

Spiritual Revivals and Awakenings: When God Works in Great Spiritual Power

Jonathan Edwards, a major figure in the First Great Awakening, described “Awakenings” as “seasons of mercy” when God, the Holy Spirit, pours out His power in “special dispensations of God’s providence”. Edwards observed that when God works in great power, more is done in a day than in our strivings over a long period of time. J. I Packer, the great contemporary theologian, has described spiritual Revivals and Awakenings as a quickened sense of “God’s presence.” Packer has observed that when Christians experience God’s presence in a heightened manner, they are often empowered to live godly lives in an enhanced fashion.

In this seminar we are going to study a number of the Great Spiritual Awakenings. Our goal is quite practical. We would like to learn more about the nature of spiritual power to fortify us and our churches as we live in an increasingly secular age.

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*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will
the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?
Luke 11:13*

I. Introduction

- A. The Old Testament prophets called on the Israelites to remember God’s mighty acts and faithfulness whenever they went astray

- B. Billy Graham (1918-) was energized in his ministry by reading accounts of past revivals
 - 1. Los Angeles Revival (1949)
 - 2. Paris Crusade (1955)
 - 3. New York City Crusade (1957)

- C. Billy Graham’s understanding and confidence in the power of revival

- II. Our theme in this presentation is “Revival: When God Works in Great Spiritual Power”
 - A. Our definition of revival: “*It is the near presence of God giving new power to the Gospel of sin and grace.*” (Dr. J.I. Packer)
 - B. Our purpose: Apply Dr. Packer’s definition of revival to a number of spiritual awakenings in which contemporaries claimed God had worked in great power in their midst.
 - C. Our practical lessons: We will seek to identify practical lessons about revival from Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who reflected deeply about the First Great Awakening (1734-1760).

- III. Application of Dr. Packer’s definition to select “Revivals”
 - A. The Korean Revival of 1907
 - B. The North American Awakenings
 - 1. The First Great Awakening
 - 2. The Second Great Awakening (1792-1835)
 - 3. The Businessmen’s Awakening of 1857-1858
 - 4. Billy Graham’s Southern Cross Crusade in Australia and in New Zealand in 1959

- IV. Jonathan Edward’s insights about awakenings
 - A. There are biblically based distinguishing marks of the Holy Spirit which help us identify the authentic presence of the Spirit of God from bogus religious enthusiasm:
 - 1. Raising the esteem for Jesus: Christ Jesus is lifted up, not ourselves.
 - 2. Working against Satan’s Kingdom: Opposition ensues because Christ is lifted up.
 - 3. Greater respect for the authority of Holy Scripture.
 - 4. Greater discernment of the truth. More insight into the difference between good and evil.
 - 5. Love displayed towards other persons. If we harbor hatred and jealousy in our hearts towards others, we should not claim we are walking in the Holy Spirit’s power.

- B. It is our spiritual pride that clogs the work of the Holy Spirit in revival
- V. Concluding Remarks about “Seasons of mercy” in which God works in great power in revival
- A. It is very clear that God is the originator of Awakenings
“It is manifest that the Scripture supposes, that if ever men are turned from sin, God must undertake it, and he must be the doer of it.” (Jonathan Edwards)
 - B. The Lord has “Seasons of mercy” or “dispensations of divine providence” during which He pours out His Holy Spirit
“When God in so remarkable a manner took the work into his own hands, there was as much done in a day or two, as at ordinary times with all our endeavors that men can use, and with such a blessing as we commonly have, is done in a year.” (Jonathan Edwards)
 - C. Christians should pray for revival just as did the early Christians in the book of Acts
“Before the first great outpouring of the Spirit of God on the Christian Church, which began at Jerusalem, the Church of God gave themselves to incessant prayer.” (Jonathan Edwards)
 - D. We close with the very pertinent words of Evan Roberts, a major participant in the Welsh Revival: “The Church of Jesus Christ on her knees in prayer is invincible”. May we commit ourselves to pray regularly that God will work in great power in our own lives [personal revival] as well as for revival in our own church, community, and nation for His glory in this our Gospel starved world.