

First the Blade'

by Stanley H. Frodsham

Stanley H. Frodsham's sermon explores the profound impact of the 1859 revival and the transformative journey of Smith Wigglesworth in faith and ministry.

Scripture: Psalm 85:6, Jeremiah 20:9, Matthew 25:40, Acts 4:31, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Revival History", "Faith Ministry"

Description

Stanley H. Frodsham preaches about the powerful revival years of 1857 and 1859 in the USA, Ireland, and Britain, where thousands came to Christ through prayer and preaching. Notable figures like C.H. Spurgeon, Christmas Evans, William Booth, and Smith Wigglesworth were instrumental in spreading the Gospel and leading many to salvation during this time. Smith Wigglesworth's humble beginnings, deep longing for God, and early experiences with faith and prayer shaped his remarkable journey of faith and ministry, marked by a passion for soul-winning and helping the poor.

Transcript

The year 1859 is known as that of the great Irish revival. Two years previously, a mighty awakening had come to the United States. Prayer meetings had been held in every large city, and were attended by thousands of people. As men called on God, the Spirit of the Lord mightily worked, and it was estimated that every month 50,000 souls passed from death unto life. The news of the revival of 1857 in the USA and of the revival of 1859 in Ireland, set the people of Britain to praying. Soon revival fires began to burn throughout that country. C.H. Spurgeon preached to vast throngs in London and at every service many received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

In Wales, Christmas Evans was engaged in a wonderful evangelistic ministry. His converts became so exuberantly happy that they would dance for joy in his meetings, and Evans would not restrain them. Because of this, scores of sinners sought Christ in order to receive the same "joy unspeakable." At the same time, the hearts of many who were attending the Wesleyan Methodist churches throughout Great Britain were "strangely warmed." One of their evangelists, William Booth, was singularly used. In 1859 he broke with the Wesleyan church to give himself entirely to the work of evangelism and was led to choose the slums of the east end of London as his first place of ministry. The worst of sinners were transformed into the greatest of saints and went preaching the Gospel throughout the land. Booth later founded the Salvation Army.

It was in this revival year of 1859, in a humble shack in Menston, in Yorkshire, England, that Smith Wigglesworth was born. One day when he was holding a meeting in Riverside, California, we said to him, "Tell us your story." He related to us the following:

My father was very poor and worked long hours for little pay in order to support mother and us three boys and one girl. I can remember one cold frosty day when my father had been given the job of digging a ditch 7 yards long and a yard deep, and filling it up again, for the sum of three shillings and sixpence. My mother said that if he would only wait a bit, it might thaw and his task would be easier. But he needed that money for food, for there was none in the house. So he set to work with a pickax. The frost was deep, but underneath the hard ground was some soft wet clay. As he threw up some of this, a robin suddenly appeared, picked up a worm, ate it, flew to a branch of a nearby tree, and from there sent out a song of joyous praise. Up to now, father had been very despondent, but he was so entranced by the robin's lovely song of thanksgiving that he took fresh courage and began to dig with renewed vigor--saying to himself, "If that robin can sing like that for a worm, surely I can work like a father for my good wife and my four fine children!"

When I was six years of age, I got work in the field, pulling and cleaning turnips, and I can remember how sore my tiny hands became pulling turnips from morning until night.

At 7 years of age, my older brother and I went to work in a woolen mill. My father obtained employment in the same mill as a weaver. Things were easier in our house from that time on, and food became more plentiful.

My father was a great lover of birds and at one time he had 16 songbirds in our home. Like my father I had a great love for birds and at every opportunity I would be out looking for their nests. I always knew where there were some 80 or 90 of them. One time I found a nest full of fledglings, and thinking they were abandoned, I adopted them, taking them home and making a place for them in my bedroom. Somehow the parent birds discovered them and would fly in through the open window and feed their young ones. One time I had both a thrush and a lark feeding their young ones in my room. My brothers and I would catch some songbirds by means of birdlime, bring them home, and later sell them in the market.

My mother was very industrious with her needle and made all our clothes, chiefly from old garments that had been given to her. I usually wore an overcoat with sleeves 3 or 4 inches too long, which was very comfortable in cold weather. I cannot forget those long winter nights and mornings, having to get out of bed at 5 o'clock to snatch a quick meal and then walk 2 miles to be at work by 6. We had to work 12 hours each day, and I often said to my father, "It's a long time from 6 until 6 in the mill." I can remember the tears in his eyes as he said, "Well, 6 o'clock will always come." Sometimes it seemed like a month coming.

I can never recollect a time when I did not long for God. Even though neither father nor mother knew God, I was always seeking him. I would often kneel down in the field and ask him to help me. I would ask him especially to enable me to find where the bird nests were, and after I had prayed I seemed to have an instinct to know exactly where to look.

One time I walked to work in a great thunderstorm. It seemed that for half an hour I was enveloped with fire as the thunders rolled and the lightnings flashed. Young as I was, my heart was crying to God for his perseverance, and he wrapped me in his gracious presence. Though all the way I was surrounded with lightning and I was drenched to the skin, I knew no fear--I only sensed that I was being shielded by the power of God.

My grandmother was an old-time Wesleyan Methodist and would take me to the meetings she attended. When I was 8 years of age there was a revival meeting held in her church. I can remember one Sunday morning at 7 o'clock when all those simple folks were dancing around a big stove in the center of the church, clapping their hands and singing,

Oh, the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb,

The Lamb of Calvary,

The Lamb that was slain,

That liveth again

To intercede for me.

As I clapped my hands and sang with them, a clear knowledge of the new birth came into my soul. I looked to the Lamb of Calvary. I believed that he loved me and had died for me. Life came in--eternal life--and I knew that I had received a new life which had come from God. I was born again. I saw that God wants us so badly that he has made the condition as simple as He possibly could--"Only believe." That experience was real and I have never doubted my salvation since that day.

But I had no words. The longer I lived the more I thought, but the less language I had to express my thoughts. In this respect I resembled my mother. She would begin to tell a story, but what she said was so unintelligible that Father would have to interrupt, saying, "Nay, Mother, you'll have to begin again!" She just could not express herself. I was the same.

But I delighted in going to meetings, especially those in which everyone was giving a testimony. I would arise to give mine, but would have no language to convey what I felt in the depths of my soul. Invariably I would burst out crying. One memorable day three old men, whom I knew very intimately, came across to where I was weeping, unable to speak. They laid their hands on me. The Spirit of the Lord came upon me and I was instantly set free from my bondage. I not only believed, but I could also speak.

From the time of my conversion I became a soul-winner, and the first person I won for Christ was my own dear mother.

When I was 9 years of age I was tall, and so I got full-time work in the mill. Schooling was not compulsory in those days, and so I was robbed of an education.

Father wanted all of us to go to the Episcopal church. He had no desire to go himself, but he liked the parson, because they met at the same pub and drank beer together. My brother and I were in the choir in this church, and although I could not read I soon learned the tunes of the hymns and chants. When most of the boys in the choir were 12 years of age they had to be confirmed by the bishop. I was not 12, but between 9 and 10, when the bishop laid his hands on me. I can remember that as he imposed his hands I had a similar experience to the one I had 40 years later when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. My whole body was filled with the consciousness of God's presence, a consciousness that remained with me for days. After the confirmation service all the other boys were swearing and quarreling, and I wondered what had made the difference between them and me.

When I was 13, we moved to Bradford. There I went to the Wesleyan Methodist church and began to enter into a deeper spiritual life. I was very keen for God. This church was having some special missionary meetings and they chose seven boys to speak. I was one of the seven chosen, and I had 3 weeks in which to get ready for a 15-minute talk. For 3 weeks I lived in prayer. I remember that as I began there were such loud Amens and shoutings. I do not recollect what I said, but I know I was possessed with a mighty zeal, a burning desire to get people to know my Savior. At that time I was always getting in touch with boys and talking to them about salvation. I had many rebuffs and rebukes. I wanted to share the great joy I had, but so many did not seem too eager to listen to me, and that was a great mystery to me. I suppose I was not very tactful. I always carried a Testament with me even though I was not able to read much.

When I was 16 years of age the Salvation Army opened up a work in Bradford. I delighted to be with these earnest Salvation Army people. It was laid very deeply upon me to fast and pray for the salvation of souls in those days, and every week we saw scores of sinners yielding their hearts to Christ.

In the mill where I worked there was a godly man belonging to the Plymouth Brethren. He was a steam-fitter. I was given to him as a helper and he taught me how to do plumbing work. He talked to me about water baptism and its meaning. I can remember that he said to me, "If you will obey the Lord in this, you do not know what he may have for you." I gladly obeyed the word of the Lord to be buried with him in baptism unto death and come forth from the symbolic watery grave to a newness of life in God. I was about 17 at that time.

It was this good man who taught me about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Again and again when I had a sense that I had failed God, I would be troubled with the thought that the Lord would come and I would not be ready to meet him. From time to time it was a relief to me to go to work and find this godly man there. Then I knew the Lord had not come in the night and left me behind.

I continued with the Salvation Army because it seemed to me they had more power in their ministry than anybody else at the time. We used to have all nights of prayer. Many would be laid out under the power of the Spirit, sometimes for as long as 24 hours at a time. We called that the Baptism in the Spirit in those days. Those early Salvationists had great power and it was manifested in their testimony and in their lives. We would join together and claim in faith 50 or 100 souls every week and know that we would get them. Alas, today many are not laying themselves out for soul-winning but for fleshly manifestations.

I looked for the Lord, and he surely helped me in everything. When I was 18 years of age, I went to a plumber to ask for employment. I cleaned up my shoes with an extra shine, put on a clean collar, and applied at the home of this man. He said, "No, I don't need anyone." I said, "Thank you, sir. I am sorry." The man let me walk down to his gate and then called me back, saying, "There's something about you that is different. I just can't let you go."

He sent me to do a job fitting a row of homes with water piping, which I finished in a week. The master was so amazed that he said, "It cannot possibly be done!" but he went and found the work perfect. He said he could not keep me employed at that speed.

When I was 20 years of age, I moved to Liverpool, and the power of God was mightily upon me. I had a great desire to help the young people. Every week I used to gather around me scores of boys and girls, barefooted, ragged, and hungry. I earned good money, but I spent all of it on food for those children. They would congregate in the sheds in the docks, and what meetings we had! Hundreds of them were saved. A friend of mine and I devoted ourselves to visiting the hospitals and also the ships. God gave me a great

heart for the poor. I used to work hard and spend all I had on the poor and have nothing for myself. I fasted all day every Sunday and prayed, and I never remember seeing less than 50 souls saved by the power of God in the meetings with the children, in the hospitals, on the ships, and in the Salvation Army. These were the days of great soul awakening.

At the Salvation Army meetings the officer in charge would constantly ask me to speak. I cannot tell why he should ask me, for my speech was always broken, weeping before the people. I could not hold back the tears. I would have given a world to be able to speak in a more eloquent way; but like Jeremiah I was a man with a fountain of tears. But as I wept before the people, this would often lead to an altar call. I thank God for those days because the Lord kept me in a broken, contrite spirit. The memory of those Liverpool days is very precious to me.

When I was about 23 years of age, I was led to go back to Bradford, and I was strongly led to open up a business for myself as a plumber and give my spare time to helping the Salvation Army. It was there I met the best girl in the world!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stanley-h-frodsham/first-the-blade/>

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