

## **REVIVAL AND THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER<sup>1</sup>**

- A. There is a dynamic connection between the release of the spirit of prayer and revival. By “revival” I do not mean a week of meetings in which an evangelist preaches each night, nightly renewal meetings, or a period of rapid church growth. Nor do I refer to services in which people are getting refreshed, manifesting, falling over, and laughing. I appreciate any genuine touch of the Spirit, but something far greater than the blessing that has occurred in various renewal meetings during the last twenty years in America is on God’s heart.
- B. When we use the word revival, we are referring to an unplanned, unprecedented historic intervention of the Holy Spirit in power over an extended period of time and a large geographic area. This type of outpouring of the Spirit results in multitudes being saved (hundreds of thousands or millions) and the church’s being revived to a state of radical love and obedience to Jesus in the fear of the Lord.
- C. The powerful move of God that came to be called the “First Great Awakening” occurred in the mid-1700s, from about 1720 to 1760. During this revival, God’s presence and power was manifest throughout most of the East Coast of America. The intercessors and revivalists associated with it include Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, John Wesley (acknowledged as the founder of the Methodist movement), and George Whitefield, who preached to crowds of twenty or thirty thousand with great power.
- D. Edwards and Whitefield are generally considered to be the two most influential of these leaders. They both emphasized prayer as essential to the birthing and sustaining of the great revival. Another move of the Holy Spirit, commonly known as the “Second Great Awakening,” took place from about 1790 to 1840. This move also began with a groundswell of prayer, which was the seedbed for the emergence of one of the most significant spiritual seasons in the church in America. The Second Great Awakening is considered to be perhaps the most profound holiness movement in American history.
- E. The manifestation of power during this revival was as dramatic as that in the First Great Awakening and was facilitated by preachers such as Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, Timothy Dwight, Francis Asbury, “Black Harry” Hosier, Peter Cartwright, and others. Of these, Finney and Asbury are considered the most prominent. Finney’s preaching was responsible for an estimated five hundred thousand converts, and Asbury (1745–1816) was a famous Methodist circuit rider and the founder of American Methodism.

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<sup>1</sup> Revival and The Spirit of Prayer – Growing in Prayer: A Real Guide to Talking with God by Mike Bickle, pages 174-175, Published by Charisma House

- F. <sup>2</sup>The leaders in both great revivals had a history of spending long hours in prayer and being energized by the spirit of prayer on many occasions. The result was that the supernatural conviction of the Holy Spirit came upon people throughout entire regions of America, leading many to a long-term lifestyle of wholeheartedness, love, and obedience to God. Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came, He would release conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). This promise of the Spirit's work of conviction is fulfilled in an unusual measure in genuine revivals.
- G. The verb convict speaks of times when the Holy Spirit takes hold of an individual's mind and conscience with the power of the truth. When the spirit of conviction is manifest in an unusual way in an entire geographic location as it was in the First and Second Great Awakenings, then hundreds of thousands—sometimes millions—of people are shaken out of their spiritual lethargy. The Holy Spirit convicts multitudes of those hearing the Word—both unbelievers and believers—of any worldliness in their lives. He presses the truth of God onto their minds and consciences with an intensity that most of us have not ever experienced.
- H. The conviction of God was manifest across large regions in both the First and Second Great Awakenings, and deep repentance occurred in the hearts of many people. Sometimes the majority of the people in a town turned to the Lord, as the public preaching of the Word had a great effect, piercing the hearts of the multitudes like a mighty sword (Heb. 4:12) and shattering the heart of resistance to God like a powerful hammer (Jer. 23:29). Whenever preachers are anointed with an unusual measure of conviction, the church in their regions will be quickly revived, the saints will speak the Word and do the works of the kingdom with great consistency, and a multitude of unbelievers will come to Jesus.

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