

Revival Stories: Evan Roberts

by E.A. Johnston

Evan Roberts, a simple coal miner, became a pivotal figure in the Welsh Revival, demonstrating the power of prayer and dependence on God to transform lives and communities.

Duration: 16:27

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:41, Romans 5:9, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Colossians 1:13-14, Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Biography"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts the incredible revival that took place in Wales in 1904. The meetings were so powerful that factories and shops would close for days so people could attend. The revival was led by the Holy Spirit, with Evan Roberts being the primary human instrument. The speaker describes the intense atmosphere of the meetings, with people singing hymns at the top of their voices and being overcome by the power of God. The revival had a profound impact, reaching beyond Wales and inspiring mission enterprises across the oceans.

Transcript

It was said of the Welsh Revival that it was an invasion of Wales by the Holy Spirit. The Welsh Revival has been called a time when the glory filled the land. It was also said that during this revival of 1904-1905 in Wales that over 100,000 souls had been gloriously brought to Christ.

The human instruments of this revival were several individuals from ministers to the local teenagers, but the primary figurehead that God raised up for the Welsh Revival was a young man by the name of Evan Roberts. Evan Roberts had earnestly prayed for 13 years to God for a mighty visitation of the Holy Spirit to come to Wales. The Welsh Revival can be referred to as a revival of prayer.

It was birthed in prayer and it produced powerful prayer meetings throughout the entire Principality of Wales. Well, Evan Roberts will be the subject of our revival stories for today, for it is how God used this humble coal miner in such a powerful way that we should be encouraged to become better persons of prayer. Evan Roberts began to have visions and encounters with God during the time of prayer that consecrated him to the work of the revival, and it was during this time in the spring of 1904 that this young man, Evan Roberts, began praying four hours each evening from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. Listen to his own account of this remarkable time in his life taken from his diary.

For a long time, I was much troubled in my soul and my heart by thinking over the failure of Christianity. Oh, it seemed such a such a failure, and I prayed and prayed, but nothing seemed to give me any relief. But one Friday night last spring, after I had been in great distress praying about this, I was taken up to a great expanse without time and space.

It was communion with God. I found myself with unspeakable joy and awe in the very presence of the Almighty God. I was privileged to speak face-to-face with him as a man speaks face-to-face to a friend.

Before this, a far-off God I had. I was frightened that night, but never since. So great was my shivering that I rocked the bed, and my brother, being awakened, took hold of me, thinking I was ill.

After that experience, I was awakened every night a little after one o'clock. This was strange, for through the years, I slept like a rock, and no disturbance in my room would awaken me. From that hour, I was taken up into the divine fellowship for about four hours.

What it was, I cannot tell you except that it was divine. Well, friends, God took that praying young man, Evan Roberts, and made him the primary human instrument of that great revival. The public ministry of Evan Roberts began on September 29, 1904, when he was in a prayer meeting being led by an evangelist by the name of Seth Joshua.

And Seth Joshua prayed out loud, Bend us, O Lord. And these words so affected Evan Roberts that after some silent prayer, he stood up and cried out, Bend me, bend me, bend me. Evan Roberts said at that time, perspiration poured down my face, and tears streamed quickly until I thought that the blood came out.

That, friends, was the beginning of the move of grace known as the Welsh Revival. But I must say this about Evan Roberts. There are few today who really understand the depth of this man spiritually.

He was a spiritual giant. He possessed an Enoch-like walk with God, and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit that was supernatural. He understood the spirit world and how to pray against it.

God favored him with spiritual insights few men have possessed. During the revival in Wales, he never allowed himself to be photographed or to advertise the revival. Often, Evan Roberts would withdraw himself from a meeting if he felt the people were coming to see and hear him only.

He jealously guarded the glory of God and would not share God's glory under any circumstances. Evan Roberts knew the revival was of God, and he refused to allow people to idolize him or even interview him for the newspapers. But the people were not there to see Evan Roberts, but to meet with God.

Often, Evan Roberts would remain silent in a meeting for three hours and then speak or pray for only 10 minutes and then sit back down. The revival was led by the Holy Spirit, and the people were carried on under the influence of the Holy Spirit. At times, the people could not finish a song because they were so overcome by the power of God.

Once the revival commenced, an entire district could be in the grip of an extraordinary spiritual force, and from 10 in the morning until 6 in the evening, meetings would be going on, and after the service, people would march home in great processions singing hymns. It was not unusual for an entire community to be awakened at 6 a.m. by the sound of crowds of people on their way to the prayer meetings. It seemed entire towns were transformed into a praying multitude.

It was said of the miners who had been saved in the revival that their mules at the mines no longer obeyed their masters because the miners no longer cursed at them, and so the mules could not understand their commands. It was said that crime decreased in Wales to such a degree that the magistrates wore white gloves to signify they had no cases to try. The key figure of this revival was Evan Roberts, and God used this young man as a major contributor to the growth and development of the revival.

Evan Roberts was a simple man who possessed no great oratory like a Whitfield and who lacked the leadership qualities of a John Wesley, but he was able to point the people to God, and this was his great gift to the revival. Evan Roberts would tell the people, it is not man. Do not wait on me.

Depend on God. Obey the Spirit. God's seal was upon this land, and God used this simple coal miner to turn the face of the country to God.

To gain some insight into Evan Roberts' prayer life, allow me to read you a poem he wrote just before he passed away. Here is that poem entitled, Consecration. Here I have built my altar.

The wood I've placed in order. The sacrifice is ready now. Send thou, O Lord, the fire.

My soul is weary, weak, and lustful, but to the end I will be faithful. Though hellish hosts revile forever, I'll lay myself on Christ my Savior. Well, one thing was certain about the Welsh revival, friends.

The whole thing was of God. He visited the people and made them God-conscious and eternity-focused. The mission enterprises that sprung from the revival reached out across the oceans.

Let me give you some descriptions of the incredible scenes of revival where the glory of the Lord pervaded the principality of Wales. A stranger walking into a town during the revival would immediately notice that whether men were on the railway trains, in their shops, or on the street corner, men everywhere were talking of God. There was a consciousness of the Almighty which permeated the very atmosphere.

People could not wait to get to the meetings to pray and sing and worship their God. In one area, a scene which could be witnessed any morning was in dozens of pits in South Wales at 5 a.m. where scores of miners held a service before going home after the midnight shift. The superintendent would start a hymn and then those in the pit would re-echo the song.

As other miners walked to work in the still darkness of the early morning, a man would cry out to the miners, now boys, those of you who love Christ, up with your lamp! And immediately scores of lights flickered in the air as the miners began to sing hymn after hymn to the God that saved them. In another area, two churches who had been divided for the last 12 years reconciled and held united meetings and the two ministers that were opponents shook hands in front of all the church members before one united church and harmony was once again restored. An insurance agent told a reporter that at practically every house he called at after Christmas, he was met by the wife with a happy smile and these words, this is the happiest Christmas we have ever had.

The reason was the drunken husbands had been converted and given up the drink. One Bible Society reported that over three times the number of Bibles were now being sold since the revival broke out. The booksellers say it's no trouble now to sell Bibles, the trouble is to get them.

In just two short months after the revival broke out, over 70,000 names of converts were reported. There was so much excitement towards spiritual things that the evening meetings which began at 7 p.m. would

still be going strong at 3 a.m. In many places, all work ceased during the time of the visit of Evan Roberts. The factories and shops would sometimes be closed for one to three days so the people could attend the meetings.

In one town, 1,300 new converts gathered in the chapel singing hymns at the tops of their voices. The service went on for three hours without any human leader. Evan Roberts then showed up.

Quietly, he elbowed his way through the dense crowd which thronged the aisle and chapel. He leaned over the big Bible on the pulpit desk and he waited silently for some time and then began to pray the following prayer, Lord Jesus, help us now through the Holy Spirit to come face to face with the cross. Whatever the hindrances may be, we commit the service to thee.

Put us all under the blood. Oh Lord, place the blood on all our past up to this moment. We thank thee for the blood.

In the name of Jesus Christ, thine the devil, this moment, we point to the cross of Christ. It is our cross and we take its conquest. Reveal the cross through the name of Jesus.

Oh, open the heavens. Descend upon us now. Tear open our hearts.

Give us such a sight of Calvary that our hearts may be broken. Oh Lord, descend now. Open our hearts to receive the heart that bled for us.

If we are to be fools, make us fools for thee. Take us spirit, soul, and body. We are thine.

Thou has purchased us. Reveal the cross for the sake of Jesus. The cross that is to conquer the world.

Place us under the blood. Forbid that we should think of what men may say of us. Oh, speak, speak, speak, Lord Jesus.

Thy words are wine indeed. Oh, reveal the cross, beloved Jesus. The cross and its glory reign in every heart for the sake of Jesus.

Lord, do thou help us to see the dying Savior. Enable us to see him conquering the hosts of darkness. Claim victory for thy son now, Lord.

He is worthy to have the victory. Thou art the all-powerful God. Oh, claim victory.

We shall give all the glory to thy name. No one else has a right to the glory but thee. Take it, Lord.

Glorify thy son in this meeting. Oh, Holy Spirit, do thy work through us and in us now. Speak thy word in power for thy name's sake.

Amen and amen. Well, friends, I hope that gives us a taste of the Welsh revival and of the man God used in that revival, Evan Roberts. He had a vision of God few have had.

He was used of God like few have been used. And he walked with God in a way few ever do. He was not a scholar.

He was not a minister. He was not a preacher. He never went to seminary.

He was a simple coal miner who believed his Bible and he knew his God. He knew that the living God heard and answered the prayers of his children. He asked God for big things, to send revival and to save over 100,000 souls.

God took the prayers of this humble, simple man and answered them. And if God can use a simple, plain man like that, friends, he can use you. Pray to the Almighty that he will blow his winds of revival to our land.

Pray that he will invade us with the visitation of the Holy Spirit. Pray that America will soon be a place where it can be said, the glory filled the land.

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