

Heart Yearnings for Revival

by Oswald J. Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, a holy life, and the Holy Spirit's power in sparking revival and convicting souls.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 5:14, Joel 2:28-29, Mark 7:24-30, Mark 9:23, Mark 11:22-24, Luke 5:1-11, John 3:6, John 15:16, Acts 6:4

Topics: "Power Of Prayer", "Revival"

Description

Oswald J. Smith shares his heartfelt yearning for revival, recounting his personal experiences and struggles during the years 1917 and 1918. He emphasizes the necessity of Holy Spirit conviction and the power of prayer in achieving true revival, expressing his deep desire for souls to be saved and transformed. Through his diary entries, he reflects on his failures in prayer and service, while also celebrating moments of breakthrough and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals. Smith's journey illustrates the importance of persistent prayer, humility, and reliance on God's power to bring about lasting change. He concludes with a fervent plea for God to pour out His Spirit and ignite a revival that leads to genuine repentance and salvation.

Transcript

IT was in the years 1917 and 1918 that the yearnings for revival expressed in these messages were born of God. Nothing of a spectacular nature took place for the work was of a wholly local character, nor did it seem to reach full fruition at the time. It was, however, a wonderful personal preparation for the ministry that was to follow, nor will the experiences of those days ever be forgotten.

Perhaps the most profitable way to tell the story will be to simply quote from my diary which was kept day by day at the time. Space forbids a full account. It is only possible to select portions here and there, but these, I believe, will be sufficient to stir up a spirit of revival and thus glorify God.

AUGUST 16Th

It must come, the revival for which I have prayed so long. How God melted me this morning! How sweet is prayer! Praise His name! Oh, for Holy Spirit conviction and Holy Spirit fruit! Only that will stand the test of time and eternity. God has stirred my heart in an unusual way. How unspeakably precious He is. Oh, for conviction, old-fashioned conviction of sin!

Thanks be to God for these wonderful books! How they have helped me! My preaching has been revolutionized. Have been reading them hour after hour. Never got hold of anything like them in my life before: "An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," by Joseph Alleine; "The Anxious Inquirer After Salvation," by John Angell James; and "A Call to the Unconverted," by Richard Baxter. These are the books. How clear and definite their message on Sin, Salvation, Heaven and Hell! Yet I realize that even these truths may be proclaimed without results unless there is the power of the Spirit. He must convict. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." And this is perhaps the secret of failure. Truth is preached most earnestly and faithfully but nothing happens. What is the matter? No power.

During my intercession this morning I read a few chapters from "Memoirs of John Smith," by Richard Treffry, and it drove me to prayer. For some time God gave wonderful liberty, perhaps an hour, possibly less. I don't know for I was entirely unconscious of time. And first He led me to confession. Oh, how I have failed! Failed in prayer, for I have spent minutes when I ought to have spent hours. Failed in Bible Study for I have not poured over the sacred pages as I ought. Failed in time for I have allowed Satan to fill my life with other things and thus crowd God out. Failed in service for I have not given out Gospel tracts to the unsaved, nor spoken to them personally about their souls, nor preached on the street corners to the hundreds who do not attend church. Oh, I have failed miserably, miserably failed. And I long to be true and faithful. I plead for souls, yet my eyes do not weep as His did.

But glory be to God, I believe He is leading me into a deeper experience where I will count all things but loss for Christ; where I will suffer, sacrifice, pray, study and serve as never before; where there will be but one thing in my life, and thus the revival for which I long will come. He will pour forth His Spirit, souls will be convicted and saved. May God hear and graciously answer! I must not fail again. God help me to press on, and on, and on.

AUGUST 25th

In my reading this morning my attention was specially drawn to the following verse: "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man" (Mark 6:20). Oh, the power of a holy life! Wicked men fear and tremble in the presence of holiness. May God make this an incentive to me. I am reading the New Testament through rapidly for the purpose of selecting those truths which will bring conviction when preached in Holy Spirit power. God is giving searching messages on Sin, Salvation, Heaven and Hell. Spent an hour in prayer and had sweet fellowship. May He lead me on. I want to know and experience more. Never will I be satisfied until God works in convicting power and men and women weep their way to the Cross.

AUGUST 26TH

His message to me this morning was, "All things are possible to him that believeth," and, "This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer" (Mark 9:23, 29). Prayer and faith are both necessary for results and thus the power of Satan will be broken in the hearts of men and Holy Spirit fruit produced. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Gathered three into my study this evening. Expected others but they did not come. Talked to them for about an hour. Found much sympathy and willingness to cooperate, but almost entire ignorance as to Holy Spirit fruit and the outpouring of God's Spirit. Decided to meet again along with others to talk it over that we may pray intelligently. Came home rejoicing for I firmly believe that God will move upon the hearts of the people in answer to prevailing prayer.

AUGUST 31st

Eight gathered in the church study tonight and we talked and prayed until after ten. Much prayer had been offered that His Spirit might open their eyes and let them see the need and feel the responsibility. If God has chosen them they will stand with me; if not, I will have to go on alone. We have decided to hold cottage prayer meetings, one each week to begin with. In closing I gave them this verse over which we prayed: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

SEPTEMBER 2nd

Preached tonight on: "Why you should be saved." Had liberty and a little power. People at great tension. Much prayer, but searched the faces in vain for signs of soul anguish and distress. Eyes dry. No outward token of conviction. Surely I am not yet endued with power from on high. If so there would be Holy Spirit fruit.

SEPTEMBER 7th

"We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing" (Luke 5:1-11). But when they let down their nets under Divine leadership "they enclosed a great multitude of fishes." Has this been my experience, or do I labor in the flesh instead of in the Spirit? Truly I "have toiled all the night and taken nothing." If men do not tremble and go away distressed and broken it is my fault. I must take the blame. When I agonize and travail over souls there will be results, but not before. Then to my knees and on my face until the power comes and God can manifest Himself. Prayed nearly all afternoon, but not much freedom. Heavens like brass.

SEPTEMBER 9th

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6: 4). Once again it must be that I have preached in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Had much liberty and power and felt that there was considerable conviction. The people listened most attentively and there was a great deal of discussion afterwards. Yet nothing happened. None were broken. No distress manifested; no soul anguish; no tears. Oh, for God's power! Luke 24:49; Acts 1: 8; Zech. 4:6; John 6:63. He has chosen me that I should bring forth fruit, fruit that will remain and stand the test of time and eternity (John 15:16). Yet I am not doing it. There is but little fruit. However it sends me to my knees. There must still be hours of waiting upon God. The price has to be paid. And when the Spirit comes upon me and fills me I will know it by the evidence of Holy Spirit fruit. Short of this I dare not rest.

SEPTEMBER 10th

Glory be to God ! There has been a move at last. It occurred in the cottage prayer meeting tonight. The service at first was cold and the people unresponsive. I spoke on prevailing prayer, concluded and closed. But no sooner was the meeting over than a woman suddenly cried out: "Pray for me, a church member--" and the rest was drowned in a flood of tears, great mighty sobs that shook her whole body. There was no let up, nor could we speak. She sobbed and sobbed as though her heart would break. Down we went on our knees and prayed one after another. Then we sang, "Just As I Am," and in about fifteen or twenty minutes she came through gloriously saved. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Oh, how our hearts thrilled with joy. Scarcely could we speak. All the way home in the street car I could hardly contain myself. Only two meetings and God had come. Prayer was answered. The Holy Spirit had commenced to work, for one soul at least had been broken up. A church member unsaved! I wonder how many others are in a like condition ?

SEPTEMBER 12th

God is surely working. Another young woman who had been convicted got up tonight and testified that she was saved yesterday at her work and received full assurance this morning. Praise God! He has again answered prayer. She says she has done almost nothing else but pray all week. So now we have two brought in through the power of God alone. It is for this I have been burdened, the coming of the Holy Spirit in such mighty convicting power that souls would cry out for mercy without even an invitation. God has set His seal and honored His truth. Lord keep me humble and teach me Thy will.

SEPTEMBER 16th

Spoke tonight and had unusual liberty and power. People listened intently. Many eyes were filled with tears, but there was no break. However, I am convinced that God is preparing His servants and that He will yet manifest His power in the conversion of others. It only means that I must spend many more hours in prayer this week than last.

SEPTEMBER 18th

Powerful cottage prayer meeting. House full, prayer fervent. Many hungry for God. Meeting continued until nearly ten o'clock, yet no visible sign. I must experience God's power no matter what it costs. Oh, that He would break me down and cause me to weep for the salvation of souls!

SEPTEMBER 19th

Another break tonight. A backslider tried to pray in the meeting but immediately broke down and wept out her confession. She continued to pray in broken syllables weeping at the same time. Thank God for this, but oh, for an intensified effect! Am still far from satisfied.

Another who has had a terrible struggle asked me tonight if she must confess having stolen something. So God is working.

SEPTEMBER 21st

Received a letter this morning from one in great distress and went to see her at once. Found her weeping in anguish of spirit. After prayer God wonderfully met her and it was good to see the glow of joy in her eyes when leaving. God is surely working with her. Praise His name! More and more I feel the need of prayer.

SEPTEMBER 22nd

Have just finished reading, "Glimpses of Life in Soul-Winning," by James Caughey. Oh, what passion, what devotion and wholehearted earnestness, and what a record of souls saved. Months of battling in prayer, then the victory. I do not believe that there is power enough on earth or in Hell to prevent a revival if I am willing to pay the price.

SEPTEMBER 23rd

After service this morning a lady came to me and said she wanted to become a Christian. We talked and prayed together. She left with a hope but I want to wait and see. Do not know yet whether it is Holy Spirit fruit or not.

SEPTEMBER 24th

Went today to the home of my friend, Dr. E. Ralph Hooper the beloved physician, and had a couple of hours with him in prayer. Was greatly discouraged over last night's service. Things seemed as dead as stone. No liberty, no power, no freedom to preach. Everything was hard. Feel I am just playing with prayer. Must spend more time in intercession.

SEPTEMBER 25th

Three of us met this morning and prayed for four hours. Experienced much blessing. Yet at the cottage prayer meeting tonight there did not seem to be a move of any kind. Two or three confessed sin, while one young man broke out and prayed.

SEPTEMBER 26th

Have been greatly impressed with Joel 2:18 and 28-29. There it is, the need, the methods, and then the results of a great revival. But I can't do it myself. My heart is cold and hard. I do not weep and mourn. May God melt and break me and then work mightily among the people. I found Jer. 5:14 also a great and precious promise and have prayed it on my knees: "I will make my Words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood and it shall devour them." God grant that it may be so.

Glorious break tonight. The prayer meeting seemed cold and dead. Very few prayed. I spoke and closed the meeting disappointed. Then a woman started to weep. She was followed by another and later on a third was broken by God's power. All gathered around and prayed. The first two sobbed and sobbed as though their hearts would break, praying and confessing by turns. Oh, it was glorious. God was working mightily. One of them who had stubbornly refused to pray in public the first night and who had sat throughout the meeting utterly unmoved, now wept so bitterly that she was unable to speak. Finally all went home fully satisfied, the light of heaven in their faces.

I saw that a fourth was under conviction as the result of what had just taken place. She is one of our prominent members. I simply shook hands with her, feeling that it would be best to leave her alone and let the Holy Spirit do His own work. As she passed out there was a look of anguish on her face and her handshake told the story. How wonderfully God uses conversions to bring conviction upon others. Can it be that the revival has started?

Once again I have cause to glory in God. He has given another sign of His presence and power. One other has been convicted and saved and is today rejoicing in God. Six weeks I think it has taken. Now she is free. God has brought her into clear and abiding liberty. In the meeting tonight she testified, her one time dejected face shining with the light of heaven as she told how she had found the peace which passes understanding, saying it was worth all the struggle. Praise God! I believe the work is genuine.

Another also testified, but confessed that she had wandered and grown cold. She knew that she was not right and asked to be prayed for. She did not get through however. There must be deeper conviction. Apparently she has been in a false experience and as a result the work has come undone.

OCTOBER 4th

Spent this afternoon in prayer on my face before God. Then went to Dr. Hooper's home for the evening where we continued in prayer until a quarter to twelve. Oh, for the power of God! We must have it. How wonderfully He opened His Word to us while in prayer. We have read it and prayed it on our knees, especially the second chapter of Joel. Oh, for a baptism of tears! Also the ninth chapter of Daniel. Sentence by sentence we prayed it out before the Lord. We are surrounded by mountains of unbelief and opposition on every side. Only the power of God can overthrow them. "Have faith in God." I want to be wholly absorbed in Him. One passion--Christ.

Lately I have been reading Robert Murray McCheyne, George Fox, Billy Bray, Chas. G. Finney, Henry Moorehouse, John Fletcher, George Whitfield, David Stoner, Henry Martyn, John Wesley, John Bunyan, Thos. Collins, James Caughey, John Smith, David Brainerd; and oh, what men of God they were! What examples of devotion, zeal and piety! Would I could be like them! What a wonder was Wm. Bramwell! But where am I? Oh, to burn out for God! All, all for Him. Jesus only. Souls! Souls! Souls! I am determined to be a winner of souls. God help me.

OCTOBER 5th

Once again, thanks be to God, there has been another conversion. This time a man. He came into my study tonight and told me that he had been convicted in a previous meeting and was most miserable. He had made resolutions again and again and had even tried religion but was still unsaved although he was a member of the church. Yesterday he threw his pipe away. I prayed with him and then we went into the service. Near the close of the meeting he stood up and confessed to all what he had already related to me. His eyes were filled with tears. Yet in spite of this he did not get through. I came home and settled down to pray for him most definitely, pleading with God to let him see the light and enable him to believe.

Faith is rising to assurance. God is working. Deep conviction has already settled upon many. Oh, for a mighty break! Have found Mark 11:22-24; Joel 1:13,14,16; 2:1,11-18, 25, 28, 29, most precious today. Have prayed them one by one before God.

OCTOBER 8th

Very strong opposition. Some of the leading officials object publicly to the meetings. Worldly members up in arms. Satan is beginning to give evidence that he is also interested in what is going on. Have taken it to the Lord in prayer. Continued intercession this evening from about 8 o'clock until a quarter to one in the morning with Dr. Hooper.

OCTOBER 10th

Dr. Hooper and I spent the day waiting on God, and as a result we had a good meeting tonight. Many testified splendidly for over half an hour. Indeed, I had to restrain them in order to give time for prayer. God is working, conviction deepening and spreading. Lives are being changed, souls coming into abundant joy and glorious liberty.

October 11th

God's Word is becoming so precious. We are hearing His voice through the prophets of the Old Testament. Our method is to read a little and then pray it out before God, closing by asking Him to fulfill it

in our experience.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). If we work in the flesh our fruit will correspond and souls be brought into a false experience. Lord, give us Holy Spirit fruit. We have taken the method of prayer as commanded in God's Word. Every other method has been tried and is being tried today, but the results do not satisfy. So now if we do not prevail in prayer we will become a reproach and to that extent prayer will be discredited. We cannot afford to fail. We must give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. If our lives do not convict people of sin there is something wrong. Oh, for the faith of the Syrophenician woman. She would not take "No" For an answer (Mark 7:24-30).

OCTOBER 14th

Preached morning and night with freedom and liberty, but no apparent result. Am still unsatisfied. Yet God is working a little. A man has restored stolen money to his employer and a woman has given back funds that were taken from the Sunday School as a result of the convicting power of the Spirit. But I pray for the conviction to spread and deepen. Oh, for souls to be wounded! Have been reading the diary of David Brainerd. Months and Months of agonizing prayer and then the mighty power of God upon the Indians. I must have Holy Spirit fruit, nothing less.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/oswald-j-smith/heart-yearnings-for-revival/>

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