

# The Outpouring of the Spirit

by Oswald J. Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the need for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church today, and highlights the conditions and promises associated with such an event.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 59:2, Joel 2:12-18, Joel 2:28-29

**Topics:** "Revival", "Outpouring of the Holy Spirit"

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## Description

Oswald J. Smith emphasizes the urgent need for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, reflecting on historical revivals in Wales, Hawaii, and the Eastern States, where communities were transformed through deep conviction of sin and genuine repentance. He laments the current spiritual apathy in churches and the lack of hunger for God, urging believers to confront their sins before seeking revival. Smith calls for earnest prayer and repentance, citing the prophecy of Joel as a guide for returning to God and receiving His blessings. He stresses that the revival is contingent upon the church's readiness to forsake sin and seek God wholeheartedly. The message is a passionate plea for a renewed spiritual awakening in the face of societal decline.

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## Transcript

IT was in 1904. All Wales was aflame. The nation had drifted far from God. The spiritual conditions were low indeed. Church attendance was poor. And sin abounded on every side.

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. Meetings lasted from ten in the morning until twelve at night. Three definite services were held each day. 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 had learnt the hymns in childhood. No choir, for everybody sang. No collection; and no advertising.

Nothing had ever come over Wales 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 theatre 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.

In the year 1835 Titus Coan landed on the shore belt of Hawaii. On his 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; and 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. Coan 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 baptised 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. Coan left he had himself received and baptised 11,960 persons.

In the little town of Adams across the line, in the year 1821, a young lawyer made his way to a secluded spot in the woods to pray. God met him there and he was wondrously converted, and soon after filled with the Holy Spirit. That man was Charles. G. Finney.

The people heard about it, became deeply interested, and as though by common consent, gathered into the meeting house in the evening. 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. 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.

Sometimes the conviction of sin was so great and caused such fearful wails of anguish that he had to stop preaching until it subsided. Ministers and Church members were converted. Sinners were reclaimed by thousands. And for years the mighty work of grace went on. Men had never witnessed the like in their lives before.

I have recalled to your minds three historical incidents of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Hundreds of others might be cited. But these are sufficient to show what I mean. And this is what we need today more than anything else. When I remember that such an Outpouring has come to China, India, Korea, Africa, England, Wales, the States, the Islands of the Seas, and many other places, but that Canada, our Dominion, our own beloved country, has never in its history experienced a national Revival, my heart cries out to God for such a Manifestation of Himself.

Do we need it? Listen! How many of our churches are more than half empty Sunday after Sunday? What a multitude there are who never enter God's house? How many mid-week prayer meetings are alive and prosperous? Where is the hunger for spiritual things? Oh, the shame of it!

And Missions--the lands beyond the seas, heathen darkness--what are we doing? Does the fact that multitudes are perishing ever cause us an anxious thought? Have we grown selfish?

What about the tremendous wealth that God has given us? Take the United States as an example, the richest nation in the world today, and the major portion of her wealth in the hands of professing Christians. And yet the United States spent more on gum in one year than she spent on Missions. How many Christians are giving God even the tenth of what He gives them ?

Then take our colleges and seminaries, both at home and on the mission field where higher criticism is taught. We are told that Jesus never performed any miracles, never rose from the dead, and was not born of a virgin, did not die as our Substitute, and is not coming again. Oh, what blasphemy !

How many professing Christians are living the Christ-life before men? Oh, how like the world we are becoming! How little opposition do we find! Where are the persecutions that were heaped on the Early Church? How easy it is now to be a Christian!

And what of the Ministry? Does the minister grip, convert, and save by his message? How many souls are won through the preaching of the Word? Oh, my friends, we are loaded down with countless Church activities, while the real work of the Church, that of evangelizing the world and winning the lost, is almost entirely neglected.

Where is the conviction of sin we used to know? Is it a thing of the past? Let us look at one of Finney's meetings. 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 school house near by. When he arrived the place was packed so that he could barely find standing room near the door. He spoke for a long time. At last he began to press home upon them the fact that they were an ungodly community; for they held no services in their district. All at once they were stricken with conviction. The Spirit of God came like a thunderbolt upon them. One by one they fell on their knees, or prostrate on the floor, crying for mercy. 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. Then taking them one by one he pointed them to Jesus. 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 ours.

Now, how may we secure such an Outpouring of the Spirit? You answer, by prayer. True, but there is something before prayer. 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 so that He will not hear." ( Isa. 59: 2. )

Probably our best guide just here is the prophecy of Joel. Let us look at it. It is a call to repentance. 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. We have it described in chapters 1 and 2. It has 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 turn 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." 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. But this is your affair, not mine. It lies between you and God.

Now notice verses 15-17. The prophet has called for a prayer meeting. Sin has been confessed and forsaken. Now they may pray. And they are to entreat God for His own name's sake, 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 elders, gather the children. 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 Thine 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 this city? Are you beseeching Him night and day for an Outpouring of His Spirit? For now is the hour to pray. We are told of a time in the work of Finney when the Revival had died out. He then made a covenant with the young people to pray at sunrise, noon and sunset in their closets for one week. The Spirit was poured out, and before the week ended 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?

Now 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 28-29: "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, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in these days will I pour out my Spirit."

Oh, my brethren, the trouble is not with God. It lies right here 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?

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