mercies of God came in like a flood. So before we re-examine our own church and community, seeking the Lord’s help in determining our place in Christ’s mission, I want us to look at what God has already been doing and what factors are operating on the ground in Churches locally and those supporting revivals remotely by giving and prayer.

When the Holy Spirit moves, whole societies are transformed in ways we could never imagine and God is calling us all to get on board and trust Him to break our nets and sink our boats. We need God to exceed all our expectations and when the Holy Spirit moves, that’s what happens: lives change, communities are flooded with the presence and power of God and whole nations are completely transformed.

Let’s always praise God for the movement of His Spirit across the world in so many areas and let’s remember that the Holy Spirit Who is moving with such power across China is the same Holy Spirit within us and hovering over this nation, this community, this Church and our own families. So whilst it is fitting and appropriate for us to rejoice in such a move of the Spirit in China, we also must ask the Lord to give us the wisdom, the discernment and the courage to embrace what we need to do before we see such a move of God’s spirit here in our nation.

Let those who have ears to hear, listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 2

by Rev. Robert Griffith

At 8:46am on Tuesday 11th September 2001, the world was changed forever when the hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York. 17 minutes later American Airlines flight 175 crashed into the South Tower. 35 minutes later American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. 26 minutes later, after a vigorous struggle between some passengers and the hijackers, United Airlines flight 93 crashed into a field near Shanksville in Pennsylvania. So began a day which would result in the loss of thousands of innocent lives as a deep-seated fear gripped the hearts of billions of people around the world – a fear which remains in many people, to some extent at least, over twenty years later.

The prominence of Islamic extremists had been comparatively low on the world stage until that fateful day. But since then, hardly a month has passed without news of some attack on freedom by a small, but lethal number of extremists who have been 'radicalized' and who breathe hatred for everything our western culture stands for. Following those attacks in 2001 the name Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda dominated every news cycle for a very long time. There were also constant reports about the brutality of Taliban and their plans to spread their ideology and hatred across the globe.

Following the death of Bin Laden and some success in holding back the Taliban and Al Qaeda, our headlines became dominated with the rise of yet another group in Northern Iraq and Syria who became known as "Islamic State" or ISIS. The ruthless barbarism of this extremist group was so severe that even the Taliban had to officially distance themselves from this new threat to the Middle East and ultimately to the whole world.

The sad truth is humanity has been embroiled in war of some kind for almost our entire existence, but with the rise of terrorism and suicide bombers who delight in becoming martyrs for Islam, all the normal rules of engagement in war disappeared. How do you fight people who are no longer concerned for their own lives? How do you prevent a lone ranger suicide bomber from walking into a crowded shopping mall or busy office building anywhere in the world and blowing themselves up, taking hundreds of innocent people with them? How can we be confident there will not be another hijacking of an airline at some stage with an equally devastating result?

We certainly live in difficult times and it is especially challenging for those who are committed to the mission of Christ and have a desire to spread a gospel of love and forgiveness in the face of the most extreme anti-Christian ideology we have seen in our lifetime. We are not just 'outsiders' to the Islamic extremists, we are the 'infidels' who are worthy only of death. There are entire nations of people who have now grown up believing that everything and everyone in 'the west' are evil and need to be conquered, destroyed and purged from Allah's world. So like we did in last week's sermon, once again we might find ourselves asking what is God doing in the midst of this rather frightening new world we wake up to each and every day?

Some of us last week were really surprised to see the unprecedented movement of God's spirit through China in recent times. It is nothing short of amazing to see how the good news of Jesus Christ has been spreading in spite of the hard line anti-Christian communist leaders in the largest nation in the world. Tens of thousands of people a week are coming into God's kingdom as lives and whole communities are transformed in ways we never dreamed possible.

Well today we may be even more shocked as I take you to a different part of the world and into what is arguably the most dangerous environment we could imagine for Christians post 9/11.

I am speaking of the Muslim world - those nations which comprise over 90% Muslims, some of them 99.9%. Ironically, the terrorist attacks in 2001 actually shook many sincere Muslims to the core. Their eyes were opened to the reality which lies at the core of their religion and culture. Many of them read the whole Koran for the first time and understood the depth of hatred for those outside the Islamic faith. Thousands of Muslims a week began turning away from Islam and embracing the good news of Jesus Christ and that wave of revival has not stopped in 20 years.

Now if the prominent news headlines are our only source of information, then we would be forced to concede that radical Islamists are taking over the whole Muslim world and their intent in doing so is to take over the world and destroy all the 'infidels', and in case you missed the memo, that includes you and your children and your grandchildren and all who follow after you.

So where is God in all this? Where is the Church which Jesus promised to build, against which the gates of hell itself could not prevail? Well let me take you behind the fear-mongering and negative headlines as we see what God has been doing in recent years in just one of many locations. Let's go to North Africa.

Click the link below (or copy and paste it into your web browser) to view the video clip and then return to this sermon.

<http://www.gunnedahbaptist.org.au/files/videos/NTH.AFRICA.mp4>

Brothers and sisters we are at war. We have been at war since Jesus Christ launched His campaign against the god of this world, Satan, over 2,000 years ago. Now Jesus was a fascinating leader in military terms, when compared to all other human counterparts. This leader of an army brought victory once and for all time by getting Himself killed - at the very start of His global campaign! Stranger still was His attack plan. He trained His army to go and do likewise: to give their lives, if needed, in order to bring life to those who were dead in their ignorance and alienation from God.

So the battle strategy we just saw in that video clip was the exact opposite of what we are seeing play out in the kingdom of this world this very week as world leaders discuss their military strategies in the face of a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine. In man's kingdom, we go to the top - we go after the leaders, the head influencers, the ones driving this campaign of death and destruction. However when it comes to Islamic extremism and terrorism, it is very difficult to identify those who are driving this evil. The latest leader of ISIS was taken out only a couple of weeks ago, just like the one before him. A new leader will already be in place and his replacement is already being trained. It never ends.

So what is God's operational strategy? Well, He starts at the bottom with the rank and file. The millions of ordinary Muslims who are not personally involved in any campaign of evil, not yet anyway. God is touching and changing hundreds and thousands of Muslims and bringing them to faith through the Lord Jesus Christ. As this groundswell of transformation gains momentum and sweeps the world, those radicalized Islamic extremists will find there are less and less Muslims to call on for their Jihad, their holy way against our nation and others.

Jesus said, *"... I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matthew 16:18). 'The gates of hell' is a euphemism for Satan, the Devil, the enemy of God and Jesus has promised that the enemy of God will not prevail against the Church that He builds. But friends, please note it only says the enemy will not 'prevail' against the Church that Jesus is building. What does 'prevail' mean? It means 'reign over' or 'conquer' or 'defeat' or 'abound against.' In other words, to prevail is to win! Our victory over sin, death and Satan is secured already in Christ, but at no point were we assured there will not be a long and costly battle before the finality of that victory is fully experienced.

Welcome to our reality today. Switch on the news and learn just how dirty the enemy of God fights. Atrocities are occurring daily, if not hourly, in many parts of the world and have been for years. You may recall a few years ago how America and its allies were absolutely outraged, and rightly so, at the public decapitation of two American journalists by ISIS. However, our outrage appears to be selective.

One of America's allies in the middle east, Saudi Arabia, has been systematically beheading people for many years. As punishment for confessions of crimes obtained under severe torture, beheadings are common. It's part of their justice system! In fact, in just the two weeks following the beheading of those American journalists – there were 22 people beheaded in Saudi Arabia! Where were these reported? Certainly not on page one of any newspaper or website and those public beheadings never made it onto our evening news. Where was America's outrage then? Where was Australia's outrage?

The fact is, the enemy of God is ramping up his campaign and we will see evil abounding more and more in the days ahead and it will emerge in places we don't expect. Now if we want to allow the reports of this evil to be our only source of information, then we will be left in despair. So I would encourage you to look behind the many reports of evil and hardship and allow God to show you a much bigger picture and you will discover that when God promises to build His Church, that is exactly what He will do, in His time and in His way.

Of course, exactly what that Church looks like; how it operates; how fast it spreads; if and how we become part of that move of the Holy Spirit across the world ... are all matters for serious discussion and much prayer. We also need to brace ourselves and be open to new things, because when revival breaks out, as it has done many times over the centuries, as it has in China and Nth Africa in recent years - things can get messy; predictability can disappear; our plans are often thwarted as God takes over; worship services get longer; the number of services grow; the music and worship style often changes as the next generation capture the vision and take the Church where God needs it to go and that can leave the former generations facing a dilemma as our desire to advance the Kingdom of God comes into conflict with our desire to hold on to an experience of Church we are used to. As those two realities face off against each other, much wisdom, tolerance, patience, courage and prayer is needed. But above all, trust in God is what is needed most.

When Jesus promised to build a Church that will prevail over all evil, He never promised we would like the way He did that and nor did He say that Church would look and act the same way in every generation or every nation or even every neighbourhood. I believe there are thousands of Christians in our nation today who are happy to give their commitment to advancing the Kingdom of God by joining Jesus as He builds His Church but only if their Church and their experience of Church doesn't change too much.

There are often conditions attached to our commitment to mission and sometimes we don't know that of ourselves until things start to change and the familiar is replaced with something we have not encountered before and we push back and we might even suggest this is not from God, when in actual fact it is just not our personal experience of God.

When the Holy Spirit moves, there is always change and the status quo is always challenged – not because it's wrong necessarily, but just because when the Holy Spirit moves in every time and cultural context, change is the result and often the fuel for the revival which is coming. The Holy Spirit has never stopped moving since the Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. The river of life He brings continues to carve its way through the nations of the world. Our problem is we set up camp beside that river of life at some point in history but we never moved.

When the Holy Spirit moved on from that place and carved a new path through the barrenness of our world, many of us remained in the place of His last move ... remembering with fondness the good old days without realizing that the good new days are ahead of us and that when the Holy Spirit moves so should we!

Whether we see it or not, the Holy Spirit is still moving in mighty and amazing ways and He wants us to know about it, to pray for those involved and He wants us to gradually loosen our grip on the Church of yesterday, as the Holy Spirit gently prepares our hearts and enables us to embrace the Church of tomorrow – the Church which Jesus is building, everywhere – including right here.

Let me pray with you:

Lord God, we thank you for reminding us that You never sleep nor slumber and that whilst our news bulletins have been bombarding us with pictures of evil abounding in some parts of our wonderful world, Your mighty hand has been at work touching millions and millions of people's hearts and transforming families, communities and whole nations.

Holy Spirit of God fall afresh on us today and capture our hearts and renew our vision and boost our trust in our God as new life and vitality and courage and purpose is released in the Body of Christ in this nation.

Lord we long for you to move in power in our nation as you have been in China and Nth Africa and many parts of the world, but we confess that sometimes we just don't long for it enough, or pray for it enough, or perhaps, deep down we sabotage our own prayers because we really don't want our experience of Church to change too much.

Lord God, break our hearts with the things that break Your heart and take us to that point where our personal comfort, desires and needs give way, if necessary to the mission of Christ as we join our Lord in building a Church which will once again shine as the beacon of hope it is meant to be as hundreds and thousands of people are drawn to the reality, the power, the grace and the love of their God through Jesus Christ.

Lord, we believe ... now help us in our unbelief. Amen!

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 3

by Rev. Robert Griffith

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11th September 2001 and the 'War on Terror,' Islam and Muslims have been a constant focus in the media, in politics and in the public arena. Islam and its adherents have been routinely framed within the context of conflict, violence and terrorism. In more recent years, social media has become a critical space where, as articulated by one study, posts stoke deep hatred of Islam across the western world and influence politics in Australia, Canada, UK and USA by blending distorted news and total fabrication to paint Muslims as sharia-imposing terrorists .. whose existence poses a threat to white culture and western civilization.

Given that Muslims are among the largest non-Christian religious groups in Australia, that over 60 percent of the world's Muslim population resides in the South East Asian region, and that Islam is predicted to have more followers than any other religion within the next thirty years, a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in Australia is essential. In Australia, a number of factors have contributed to a perception that Islam and Muslims threaten peace and security, including:

- (i) Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level assessment that identifies the most likely perpetrators as Islamist extremists;
- (ii) Identification of over 150 Muslim Australians joining the ranks of ISIS in addition to many others whose passports were cancelled for attempting to do so;
- (iii) The conviction of dozens of Muslim Australians for terrorism offenses; and
- (iv) Countering violent extremism policy that officially reinforces many of the core stereotypes of Islam in the West: militancy, fanaticism, intolerance, fundamentalism, misogyny etc.

These factors highlight the need for a more informed understanding of Islam and Muslims in Australia in order to alleviate unwarranted fears and misconceptions, counter stereotypes and misinformation, and identify issues that require further attention and education. However, for some people, this education will reveal some foundational truths which lie at the heart of true Islam which force us to face some confronting facts about how truly devoted, Qur'an-following Muslims feel about the rest of us. I agree that there has been misinformation disseminated about Muslims in an attempt to turn us against them. I don't support that at all and I am interested only in the facts but the truth is, many of the facts about Islam have been watered down or denied completely.

So in our multi-cultural nation we find there is a huge diversity of opinions about Islam and Muslims and terrorism and war and God and Government policies etc. On one extreme we have people who say we have allowed far too many Muslims to migrate to our great country without any thought to the incompatibility of their religion and their culture with what was, until quite recently, a Christian country which celebrates freedom in all aspects of our society and has been built on strong Judeo-Christian principles – which are incompatible with Islam.

Most people holding this view are not bigoted against particular people, they are simply stating what many have known to be a fact: that whilst the majority of individual Muslims may be anything but a threat to our freedoms, Islam as an ideology is a different matter altogether and no serious student of the Qur'an or the actual teaching of Mohammed the Prophet could reach any other conclusion.

If any Muslim decides to follow Islam fully (and thankfully most of them don't), then they will set themselves firmly against all Christians and the freedoms which Christianity has brought to western society over many centuries. One of the basic underlying tenants of the vast majority of world religions and the Christian faith, is that all men and women are created equal.

That is NOT the teaching of Islam and that sets all committed Muslims against everyone else in a way that very few non-Muslims understand. In fact, a large number of Muslims don't fully appreciate the foundation of their own religion – but they will, if their leaders call them to at some point in time. So on this end of the spectrum we have people who genuinely believe all Muslims in our nation are a potential threat to us. So there is a lot of paralyzing fear up this end of the spectrum.

Then on the other end of the spectrum we have people who respond harshly to that view and call all those people ignorant bigots and that the overwhelming majority of Muslims in our country and in the USA and Great Britain are not jihadists, they are not against the west or longing to put all Christians to the sword. They actually chose to move to our country because of our way of life, our freedoms and our culture. So they stand with us, side by side as we oppose the extremists in their midst. There are many prominent Church leaders in this category and they believe God has given us a mission field right at our doorstep and that Christians need to not fear Muslims, but engage with them and become friends with them and lead them to Christ.

So those are the two ends of the spectrum as I see it. However, I believe the vast majority of people in the Church and in our nation are not at either end of that spectrum as I have just described them. I think the vast majority of people are stuck in the middle, not knowing what to think, how to feel or what the solution might be. They see some merit in both views. They see the need for caution and wisdom, but they also see the need for compassion, engagement and mission.

Now being stuck in the middle is a bad thing because we need to know what we think about this. But being stuck in the middle is a good thing too because we are more teachable and usable for God when we are not rusted on to a fixed point of view which can cause our minds to close off to an alternate position.

So what is God doing while we wrestle with these issues in a changing world? What is God's solution to this new enemy of peace we face not just in the Middle East anymore, but across the world and in our own country? Well, as we've seen over the last couple of weeks, God's strategies are often very different to man's strategies and He knows that this new chapter of human history in which we find ourselves is very different to previous chapters. He knows that the enemies to freedom and peace today and their methods of war are very different to most of what we have seen in the past, and yet God also knows that the human condition has not changed in thousands of years and the root cause of all conflict, all war, all aggression, all violence, all brutality and all that threatens peace today is the same as it always was.

The root cause of all that is wrong with our world is the unenlightened human heart which is out of sync with its Creator, out of harmony with our God, Who is love, our God Who is peace. The greatest need of the people who are committing these acts of unspeakable evil right now in the Middle East and other nations is the exact same need of those men who have been sent from our nation and 40 other countries over the years to stop them: they all need a revelation of God's love for them and of the freedom and life He has secured for them in Jesus Christ.

The other thing that has not changed is Satan and his overall strategy. None of us are experts about spiritual warfare and the Devil. Some Christians don't even believe there is an actual enemy of God who is active in the spiritual realm. That pleases Satan a great deal, I can assure you. But one thing we all know is this: God is love. Not only do we know that God is love, we also know that fear is the greatest enemy of love and the greatest hindrance to the mission of the Church. Fear is like a general anesthetic to the Church. It just puts us into a coma-like state where we simply cannot function and the only thing that brings us out of that fear-induced, frozen state is God, Who is love. Perfect love casts out fear!

Of course there is cause for much concern. It would be irresponsible for us to not be concerned. But there is no place for fear. Unlike the last two great wars which were fought on specific fronts and were confined to those fronts, these extremists are using the same internet we use to spread the gospel, to recruit other extremists all around the world and so this battle will have multiple fronts across the world and most of them will not be visible until it's too late.

So what is God doing about that? When this evil is not contained to the Middle East, what is God's strategy? Well I want to take you to the United States today – a western nation like ours with even deeper Christian roots than Australia but a nation which now has a very large Muslim population and who face the same potential threats to their freedoms as we do.

Many years ago, Islamic leaders sent a young man to the USA to promote the cause of Islam, but he ended up doing the exact opposite, because God had different plans. I believe the man I am about to introduce you to will help answer the question, *"What is God doing?"* I believe he will give us an insight into how God plans to fight this battle which we now face. Please listen carefully to our guest today – his name is Kamal Saleem. (Follow the link below to view the video now)

<https://www.gunnedahbaptist.org.au/files/videos/Kamal.Saleem.mp4>

So what is God doing about the spread of Islamic extremism? He is doing what He has always done – He is sending His true warriors into battle to bring His message of freedom and love and peace and life and as we will be reminded next week, He doesn't just call a few of His people to be involved in this critically important mission, He calls us all. We all have a job to do.

If you have the courage and the commitment to reconnect with us next week, then I believe God will begin to show us exactly what our role is in this global campaign of His which began over two thousand years ago when Jesus commissioned His first disciples to be salt in a world which has lost its flavour, light in a world gripped by darkness and a beacon of hope in a world which has lost its way.

So watch this space; expect God to speak to you; expect your life to change; expect your Church to change; expect the world to change around you. That all sounds rather over the top and dramatic, doesn't it? Well, sadly that might be true. We live in an age when a simple reminder of why we are even here Sunday by Sunday; a simple reminder of God's revealed purposes over many generations now; a few simple sentences about God's desire to communicate directly to us and transform us and our environment, might sound 'over the top', if not unbelievable. Some might even say it's outrageous. Well friends, God's desire has always been to speak directly to you in this place.

God's desire has always been to change your life every time you encounter Him.

God's desire has always been to change this Church ... every day since it was first formed.

God's desire has always been to change the world and the only people He has to do that through is you and me and simple people of faith like us scattered across the globe.

So perhaps it only sounds 'over the top' because we lost sight a long time ago of why we are even here in this place today.

Well friends, I have it on good authority that one of the things our God does best is restore sight to those who cannot see. But the real challenge to us today is to decide if we really want to see.

Sometimes we have to be honest and admit that being blind to some things is better, because once our eyes are opened to the plan and purposes of God, we will never be the same again and we will not be able to go back without deliberately walking away from God's revealed purposes for us.

When God reveals something to you, it can never be 'unrevealed' and we then need to face the most important question for all believers today – the question we all should face every time we encounter God and His Word:

'How then shall I live?'

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 4

by Rev. Robert Griffith

As we continue to investigate what happens when the Holy Spirit moves across a community and a nation, I want to take you back thirty three years. I was at Theological College at the time and part of our pastoral training included a week-long mission trip somewhere in our State. This trip was to Tuggeranong Baptist Church in Canberra. It was a week which God used to show me something I could hardly believe at the time, but it has been a source of great encouragement ever since.

After I had been there a few days I observed a spirit of unity I had never really seen before. Like some Churches now, there was a great diversity of backgrounds in the members of this Church. This congregation included former Anglicans, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and of course many rusted-on third generation Baptists.

That was very interesting, especially thirty three years ago when such diversity was very rare in a Baptist Church. As I got to know some of these people I soon realised that many of them had actually not changed some of their very different theological positions and yet they still enjoyed a rich and fruitful fellowship together.

For example, there were a number of full-on Pentecostals who exercised some of the 'revelatory' gifts such as tongues, words of knowledge and prophecy. However, they enjoyed close fellowship with other believers who firmly believed that such gifts were only for the establishment of the Church and ceased with the Apostolic age! Two of these people I met who held such opposing views were actually in the same weekly home group and were really good friends! There were many other diverse views held in this congregation and yet the unity and singleness of purpose in Christ was so clearly evident and so powerfully present.

I remember asking the Pastor at that time, Rev. Laurie Purdy, what the secret was and how did he manage to have such a growing, vibrant Church full of people who didn't agree with each other on some issues which have been dividing Christians for centuries. He told me that he preached on unity and grace in some form or another almost every week over many years, but then he said, *"If you want to know the main reason for this miracle Church, then come with me and I will show you."*

Somewhat intrigued, I followed Laurie down a long hallway and into his office. He went to his book shelf and reached up and took a photo album off the top shelf and opened it on his desk. This album was full of many photos of his Church family involved in a variety of activities over the years. He flicked through the pages until he came to a photo of two dear old ladies whom he said were in their 80's at the time of the photo. As he pointed to these ladies, his voice softened and he became a little emotional as he said, *"There is your answer. That is the real reason why this Church is growing so consistently and has such an amazing unity in the midst of incredible diversity."*

He went on to explain that these two ladies had been two of his greatest intercessors – they had a deep burden for the Church and the mission of Christ and they prayed more than anyone he had ever known. One of them, he said, prayed for up to eight hours some days and both of them would never spend less than three hours in prayer every single day. Also, as a result of their commitment to prayer, they had also been used by God to inspire the entire congregation to pray far more than they ever had before.

Pastor Laurie said he learned a lot of things about God and about the ministry of the Church in his many years at Tuggeranong Baptist, but the most important thing he learned was the purpose, priority and power of prayer – sustained, fervent, believing prayer.

He said to me with great conviction in his voice, *“The reason the Holy Spirit has been moving so powerfully among us in recent years is because those two beautiful women showed us and taught us the priority of prayer.”* That was over thirty years ago and those two ladies and their Pastor are with the Lord now, but that Congregation is still the same miracle of grace and unity it was back then because those who followed on, were marked by God with the same commitment to prayer.

Now let me take you back 165 years. In 1857 Jeremiah Lanphier was at a crossroads in his life. He was a single, middle-aged businessman with no children or family. Following his heart to reach the neediest people around him, he put aside his regular business and began to work with the North Dutch Church in Manhattan New York as a lay missionary. At that time, there were 30,000 men idle on the streets of New York. Unemployment was at record levels; drunkenness was rampant and the nation was bitterly divided by slavery.

Ministering in the dark slums of Hell’s Kitchen, Lanphier poured himself into the lives of people who were homeless, helpless and hopeless. Month after month he went door to door sharing the Good News, distributing gospel tracts and holding Bible studies with anyone who would listen. Jeremiah would begin each day going from office to office, house to house and shop to shop; but by midday he was physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausted.

So he soon realized his need and so he returned to a room in the Church building to cry out to God for spiritual strength and God restored him miraculously. This fresh, personal experience of the power of prayer suggested to Lanphier that there might be others, especially those engaged in business, who would profit from some time in prayer. So he printed, at his own expense, 20,000 flyers advertising the first noonday prayer meeting on Wednesday 23rd September 1857.

The time for the prayer meeting to start passed and thirty minutes later, Jeremiah Lanphier was still alone praying. Just as he was about to conclude that none of the 20,000 flyers he paid for and handed out personally had touched anyone, he heard footsteps coming up the staircase and another person joined him. Then another and another until Lanphier was joined by five men. God let him wait half an hour and almost lose hope, so that his joy over just six people in a prayer meeting was overwhelming. The following Wednesday that six increased to twenty. The following week there were sixty gathered in prayer. Three months later there were eight hundred. Eight months later 6,000 people were gathering for prayer in the middle of New York City.

After a while they decided to meet daily, and within weeks the word spread and the Spirit of God brought thousands of business leaders together for prayer every single day. Before long over 100 Churches and public meeting halls were filled to capacity with noonday prayer meetings. God moved so powerfully as prayers were being answered every day and similar prayer meetings sprang up right across America. By the end of the first year of this mighty move of the Holy Spirit, there were 800,000 people praying at noon every day in the middle of cities right across the USA.

For many months there were over 10,000 conversions to Christ each week in New York City alone, and it is estimated that nearly one million people across the United States were transformed during this incredible move of God which has now been called *The Layman’s Prayer Revival*. It was a move of God which did not begin with the Clergy, or with some gifted evangelist – it began in the heart of one layman who refused to give up and who discovered the purpose and the power of persistent, fervent prayer.

Now let me take you back even further. It was on a Saturday afternoon in August 1806 that five young men from Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, met together to pray near a grove of maple trees north of the campus. As a thunderstorm rolled in overhead, lightning and rain forced the students to run and take shelter in a haystack. As the storm raged and the lightning flashed overhead, the students prayed that God would send them across the seas to share the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost world. God heard their prayer.

Two years later, the Haystack Prayer Group and other Williams College students began a ministry tasked with establishing missions locally and abroad. In 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was created and it soon sent its first missionaries to the non-Christian world - to India. In its first fifty years, ABCFM sent out over 1,200 missionaries.

Samuel Mills was the most influential among the Haystack Group to direct the modern mission movement. He played a role in the founding of the American Bible Society and the United Foreign Missionary Society.

Why did all this happen? What caused the explosion of American interest in global evangelism and missions after 1810? Well it was simple really. A handful of college students who were completely sold out to God in the summer of 1806, gathered to pray and experienced the presence of God. In the presence of God, the students at the haystack took personal responsibility for the lost souls of their generation and committed that burden to prayer and didn't stop praying until God acted.

Now I could keep going for hours, if not days, sharing accounts like this throughout history and I hope to do so more in the days ahead. But let me just take you back to the very beginning, which was over 2,000 years ago at the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, our Lord and Saviour. After the resurrected Christ had appeared many times to the disciples He said something very important to them and we can read His words in the first chapter of the book of Acts.

Acts 1:4-5,8 *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Those were Jesus' last words as man before He left the earth. Then notice what the disciples did:

Acts 1:12-14 *“Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”*

I find it fascinating to see how many thousands of sermons have been preached and books written on Acts 1:8, which contains Jesus' promise of the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon His people to be witnesses to the ends of the earth - and rightly so - it's a great verse! But you won't find too many sermons and books on Acts 1:14 .. *“They all joined together constantly in prayer ...”* I think this has always been the case in the Church but it has increased as we have moved further and further into this 'instant' age in which we now find ourselves. Sadly, the concept of 'waiting' or doing anything 'constantly' over time, stands in stark contrast to our whole culture.

Today we can just type a few words on a keyboard and click a plastic thing we call a mouse and be anywhere in the world or in human history in seconds. Years ago that required hours in a public library and even then the information was never totally up to date because it took years for reference books to be re-printed and updated. Today we can now remove a frozen meal from a container, zap it with microwaves and be eating it in five minutes. Years ago we would need to have taken the meat out of the freezer the night before and started preparing our evening meal early in the afternoon for it all to be ready by dinner time.

So much of our world has been turbo-charged and lots of things happen quickly now and so people's tolerance of those things which take time has lessened. These days many of us don't even have the ability to think about doing something over and over again without an instant result, because so much of our world only requires us to do something once and the result is there! Waiting on God and waiting for God to act in His time; trusting God to move in our midst and around the world; praying fervently, persistently and constantly for days, weeks, months and even years – these are the key characteristics of the mighty men and women of God we have seen down through the ages.

Now of course God is certainly able to act quickly and sometimes He does so when we least expect it. However, God is far more committed to the journey with us in partnership than we seem to be in our time and culture. We just want the results. But from God's perspective, what happens to us in the process is a result in itself. God is certainly concerned about the destination, the goal and the outcome. But He is just as concerned about the process, the moment by moment faith journey which He calls us into and that's why Billy Graham once said, *"The mystery and wonder of prayer is that God often waits until someone asks."*

God does not *need* us to pray in order to act and God does not *need* us to pray over and over and over again in order to act. He doesn't need convincing. He's not hard of hearing. He's not stubborn and needs us to wear Him down. God calls upon us to wait on Him in constant, fervent, believing prayer because of what it does in us and to us. Prayer is not just asking God for something and expecting Him to give it. If that is all prayer was, then we would only ask once and forget about it. But history tells us that prolonged, constant, fervent prayer is what precedes all the mighty outpourings from God in healing, revival and community transformation.

Why is that? Well we don't know all the reasons, only God does. However, one of the reasons is clear. Nobody can pray constantly and fervently and sincerely over a long period of time without faith. You just can't do it. You will give up sooner or later because without faith you will see no real purpose in sustained prayer. It will feel like a dead ritual, not a spiritually significant activity.

Only those with a deep sense of trust and faith in God will be able to pray and continue praying, regardless of the outcome and it's that faith and trust which is what God is holding out for. Revivals and community transformations are built on that faith and trust. Prayer is simply the activity of those people who trust God and have the faith to believe that God will not only answer their prayer, in His time and His way, but He will also transform them in the process of praying. **Prayer is the activity of those people who trust God and have the faith to believe that God will not only answer their prayer, in His time and in His way, but He will also transform them in the process of praying.**

You see friends, God has never seen prayer as just the means by which we communicate with Him or ask Him for stuff. God sees prayer as much, much more than that. God desires to transform us into the image of His Son, which is our ultimate and true identity as believers, and He does that as we pray more than via any other means. So what is God doing in the face of all our challenges in the world today?

God is doing exactly what He was doing thirty three years ago in that Church in Canberra I visited; He is doing exactly what He was doing in New York in 1857 and then all across America the following year; He is doing exactly what He was doing under that haystack in Massachusetts in 1806; He is doing exactly what He was doing just before He left the earth in bodily form over 2,000 years ago – God is calling His people to prayer. In an age when we would rather fill our days with more ‘productive’ activities, God is still calling us to be still and know that He is God (Ps.46:10); to draw near to Him so that He might draw near to us (James 4:8); to wait on our Lord so that we might rise up as with the wings of an eagle (Is. 40:31).

God is calling us to push the ‘pause’ button on our busy lives and to pray - constantly, fervently and in faith. Our minds tell us that we need to ‘do’ so much more in this troubled world, but the Spirit of God will tell us that we need to direct more of that energy into humbling ourselves before God in prayer. Only there, in that place of submission, that place of dependence, that place of trust, will we once again know that God is the only One with the ability to deal with any and all of the world’s woes and the army He is raising up to bring His enemy into submission is an army which marches on its knees - an army of invisible prayer warriors.

We are in a spiritual battle, we always have been. We are at war with the enemy of God, we always have been. Our battle is not against the Islamic State and ruthless terrorists ... our battle is against the principalities and powers, the spiritual forces of darkness which gives birth to all manner of evil around our world, and that battle is not fought with weapons made by man.

The soldiers in God’s army have the cross of Christ as their ultimate weapon and they march on their knees in prayer. The amazing thing about God’s army is there is no age limit. In fact, like I saw in a photo album many years ago in that Canberra church, some of the greatest and most effective soldiers in the army of God, are those in the twilight of their life on earth – those senior saints who have the time, the maturity and the spiritual burden to spend hours and hours in prayer.

Let me assure you that I would not have survived the last four decades in ministry without prayer warriors like that. I could take you to several photos in my album of life and point out the specific people whom I know for a fact were praying fervently and especially for me, for my family and for the ministry in which I was involved at the time.

You see friends our mission, our vision, our strategic direction, our ministry programs ... in fact everything we ‘do’ and ‘decide’ as a church are all a fruitless waste of time without prayer. They are just things we do – maybe with right motives and sincere intentions - but they will lack power, they will achieve very little and they will not last, if they are not preceded by, saturated in, and constantly upheld by sustained, fervent, daily prayer across the Church.

When that vision of the purpose, the place and the priority of prayer is re-captured by the Church in our day, then maybe, just maybe, we will also get to see one of those ‘spontaneous’, ‘sovereign’ moves of the Holy Spirit explode across the landscape of our life and community as the Lord captures the hearts of thousands of His people. Let those who have ears to hear, really listen to what God is saying to the Church today. Amen.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 5

by Rev. Robert Griffith

When the Holy Spirit moves in power across a people over time revival always comes. In a revival the Church is renewed and refocused, the Gospel explodes across communities and nations and the presence and power of God is seen and felt by hundreds of thousands of people. Some of the greatest examples of the Holy Spirit moving like this are the powerful revivals of the eighteenth century which spread through Europe, especially England, and then on to North America. They became known as the *Evangelical Revivals* in England and *The Great Awakening* in America. They grew from the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on some small communities of refugees which had suffered incredible persecution in Europe.

No one present could tell exactly what happened on this one Wednesday morning when a special Communion service had been scheduled. The glory of the Lord came upon those who were present so powerfully that they hardly knew if they were on earth or in heaven. The Spirit of God moved powerfully among those three hundred refugees in Saxony in 1727. One of them wrote this:

'Church history abounds in records of special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and most certainly Wednesday August 13, 1727, was such a day when the Holy Spirit moved in power. We saw the hand of God and His wonders, and we were all under the cloud of God's presence. The Holy Spirit came upon us and in those days great signs and wonders took place in our midst. From that time scarcely a day passed without us beholding God's almighty workings amongst us. A great hunger after the Word of God took possession of us so that we had to have three services every day, at 5.00am, 7.30am and 9.00pm. Every one desired above everything else that the Holy Spirit might have full control. Self love and self will, as well as all disobedience, disappeared and an overwhelming flood of God's grace swept us all out into the great ocean of Divine Love.'

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the benefactor and 27-year-old leader of that community, gave this account at a meeting in London many years later:

'We needed to come to the Communion with a sense of the loving nearness of the Saviour. This was the great comfort which has made this day a generation ago to be a festival, because on this day twenty-seven years ago the Congregation of Herrnhut, assembled for communion (at the Berthelsdorf church) were all dissatisfied with themselves. They had quit judging each other because they had become convinced, each one, of his lack of worth in the sight of God and each felt himself at this Communion to be in view of the noble countenance of the Saviour.'

In this view of the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, their hearts told them that He would be their patron and their priest who was at once changing their tears into the oil of gladness and their misery into happiness. This firm confidence changed them in a single moment into a happy people which they are to this day, and into their happiness they have since led many thousands of others through the memory and help which the heavenly grace once given to themselves, so many thousand times confirmed to them since then.'

Known as the Moravians this group had grown from the work and martyrdom of the Bohemian Reformer, John Hus. They suffered centuries of persecution. Many had been killed, many others were imprisoned, tortured or banished from their homeland.

This group had fled for refuge to Germany where the young Christian nobleman, Count Zinzendorf, offered them asylum on his estates in Saxony. They named their new home Herrnhut, which means *'the Lord's Watch.'* From there, after their baptism of fire, they became pioneering evangelists and missionaries.

Fifty years before the beginning of modern missions with William Carey, the Moravian Church had already sent out over 100 missionaries. Their English missionary magazine, *Periodical Accounts*, really inspired Carey. Apparently he threw a copy of the magazine on a table at a Baptist meeting and said, *“See what the Moravians have done! Cannot we follow their example and in obedience to our Heavenly Father go out into the world and preach the gospel to all?”*

That missionary zeal all began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as Zinzendorf observed here:

“The Saviour permitted to come upon us a Spirit of whom we had hitherto not had any experience or knowledge. ... until then we had been the leaders and helpers. Now the Holy Spirit Himself took full control of everything and everyone.”

Converted in early childhood, at four years of age Zinzendorf composed and signed a covenant: *“Dear Saviour, be mine, and I will be Thine.”* His life’s motto was, *“Jesus only.”* Zinzendorf learned the secret of prevailing prayer. He actively established prayer groups as a teenager, and by the time he finished college at the age of sixteen he had already established seven praying societies.

The disgruntled community at Herrnhut early in 1727 criticized one another. Heated controversies threatened to disrupt the community. The majority belonged to the ancient Moravian Church of the Brethren. Other believers attracted to Herrnhut included Lutherans, Reformed, and Anabaptists. They argued constantly about predestination, holiness and baptism. Zinzendorf, pleaded for unity, love and repentance. At Herrnhut, Zinzendorf visited all the adult members of the deeply divided community. He drew up a covenant calling upon them to seek out and emphasize the points upon which they agreed rather than debating their differences. On 12th May, 1727, they all signed this covenant, dedicating their lives, as Zinzendorf had dedicated his, to the service of Jesus Christ.

The Moravian revival of 1727 was preceded and sustained by extraordinary personal and communal, united prayer. A strong spirit of grace and unity grew among them. On July 16th Zinzendorf poured out his soul in a prayer accompanied by a flood of tears. This prayer produced an extraordinary effect. The whole community began praying as never before. On July 22nd many of the community covenanted together on their own accord to meet often to pour out their hearts in prayers and hymns. On August 5th Zinzendorf spent the whole night in prayer with about fourteen others after a large meeting for prayer at midnight where great emotion prevailed.

On Sunday, August 10th, Pastor Johann Rothe, a friend of Zinzendorf and minister of the Berthelsdorf Parish Church, was overwhelmed by the Spirit about noon. He sank down into the dust before God. So did the whole congregation. They continued till midnight in prayer and singing, weeping and praying. On Wednesday, August 13th, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them all at the specially arranged communion service in the Berthelsdorf Church. Their prayers were answered in ways far beyond anyone’s expectations. Many of them decided to set aside certain times for continued earnest prayer.

On Tuesday August 26th, twenty-four men and twenty-four women covenanted together to continue praying in intervals of one hour each, day and night, each hour allocated by lots to different people. On Wednesday, August 27th, this new schedule began. Others joined the intercessors and the number involved increased to seventy-seven.

They all carefully observed the hour which had been appointed for them. The intercessors had a weekly meeting where prayer needs were given to them. The children began a similar plan among themselves. Those who heard their infant supplications were deeply moved. The children’s prayers had a powerful effect on the whole community.

That astonishing 24 hour rolling prayer meeting began in 1727 and it was still running a hundred years later. Known as *The Hourly Intercession*, it involved relays of men and women and children in prayer without ceasing. That prayer also led to action, especially evangelism. More than 100 missionaries left that village community alone in the next twenty-five years, all constantly supported in prayer. One result of this mighty move of the Holy Spirit was a joyful assurance of their pardon and salvation. This had a strong impact on people in many countries, including John and Charles Wesley. Their prayers, preaching and witness profoundly affected the eighteenth-century evangelical awakening.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the preacher and scholar who later became President of Princeton University, was a prominent leader in a revival movement which came to be called *The Great Awakening* as it spread through the communities of New England and the pioneering settlements in America. Converts to Christianity reached 50,000 out of a total of only 250,000 colonists. Early in 1735, an unusually powerful move of God's Spirit brought revival to Northampton, which then spread through New England in the north-east of America. Edwards noted the following:

"A great and earnest concern about the great things of faith and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town and among persons of all degrees and all ages; the noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder; all other talk but about spiritual and eternal things, was soon discarded. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world; it was treated among us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business, more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it... And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light ... with a new song of praise to God in their mouths..."

Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours ...

Those amongst us who had been formerly converted, were greatly enlivened, and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomes of the Spirit of God; though some much more than others, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Many who before had laboured under difficulties about their own state, had now their doubts removed by more satisfying experience, and more clear discoveries of God's love."

Describing the characteristics of the revival, Edwards said,

"It gave people an extraordinary sense of the awful majesty, greatness and holiness of God, so as sometimes to overwhelm soul and body; a sense of the piercing, all seeing eye of God, so as sometimes to take away the bodily strength; and an extraordinary view of the infinite majesty of God, longings after more love for Christ, and greater conformity to him; especially longing to be more perfect in humility and adoration. The flesh and the heart seem often to cry out, lying low before God and adoring Him with greater love and humility. ...

These people felt a great delight in singing praises to God and Jesus Christ, and longing that this present life may be as it were one continued song of praise to God. ... Together with living by faith to a great degree, there was a constant and extraordinary distrust of our own strength and wisdom; a great dependence on God for His help and His empowering presence."

In 1735, when the American revival was strongest, George Whitefield (1714-1770) back in England and Howell Harris (1714-1773) in Wales were both converted at the age of 21. Both ignited revival fires, seeing thousands converted and whole communities changed. By 1736 Harris began forming his converts into societies and by 1739 there were nearly thirty such societies. Whitefield travelled extensively, visiting Georgia in 1738 (the first of seven journeys to America), then ministering powerfully with Howell Harris in Wales in 1739 and with Jonathan Edwards in New England in 1740, all in his early twenties. At the end of 1735, John Wesley (1703-1791) sailed to Georgia, an American colony. A company of Moravian immigrants travelled on that vessel. During a storm they faced the danger of shipwreck. John Wesley wrote in his journal for Sunday 25th January 1736:

“At seven o’clock I went to the Germans. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behaviour. Of their humility they had given a continual proof by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying, “It was good for their proud hearts,” 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 trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger and revenge.

In the midst of the Psalm where their service began, the sea broke over, split the main sail 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 the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them later: “Were you not afraid?” He answered, “I thank God, no.” I asked: “But were not your women and children afraid?” He replied mildly: “No, they are not afraid to die.”

Back in England in 1738 the Wesley brothers were greatly challenged by the Moravian missionary Peter Bohler. In March 1738 John Wesley wrote this in his journal:

“On Saturday 4th March I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Bohler, by whom (in the hand of the great God) I was, on Sunday 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved. Immediately it struck into my mind, “Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?” I asked Bohler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, “By no means.” I asked, “But what can I preach?” He said, “Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith even more!”

Both John and Charles Wesley were powerfully converted in May 1738, Charles first, and John three days later on Wednesday 24 May. John wrote this now famous testimony in his Journal:

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.

I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Later that year John Wesley visited the Moravian community at Herrnhut. He admired their zeal and love for the Lord, and he prayed that their kind of Christianity, full of the Holy Spirit, would spread through the earth. Back in England he preached evangelically, gathered converts into religious societies (which were nicknamed Methodists because of his methodical procedures), and continued to relate warmly with the Moravians. Evangelical revival fires began to stir in England and burst into flame the following year.

In 1739 an astonishing expansion of revival was seen in England. On the evening of January 1st the Wesleys and Whitefield (recently back from America) and four others from their former Holy Club at Oxford University, along with 60 others, met in London for prayer and a love feast. The Spirit of God moved powerfully upon them all. Many fell down, overwhelmed. The meeting went all night and they realised they had been empowered in a fresh visitation from God.

This Pentecost on New Year's Day launched what was known later as *The Great Awakening*. Revival spread rapidly. In February 1739 Whitefield started preaching to the Kingswood coal miners in the open fields near Bristol because many Churches opposed him, accusing him and other evangelicals of 'enthusiasm'. In February about 200 attended. By March 20,000 attended. Whitefield invited Wesley to take over then and so in April Wesley reluctantly began his famous open-air preaching, which continued for 50 years.

He described that first weekend in his Journal:

"Saturday, 31st March - In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr Whitefield. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.

Sunday, 1st April - In the evening, I begun expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching) to a little society in Nicholas Street.

Monday, 2 April - At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to almost three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor."

Sometimes strange manifestations accompanied revival preaching. Wesley wrote in his Journal on 26th April 1739 that during his preaching at Newgate, Bristol, *"One, then another, and another sunk to the earth; they dropped on every side as thunderstruck."*

He returned to London in June reporting on the amazing move of God's Spirit with many conversions and many people falling prostrate, a phenomenon he never encouraged. Features of this revival were enthusiastic singing, powerful preaching and the gathering of converts into small societies called weekly Class Meetings. Initially, leaders such as George Whitefield criticized some manifestations in Wesley's meetings, but this changed. Wesley wrote in his journal on 7 July 1739:

"I had opportunity to talk with Mr Whitefield about those outward signs which had so often accompanied the inward work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matter of fact. But the next day he had opportunity of informing himself better: for no sooner had he begun (in the application of his sermon) to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sank down, close to him, almost at the same moment.

One of them lay without either sense or motion; a second trembled exceedingly; the third had strong convulsions all over his body, but made no noise, unless by groans; the fourth, equally convulsed, called upon God, with strong cried and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleases Him."

Revival also caught fire in Scotland. After returning again from America in 1741, Whitefield visited Glasgow. Two ministers in villages nearby invited him to return in 1742 because revival had already begun in their area. Conversions and prayer groups multiplied rapidly.

Whitefield preached there at Cambuslang about four miles from Glasgow. The opening meetings on a Sunday saw great crowds on the hillside gripped with conviction, repentance and weeping more than he had seen elsewhere. The word spread quickly and the following weekend 20,000 people gathered on the Saturday and up to 50,000 on the Sunday for the quarterly communion. The visit was charged with the power and the presence of God to such a degree which even amazed Whitefield.

So why is this journey down memory lane relevant and important to us today? Well first of all, it's relevant because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Therefore, if He could pour out His spirit upon preachers and Church communities and whole nations like He did back in the 18th Century revivals, He can do exactly the same today. These were not cultural phenomena, locked in time and space – these were outpourings from God in response to the prayers and yearning of His people. So if God could move in power like He did back then, He could do it again today – right here in our Church and in our community.

It's also important that we revisit these mighty moves of God's Spirit so our faith might be boosted and our desire for revival and transformation in our lives, our Church and our communities would become our highest priority and our deepest desire.

So let's rejoice and celebrate all the mighty moves of God throughout history but let's also affirm and accept that God's desire for renewal, revival and community-wide transformation never changes with the passing of time or the evolution cultures. The mission of Christ is the same today as it was when Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room, *"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."* Then He breathed on them and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* Jesus is among us right now saying exactly the same thing today.

Will we heed His call? Will we embrace His mission? Will we pray for and welcome a fresh and powerful impartation of His empowering Spirit among us? All of heaven is awaiting our reply . . .

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 6

by Rev. Robert Griffith

As we continue our study of the many times the Holy Spirit has moved across communities and even whole nations, I want to talk about the ministry of Charles Finney (1792-1875), who became well known in revivals in the nineteenth century. Charles was a very keen sportsman and young lawyer, who also happened to have a mighty empowering of God's Spirit on the night of his conversion which took place on Wednesday 10th October 1821.

That morning the Holy Spirit convicted Charles on his way to work. So rather than go to work he spent the morning praying in the woods near his small home town of Adams in New York State. There he surrendered himself fully to God. He then walked to his law office that afternoon as a profoundly changed man and in the afternoon assisted his employer Squire Wright to set up a new office. That night he was filled with the Holy Spirit like never before. He describes that momentous night in his autobiography:

“By evening we had the books and furniture adjusted, and I made a good fire in an open fireplace, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark my employer, seeing that everything was adjusted, told me good night and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door, and as I closed the door and turned around my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out and the thought of my heart was, ‘I want to pour my whole soul out to God.’ The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room at the back of the office to pray. There was no fire and no light in this back room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light.

As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed to me as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. It seemed to me a reality that he stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him. I wept aloud like a child and made such confession as I could with my choked words. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears, and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched him.

I must have continued in this state for a good while, but my mind was too much absorbed with the experience to remember anything that I said. As soon as my mind became calm enough I returned to the front office and found that the fire I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any memory of ever hearing the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can remember distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

No words can express the wonderful love that was spread abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love. I literally bellowed out the unspeakable overflow of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after another, until I remember crying out, ‘I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me. Lord, I cannot bear any more,’ yet I had no fear of death.”

That night a member of the Church choir which Finney led called in at his office, amazed to find the former sceptic in a “*state of loud weeping*” and unable to talk to him for some time. That young friend left and soon returned with an elder from the Church who was usually serious and rarely laughed. This is Finney’s account of what happened then:

“I was very much in the state in which I was when the young man went out to call him. He asked me how I felt and I began to tell him. Instead of saying anything he fell into a most spasmodic laughter. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to keep from laughing from the very bottom of his heart.”

Next morning, with what Finney called “*the renewal of these mighty waves of love and salvation*” flowing through him, Charles witnessed to his employer who was strongly convicted and later made his peace with God. That morning a Deacon from the Church came to see Finney about a court case due to be tried at ten o’clock. Finney told him he would have to find another lawyer, saying, “*I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead His cause and I cannot plead yours.*” The astonished Deacon later became more serious about God and settled his case privately. Finney described the immediate change in his own life and work:

“I soon sallied forth from the office to converse with those whom I might meet about their souls. I had the impression, which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the Gospel, and that I must begin immediately. So I spoke with many persons that day, and I believe the Spirit of God made lasting impressions upon every one of them. I cannot remember one whom I spoke with, who was not soon after converted.

In the course of the day a good deal of excitement was created in the village because of what the Lord had done for my soul. Some thought one thing and some another. At evening, without any appointment having been made, I observed that the people were going to the place where they usually held their conference and prayer meetings. I went there myself. The minister was there, and nearly all the principal people in the village. No one seemed ready to open the meeting, but the house was packed to its utmost capacity. I did not wait for anybody, but rose and began by saying that I then knew that religion was from God. I went on and told such parts of my experience as it seemed important for me to tell. We had a wonderful meeting that evening, and from that day we had a meeting every evening for a long time.

As I had been a leader among the young people I immediately appointed a meeting for them, which they all attended. ... They were converted one after another with great rapidity, and the work continued among them until only one of their number was left unconverted. The work spread among all classes, and extended itself not only through the village but also out of the village in every direction.”

Charles Finney continued for the rest of his life in evangelism and revival. During the height of the revivals he often saw the awesome holiness of God come upon people, not only in meetings but also in the community, bringing multitudes to repentance and conversion. Wherever he travelled, instead of bringing a song leader he brought someone to pray. Often Father Nash, his companion, was not even in the meetings but in the woods praying.

Finney founded and taught theology at Oberlin College which pioneered co-education in America and enrolled both blacks and whites. His Lectures on Revival were widely read and helped to fan revival fire in America and England. He emphasized Hosea 10:12, “*Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*” He believed that if we do our part in repentance and prayer, God will do His in sending revival.

He preached in Boston for over a year during the great revival in 1858-1859. Many reports tell of the power of God producing conviction in people not even in the meetings. At times people would repent as they sailed into Boston harbour, convicted by the Holy Spirit. At one time the power of God came over a whole town and people. In bars, in their homes, on the streets people were overcome with the reality of their sin and God's grace and forgiveness. This all began at the exact same time as Charles Finney was sitting on a train and looked up from his Bible as the train passed through the town and he prayed for this community where he was not scheduled to stop. The Holy Spirit moved with power and touched hundreds of lives.

Various revival movements influenced society in the nineteenth century but 1858 in America and 1859 in Britain were outstanding. Typically, it followed a low ebb of spiritual life. Concerned Christians began praying earnestly and anticipating a new move of God's Spirit. Revival swept Great Britain also at this time, including the Ulster revival of 1859. During September 1857, James McQuilkin commenced a weekly prayer meeting in a village schoolhouse near Kells with three other young Irishmen. This is generally seen as the start of the Ulster revival.

The first conversions in answer to their prayer came in December 1857. Through 1858 innumerable prayer meetings started, and revival was a common theme of preachers. On 14th March 1859 James McQuilkin and his praying friends organized a great prayer meeting at the Ahoghill Presbyterian Church. Such a large crowd gathered that the building was cleared in case the galleries collapsed. Outside in the chilling rain as a layman preached with great power hundreds knelt in repentance. This was the first of many movements of the Holy Spirit.

No town in Ulster was more deeply stirred during the 1859 Revival than Coleraine. It was there that a boy was so troubled about his soul that the schoolmaster sent him home. An older boy, a Christian, accompanied him, and before they had gone far he led the young boy to Christ. Returning at once to the school, this latest convert testified to the master, *"Oh, I am so happy! I have the Lord Jesus in my heart."* The effect of these artless words was very great. Boy after boy rose and silently left the room. On investigation the master found these boys kneeling in prayer alongside the wall at the playground. Very soon their silent prayer became a bitter cry. It was heard by those within and pierced their hearts. They cast themselves upon their knees, and their cry for mercy was heard in the girls' schoolroom above. In a few moments the whole school was upon its knees, and its wail of distress was heard in the street outside. Neighbours and passers-by came flocking in, and all, as they crossed the threshold, came under the same convicting power. Every room was filled with men, women, and children seeking God.

The revival of 1859 brought 100,000 converts into the Churches of Ireland. God's Spirit moved powerfully in small and large gatherings bringing great conviction of sin, deep repentance, and lasting moral change. It was common for people to be lying prostrate for some time overcome by the Holy Presence of God. The transformation impacted the whole community. This revival had a greater impact on Ireland than anything known since Patrick brought Christianity there. By the end of 1860 the effects of the Ulster revival were listed as overflowing services, unprecedented numbers of communicants, abundant prayer meetings, increased family prayers, unmatched Scripture reading, prosperous Sunday Schools, converts remaining steadfast, increased giving, vice and crime reduced.

Revival fire ignites fire. Throughout 1859 the same deep conviction and lasting conversions revived thousands of people in Wales, Scotland and England. Revival in Wales found expression in glorious praise including harmonies unique to the Welsh which involved preacher and people in turn. There too, 100,000 converts (one-tenth of the total population) were added to the Church and crime was greatly reduced. Scotland and England were similarly visited with revival. Again, prayer increased enormously and preaching caught fire with many anointed evangelists seeing thousands converted.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a Baptist Minister known as 'the prince of preachers,' saw 1859 as the high watermark although he had already been preaching in his Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for over five years with great blessing and huge crowds. Spurgeon first preached in what was known as New Park Street Chapel in 1853. His arrival soon led to such crowds thronging to the chapel that services had to be moved to a vast hired hall in the Strand, and then to the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall, where up to 10,000 people assembled. During Charles Spurgeon's ministry tens of thousands were converted to God under the preaching of the Word. Spurgeon pastored the church for 38 years, founding a pastors' college, an orphanage, a Christian literature society and *The Sword and the Trowel* magazine. Over 200 new churches were started and pastored by his students.

This wave of revival in the mid 1800's included countries around the globe. Missionaries and travellers told of thousands being converted, and others began crying out to God to send revival to their nations. It happened in South Africa. Revival began among the Zulu tribes before it spilled over into the Dutch Reformed Church. Tribal people gathered in large numbers on the frontier mission stations and then took revival fire, African style, into all their villages.

On Sunday night, 22 May 1859 the Spirit of God fell on a service of the Zulus in Natal so powerfully that they prayed all night. News spread rapidly. This revival among the Zulus of Natal on the east coast ignited missions and tribal Churches. It produced extraordinary praying and vigorous evangelism. In April 1860 at a combined missions conference of over 370 leaders of Dutch Reformed, Methodist and Presbyterian missions meeting at Worcester, South Africa, discussed revival. Andrew Murray Sr., moved to tears, had to stop speaking. His son, Andrew Murray Jr., now well known through his books, led in prayer so powerfully that many saw that as the beginning of revival in those Churches. By June revival had so impacted the Methodist Church in Montague village that they held prayer meetings every night and three mornings a week, sometimes as early as 3 am. The Dutch Reformed people joined together with the Methodists with great conviction to seek God in worship and intercession. Reports to many other villages and ignited similar prayer meetings in many places.

As an African servant girl sang and prayed one Sunday night, the Holy Spirit fell on the group and a roaring sound like approaching thunder surrounded the hall which then began to shake. Instantly everyone burst out praying! Their pastor, Andrew Murray Jr., had been speaking in the main sanctuary. When told of this he ran to their meeting calling for order! No one took any notice. They kept crying loudly to God for forgiveness.

All week the prayer meetings continued, beginning in silence, but "*as soon as several prayers had arisen the place was shaken as before and the whole company of people engaged in simultaneous petition to the throne of grace.*" On the Saturday, Andrew Murray Jr. led the prayer meeting. After preaching he prayed and invited others to pray. Again the sound of thunder approached and everyone prayed aloud, loudly. At first Andrew Murray tried to quieten the people, but a stranger reminded him that God was at work, and he learned to accept this noisy revival praying. People were converted. The revival spread like a fire. Fifty men from that congregation alone went into full-time ministry, and the revival launched Andrew Murray Jr. into a worldwide ministry of speaking and writing.

Later that year D.L. Moody (1837-1899), converted in 1855, led powerful evangelistic campaigns in America and England. Two women in his church prayed constantly that he would be filled with the Spirit, and his yearning for God continued to increase. While visiting New York in 1871 to raise funds for Churches and orphanages destroyed in the Chicago fire of October that year, in which his home, Church sanctuary and the YMCA buildings were destroyed, Moody had a deep encounter with God. He wrote:

“I was crying all the time God would fill me with his Spirit. Well, one day in the city of New York oh, what a day! I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask him to stay his hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not be placed back where I was before that blessed experience for all the world it would be as the small dust of the balance.”

On a visit to Britain he heard Henry Varley say, *“The world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him.”* D.L. Moody resolved to be that man and he worked vigorously to establish the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in America and England as a means of converting and discipling youth. A Baptist minister in London, Rev. R. Boyd, went to a meeting where Moody had just spoken and observed, *“When I got to the rooms of the YMCA, Victoria Hall, London, I found the meeting was on fire. The young men were all filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.”* God’s Spirit powerfully impacted people through D.L. Moody’s ministry, especially in conversion and in deep commitment to God. Tens of thousands of people embraced the Gospel and many became pastors and missionaries.

When the Holy Spirit moves, whole societies and nations are transformed and the Kingdom of God advances just as Jesus said it would. The power of presence of God in revival is too often seen as some special and unique manifestation for a specific season and time and yet all the ingredients for revival are always at the disposal of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel hasn’t changed.

The mission of Christ hasn’t changed.

The need for revival hasn’t changed.

The Holy Spirit’s desire to move in us, among us and through us hasn’t changed.

The Word of God hasn’t changed.

The only thing that has changed is the heart of God’s people, their conviction and passion for mission, their faith to believe that God desires to pour out His Spirit upon our land in our time and their willingness to pay the price, and more specifically to PRAY THE PRICE to see revival come.

If we can re-visit those wonderful revivals in the past and see what God can do when His people humble themselves and pray and cry out to Him for revival – if we can see all that God can do when the Holy Spirit moves and nothing changes in the choices we make the prayers we pray or the faith we have in God – then perhaps we will understand why revival continues to be a distant memory and not a realistic expectation.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 7

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Beginning with thousands of small prayer groups worldwide, the first few years of the twentieth century saw revival break out in unprecedented measure. A prime example in our own country was in 1902 with the evangelistic meetings held by Reuben Torrey with Charles Alexander. In preparation for their visit to Melbourne, 1,700 home prayer groups met to pray for the mission and for revival. The Australian campaign registered over 20,000 enquirers and many Church buildings were filled to capacity early that century. Torrey reported on the large numbers of Melbourne home 'prayer circles' when he spoke at the Keswick Convention in England in July 1902. All of the 5,000 people who were attending the convention responded with enthusiasm, committing themselves to pray for worldwide revival in ever-increasing 'prayer circles'. Then volunteers gathered names of additional thousands who committed to join in united, constant prayer for revival. So this revival 'down under' spread to the other side of the world over the next few years.

The Welsh Revival of 1904-1905 became the most powerful expression of that revival, and it, in turn, impacted the whole world. As news of the revival spread in print and as missionaries sailed from Great Britain, fervent prayer for revival increased across the world. Powerful revivals touched India, Korea, China, South Africa and Japan, along with fresh awakenings in Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific. From November 1904 in Wales thousands were converted in a few months and 100,000 within a year. That number did not include nominal members converted in the Anglican and Free Churches. Five years later the vast majority of those converts remained active in the Churches. During the revival, crime dropped dramatically, with some judges left without any cases to try. Convictions for drunkenness fell drastically and a number of the main taverns went bankrupt as men turned away from alcohol in their droves. At times so many miners were converted that it caused slowdowns in the mines because the pit ponies hauling coal all stopped, confused, not understanding their instructions without profanity. All the ponies needed to be re-trained so they would respond to the more refined language!

Early in 1904 touches of revival stirred New Quay, Cardiganshire, on the west coast of Wales where Joseph Jenkins was minister. At a testimony meeting at Jenkin's Methodist Church, a recent teenage convert, Florrie Evans, announced, *"If no one else will, I must say that I do love my Lord Jesus with all my heart."* The Holy Spirit instantly moved powerfully on the meeting with strong conviction. Many wept. One after another stood and acknowledged their submission to God. Jenkins led teams of revived young people conducting testimony meetings throughout the area.

The evangelist, Seth Joshua, arrived at New Quay in September 1904 to find remarkable moves of the Spirit in his meetings. On Sunday 18th, he reported that he had *"never seen the power of the Holy Spirit so powerfully manifested among the people as at this place just now."* His meetings lasted far into the night.

Some excerpts from his diary read:

"Revival is breaking out here in greater power ... the young people receiving the greatest measure of blessing. They break out into prayer, praise, testimony and exhortation. I cannot leave the building until midnight and even 1am. I closed the service several times and yet it would break out again quite beyond control of human power. . . At tonight's meeting group after group came out to the front, seeking the full assurance of faith. I am of the opinion that forty conversions took place this week. I also think that those seeking assurance may be fairly counted as converts, for they had never received Jesus as personal Saviour before."

Seth Joshua, alarmed by the inroads of liberalism in the Churches, had prayed that God would use a zealous young Christian to bring revival to Wales. One such young man, converted through his own ministry was Evan Roberts (1878-1951). Born in Loughor, Evan Roberts was an exemplary school pupil. At twelve he began working in the mine with his father. He founded a Sunday school for the children of miners and decided to become a preacher. Constantly he read the Bible, even in the mine. He published poems in the Cardiff Times under a pseudonym, learned shorthand, and taught himself to be a blacksmith. He describes his encounters with the Holy Spirit as follows:

“For thirteen years I prayed that I might receive the fullness of the Spirit. I had been led to pray by a remark of William Davies, one of the deacons: ‘Be faithful! Supposing the Spirit were to come down and you were not there. Remember Thomas, and how much he lost from not being present on the evening of the Resurrection.’ So I said to myself: ‘I want to receive the Spirit at any price.’ And I continually went to meetings despite all difficulties. Often, as I saw the other boys putting out to sea in their boats, I was tempted to turn round and join them. But no. I said to myself, ‘Remember your resolution to be faithful’, and I would go to the meeting. Prayer meeting on Monday evening at the chapel, prayer meeting for the Sunday school on Tuesday evening, meeting at the Church on Wednesday evening, and Thursday evening. I supported all these faithfully for years. For ten or eleven years I prayed for revival. I spent whole nights reading accounts of revivals or talking about them. It was the Spirit who in this way was driving me to think about revival.

One Friday evening that spring (1904), as I was praying at my bedside before going to bed, I was taken up into a great expanse – without time or space. It was communion with God. Up to that time I had only had a God who was far off. That evening I was afraid, but that fear has never come back. I trembled so violently that the bed shook, and my brother was awakened and took hold of me, thinking I was ill. After this experience I woke each night about one o’clock in the morning. It was the more strange, as usually I slept like a log and no noise in my room was enough to wake me. From one o’clock I was taken up into communion with God for about four hours. What it was I cannot tell you, except that it was of God. About five o’clock I was again allowed to sleep until about nine o’clock. I was then taken up again and carried away in the same experience as in the early hours of the morning, until about midday or one o’clock.”

He entered the Calvinistic Methodist Academy in mid September 1904. He was convinced revival would touch all Wales and eventually he led a small band all over the country praying and preaching. Seth Joshua held meetings at Newcastle Emlyn, following his meetings at New Quay. Students from the Methodist Academy attended. Among them was Sidney Evans a room-mate of Evan Roberts. The students, including Evan Roberts, attended the next Seth Joshua meetings in Blaenannerch. There on Thursday 29th September, Seth Joshua closed the 7 a.m. meeting before breakfast crying out in Welsh, “*Lord ... bend us.*” Evan Roberts remembered, “*It was the Spirit that put the emphasis for me on ‘Bend us.’ ‘That is what you need,’ said the Spirit to me. And as I went out I prayed, O Lord, bend me.*”

During the 9 a.m. meeting, Evan Roberts eventually prayed aloud after others had prayed. He knelt with his arms over the seat in front, bathed in perspiration as he agonized in prayer. He regarded that encounter with the Spirit as crucial in launching him into his revival ministry which began one month later. A motto of the revival became “*Bend the Church and save the world.*” Soon after the impact of the Spirit on him at Seth Joshua’s meetings, he took leave from the Academy to return home to challenge his friends, especially the young people.

Arriving home by train at his village of Loughor on the south coast of Wales on Monday, 31st October, Evan Roberts obtained permission to speak at meetings at Moriah Church in Loughor and at Moriah's daughter Church in Gorseinon. Roberts spoke after the usual Monday night prayer meeting at Moriah to 17 young people. The Holy Spirit moved on them all in that two-hour session, and they all publicly confessed Christ as their personal Saviour, including Evan Roberts' three sisters and his brother Dan, all of whom later took a leading part in many revival meetings.

Meetings followed at Gorseinon. He then spoke every night to increasing crowds at the Moriah Church. By the weekend the Church was packed. Roberts spoke to a crowded Church on Saturday night on 'Being filled with the Spirit'. An after-meeting with Roberts followed the Sunday night service at Gorseinon. Evan Roberts described the response on the Sunday evening, 6th November, when by midnight the congregation was overwhelmed with tears.

"Then the people came down from the gallery, and sat close to one another. 'Now,' said I, 'we must believe that the Spirit will come; not think He will come; not hope He will come; but firmly believe that He will come.' Then I read the promises of God, and pointed out how definite they were. (Remember, I am doing all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and praise be to Him.) After this, the Spirit said that everyone was to pray. Pray now, not confess, not sing, not give experience, but pray and believe, and wait. And this is the prayer, "Send the Spirit now, for Jesus Christ's sake."

The people were sitting, and only closed their eyes. The prayer began with me. Then it went from seat to seat boys and girls young men and maidens. Some asking in silence, some aloud, some coldly, some with warmth, some formally, some in tears, some with difficulty, some adding to it, boys and girls, strong voices, then tender voices. Oh, wonderful! I never thought of such an effect. I felt the place beginning to be filled, and before the prayer had gone half way through the chapel, I could hear some brother weeping, sobbing, and crying out before God. On went the prayer, the feeling becoming more intense; the place being filled more and more with the Spirit's presence."

The crowded Monday evening meeting went until 3 a.m. and the meetings continued every night. The Cardiff newspaper and the Western Mail, published this report on Thursday 10th November, the first of many daily reports on the progress of the revival:

GREAT CROWDS OF PEOPLE DRAWN TO LOUGHOR

Congregation Stays till 2.30am in the Morning

A remarkable religious revival is now taking place in Loughor. For some days a young man named Evan Roberts, a native of Loughor, has been causing great surprise at Moriah Chapel. The place has been besieged by dense crowds of people unable to obtain admission. Such excitement has prevailed that the road on which the chapel is situated has been lined with people from end to end. Roberts, who speaks in Welsh, opens his discourse by saying that he does not know what he is going to say but that when he is in communion with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will speak, and he will simply be the medium of His wisdom. The preacher soon after launches into a fervent and at times impassioned oration. His statements have had the most stirring effects upon his listeners. Many who have disbelieved Christianity for years are returning to the fold of their younger days. One night, so great was the enthusiasm invoked by the young revivalist that, after his sermon which lasted two hours, the vast congregation remained praying and singing until two-thirty in the morning. Shopkeepers are closing early in order to get a place in the chapel, and tin and steel workers throng the place in working clothes.

Revival meetings began to multiply rapidly, the early ones in South Wales being led by Evan Roberts, Sydney Evans, Seth Joshua and Joseph Jenkins with teams of young people. Rev. R. B. Jones began a ten-day mission on Tuesday, 8th November in Rhos in North Wales during which revival broke out and rapidly spread through the north as well as the south. Many of the 800 attending the Moriah meeting on Friday, 11th November were on their knees repenting for a long time. This Western Mail report of that meeting circulated widely in Wales and throughout the rest of Britain:

Instead of the set order of proceedings ... everything was left to the spontaneous impulse of the moment. At 4.25 am, the gathering dispersed. But even at that hour, the people did not make their way home. When I left to walk back to Llanelly, I left dozens of them about the road discussing what was happening in their communities. I felt that this was no ordinary gathering.

Newspaper reports generated intense interest in the meetings. Crowds arrived in Loughor on Saturday 12th November filling the streets with wagons and carts. Shops emptied of food supplies. Roberts' college room mate preached at one chapel and Roberts at the other on Saturday, both meetings lasting till after dawn Sunday. Hundreds of coalminers and tin plate workers were converted, filled with the Spirit, and radically transformed. Swearing, drunkenness, immorality and crime began to diminish.

From Sunday 13th November Evan Roberts and his teams conducted meetings by invitation, first at Aberdare and then throughout the towns and hamlets of Wales. He usually took a small team with him to pray, witness and sing. November 1904 saw revival spread throughout Wales. Newspapers described the crowded meetings. Churches and chapels sent statistics of conversions to the papers. By the end of January 1905 the papers had reported 70,000 people converted in three months.

As with other evangelists and ministers, Evan Roberts travelled the Welsh valleys, often never preaching but earnestly praying. In Neath he spent a week in prayer without leaving his rooms while the revival continued to pack the churches.

Characteristics of the meetings were singing Welsh hymns in harmony for over an hour, the decline of the sermon, emphasis on submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, public repentance and the *hywl* (pronounced 'hoo-ill') which was a half-sung, half spoken harmony ending in a hymn, or a cry of thanksgiving or repentance.

Church buildings filled. The revival spread. Meetings continued all day as well as each night, often late into the night or through to morning. Crowds were getting right with God and with one another in confession, repentance and restitution of wrongs done. People prayed fervently and worshipped God with great joy. Crime disappeared and the police had so little to do they joined the crowds in the Churches, sometimes forming singing groups. The impact of the Spirit across the Churches produced new levels of unity, joy, boldness, power to witness, changed lives, and enthusiasm explained as being "fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11).

Roberts, prophetically gifted, was unusually sensitive to the responses in the congregation. Public criticism of Evan Roberts and some revival phenomena included the usual objections to all the enthusiasm, emotionalism and even confusion. At age 27 he lacked maturity and theological balance and fell too easily into nervous exhaustion, as did other young leaders in the revival. More experienced ministers avoided these errors and contributed significantly to revival leadership. Defenders of revival phenomena pointed to thousands of changed lives and the spiritual zeal generated. Roberts believed his unusual prophetic and intuitive abilities all came from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and encouraged everyone to seek the Spirit.

Revival historians trace a direct link from the Welsh revival to increased worldwide fervent prayer, increased expectation of revival, increased evangelism and the emergence of Pentecostalism, even though many evangelicals back then regarded Pentecostalism as an aberration of revival.

On Sunday, 20th November 1904, the brothers Stephen and George Jeffreys were converted in Siloh Chapel in Maesteg, their home church in the Welsh Independent (Congregational) Church. Both became powerful evangelists in Great Britain and abroad, preaching to huge crowds and seeing hundreds healed and thousands converted. They often travelled and ministered together and established many Churches. George Jeffreys' campaigns included a crusade in Birmingham with 10,000 converted and powerful ministry in Europe such as 14,000 converted in Switzerland in 1934-1936, and he became the founder and leader of the Elim Foursquare Alliance. Stephen Jeffreys also pioneered many Churches and worked actively with the newly formed Assemblies of God of Britain and Ireland as an independent evangelist.

The Welsh Revival emphasized the importance of being filled with and led by the Holy Spirit. Reports of the 'influx' of the Spirit and the testimony of thousands involved, generated new interest in revival. The impact of the Welsh Revival on the whole world is beyond measure. In fact, every major movement of the Holy Spirit across the world over the following 30 years can be traced back to what happen in Wales in 1904-1905. Individuals who had been converted or revived in that revival responded to the call of God to places across the world and a local revival became a world-wide revival.

But let's not forget, all of that began after the Holy Spirit moved powerfully in Australia in 1902-1903. Most people know about the Welsh Revival which followed, but very few know where it began. So our great nation has seen mighty moves of the Holy Spirit in the past. But do we have the faith to believe God can do it again here in our homeland? Are we prepared to pray for and expect revival again in our great nation? I hope the answer is yes!

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 8

by Rev. Robert Griffith

German missionary to Africa, Reinhard Bonnke (1940-2019) was the founder of *Christ For All Nations* (CFAN) which now ministers to millions. Converted at nine, he had a missionary zeal. As a teenager, Reinhard saw Johannesburg in South Africa in a vision of a map of Africa. At 19 he headed off to the Bible College of Wales to train as a missionary, even though he couldn't speak English. Three months later he was preaching in English! There he learned practical principles of living by faith. After a short pastorate in Germany where he married Anna, they left for German missionary work in Africa. Working as traditional missionaries from 1967 to 1974 in Maseru, the capital of the small landlocked country of Lesotho, they saw meagre results.

Near the end of that time Reinhard's interpreter broke down during his message at a healing meeting one Sunday morning and sank to the floor weeping because of God's awesome presence. Waiting for the interpreter to recover, Reinhard heard the Lord speak to him and say, *"My Words in your mouth are just as powerful as My Words in My own mouth."* This voice repeated that sentence and Reinhard 'saw' it like a movie in Scripture – as Jesus told His disciples to speak in faith and it would happen.

Speaking about this pivotal moment later, Reinhard said, *"I suddenly realized that the power was not in the mouth – the power was in the Word."* Then, when the interpreter had recovered enough to speak, as he was preaching Reinhard heard the Spirit say, *"Call those who are completely blind and speak the Word of Authority."* He did and about six blind people stood. He boldly proclaimed, *"Now I am going to speak with the authority of God and you are going to see a white man standing before you. Your eyes are going to open."* Taking a deep breath Reinhard shouted: *"In the name of Jesus, blind eyes open!"*

The power of his voice jolted even those on the stage. It felt as though a flaming bolt of lightning was let loose in the building. His voice was still resonating against the bare brick walls when there was another shout. This time it was the shriek of a woman's voice. What she screamed shattered the silence that hung over the congregation: *"I can see! I can see!"* She had been totally blind for years. The other blind people also could see. The whole place erupted in excited cheers. A woman then handed her crippled boy to Reinhard who sensed the power of God on the boy and watched amazed as his crippled legs shook and straightened. He was completely healed. The meeting went for hours as people screamed, shouted, danced and sang.

At the end of 1974, Reinhard relocated to Johannesburg where he established Christ for All Nations (CFAN). Early in January, when he was ill, he had a vision of Jesus similar to Joshua's vision in Joshua 5:13-15. He wrote about it later:

"I was very sick. I didn't think I would make it. I went to the doctors. Nothing helped. I was crying to God: 'Lord what are you doing? What is your plan?' One afternoon I retired to my study. A thirst for prayer came over me and I was hardly on my knees when I saw a most wonderful vision. I saw the son of God standing in front of me in full armour, like a general. The armour was shining like the sun and burning like fire. It was tremendous and I realised that the Lord of Hosts had come. I threw myself at His feet. I laughed and I cried ... I don't know for how long, but when I got up I was perfectly healed."

Revived and renewed, Reinhard then flew to Gaborone in Botswana to buy time on radio there to promote a crusade meeting. The Lord had told him to hire the 10,000 seat sports stadium for the meetings. A local pastor who agreed to help prepare for the crusade was amazed.

He only had 40 people in his entire congregation! This crusade in April 1974 started in a hall which could seat 800. On the first night 100 attended. Healings happened every night and many people embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

By the end of the first week 2,000 people were packed into the hall. So then they moved into the awaiting stadium! Thousands more came. People were saved and healed every night and over 500 people were baptised in water in just two weeks. One night in the stadium, the Holy Spirit urged Reinhard to pray for people to receive a fresh impartation of the Holy Spirit. So he asked his African co-worker to give a message on the Holy Spirit.

About 1,000 people responded to the call to let the Holy Spirit take the lead in their lives and their ministries. As soon as they raised their hands they were all flattened, shouting and praising God from the ground. Reinhard had never seen anything like that before. This continued to happen in all his crusades. Reinhard used an enormous tent which could seat 30,000 people. Then the crowds grew so large no tent could hold them. Some of CFAN crusades in Africa have reached huge open air crowds of 600,000 to 800,000 people and one had over a million people gathered. It was an amazing time and I could share many wonderful stories of what happened as the Holy Spirit moved through these crusade meetings. Let me share one of them with you now. This is from one of Reinhard Bonnke's books:

My phone rang. Brother Harold Horn, someone I had known since my arrival in Lesotho, said, "Reinhard, come to Kimberly and preach to us." I said, "I will come."

Friday night as I sat on the platform I looked across the gathering of 200 people. Not one young person did I see in the room. Not one. I leaned over to Harold, who was near to me, and asked, "Where are the young people?" He nodded sadly, acknowledging that I had correctly seen the problem. Every head in the room was gray. I preached. The service was closed, and the people filtered out to their cars to go home. When they had gone, Harold came to me.

"Reinhard, would you like to see the answer to your question? Would you like to know where all the young people in Kimberly are?"

"Yes, I would," I replied.

"I will show you. Get into my car, and I will take you there."

He drove through the streets, turning this way and that until he came to a large building at the edge of a warehouse district. The building was ablaze with gaudy neon signs. One large sign blinked out the word, disco, disco, disco...The parking lot was jam-packed to overflowing with vehicles. As he turned off the key I could hear the boom, boom, boom, of the heavy bass beat coming through the walls of that building. The so-called music seemed to shake the very ground beneath us with an ungodly spirit. "This is a den of iniquity," I said sadly. He nodded. "This is the latest thing, Reinhard. It is called a discotheque, a dance club. It is a craze that is sweeping the whole world right now, and young people everywhere are very attracted to it. Let's go inside."

"Oh, no," I said. "Let's go home. I have never gone to such a place. It would be an abomination to me. But as I turned to get back into the car I felt bad inside. I stopped in my tracks. This is when the Holy Spirit began to speak to me. Since I had come this far, something seemed wrong if I now turned away. But I had no idea what the Spirit wanted me to do. I just couldn't leave.

"Let's take a look inside," Harold suggested. Suddenly, this seemed right. Everything in my spirit said yes. I nodded. "OK, Harold. Let's just take a look at this disco."

We came to the door and stood there. I felt the Spirit say to me very clearly, 'Look inside. I will show you something you do not know.' I took a deep breath then opened the door. The blast of music must have knocked the hair back from my forehead. I have never heard such volume in my life. It was deafening.

But it was in that instant that I received a spiritual vision of the reality of the disco. In the flash of the strobe lights, I did not see young people dancing with joy. I saw frozen images of boredom, fear, loneliness and insecurity - one after the other, captured on the faces of those young people. The split-second flashes of light revealed these images, over and over and over again. Each of those haunted faces spoke to me of their emptiness - pure emptiness.

Suddenly, I could not care less what anyone thought of me. I knew that I would preach in this disco. Nothing could deny the love of Jesus that I felt. I heard the Holy Spirit say in my heart, 'Find the owner of this place.' And so, I said to Harold, "Help me to find the owner of this disco."

"What good will that do?"

"I must talk to him. Let's find him now."

"But what will you say to him?"

"I will ask him to let me preach in his disco."

Harold laughed. "You won't do that, Reinhard."

"I will. I absolutely will."

Harold followed me now. I inquired inside the disco, and we were led to an office at the rear of the building. The owner was a middle-aged businessman who looked to be very much a part of the rock-and-roll culture. He had long hair, gold chains around his neck, an open-collared shirt, and blue jeans. I said to him, "Sir, I've come all the way from Germany. I am asking you for permission to allow me to address the young people in your disco for just five minutes." He looked at me from top to toe. "You're a preacher," he said. I was still dressed in my suit and tie. I nodded. He said, "If you want to preach you should preach in a church."

"There are no young people in the church," I said. "They don't come to the church so the preacher must come to the young people. Now give me five minutes, only five minutes, I ask of you." "You've got to be kidding." He shook his head in disbelief, then turned around and walked away. "There is no way, man." He had no sympathy for my plea at all.

As he was walking, suddenly the Holy Spirit touched me. He said to me, 'Tell him what you saw when you looked into his dance hall.' I went after the man and took him by the arm. He turned to face me again. "One question, sir," I said, looking deep into his eyes. "Do you think the young people find what they need for life in your disco?" Slowly the face of that man changed. He looked down thoughtfully. When he looked up again he said, "It is very strange that you would say that. I have children of my own. I've thought many times that the disco will not give the young people what they need for life."

"I beg you, sir, give me five minutes with them." He was thoughtful for a moment. "OK, but not tonight. Saturday night, tomorrow night at midnight, I will give you the microphone for five minutes." I grabbed his hand and shook it. "It's a deal, and thank you, sir. I will be here."

The next night I dressed in casual clothes. I did not want to look like a preacher just coming from Church. I needed disco camouflage.

When at last the clock struck twelve, the music stopped. I jumped up and onto the stage where the records were being spun. I took the microphone from the disk jockey and shouted, "Sit down, sit down, sit down. I've come all the way from Germany, and I've got something very important to tell you." Suddenly the young people began sitting down everywhere. It was then I realized I was not in church but in a dance hall. Most of the young people plopped right down on the floor. There they sat, smoking cigarettes and chewing gum, waiting for me to tell them something very important that I had brought with me all the way from Germany.

I started to preach... one minute ... two minutes ... then suddenly the Holy Spirit was there; I mean the wind of God blew through that disco. Suddenly I heard sobbing. I saw many young people getting out their handkerchiefs and starting to wipe their eyes, crying everywhere. I had preached enough to know that when people start shedding tears, it's time for an altar call. I said, "How many of you want to receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour? How many want to find forgiveness for your sins and enter God's plan for your life, here, tonight?" Every hand that I could see in that place went straight up. I said, "Alright, repeat after me." We prayed the prayer of salvation together. My five minutes were up. My work was done. I left that disco walking on cloud nine, rejoicing, absolutely rejoicing.

A year later I returned to Kimberly. Harold met me at the airport. He said, "Get in my car. I have a surprise for you." I got in his car. He did not say anything about it; he just drove through the winding streets until he came to the warehouse district. The car stopped. I looked out of the window. I could not believe my eyes. I wiped them and looked again. Instead of seeing the big disco sign, there was a huge white cross on the front of the building.

"This is not the surprise," Harold said. "Come inside." We walked up to that door where we had stood a year ago." Are you ready for this, Reinhard?" Harold swung the door open, and I looked into a packed house full of young people. They were chanting, "Bonnke, Bonnke, Bonnke." I cried out with joy. They rushed to me, hugging me and shaking my hands, bringing me inside. One young man said, "Remember me? I was the disk jockey that night that you came." Another grabbed my hand. "I was operating the light show." Another said, "We were dancing the night away. Now we are dancing for Jesus."

"After you left town, the disco went bankrupt," Harold shouted to me. "This disco is now a Church!" He was beaming from ear to ear. A fine-looking gentleman came up to me. "We heard about what happened to the young people here. My church has sponsored me to be a pastor to these kids."

I stood again on that disco stage looking at those faces, so different from the ones I had seen in the strobe lights a year before. The lights were up full now. Even more, the light of the Lord's favour was shining on every face. I pointed my finger to the heavens and shouted, "Jesus!" – "Jesus!"

They shouted back to me as one, making the walls to tremble. "Praise Jesus! – Praise Jesus! He is Lord! – "He is Lord! Hallelujah! – "Hallelujah!" Now that disco was rocking the right way. Kimberley's true diamonds were shining in their Father's eyes.

There are countless stories which have arisen through Reinhard Bonnke's ministry. I will let Reinhardt tell about this next one himself. This was recorded just before he died three years ago. These are some of his final words. This is what happens when the Holy Spirit moves.

Follow this link to view the video:

<https://www.gunnedahbaptist.org.au/files/videos/Bonnke.mp4>

When the Holy Spirit moves, there is no mistaking the presence and power of God. Reinhard Bonnke left an amazing legacy, having preached to tens of millions of people in Africa alone, leading hundreds of thousands of people to Jesus Christ. Throughout his ministry, Reinhard always pointed people to God and was always deferring to the Holy Spirit Who directed his entire ministry.

If you want to see what happens when the Holy Spirit moves in and through God's surrendered, available children, then you need look no further than the ministry of this one German Pastor whom God called to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Africa.

Let me close with some quotes from Reinhard's sermons which reveal a lot about His central focus and daily submission to God, through the Holy Spirit:

"God always works with workers and moves with movers, but He does not sit with sitters."

"The Bible says that the devil is like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). He comes in the darkness, and tries to frighten the children of God with his mighty roar. But when you switch on the light of the Word of God, you discover that there is no lion. There is only a mouse with a microphone! The devil is an imposter."

"The Gospel is 'Good News', not 'Good History,' because when it's preached, it happens."

"If you are doing nothing, God doesn't need to give you any help in doing nothing. Go out and do something impossible for Jesus, and then God will help you."

"Anyone can believe when God is already moving. But real faith is when you step out when it seems that God is not moving."

"We may sing 'welcome, welcome, Holy Spirit', but He does not come because of our welcome. He is no guest, no stranger invited in for an hour or two. He is the Lord from heaven and He invites us into His presence."

"I don't want to play with marbles, when God told me to move mountains!"

"The Gospel is like water; no man invented it, yet no man can live without it."

"The Gospel is not reformation, decoration or renovation. The Gospel is liberation."

"The Holy Spirit is a healing spirit. When the Holy Spirit is present, anything is possible."

"The less Holy Spirit we have, the more cake and coffee we need to keep the Church going."

"Christianity is supernatural – or it's nothing at all."

Now of course, none of this is new to us. We have always known about the essential role of the Holy Spirit in our lives if we desire to live up to our calling in Christ. God told us many years ago through Zechariah, *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty."* (Zechariah 4:6)

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES – Part 9

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Throughout this series we have been looking at city-wide and nation-wide revivals down through the years as we have seen what happens when the Holy Spirit moves in power through a region or even a whole nation. In last week's sermon we were reminded what can happen when the Holy Spirit moves in and through the life of just one, surrendered, passionate, committed and called disciple who embraces the Great Commission personally and for their entire life. Last week we looked at the life and ministry Reinhard Bonnke and his incredible evangelistic impact on the African continent over many decades until his passing a few years ago.

Today I want to conclude this series by looking at another single person whom God used in a truly amazing way for over 60 years. He is perhaps the most recognised and respected Christian preacher of all time and a man whose impact on the Kingdom of God and this whole world is really beyond measure. Of course I am talking about Rev. Billy Graham. Even a cursory glance at the life of this country boy from the South will demonstrate how wide and broad and deep the impact of just one person can be in our world when the Holy Spirit moves in them and through them over so many years.

Billy Graham was born November 7, 1918 in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was the son of a prosperous dairy farmer. In 1934, while attending a revival meeting led by the evangelist Mordecai Ham, Billy had a significant spiritual awakening and he professed his acceptance of Christ and the salvation He offered us by His grace. In 1936 he left his father's dairy farm to attend Bob Jones College then located in Cleveland, Tennessee, but stayed for only a semester because of the extreme fundamentalism of the institution. He transferred to Florida Bible Institute (now Trinity College), near Tampa, graduated in 1940, and was ordained as a Southern Baptist minister. Convinced that his education was deficient, however, Graham enrolled at Wheaton College in Illinois. While at Wheaton, he met and married (1943) Ruth Bell, daughter of L. Nelson Bell, a missionary to China.

By the time Billy Graham graduated from Wheaton in 1943, he had developed the preaching style for which he would become famous - a simple, direct message of sin and salvation that he delivered energetically and without condescension. "*Sincerity*," he observed many years later, "*is the biggest part of presenting anything, especially the Christian plan of salvation.*" After a brief stint as Pastor of Western Springs Baptist Church in Chicago, Graham decided to become an itinerant evangelist. In 1945 he joined the staff of a new organization called *Youth for Christ* and in 1947 he served as president of Northwestern Bible College in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Graham's emergence as an evangelist came at a perfect time for 20th-century Protestants. Protestantism in the United States was deeply divided as a result of controversies in the 1920s between fundamentalism and modernism (a movement that applied scholarly methods of textual and historical criticism to the study of the Bible). In response to these controversies, most fundamentalists withdrew from the established Protestant denominations, which they regarded as hopelessly liberal, and retreated from the larger society, which they viewed as both corrupt and corrupting. Although Graham remained theologically conservative, he refused to be sectarian like other fundamentalists. Seeking to dissociate himself from the image of the stodgy fundamentalist preacher, he seized on the opportunity presented by new media technologies, especially radio and television, to spread the message of the gospel.

In the late 1940s Graham's fellow evangelist in Youth for Christ, Charles Templeton, challenged Billy to attend seminary with him so that both preachers could shore up their theological knowledge.

Graham considered the possibility at length, but in 1949, while on a spiritual retreat in the San Bernardino Mountains of southern California, he decided to set aside his intellectual doubts about Christianity and simply “preach the gospel.” After his retreat, Graham began preaching in Los Angeles, where his crusade brought him national attention. He acquired this new fame in no small measure because newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, impressed with the young evangelist’s preaching, instructed his papers to promote Graham. The huge circus tent in which Graham preached, as well as his own self-promotion, lured thousands of curious visitors - including Hollywood movie stars and gangsters - to what the press dubbed the “canvas cathedral” at the corner of Washington and Hill streets. From Los Angeles, Graham undertook evangelistic crusades around the country and across the world, eventually earning international renown.

Despite his successes, Graham faced criticism from both liberals and conservatives. In New York City in 1954 he was received warmly by students at Union Theological Seminary, a bastion of liberal Protestantism; nevertheless, the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, a professor at Union and one of the leading Protestant thinkers of the 20th century, had little patience for Graham’s simplistic preaching. On the other end of the theological spectrum, fundamentalists such as Bob Jones, Jr. and Carl McIntire, never forgave Graham for cooperating with the Ministerial Alliance, which included mainline Protestant clergy, in the planning and execution of Graham’s crusade at Madison Square Garden in New York in 1957. Such cooperation, however, was part of Graham’s deliberate strategy to distance himself from the starchy conservatism and separatism of American fundamentalists. His entire career, in fact, was marked by a spirit of reconciliation and cooperation.

Billy Graham enjoyed close relationships with several American presidents, from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush. Despite claiming to be apolitical, Graham became close to Richard Nixon, whom he had befriended when Nixon was Eisenhower’s vice president. During the 1960 presidential campaign, in which Nixon was the Republican nominee, Graham met in Montreaux, Switzerland, with Norman Vincent Peale and other Protestant leaders to devise a strategy to derail the campaign of John F. Kennedy, the Democratic nominee, in order to secure Nixon’s election and prevent a Roman Catholic from becoming president. Although Graham later mended relations with Kennedy, Nixon remained his favourite politician; indeed, Graham all but endorsed Nixon’s reelection effort in 1972 against George McGovern. However, as Nixon’s presidency unraveled amid charges of criminal misconduct in the Watergate scandal, Graham reviewed transcripts of Oval Office tape recordings subpoenaed by Watergate investigators and professed to be physically sickened by what he heard from someone he had considered his friend.

Graham’s popular appeal was the result of his extraordinary charisma, his forceful preaching, and his simple, homespun gospel message. Behind that simple message, however, stood a sophisticated organization, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, incorporated in 1950, which performed extensive advance work in the form of media coverage, cooperation with political leaders, and coordination with local churches and provided a follow-up program for new converts.

The organization also distributed a radio program, *Hour of Decision*, a syndicated newspaper column, *My Answer* and a magazine, *Decision*. Although Graham pioneered the use of television for gospel purposes, he always shied away from the label “televangelist.” During the 1980s, when other television preachers were embroiled in sensational scandals, Graham remained above the fray, and throughout a career that spanned over half a century few people ever questioned his integrity.

In 1996 Graham and his wife received the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the highest civilian award bestowed by the United States, and in 2001 he was made an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE). Graham concluded his public career with a crusade in Queens, New York, in June 2005.

Graham claimed to have preached in person to more people than anyone else in history, an assertion that few would challenge. His evangelical crusades around the world, his television appearances and radio broadcasts, his friendships with presidents, and his unofficial role as spokesman for America's evangelicals made him one of the most recognized religious figures of the 20th century.

The sheer magnitude of Billy Graham's ministry and impact in our world can only be seen by reviewing his incredible list of crusades and missions around the world. His very first crusade was in Grand Rapids, Michigan in September 1947. Like most of his crusades this was not a one-off event. It ran for nine days. This was followed only a few weeks later with a 14 day crusade in Billy's home town of Charlotte, North Carolina. Billy set a slow pace at first with only two crusades the following year and then four in 1949. But from 1950 – 1953 Billy held 24 separate crusades spanning more than a week each and he also had 6 tours in which he covered multiple cities in a region or state. Up to that point, all of these Crusades had been across America.

At was in 1954 that Billy decided to take his ministry to the world. He began with a monster crusade in London which ran from 1st March to the end of May. He followed this with a massive tour through the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and France, before returning to the USA for a tour of the whole west coast and two Crusades in Nashville and New Orleans.

In 1959 it was Australia's turn with a month-long crusade in Melbourne in February/March, a month in Sydney in April/May, then Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide and Canberra. The impact of Billy Graham in our nation alone is incredible. If I had walked into any congregation in our nation during the 1960's and asked for a show of hands of all those who came to Christ through Billy Graham's ministry in 1959, there would be very few Congregations with no hands raised.

The pace which Billy Graham set was beyond what most people could do. Admittedly he had a great team behind him but he still had to stand up at every meeting and deliver the goods. It was Billy Graham that people came to see and hear. After an incredible year in Australia and New Zealand, the following year (1960) was by far the biggest commitment Billy had made to date. He held 29 Crusades across Africa, South America, West Germany, Switzerland and America.

This pace continued year after year after year – without a break. We were blessed to have Billy come to Australia again in 1979. Just a few years later he broke all records when in 1982 he hosted 32 separate Crusades across America and Europe. Of course as the years rolled by, Billy's age and energy levels saw the number of Crusades reduce and from 1998 onwards he was only doing two major missions each year and then in 2005, this incredible Evangelist, led his final Crusade in New York at the age of 87. His work ethic and commitment to the gospel was second to none!

So in total, Billy Graham held 417 separate crusades spanning an incredible 58 years. Some of those were tours which involved many smaller crusades across a region and the average length of his normal Crusades over almost six decades was 7-10 days. So in terms of individual meetings / rallies at which Billy Graham preached and led people to Christ, we are talking in excess of 6,000. This country boy from Charlotte, North Carolina reached in excess of 210 million people in over 185 countries and territories on six continents and that does not include the millions more he reached through radio, print and television and now the internet.

Billy Graham's first crusade in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1947 lasted 9 days and had 6,000 people attend. His longest Crusade was in Madison Square Garden in New York ten years later. While ever the people kept coming, Billy kept preaching - every night for 16 weeks! In Moscow in 1992 there were over 150,000 people at his Crusade and over a quarter of them came forward to accept Christ at the end. The largest crusade in terms of people present at one time was held in Yoido Plaza in Seoul, South Korea in 1973. Over 1.1 million people came to hear Billy Graham preach.

What an incredible ministry. What an incredible legacy. What an incredible testimony to what the Holy Spirit can do in and through one called, convicted, surrendered, passionate disciple. In 2018, when the news broke of the death of Billy Graham, the most influential Christian evangelist of the twentieth century, scholars and admirers began asking: "Will there ever be another Billy Graham?" Sadly the consensus seems to be "no."

Scholars note that evangelical Christianity and our dominant media culture are both too diverse for anyone to take on a singular role like Billy Graham's again. Admirers contend that Graham's relentless devotion to Christ and to the gospel also made him a unique figure in Church History. Of course if Billy Graham was around to hear this discussion, I am confident he would remind us all that God made him into the titanic figure he was.

So if God chooses to raise up "another Billy Graham," then that is what He will do. But commentators on Graham's uniqueness are missing another point. Some scholars say that our media environment is too dispersed for someone like Graham to capture its attention. But we could turn that argument on its head. Perhaps all we need is another evangelist with Graham's hard work and savvy for tomorrow's media, and he or she could become as influential as Graham. Such savvy presumes a forward-looking, entrepreneurial aptitude. We don't know what a future Billy Graham would look like. Great entrepreneurs are hard to anticipate.

Graham's success was built in part upon his remarkable endurance and his shrewd use of the latest communication techniques, most notably broadcast television. He also caught the attention of titans such as William Randolph Hearst, who catapulted Graham to fame through secular media outlets, including the top magazines and newspapers of the day. In his adept use of media, Graham followed in the footsteps of George Whitefield, who was the Billy Graham of the eighteenth century. Whitefield would surely have reached Graham's hundreds of millions of people if he had television, airplanes and sports arenas at his disposal. As it was, Whitefield became the best-known individual in eighteenth-century Britain and America before the American Revolution.

A future Billy Graham would face more challenges than just a fractured media. He or she would face an English-speaking world that no longer necessarily believes that Christianity is a constructive force. Graham and Whitefield were both products of a culture that assumed Christianity's established status, either by fact or by law. Whitefield was a Church of England minister seeking to awaken the culture of Anglo-American Christianity. Whitefield ministered in a Christian culture, but he rejected the spirit of nominal Christianity that such a culture bred. He told people that it was not enough for them to respect the church. They could not depend on their parents' faith or their baptism to save them. They needed the "new birth" of salvation, as described in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, and other parts of the New Testament.

This message of the new birth through Christ has been the hallmark of the evangelical movement since at least the time of Whitefield. However the term "evangelical" has become confused and diluted in popular usage today. Listening to the American media, one could easily get the impression that "evangelical" just means a religious white Republican. Although both Whitefield and Graham had political opinions, no listener would have left their sermons confused about what the "gospel" was. The Son of God offered forgiveness and new life to all who received Him as Lord and Saviour.

Evangelical-style faith was the de facto established religion of Graham's native South in the early- and mid-twentieth century. Graham's travels took him to places such as the Soviet Union, where faith was hardly assumed and he did reach many people who had little background in faith. But Graham's greatest impact was naturally on his home turf, in areas of the South and Midwest that already had a pervasive Christian culture.

Graham helped untold millions of Americans who already respected Christianity to come across the threshold of personal faith, and to be born again. President George W. Bush is perhaps the best-known example. Bush, who had struggled for years with alcohol abuse, said that a mid-1980s conversation with Billy Graham about God's grace led him to recommit his heart to Jesus Christ.

A future Billy Graham will not be able to assume as much as Graham or Whitefield could about people's familiarity with the Bible or theology, or about their sympathy for the gospel. So a future Billy Graham will take cues from the Apostle Paul and his outreach to ancient pagan culture. Christian evangelists will increasingly find themselves, like Paul in Athens, accused of "advocating foreign gods," because he preached Jesus to them, and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18).

In post-Christian Western culture, the gospel will seem odd. It will need to be framed in terms that outsiders can understand, without compromising theological integrity or the sharper edges of Christian doctrine. Christians will also need to manifest loving community and family wholeness, which our broken culture desperately needs in the wake of the sexual revolution. Ordering your life around the Lordship of Christ will increasingly seem a strange alternative for a select few, rather than a natural step for responsible people entering adulthood.

C. S. Lewis offers a modern example of effective evangelism in an unchurched world. To be sure, Lewis spoke to a nation with a legally established Church in World War II - era Britain. And he did find a platform on government-run BBC radio for the series of talks that became his book: *Mere Christianity*. But Lewis did not begin from an assumption that Britons intuitively saw that Christianity was desirable, or that it even mattered. Instead, he persuasively and intelligently argued that Christianity was true, and that it demanded a response. He also used science fiction and children's stories as literary bridges to explore age-old questions about sin, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God. Those books surely reached many for whom straightforward Christian preaching seemed irrelevant.

Of course, historic evangelicals believe that we'll always need evangelism for both the church and the unchurched. Billy Graham illustrated how you can do both, and he knew how to modulate his presentation depending on whether he was in Michigan or Melbourne or Moscow. So if a future Billy Graham does speak before unconverted people, he or she will most likely not lead with the exhortation, "*You must be born again,*" but rather with the question, "*Why does Christianity matter?*"

So maybe there will be another Billy Graham, but he or she will undoubtedly speak in a different cultural mode and use different media than Graham did. As Graham would remind us, however, God also has a long track record of using people who rely on Him, who work hard and use entrepreneurial ministry methods, and who stay faithful to the traditional teachings of the Church. We need not worry about who will fill his shoes, then. If the Kingdom of God requires it, God will most certainly raise up another Billy Graham.

Now of course, like all the revivals we have studied in this teaching series, the worldwide impact which Billy Graham had over this six decades of ministry was only possible because there were literally millions of people praying before, during and after every Crusade.

In fact, Billy Graham's commitment to see local people in prayer long before he rolled into town saw a huge pre-evangelism ministry develop. In fact, in the second half of Billy's ministry he would refuse to hold a crusade in a city or region unless the Body of Christ had already been mobilized in prayer and trained in follow-up for new believers. So whilst the spotlight was on one man when the Crusades began, the real power flowed from and through the ordinary people in Churches of all sizes and denominations – on their knees in prayer, months before the gospel was preached.

Billy Graham knew that God gave us a promise many, many years ago and it has not changed or been withdrawn. We have read these words many times in recent days and I hope we continue to read them. 2 Chronicles 7:14 continues to lie at the heart of every major move of God throughout history. God said it very clearly:

“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, forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Behind, beneath and within every revival in human history we see this promise of God being played out. **God will heal our land when we, His people, respond to His call and embrace His promise.** Will there be another John Wesley, George Whitefield, Reinhard Bonnke or Billy Graham? That all depends on you and me and all those who claim to be disciples of Jesus and the people of God.

Are we prepared to pay the price for the next mighty move of God? Are we prepared to pray, and I mean really pray, day and night for as long as it takes, for the Holy Spirit to move in our land, in our city, in our Church fellowship, indeed - in our own hearts? I guess only time will tell.

Come, Holy Spirit of God, speak to us now. Amen.