

REVIVAL EXPERIENCES: CRYING OUT

VARIOUS ACCOUNTS OF SPIRITUAL PHENOMENA DURING REVIVAL

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AGONIES OF MIND

”Isn’t it criminal the way we live in the sight of the cross” said the famous preacher Alan Redpath. It is criminal, it is a scandal, is it wrong! We need today a strong impression of the deep sinful practices we find ourselves in and the extreme magnitude that God went to die for these sins that we hold to strongly to. Once people see the Holiness of God and the Sinfulness of man and that deep chasm in-between, then they will cry out for mercy. In revival the sound of men and women wailing under the deep impressions of the sinful state of their soul was not uncommon. Oh for days of such weeping and wailing, such crying out and confessions. Oh for the days of such honesty amongst men that they have offended a Just and Holy God. May God smite this world with this divine medicine of brokenness and barrenness under our woeful condition as enemies of God.

J.I. Packer shares how there is a “Sensitiveness to Sin” during times of revival: “Deep awareness of what things are sinful and how sinful we are is the third feature of revival that calls for notice. No upsurge of

religious interest or excitement merits the name of revival if there is no profound sense of sin at its heart. God's coming, and the consequent impact of his word, makes Christians much more sensitive to sin than they previously were: consciences become tender and a profound humbling takes place. The perverseness, ugliness, uncleanness, and guilt of sin are seen and felt with new vividness. Under revival conditions consciences are so quickened that conviction of each person's own sinfulness becomes strong and terrible, inducing agonies of mind that are beyond imagining till they happen. The gospel of forgiveness through Christ's cross comes to be loved as never before, as people see their need of it so much more clearly."

THEY WEPT AND WAILED

When men were approached with divine truth and the person of God in all His glory they wept and wailed under the state of their sinfulness. Many are the accounts of such "crying out" during times of refreshing and revival in the history of the Church. Here are some reliable reports from these such revivals:

In the revival at Cambuslang, Scotland in 1742 it was reported: "One young woman, noted for her timidity, preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit to a large crowd with compelling power. A visiting minister wrote of how some that were previously notorious sinners had now the meekness of the Lamb. On Tuesday, July 6, 1742, Whitefield came to Cambuslang at midday and preached at two, six and nine o'clock. For about an hour and a half there were scenes of uncontrollable distress, like a field of battle. Many were being carried into the manse like wounded soldiers. 'Such a commotion was surely never heard of especially at eleven at night,' he wrote to a friend. 'It far out-did all I ever saw in America.' Mr. Whitefield's sermons on Saturday and Sabbath were attended with much power, particularly on Sabbath night about ten, and that on Monday, several crying out, and a very great but devout weeping and mourning was observable through the auditory. Whitefield wrote to John Cennick of these happenings: Such a universal stir I never saw before. The motion fled as swiftly as lightning from one end of the auditory to the other. You might have seen the thousands bathed in tears; some at the same time wringing their hands, others almost swooning and others crying out and mourning over a pierced Saviour."

Again, in the revival at Cambuslang, Scotland in 1742 it was reported: "Seeing some are desirous to know my thoughts of the work at Cambuslang, I am willing to own that I have travelled a good way to inquire and get satisfaction about it. And having resided several days in Mr. M'Culloch's house, I had occasion to converse with many who had been awakened and under convictions there; I found severals in

darkness and great distress about their souls' condition, and with many tears bewailing their sins and original corruption, and especially the sin of unbelief, and slighting of precious Christ."

In the revival at Kilsyth, Scotland in 1742 it was reported: "Mr. Robe in his narrative states, 'On May 16, I preached, as I have done for some time, on Gal. iv. 19: 'My little children of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you.' While pressing all the unregenerate to seek to have Christ formed in them, an extraordinary power of the Divine Spirit accompanied the word preached. There was a great mourning in the congregation, as for an only son. Many cried out, and there not only women, but some strong stout-hearted young men."

Again, in the revival at Kilsyth, Scotland in 1742 it was reported: "I pressed them, with every argument I could think of, to give up their sinful ways, and flee to Jesus Christ by faith and repentance; and by the blessing of god, my efforts were not made in vain. Glory to His holy name, that that which was spoken in much weakness, was accompanied by the power of His Holy Spirit. I likewise warned them against the commission of known sin. I told them the danger of persisting contrary to the voice of conscience, and the plain dictates of the word of God; assuring them, that if they did so, their sin would one day find them out. A word of terror occurring in their lessons would sometimes make them cry out and weep bitterly."

In the revival in the Island of Aran in 1812 it was reported: "Although this revival did in some measure degenerate latterly through the weakness and folly of men, yet the beginning of it was truly the doing of the Lord, and marvelous in our eyes. Some who were among the first affected, told the writer, that they had not the most remote idea of crying out, before they were constrained to do so. So much was this the case, that thy said they could not have refrained, even if they had been threatened with instant death. They added, that their out-cryings and bodily agitations arose entirely from the state of their minds, when powerfully impressed and affected with a sense of divine truth. The first impressions of many of them were accompanied with deep convictions of sin, with a painful sense of their helplessness and misery as sinners."

In the revival in the Ulster, England in 1623 it was reported: "At Oldstone, God made use of him to awaken the consciences of a lewd and secure people thereabouts. For seeing the great lewdness and ungodly sinfulness of the people, he preached to them nothing but law, wrath, and the terrors of God for sin. Behold the success! For the hearers finding themselves condemned by the mouth of God speaking in his word, fell into such anxiety and terror of conscience that they looked on themselves as altogether lost and damned; and this work appeared not in one single person or two, but multitudes were brought to understand their way, and to cry out, men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved! I have seen them myself stricken into a swoon with the word; yea, a dozen in one day carried out of doors as dead, so marvelous was the power of God smiting their hearts for sin, condemning and killing."

In the revival in Wales in 1649 it was reported: "Mr. Jones was an animated, faithful, and laborious minister, well versed in the Scriptures, and was honored with much success. It is said that such was the

power and authority with which he delivered his exhortations, that many could not refrain from crying out aloud, being overpowered by a sense of their own sinfulness in the sight of a holy God.”

COUNTERFEITS THAT CRY OUT

During the revival in Ulster, England in 1623 it was reported amongst a meeting of a counterfeit “crying out” to “molest” the congregation and distract people’s attention from the word of God: “There were not many converts in all the congregations which have been mentioned, and Satan observing the prosperity of the gospel amongst them set himself to perplex them by discrediting the work of God in their hearts. This he did by a counterfeit of the operation of the Holy Spirit on several persons at Lochlarne, whom he caused to cry out during public worship, and some of them were affected with convulsive pangs. The number of persons thus affected increased daily, and at first the ministers and people pitied them, hoping that the Holy Spirit was at work with them. But when they had conversed with them, and found that they did not discover any sense of their sinful state or any longing after a Saviour, the minister of the place wrote to his brethren, inviting them to come and examine the matter, who when they had spoken with them saw that it was a mere delusion of the destroyer. the next Sabbath, an ignorant person in Mr. Blair’s congregation made a noise, but immediately, says Mr. B., ‘I was assisted to rebuke that lying spirit which disturbed the worship of God, and I charged the same in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, not to molest that congregation; and through God’s mercy we met with no more of that sort.’” We need to realize such “counterfeits” in our midst today. God was working in powerful ways with even outward signs in those days yet those ministers were equipped with the power of God to discern the true between the spurious in their ministries. Oh how we need this again today with such “charismatic chaos” insuing from every corner to hear clear strong voices speaking in the authority of God against the counterfeit.

WILL WE CRY OUT?

Truly we need a revival and restoration in the Church. We will not cry out until we realize our sinfulness, until we go to church to meet with God and not for our own selfish purposes. We will not cry out until we hear sin preached against in the pulpits and a glorious holy God magnified in these same pulpits. Will we cry out? Oh may God in his grace and loving kindness that extends to every generation send us a revival that will shake us out of our complacency and lukewarmness. Then, yes we will cry out!