

EVAN ROBERTS AND THE WELSH REVIVAL

Evan Roberts was the central figure in the Welsh Revival, in Wales, often described as one of the purest, movements of the Holy Spirit in the history of the church. Evan grew up in a coal mining community and quit school to become a coal miner at the age of twelve. At thirteen Evan Roberts received Christ as his Saviour. In his teens, he would attend every prayer meeting he could find, often, 6 out of 7 days a week. He read and heard about some of the great revivals that had occurred in Wales and other places and became obsessed with the subject. He stated, "I could sit up all night to read or talk about revivals." As a young man he was once forced out of his rented room by his landlady, who would hear him pray and preach in his room for hours on end, and concluded he was dangerous and quite likely insane.

At the age of 25 he woke up one night and found himself in the presence of God. His fellowship with God was so real, he stated: "I found myself with unspeakable joy and awe in the presence of the almighty God I was privileged to speak face-to-face with him as a man speaks face-to-face with a friend." This deep communion went on for four hours, and then he fell asleep again. He was surprised to find that the same experience occurred the next night, again resulting in an extraordinary fellowship with God that lasted again for four hours. This continued every night for the next three months, as God revealed Himself in dramatic fashion to this young man, preparing him for his great calling that lay ahead.

Even after these experiences with Christ he continued to be burdened for more of God. He spoke with his friends and wrote, "I have built the altar, and laid the wood in order, and have prepared the offering; I have only to wait for the fire." He understood that fire falls on sacrifice. Roberts attended a series of small meetings held nearby by the famous evangelist, Seth Joshua. Seth was also a man of prayer and used to prayer walk for hours asking the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into his harvest fields. The Lord answered his prayer by raising up Evan Roberts. Seth prayed at the end of one of the services, "O God, bend us." These words shook Evan Roberts to the core. Roberts recorded, "I felt a living power pervading my soul. It took my breath away and my legs trembled exceedingly."

Roberts went on "This living power became stronger and stronger as each one prayed, until I felt it would tear me apart, I fell on my knees with my arms over the seat in front of me. My face was bathed in perspiration, and the tears flowed in streams. I cried out, "Bend me, bend me!" It was God's commending love which bent me, what a wave of peace flooded my bosom..." This mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit transformed Evan. Before that time, he was quite serious and had a gloomy personality, but after this he radiated joy. Before he had been a timid and hesitant speaker, but now spoke with an authority and boldness that could hardly be resisted.

During a church service soon afterwards, Roberts saw a vision of himself speaking to the young people at his home church in Loughor and decided to head home.

His parents were puzzled to see their son home from college, and more puzzled still when he announced he had come to speak to the church (without being invited by the pastor) and was considering going through all Wales preaching and soul winning. The pastor of their home church didn't quite know what to do with Evan. He decided to play it safe and allowed Evan to speak only after the main prayer meeting was over. Sixteen people and one little girl decided to stay and hear what he had to say. Roberts wasted no time in getting to the heart of his message. He spoke about a fullness of the Holy Spirit that was available for Christians, but declared that they must fulfil four conditions:

- Confess all known sin to God.
- Put away all doubtful habits.
- Obey the Holy Spirit promptly.
- Confess Christ publicly.

On that first night, October 31st, 1904, his teaching was accompanied with a deep sense of Holy Spirit conviction. By the end of the night all sixteen young people and adults had confessed Christ. So powerful was this first meeting that Roberts was given a second night to share, and then a third. In one of those early meetings, Evan led the small group of people in what he called a chain prayer. He began by praying: "Send the Spirit now for Jesus Christ's sake." He then told everyone else in attendance to pray the same prayer out loud, one at a time. And so, the prayer went around the room. After they had all prayed, Evan started a new section of the prayer: "Send the Spirit powerfully now for Jesus Christ's sake." Again, the prayer went around the room.

Now as it was being prayed, the Holy Spirit began to fall on some of those in attendance. Evan prayed again: "Send the Spirit more powerfully now for Jesus Christ's sake." After that prayer went around the room, Evan prayed the final section of his prayer: "Send the Spirit still more powerfully now for Jesus Christ's sake." That chapel meeting went on for hours and hours. Within the next few days, hundreds of people were attending the meetings. Within a few more days, a massive revival swept across Wales; changing the entire culture of the country and spreading to nations all across the earth. He continued to lead meetings in his hometown each night at nearby churches and saw a total of 65 conversions that week.

Some of the meetings in the early weeks of the revival started at 7:00pm and continued on without any breaks until 4:30am the next morning. After just two months of meetings (from November 8 to December 31st 1904), there were over 34,000 conversions recorded. Two months after that, by February 28, 1905, there were 84,000 conversions recorded. It was an average of over 5,000 conversions a week!

From Wales, the revival began to spread to scattered cities in England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man. It also spread as far as New Zealand, Madagascar, India, North America and Mexico, along with several countries within Europe, Asia, and Africa. There was also great cultural transformation in Wales as the revival spread.

Shops closed down early so the workers could get a seat at the revival meetings. Bibles flew off the shelves in the bookstores. Longstanding debts were paid off, drunkenness and crime drastically declined, and relationships were reconciled. One night at a football game, the whole crowd broke out singing one of the revival worship songs! So radical was the change in the coal miners that there was a slowdown in the mines. The pit ponies, so used to being cursed at and screamed at by the ungodly miners couldn't figure out what to do when their transformed masters spoke kindly to them." Over a three-year period, approximately 250,000 souls came to Christ as a direct result of the Welsh Revival. After these revival years, Evan Roberts stepped down from public ministry and dedicated himself to a life of intercession. He wrote in one of his journals, "Before men I might reach a limited few, but before God I could reach the whole world!"

Source: *Dr Jason Hubbard – Executive Coordinator International Prayer Connections*