

# On Eagles' Wings Pt 211

by Don Courville

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of repentance and prayer for a genuine revival in our lives and communities.*

**Duration:** 23:48

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1

**Topics:** "Radio Show"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker, Oswald J. Smith, shares a powerful testimony of a revival that occurred during the preaching of Charles Finney. He describes how Finney was invited to preach in a packed schoolhouse and began to convict the community of their ungodliness. As Finney pressed upon them the need for repentance, the Spirit of God came upon them like a thunderbolt, and people fell to their knees crying for mercy. The revival resulted in a transformation of the community, with thousands joining the churches in just five weeks. Smith emphasizes the importance of prayer and repentance in seeking an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and calls for a revival in America.

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## Transcript

Well, it was in 1904. All of Wells was aflame. The nation had drifted far from God, the spiritual conditions were low indeed, Church attendance was poor, sin abounded on every side, and suddenly, like an unexpected tornado, the Spirit of God swept over the land.

The churches were crowded, so that multitudes were unable to get in. Evan Roberts was the human instrument, but there was very little preaching. Singing, testimony, and prayer were the chief features.

There were no hymn books. They learnt the hymns in childhood, no choir for everybody sang, no collection, and no advertising. Nothing had ever come over Wells with such far-reaching results.

Infidels were converted, drunkards, thieves, and gamblers saved, and thousands reclaimed to respectability. Confessions of awful sins were heard on every side, old debts were paid, the theater had to leave for want of patronage, mules in the coal mines refused to work, being unused to kindness, in five weeks 20,000 joined the churches. Do you believe this can happen in America? Well, your answer will determine whether or not it will or not.

I believe, and I'm with a group of other believers that are of the persuasion that God is going to bring an awakening in our land. He's going to do a mighty thing. This story by Oswald J. Smith is just a testimony of what's happened in other places.

O Father, we pray that You'd bring revival in our land. O Lord, that You'd stir us up to pray and to believe it, that we would repent of our sins, that we would want to get back to a standard of godliness. Wilt not Thou revive Thy work again? We pray that You'd minister to us today, that our hearts would be open to what the Holy Spirit has to say.

O, I pray for Your anointing, in Jesus' name. Amen. Going on with the story from Oswald J. Smith on THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSING, he said, in the year of 1835.

Titus Cohen landed on the shore belt of Hawaii, and on this first tour multitudes flocked to hear him. They thronged him so that he had scarcely time to eat. Once he preached three times before he had a chance to take breakfast.

He felt that God was strangely at work. In 1837 the slumbering fires broke out. Nearly the whole population became an audience.

He was ministering to 15,000 people. Unable to reach them, they came to him and settled down to a two years' camp meeting. There was not an hour, day or night when an audience of from 2,000 to 6,000 would not rally to the signal of the bell.

There was trembling, weeping, sobbing, and loud crying for mercy, sometimes too loud for the preacher to be heard. In hundreds of cases his hearers fell in a swoon. Some would cry out, "'The two-edged sword is cutting me to pieces!' The wicked scoffer who came to make sport dropped like a dog and cried, "'God has struck me!' Once while preaching in the open field to 2,000 people, a man cried out, "'What must I do to be saved?'" and prayed the publican's prayer, and the entire congregation took up the cry for mercy.

For half an hour Mr. Cohen could get no chance to speak, but had to stand still and see God work. Quarrels were made up, drunkards reclaimed, adulterers converted, and murderers revealed and pardoned. Thieves returned stolen property, and sins of a lifetime were renounced.

In one year 5,244 joined the Church. There were 1,705 baptized on one Sunday, and 2,400 sat down at the Lord's table, once sinners of the blackest type, now saints of God. And when Mr. Cohen left, he had himself received and baptized 11,960 persons.

And in the little town of Adams, across the line, in the year of 1821, a young lawyer made his way to a secluded spot in the woods to pray. And God met him there, and he was wondrously converted, and soon after filled with the Holy Spirit, and that man was, of course, Charles G. Finney. The people heard about it, and they became deeply interested, and as though by common consent, gathered into the meeting-house in the evening, and Mr. Finney was present.

The Spirit of God came on them in mighty convicting power, and a revival started. It then spread to the surrounding country until finally nearly the whole of the eastern states was held in the grip of a mighty awakening. And whenever Mr. Finney preached, the Spirit was poured out.

Frequently God went before him, so that when he arrived at the place, he found the people already crying out for mercy. And sometimes the conviction of sin was so great and caused such fearful wells of anguish

that he had to stop preaching until it subsided. Ministers and Church members were converted.

Sinners were reclaimed by the thousands. And for years the mighty work of grace went on. Men had never witnessed the like in their lives before.

And I've recalled to your minds three historical instances of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Hundreds of others might be cited, but these are sufficient to show what I mean. Here's a good question.

Where is the conviction of sin we used to know? Is it a thing of the past? Let's look at one of Finney's meetings, and oh, that we could repeat it today. He tells us that one time when he was conducting meetings in Antwerp, an old man invited him to preach in a small schoolhouse nearby. When he arrived, the place was so packed that he could barely find standing room near the door.

He spoke for a long time, and at last he began to press home upon them the fact that they were an ungodly community, for they had no service in their district. And all at once they were stricken with conviction, and the Spirit of God came like a thunderbolt upon them, and one by one they fell on their knees or prostrated on the floor, crying for mercy. And in two minutes they were all down, and Mr. Finney had to stop preaching, for he was unable to make himself heard.

At last he got the attention of the old man who was sitting in the middle of the room and gazing around him in utter amazement, and shouted to him at the top of his voice to pray, and then taking them one by one, he pointed them to Jesus. And the old man took charge of the meeting while he went to another. All night it continued.

So deep was the conviction of sin. The results were permanent, and one of the young converts became a most successful minister of the Gospel. Ah, yes, men have forgotten God.

Sin flourishes on every side, and the pulpit fails to grip. And I know of nothing less than the outpouring of His Spirit that can meet the situation. Such a revival has transformed scores and hundreds of communities.

It can transform yours. Now, how may we secure such an outpouring of the Spirit? You answer, by prayer? True, but there is something before prayer, and that is repentance from sin. We talked with you last week about this, repentance from sin, and Oswald Smith goes on and he says, We will have to deal, first of all, with the question of sin.

For unless our lives are right in the sight of God, unless sin has been put away, we may pray until doomsday, and the revival will never come. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear. Isaiah 59-2.

Let me inject something in here. We need to be very careful to receive from each other. When God wants to use a brother or sister to minister to us in exhorting us, we need to be very sensitive to receive, because if we won't, we'll be in this position of having sin in our life that we won't deal with, and God won't hear us, and we won't see revival.

And probably our best guide here is the prophecy of Joel. Let's look at it. It's a call to repentance, and God is anxious to bless His people, but sin has withheld the blessing, and so in His love and compassion He brings a fearful judgment upon them.

And we have it described in chapters 1 and 2, and it's almost reached the gates of the city, but see how great is His love. Notice verses 12-14 of chapter 2, where He says, Turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your heart, and not your garments. And turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.

Who knoweth if He will return and repent and leave a blessing behind Him? Now my friend, I don't know what your sin is. You know, and God knows. But I want you to think about it, for you may as well stop praying and rise from your knees until you have dealt with it and put it away.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Psalm 66, 18. Let God search your heart and reveal the hindrance.

Sin must be confessed and put away. It may be you will have to forsake some cherished idol. It may be you will have to make restitution.

Perhaps you are withholding from God, robbing Him of His own. Malachi 3, 7 and 12. But this is your affair, not mine.

It lies between you and God. Now notice verses 15 to 17. The prophet has called for a prayer meeting, and sin has been confessed and forsaken.

And now they may pray, and they are to entreat God for His own namesake. Lest the nations say, Where is their God? They are dead in earnest now, and their prayer is going to prevail. Listen.

Blow the trumpet in Zion. Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly.

Gather the people. Sanctify the congregation. Assemble the other elders.

Gather the children. Oh, let's take a break here. Where are your children? Where are they? Where are they at? Does the devil have them? Are they in the world? Are your children with you? Oh God, have mercy upon us.

We're losing our children. So many of us have no concept of the wickedness that we have committed by turning over our children to ungodly teachers, letting ungodly influence come into their lives. And going on, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.

Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Ah, my brethren, are you praying? Do you plead with God for your city? Are you beseeching Him night and day for an outpouring of His Spirit? Now is the hour to pray. We are told of a time in the work of Phiney when the revival had died out. He then made a covenant with the young people to pray at sunrise, noon, and sunset in their closet for one week.

The Spirit was poured out again, and before the weekend did the meetings were thronged. And of course it must be believing prayer, prayer that expects. If God stirs up hearts to pray for a revival, it is a sure sign that He wants to send one, and He is always true to His word.

There shall be showers of blessing. His promises never fail. Have we faith? Do we expect an awakening? Notice the speedy answer in verse 18, Then, after they had forsaken sin and cried unto God in prayer, then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people.

The answer is not long in coming once the conditions have been met. We have it fully described in verses 28 and 29, And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. Oh, my brethren, the trouble is not with God, it lies with ourselves.

He is willing, more than willing, but we are not ready, and He is waiting for us. Are we going to keep Him waiting long? From the book, *The Revival We Need*, by Oswald J. Smith. But the message is powerful.

Are we meeting the conditions? Have we poured out our heart before God so He can pour out His Spirit on us? We need to have hope in God. Father, have mercy upon us. We've been sharing these revival stories to stir our hearts up.

Lord, would You bring a revival in our hearts. We pray for this area. We pray for an outpouring of Your Spirit.

Lord, I pray that we'd quit playing church games, going through the motions. Oh, we're so busy, but we won't take time for an hour of prayer or two hours or an all-night prayer meeting until we have Your blessing and we're hearing from You. Lord, send a revival.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I was just thinking of something that Jonathan Edwards said.

And, you know, there's a real need for conviction of sin. That was one of the things that was mentioned in a little booklet called *Jonathan Edwards, The Narrative*. Jonathan wrote this, "...the drift of the Spirit of God in His legal strivings with persons has seen most evidently to be to bring to a conviction of their absolute dependence on His sovereign power and grace, and a universal necessity of a mediator.

This has been effected by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness and guiltiness in His sight, their pollution and the insufficiency of their own righteousness, that they can in no wise help themselves, and that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them in all that they do and in casting them off forever. There is, however, a vast variety as to the manner and distinctness of such convictions." Jonathan Edwards. And he shares in this little booklet about the revival, case histories of what happened and the conversions, how God brought conviction into the lives of those that He touched.

Well, we need to take heart in these perilous times. A statement made from *Redemption Tidings* and I might even share some thoughts from that on how there are some aspects of revival that can only be explained in terms of divine sovereignty. And we proclaim so boldly and so presumptuously and so, what should I say, without thinking that we're going to have revival meetings.

We're not going to have revival meetings if God doesn't revive us. When we have revival, God does the work. We've experienced some revival years ago that has continued on for years out in western Nebraska, and it spread around.

But this was not an awakening. It was revival where our hearts were touched, many hearts were touched. A thousand had prayed in one town in a ten-and-a-half-week period of time.

We don't know how many really were saved, but a lot of them were saved. A lot of lives were changed. When revival comes, it's God's sovereign moving.

And we get into, we get before God, and then He does the work. He does the reviving. Here's some things, three things that stand out.

Because students of church history would have little difficulty in multiplying instances that confirm these opinions. These three things stand out. The circumstances in which revival is born.

It is at the blackest moments that the lamp of revival burst into radiance. By the way, this is why we believe God is going to bring an awakening in our land. Things are getting black so that we'll see how dark sin is in our own lives.

The shadiest portions of history have often proved the dark backcloth to the revelation of God's glory. Economic depression, social decadence, religious indifference, ecclesiastical defection, and even national disaster have all been the immediate predecessor of God's manifestation of His power to save. The perilous times in which we live are in themselves an invitation to God to assert Himself and display His sovereign grace.

Another thing. First was the circumstances in which revival is born. A second thing is this.

The seemingly inadequate instruments that God uses for revival. Now let me repeat this. The seemingly inadequate instruments that God uses for revival.

The most powerful instruments have been those that have had the most sense of their own unworthiness, and God is able to use them because of this characteristic. Very often the trained ministry is bypassed and untaught. Even rustic men and women become the channels of blessing, and this is not to despise learning or culture, but to show that there are greater forces than intellectual energy, which seems to be what our religiosity today is intellectualism.

In our Bible schools and our Bible colleges we have intellect, but we miss the spirit, and it's not technique that prompts the outpouring of God's grace. It is faith. It is love.

It is prevailing prayer that the wind bloweth where it listeth is never more evident than in revival. At such times God may take some humble servant out of obscurity and use him to diffuse blessing abroad. But what manner so long as revival comes? And this is what we experienced.

I almost missed it when God worked for seven months up in Nebraska, when my buddy Wes had lined up a revival man to come in. I never heard of him. He was even in my own denomination.

I almost wouldn't go along with it, but I agreed. But this man had been sitting in the backwoods for five years, and God was pounding and molding and making him. And when he showed up, he spoke, and the Spirit of God began to work, especially in the hearts of the missionaries as they came down off the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, in the hearts of the pastors.

And I sat through twelve messages, and then God nailed me that I was a bitter man. And he's continued to peel off layers of the onion. He'd peel off a layer, and there'd be some tears.

For nine years he's continued to show me even more the depravity and the despicableness of my own heart. There's no good thing in me. The only good thing in me is the Holy Spirit, but there's no good thing in the flesh, the Scripture says.

Paul said it, and if it works for Paul, then it works for all of us, that no man would glory in his presence. And so there's a third thing, and that's this. Then I'm going to have to close up on this.

Time's going away. The tremendous results from apparently insufficient causes. Someone labors in prayer, unknown, unseen, and becomes a pivot upon which the revival situation turns.

The hand of some weak, inoffensive, yet trustful saint is used to lever the floodgates and blessing gush through. Are you that one? With little organization, often outside organization, bodies ready, geared to service, the revival spreads like a contagious disease, and no one can find an adequate cause. So all give glory to who? God! And for all that, it is the purpose of God that His people shall long for revival, pray for revival, seek for revival, work for revival.

We should not slack in our endeavors because God is sovereign, but rather exert ourselves to do His will that we may be in the current of power when revival flows. From Redemption Tidings, from a little pamphlet, Herald of His Coming, well, I've got to go. May God bless you in Jesus' name.

Father, pour out Your blessing on us in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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