

Michigan Tornadoes

by Martin Knapp

Brother Weber's revival work in Michigan resulted in the salvation of thousands of people and the strengthening of the church.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:9, Isaiah 55:8, Acts 16:6, 1 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Hebrews 11:8, James 4:13

Topics: "Revival Ministry", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

Martin Knapp recounts the unexpected journey of Mr. Weber, who, despite plans to labor in California, was led by God to Marcellus, Michigan, sparking a powerful revival. The revival cyclone in Southern Michigan, White Pigeon, and Bronson led to hundreds of conversions and a lasting impact on the communities. The Coldwater Revival in Michigan witnessed nearly one thousand conversions in three years, with Brother Weber's powerful preaching and songs touching many lives and transforming the city. Testimonies of changed lives and remarkable conversions highlight the profound impact of Brother Weber's ministry, inspiring faith and perseverance in the face of opposition and doubt.

Transcript

October, 1887, found Mr. Weber preparing for a soul-saving tour in California. He had received a cordial invitation from Bishop Fowler to labor there, with the promise that he would use his influence to open the way and to aid him in the work.

He bade farewell again to loved ones, and took the train for his trip to the land of gold.

God, however, had a different plan for him. How our Father's plans sometimes surprise us both in their nature and the suddenness of their unfoldings.

An urgent invitation led him to stop off over Sunday at Marcellus, Mich. A protracted meeting was in progress, and he was invited to preach. He did so. It was the beginning of a mighty revival cyclone in Southern Michigan, the influence of which is still felt, and will be upon the shores of eternity.

Its currents were so strong that the Evangelist could not break away from them. His visit to California was postponed. "The Spirit suffered him not" as yet to labor there, but opened to him a great and effectual door in the Peninsula State. The same methods which had hitherto been so abundantly blessed were used with undiminished success.

"For seven weeks," writes Pastor Prouty, "the meeting sparkled so continuously with interesting incidents, that it would seem like breaking the chain to narrate anything in particular."

Over two hundred were saved, and many are rejoicing today that Brother Weber came that way. A correspondent who knows whereof he affirms, Brother S. Cromley, writes, --

"A year has passed, and we think as many have proved faithful as usual after a protracted effort ... Brother Weber bears acquaintance; at first he seemed to repel. He is peculiar, but can be trusted to manage his own affairs. Some become his enemies at first sight. The mass love and respect him. He is fearless in all he says and does, getting at the very inner life of all his hearers. Is not afraid to attack the great abomination, the liquor traffic."

His labors ended at Marcellus, where next? The "world is his parish," and many open doors invite. Which shall he enter? Providence points to

WHITE PIGEON

Mrs. Sophia McGowan, a member of the White Pigeon church, paid a visit to Marcellus during the great revival, and, coming home, at once agitated the question of securing the services of Brother Weber in that place. Jesus has said, "If I send my sheep forth I will go before them." She found that he had gone before her, and soon the way was prepared, and a cordial invitation extended to the Evangelist to "come and help."

Concerning this wondrous work one of the leading members of the White Pigeon Church, Prof. J. G. Plowman, writes as follows, --

"On Dec. 11, 1887, Brother Weber began meeting at White Pigeon Mich. The church membership was small but remarkably united and ready to support and uphold the leader in all his measures for reviving the spiritual power of the church, and securing the conversion of sinners.

"The church was filled to overflowing night and day. It was no uncommon thing, too, for members to come ten or twelve miles, only to find the house crowded, and many others who, like themselves, were unable to gain admission. For seven weeks the meetings continued with interest unabated. The country for miles around was stirred as never before, and the question 'What shall I do to be saved?' seemed to be agitating the people everywhere. The Spirit of God was manifested in mighty power. Not a single invitation to the altar was given without a response, sometimes fifteen or twenty seekers being forward at once. Two hundred professed conversion, of which one hundred united with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nearly all of these are now good and faithful in embers. The church was more than doubled in membership and greatly strengthened in its spiritual power. The effects of Brother Weber's meetings among us are permanent and abiding, and the influence of this series of meetings, on the church and on the community, will go on widening we trust, to all eternity."

Sister McGowan, one of the elect mothers in Israel, at whose house Brother Weber made his home while at White Pigeon, and who has labored in a number of his meetings, says, --

"There never was known in southern Michigan such a revival. For seven weeks he held the fort and threats and slander. Men, women and children came to the Lord Jesus and were saved. Brother Weber brings a blessing wherever he goes. He is pure-hearted and kind, gives his money like water to those that are in need, as those who know him can testify. I have been in his meetings six months altogether, and

have seen over thirteen hundred conversions. Some have asked me, 'Where is the secret of his success?' I can tell you, he is on his knees for hours pleading with our Father, in the name of Jesus, to send the Holy Ghost to convict of sin, of righteousness and judgment.

"I have seen him in the greatest agony for souls, and he would not give up until he received an answer."

Thus like Jacob be wrestled with God and like Jacob prevailed, and many in White Pigeon rise up and call him blessed.

Oh, may men who thus will stand between an angry God and angry people until their own souls "feel the shock of their dread warfare" continue to multiply until the glorious Gospel is proclaimed to every creature.

Genuine revivals spread like a fire in a pine forest, where the sparks fly from tree to tree.

From Marcellus the sparks flew to White Pigeon until that was ablaze, and from White Pigeon it spread to BRONSON,

the next point where the Evangelist claimed revival victory. Rev. L. S. Matthews was pastor.

Scenes similar to those described in other places, yet varied by many local incidents, here occurred. One hundred and fifty-six professed conversion. A great work, as usual, was wrought among the young people. Their bondage to the card-table, rink, opera, and kindred sinful amusements was broken, and the service of Gods house was substituted instead. "Congregations more than doubled," "attendance to prayer and classmeetings increased threefold," and one year afterward it was said that only "five or six had gone back," the rest had "continued in the faith." Brother C. H. Compton says, --

"The effect of Brother Weber's singing and songs was one of the marked features of his work here. His song 'My Mother's Hands,' as rendered by him here, seemed to open the fountain of tears in the audience, and more than half could be seen weeping whenever he would sing it. Although the dear brother has been absent from us months, yet we are singing his beautiful songs still. and our young people never the of them. His lectures on the Holy Land were listened to by large audiences with deep interest."

The pleadings, the prayers, the hand-to-hand conflicts with the enemy, the tears of penitence and of joy, the songs of triumph and shouts of praise, all are marked on memory's pages to be read across the river.

The closing service was described as follows by Presiding Elder N. L. Bray, --

"Yesterday was the most remarkable day in the history of the Methodist Church in this place. It was the occasion of our quarterly meeting, and also the closing exercises of a most extensive revival under the direction of Evangelist J. H. Weber. Over one hundred testimonies were given in the love feast in thirty minutes, and one hundred and forty partook of the Lord's supper at the close of the sermon. Following the sacrament, the door of the church was opened and twenty-two probationers were added to a list of fifty-six, making in all seventy-eight. Handshaking followed. In the afternoon a most impressive meeting for the promotion of Christian holiness was conducted by Brother Weber. The evening meeting can never be described. Scores of sinners were led to a decision in the interest of their souls. The probation list reached the number of ninety-five, with many yet to enter the fold. Pastor Matthews and his faithful flock are happy. Brother Weber is rejoicing in the conversion of about four hundred souls in two meetings oil Coldwater district, and will commence his third meeting at Coldwater City on Wednesday of this week."

What if the three revivals mentioned should prove to be but the prelude to still greater victories? It may be that they will. It would be in keeping both with the character of the Evangelist and the promises of God. We will see.

THE COLDWATER REVIVAL -- NEARLY ONE THOUSAND CONVERSIONS IN THREE YEARS

Coldwater, one of the finest cities in southern Michigan, is the county seat of Branch County. Here is one of the most flourishing Methodist societies in the State. It is the head of Coldwater District and the home of the presiding elder, N. L. Bray, who was instrumental chiefly in retaining Brother Weber on the district, and to whose support much of his success was due. The pastor, Rev. W. A. Hunsberger, was serving the second year, and had won the hearts of the people. The year preceding Brother Weber's coming had been a year of great spiritual blessing, about two hundred and fifty professing conversion, and quite a large number also the December prior to his coming. His success in the fields mentioned and elsewhere led the Coldwater Official Board to extend to him the invitation to labor in their midst. The Spirit said, "Go," and as usual he was prompt to obey. Many thought that because the field had been so thoroughly gleaned in the revivals preceding a great revival could not be expected. The church Mr. Weber declared to be in the best spiritual condition of any he ever labored with. Having from the beginning the support of pastor, presiding elder, and official board, as at Berea, O., the Evangelist did not meet the opposition that sometimes appears in places of less piety. Almost immediately the work began and increased in interest and power to the end. There were times when a solemn awe hung over the city like the hush between the lightning flash and the thunder's crash. Waves of convicting power were followed by those of converting grace until scores had yielded to be saved. As is his custom, the Evangelist visited the shops and the factories and prayed with the workmen. He called at the cart factory three times. One of the employees says "that when he prayed it brought conviction to every man in the room, and when he arose many were in tears and soon were at the altar seeking mercy." In the midst of the meeting Pastor Hunsberger penned the following report to the Michigan Advocate:--

"We are having the greatest revival that ever swept over the city, considering the brief time we have been engaged in meetings. Last year we were blessed with one hundred and ninety-seven additions to our church, as the result of special services, nearly every one of whom is faithful today, but, judging from present indications, we shall be blessed by nearly or quite double that number of accessions, through the present meeting. Rev. J. H. Weber is surely a man commissioned of God to do the work of an evangelist. He came to us but three weeks and a half ago, yet over two hundred and fifty souls have already professed conversion and scores of others are earnestly seeking Christ. The meetings seem only nicely begun. They are increasing in interest and out-reaching power from night to night. Yesterday (Sunday) was the greatest day ever known in the history of our church in this city. It was a day of weeping for joy and hallelujah shouts. No less than one hundred and thirty-three were received on probation and thirteen by letter. As fine a class of converts as I ever saw, made up of age and youth from the business, professional, and other walks of life. This raises our present membership up to seven hundred and fifty in all. Next Sabbath and the following Sabbath we expect to receive many more. Let all pray for Coldwater and especially for Brother Weber, who is so grandly and successfully leading God's people forward to victory."

A noted infidel came to the meetings, got under conviction, and was saved. A lawyer and his wife were both converted and are happy Christians today. The Y. M. C. A. and the other churches received many members from the fruit of the revival. At a meeting held especially for men one of them became so happy that he threw his book in the air and shouted aloud The Evangelist, pastor, and others held meetings at

the factory at the noonday hour. In this and kindred ways the lion was bearded in his den and victory achieved.

For three consecutive Sundays there were forty converted each day. The following from a correspondent to a Detroit paper speaks for itself:--

"An incident which occurred at Coldwater on Thursday showed what a big heart has Weber the Evangelist. While at the depot, waiting for the train on which he was to leave the city, he noticed the City Marshal with a prisoner shackled to him. Inquiring into the matter, he found that the fellow was bound to Ionia for ninety days for striking a man. Weber had had some talk with him at the meetings before the trial, and had not heard of the result. He inquired the amount of the fine in default of which the prisoner was going to Ionia, found it was twenty dollars, put his hand down into his pocket, the fine was paid, and the man went free. Strong men wept at the affecting scene."

While laboring here Brother Weber was royally entertained at Brother R. G. Chandler's. Mrs. Chandler was present at the Board meeting when Mr. Weber was invited, and it is said that a proposition which she there made had much to do with his coming. It was here that her remarkable healing narrated elsewhere, in answer to Brother Weber's prayer, occurred. This became one of Brother Weber's "homes," and Brother Chandler and wife, by their presence at Quincy, Hillsdale, Adrian, and other places where he afterwards labored, did much to help in the work.

Time would fail to tell of all the incidents occurring. The souls converted through the influence of his songs alone, only eternity can number. The work rolled on until over three hundred and fifty had professed conversion, a large proportion of which Pastor Hunsberger has received into full membership. He says, --

"The effect of the revival was to deepen the piety of the members, enlarge our congregations on the Sabbath, and increase the interest in and attendance upon the prayer services of the church. Indeed, the work was so deep, searching, and awakening that souls have been coming into the kingdom almost constantly since our brother was here, nearly four hundred being converted during the winter of the present year, two hundred and eighty of whom have united with the church, the largest revival in the history of the church. Some of the conversions were most remarkable, and Coldwater, because of these, will have reason to thank God throughout all eternity. It may be truthfully said that Brother Weber's coming to our city left an already prosperous church in a far more prosperous condition than ever, numerically, financially, socially, morally, and spiritually. He is, we feel, a heaven-commissioned minister of God."

The following incidents, mentioned by Presiding Elder Bray, illustrate some of Mr. Weber's peculiarities, and the last statement shows in what high esteem he is held by this evangelical sub-bishop, on whose district he has labored for nearly a year:--

"I once saw him walk from the pulpit to a pew, sit down on a gentleman's knee, and relate a conversation he once had with a roommate in college, while sitting on his room-mate's knee."

"I have often known him to buy dresses and other necessities for poor and needy children, and many young men have taken or are taking a course in college through his generosity."

"On one occasion, he said to me, 'I will have success! I'll wear the knees of my pants out and tear a hole through heaven. God must come to me.'"

"'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'"

"I saw him talk to a mother and daughter, at our campmeeting, at which time the daughter slapped his face; he then turned the other cheek, and still continued to labor with them, until both mother and daughter went to the altar.

"His singing has very much to do with his success. The songs fit the man and the man fits the songs, and wherever he sings them they are a marvelous power for good.

"His lectures and illustrations on the Holy Land are very interesting and profitable. After paying him fifty dollars per week, there was money left in the treasury at every point.

"I endorse Brother Weber, and would be glad to guarantee him the amount he demands in compensation for his labors all the time I may be on the district as its Presiding Elder.

"The condition of the district when he first came, was at most points that of formality and death. About fifteen hundred have been converted during the two seasons of his labor with us, and my opinion is that his work had much to do with the great revival wave on the district during the past winter, through which two thousand have been saved."

We append the following testimony, as illustrating the convicting and converting power of the Spirit under Brother Weber's work. It is a letter written by a man who was converted in the Coldwater meeting. He wrote it in response to the question, "What led to your conversion?"

"I can tell you what kept me out of the kingdom for many years, and I think the prayers of dear ones, now in the glory land, had much to do with my conversion.

"I was brought up by praying parents. At the age of twenty-one I married a beautiful wife. Six months later I left her, for the gold fields of California. I there formed a partnership with a man, and we succeeded in making money, and my prospects were fair as I could wish. In 1854 I received a letter saying wife had the consumption, and if I ever saw her I must come home. I converted all I had into money, and was ready to start, when this partner took my money and left.

"I found myself thousands of miles from a sick wife and not one dollar in the world. I followed this man many days over mountains and valleys towards the coast, till I fainted by a wayside inn. Two days later I came to myself, being nursed and cared for by these strangers.

"In that room alone I bowed on my knees and took an awful oath to kill this man at sight. That oath was the one sin whereby I came near losing my soul. For often through all those years the Spirit came through the prayers of dear ones, and I felt that I could give up all but that one wicked oath.

"Last spring I attended Brother Weber's revival services without any feeling, until the absence of all feeling frightened me. On the first Sabbath morning in April, while going into church, something said to me so plainly that I thought others heard it, 'if you refuse God your heart today, you will never be saved.'

"In thirty minutes I was broken down nearly a maniac. I was mad at myself, and nearly every one I saw, and left the morning service swearing I would never go back. Between the morning and evening service I walked many miles, trying to brace up, but grew more broken and weak every hour.

"Evening found me in church. I never knew how, but at the first opportunity I started for the altar, saying, 'I must be honest.' When on my knees the struggle continued, for I surely felt like one enclosed in a great

bell that shut out all light and all air, and was being drummed on by grinning imps from the infernal regions.

"I then said to the Lord, I forgive my old partner, as I pray for forgiveness, and, wherever he roams, on the green old earth, I will pray for him. Then the burden seemed rolled away, and while I am not always on the mountain or in the sunshine, I am always in sight of the cross of Christ, and I praise God today that the blood is sufficient for the worst of sinners. -- R. A. I."

Hundreds through eternity will thank God for the Coldwater Revival.

What if pastor and people, as is frequently the case, had settled down content with the first hundred conversions?

What if Brother Weber had said, 'I . cannot succeed there, because there has been so great a work done already'?

Oh, how often Satan cheats the church out of what might be great victories, because of her lack of faith in God and the agencies he has ordained for the salvation of the people.

May the success which God gave his servants on this victorious battlefield inspire to hundreds of similar triumphs until the world shall be redeemed from the power of the enemy, and Zion become a "praise in the earth."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/martin-knapp/michigan-tornadoes/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net