

REVIVAL PRAYER
Revival
Banska Stiavnica, 12 December 2019

<p style="text-align: center;">וּכְנָעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיֵּשְׁבוּ מִדַּרְכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים וְאֲנִי אֲשָׁמַע מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶסְלַח לְחַטָּאתָם וְאֶרְפָּא אֶת-אֲרָצָם</p>	<p>2Chron 7:14 ...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.</p>
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0. INTRODUCTION

- prayer: between pessimism (deterministic sovereignty) and presumption (triumphalist naivete)
- [BILLHEIMER *Destined to Overcome*] “prayer is the most important thing anyone can do for God or man”

[LLOYD-JONES *Revival*] That is the prayer for revival – not being content to go on from week to week, and month to month, year to year. Certainly enjoying God’s blessings, do not misunderstand me. I am not despising the day of small things – I just want us to realise that we are in the day of small things. But there are big things, and I am talking about the longing for these bigger things. And that is what Moses was praying for.

0.1. PRAYER AND REVIVALS

- [HAYKIN¹] In 1784 John Erskine had sent to Ryland a copy of Edwards’s *An Humble Attempt...* Ryland shared Edwards’s treatise with his friend Sutcliff, who in turn used it as the basis for a proposal to the Baptist ministers of the Northamptonshire Association that monthly prayer meetings be established to pray for the outpouring of God’s Spirit in revival. This proposal was duly adopted and a circular letter sent to the churches of the Association encouraging them ‘to wrestle with God for the effusion of His Holy Spirit,’ not only upon their churches, but also upon those of other denominations. ‘Let the whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered,’ the prayer call urged.

¹ https://churchsociety.org/docs/churchman/103/Cman_103_4_Haykin.pdf

EDWARDS *An Humble Attempt*² (1747) [p. 81] It is becoming of Christians, with whose Character a narrow selfish Spirit, above all others, disagrees, to be much in Prayer for that publick Mercy, wherein consists the Welfare and Happiness of the whole Body of Christ, of which they are Members, and the greatest Good of Mankind. And Union or Agreement in Prayer is especially becoming, when Christians pray for that Mercy, which above all other Things concerns them unitedly, and tends to the Relief, Prosperity and Glory of the whole Body, as well as of each individual Member.

0.2. ON PRAYER FROM REVIVALS

- FINNEY *Autobiography* (Memoirs)

I was particularly struck with the fact that the prayers that I had listened to, from week to week, were not, that I could see, answered. Indeed, I understood from their utterances in prayer, and from other remarks in their meetings, that those who offered them did not regard them as answered. ... This inconsistency, the fact that they prayed so much and were not answered, was a sad stumbling block to me. On one occasion, when I was in one of the prayer meetings, I was asked if I did not desire that they should pray for me! I told them, no; because I did not see that God answered their prayers. I said, "I suppose I need to be prayed for, for I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; for you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for a revival of religion ever since I have been in Adams, and yet you have it not. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness." I recollect having used this expression at that time: "You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayers. But here you are praying on, and complaining still."

- [BRADLEY *Accounts*, p. 42] December was a solemn and pleasing month. Prayer meetings were attended three times in a week, and sometimes oftener. These were much crowded, and the power of the Spirit was so manifested with the people, that there were but few who were not awed with his presence.
- FINNEY *Revival Lectures* (1) Lecture IV. — **Prevailing** Prayer. (2) Lecture V. — The Prayer of **Faith**. (3) Lecture VI. — The **Spirit** of Prayer. (4) Lecture VIII. — **Meetings** for Prayer.

1. FAITH: THE THEOLOGY OF PRAYER

- [BILLHEIMER *Destined to Overcome*] "Prayer is a warfare. We need to understand some basic theology of successful praying in order to use our weapons effectively."

1.1. THE "WHY" OF PRAYER

- [Alexander CUMMING in *Lectures on the Revival of Religion*, Glasgow, 1840] "We are too apt to let our views terminate in the operation of secondary causes, and to forget that Almighty power to which they are indebted for their energy and existence... We learn from Scripture that the exhibition of omnipotent power made in the conversion of a soul is equivalent to that implied in the creation of a new world, or in the resuscitation of a dead body" → idolatrous affection (p. 155)

- **James 5:16** The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (Πολὺν ἰσχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη) → *Revival Lectures*...

- [FINNEY *Revival Lectures*, p. 49-50] There are two kinds of means requisite to promote a revival : the one to influence men, the other to influence God. The (1) **truth** is employed to influence men, and (2) **prayer** to move God. ... Sometimes it happens that those who are the most engaged in employing truth are not the most engaged in prayer. This is always unhappy. For unless they have the spirit of prayer (or unless some one else has), the truth, by itself, will do nothing but harden men in impenitence. Probably in the Day of Judgment it will be found that nothing is ever done by the truth, used ever so zealously, unless there is a spirit of prayer somewhere in connection with the presentation of truth.

² Full title: *An humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth, pursuant to Scripture-promises and prophecies concerning the last time.*

1.2. BIBLICAL PRAYERS

- [FINNEY *Letters on Revival*,] “No person really understands and loves his Bible, until he has such an experience as accords with the language of the Bible; and no further than his experience accords with the inspired writers, does the Bible become intelligible and deeply interesting to him. Now I have observed that there are a great many professors who neither know nor care much about their Bibles.”

2. ATTITUDE: SECRET PRAYER (MT 6:6)

- [CUMMING p. 134] “It is the invariable constitution of the kingdom of heaven that blessings of great magnitude are not imparted except to prayers of the deepest urgency.”
- FINNEY (Revival Lectures) Essential Attributes of Prevailing Prayer: (1) pray for a definite object. (2) in accordance with the revealed will of God. (3) pray with submission to the will of God. (4) Effectual prayer for an object implies a desire for that object commensurate with its importance (5) offered from right motives. (6) by the intercession of the Spirit. (7) persevering prayer. (8) pray a great deal. (9) offer it in the name of Christ. (10) renouncing all your sins. (11) pray in faith

2.1. SPIRITUAL

- **Eph 6:18** ...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication (Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι,)
- FINNEY *The Spirit of Prayer: Rom 8:26-27* Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευζόμεθα καθὼς δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερευτυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις· ²⁷ ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων) → “You never can expect to offer prayer according to the will of God without the Spirit.”
- [FINNEY] “He prays for us by exciting our faculties.”

[GOFORTH *By My Spirit*, p. 80] Ten minutes went by and then he rose again. It was the same vision, but now his whole being seemed enthralled. "What, Lord!" he cried, "You waiting there still? You, who art Lord of all! One word from You would sweep us sinners from the earth. Is it possible that still we defy You and bar You from Your own temple?" At these words the whole audience gave way and melted like wax. **To show how carefully even the most favoured must walk in the presence of the Lord**, I will mention an incident which occurred on the following evening. Shortly after the meeting had been thrown open for prayer, I heard a peculiar moaning sound. Looking up I saw this man, who had been so wonderfully used the evening before, groaning horribly and going through all manner of rhythmical movements. Suddenly, as I was watching him, he threw himself full length upon the ground. It was clear enough that the devil had got hold of him. Realising what a powerful effect his prayer had produced the night before, he had probably decided that this time he was going to stage something really extraordinary. Although I disliked intensely to interfere, I was afraid that, if I left him alone, he would soon have imitators. I went down and gave him a sharp slap on the side, saying, "Get up and pray decently." He stopped on the instant, and shamefacedly slunk into his seat.

2.2. FAITH: KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD

- [FINNEY *Revival Lectures*] → **Mk 11:24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours (διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν, πάντα ὅσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε, πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν)
- When God's people are at a loss what to pray for, agreeable to His will. His Spirit often instructs them.

2.3. FERVENT

[CUMMING] If benefits of vast magnitude are to be bestowed, they must therefore be preceded by prayers of fervid pathos; and God often delays an answer to supplication, not that he despises the anxious voice of our humble entreaty, but because he waits till our desires gain an accession of strength, and are somewhat commensurate to the vastness of the mercy that is stored up for us; and for this purpose he sometimes encircles us with an array of troubles, that they may enhance the frequency and earnestness of our addresses

to the throne of grace.

- Finney *Revival Lectures*, James 5:16

...effects of the spirit of prayer upon the body are themselves no part of religion. It is only that the body is often so weak that the feelings of the soul overpower it. These bodily effects are not at all essential to prevailing prayer; but are only a natural or physical result of highly excited emotions of the mind. It is not at all unusual for the body to be weakened, and even overcome, by any powerful emotion of the mind, on other subjects besides religion. The doorkeeper of Congress, in the time of the Revolution, fell down dead on the reception of some highly cheering intelligence. I knew a woman in Rochester who was in a great agony of prayer for the conversion of her son-in-law. One morning he was at an anxious meeting, and she remained at home praying for him. At the close of the meeting he came home a convert, and she was so rejoiced that she fell down and died on the spot. It is no more strange that these effects should be produced by religion than by strong feeling on any other subject. It is not essential to prayer, but is the natural result of great efforts of the mind.

2.4. PERSEVERING

- FINNEY *Revival Lectures*,

It must be persevering prayer. As a general thing, Christians who have backslidden and lost the spirit of prayer, will not get at once into the habit of persevering prayer. Their minds are not in a right state, and they cannot fix their thoughts so as to hold on till the blessing comes. If their minds were in that state in which they would persevere till the answer came, effectual prayer might be offered at once, as well as after praying ever so many times for an object. But they have to pray again and again, because their thoughts are so apt to wander away and are so easily diverted from the object ... Just as the mother whose child is sick goes round her house sighing as if her heart would break.

3. POWER: PRAYER MEETINGS (MT 18:19)

- [Finney Lecture VIII. — Meetings for Prayer.]
- **Mt 18:19** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven (Πάλιν [ἀμήν] λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν δύο συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς περὶ παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται, γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.)

3.1. THE DESIGN OF PRAYER-MEETINGS.

- [FINNEY *Revival Lectures*] → “...to promote union among Christians”

Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer. Their spirituality begets a feeling of union and confidence, highly important to the prosperity of the Church... Nothing is more calculated to beget a spirit of prayer than to unite in social prayer with one who has the spirit himself; unless this one should be so far ahead that his prayer will repel the rest. His prayer will awaken them, if they are not so far behind as to revolt at it and resist it. If they are anywhere near the standard of his feelings, his spirit will kindle, and burn, and spread all around. One individual who obtains the spirit of prayer will often arouse a whole Church, and extend the same spirit through the whole, so that a general revival follows

3.2. CONDUCTING A PRAYER MEETING

- [FINNEY *Revival Lectures*, “Meetings for Prayer”]
- The design of a prayer-meeting should be to bring Christians to the point, to pray for a definite object. Wandering over a large field hinders and destroys this design.

4. TO REMEMBER

- Prayer for revival is requesting exceptionally great things from God. It has to be accompanied by corresponding attitude and deep feelings.
- Prayer begins in secret and has to fill all our being as if nothing else mattered, only God answering our request.
- United prayer has to be free from side-topics, sensitivity to self, submitted to the common guidance

of the Spirit.