



God Came

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The word 'dedication' carries with it the idea of complete and utter concentration. It is the determination of an utterly convinced soul, a fixed intention, it implies the setting aside of whatever or whoever it is to one end and purpose alone. There is something wonderful about dedication unto the Lord, implying the thought of 'being within the veil'.

As a result of this in the hearts of a group of people I was blessed many years ago to be in an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord in a certain district of Yorkshire. I am a result of that. I did not begin it. I did not take revival. The Lord outpoured His Spirit in that place at that time, I did not take it there, I emphasize that: I am a result of it.

YOU CAN HAVE REVIVAL

Throughout the ages there have been great men who have moved in revival, to name one — Charles Grandison Finney. Finney wrote a series of lectures on the subject: 'Revivals of Religion' he called them. In these he gave some guidance, if not rules, about revival, and said that if you follow these procedures you can have a revival any time you wish. I would heartily commend Charles Finney to you, for it seemed that everywhere that man went there was a great move of the Spirit of God; it must have been marvellous to have been there.

I can remember a time in my life when I avidly read everything to do with outpourings of the Spirit and

revivals. Some of you may have heard me commend certain books for reading: Finney's 'Lectures on Religious Revival' Finney's Autobiography, Jonathan Goforth's 'By My Spirit', and so on . . .

I remember reading, when I was a young man, a book by Dr. Campbell Morgan in which he spoke of being deputed to visit Wales during the Revival taking place there. He was amazed, he said, as he sat in the congregation of those people being wrought upon by the Spirit of God. He came from a very orderly congregational background and was there as an observer. To his amazement four or five people stood up, all praying at the same time, yet there was no confusion, as he thought would happen:

everything was being done decently and in order. This is Campbell Morgan's own confession: 'Instead of it being reprehensible and confusing, this divine disorder' (his own words) 'was wonderful, all was under the inspiration and control of the Spirit of God, He was moving on the congregation'.

No man carries round revival in his pocket or in his sermon bag, no-one can guarantee an outpouring of the Spirit of God. In the general reading of scripture — both in the New Testament and also in the Old, revivals as we speak of them are never ascribed to the outpouring of the Spirit.

What we call revivals happened when perhaps God raised up either a prophet or a king who would speak out His word and go dead against sin. All idols, whatever their name, had to go. All kinds of things had to go and deep repentance and contrition

seized the people.

At these times the blood sacrifices and offerings to God were restored and His pure worship reinstated. In some instances you will find that the word of God, the scripture of truth, was read; always it was coming back to that which God originally gave. I can remember too reading about the revivals in Lewis (in Scotland).

We had that great man Duncan Campbell staying in our home at one period. He visited us for a weekend when I was in Yorkshire, and he shared with us. He was a dear man of God - he still is, of course, he has gone to be with God; he is more a man of God now than he was then. That is the great future for us, isn't it? As you know, God is not a God of the dead. but of the living.

Duncan Campbell was telling some of the glorious stories of the outpourings of the Spirit of God, in Lewis. One that vividly remains in my memory is the story of the woman in the ditch. He was going along the road to a service at the time, when he heard a woman's voice crying, sobbing out her heart to God. Louder and louder grew the cries as he drew toward their source, and as he listened, he began to make out the words. They were being repeated over and over again in solemn, heartbreaking repetition - 'O God, the walls of Zion are broken down, the walls of Zion are broken down'.

Reaching the immediate spot where the woman was, he looked over and through the hedge, and there in a ditch, lay a Scotswoman in great distress, crying out to God. Duncan Campbell was greatly moved as he listened to her heart-cries. She wasn't praying marvellous prayers, there was no great oratory, just distress of soul, and heartbreak.

The heartbreak of God - it was coming out of a ditch; a poor woman feeling under the burden, under the weight of the sin and need of the island of Lewis. He left her there with God, went down the road and walked into the church; and are you surprised to hear that that very evening, in that same church, God poured out the Spirit. On another

occasion (I think it was) he preached on 'I will pour water on him that is thirsty.' At least, he announced his text (whether or not he preached, I cannot remember), and a man, an elder in the church, who was sitting on the end of the pew somewhere back down the church, got up, stepped out into the aisle and cried, 'Oh God, I'm thirsty, Oh God, I'm thirsty'.

That was as far as Duncan Campbell got with his sermon! God came.

Duncan Campbell, that humble servant of God, said, 'I do not carry revival round with me in my bag.' I believe with all my heart that with God all these things are by law. By that I do not mean that you and I can make up laws about it. I am pleased that I can faintly remember things that Finney says about fulfilling the rules and conditions, and am persuaded that God in heaven and a woman in a ditch, and a man in a pew, continued without knowledge, aforethought or agreement to fulfil the conditions of God.

If we did the same things, put a woman in the gutter here, put a man in a pew, have the right text announced, will we have revival? Strangely enough, we might, but I do not think so. I wouldn't like to guarantee it.

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

When this same kind of thing happened with me. I was a Baptist pastor in Kent, not without a degree of blessing in the ministry, when the Lord broke in and sent me to Yorkshire. God told me to go. I was under Divine command, that I know. Sorrowfully I tarried about 3-6 months after God told me to go - I ought not to have done, but I was doing the acceptable thing (in some circles) fiddling about, putting out what are politely called 'fleeces'. God would have none of it. He told me to go, and that was that. And so the time came when I went. I did not go there to have a revival, I did not go there to have an outpouring of the Spirit - God did not tell me what He was going to do, he expected me to obey

Him, that was all. God had long since shown me what a true New Testament church was: and I knew that the church in which I was pastor was not a true New Testament church. God knew it too. This is not spoken in a criticism: I was the pastor of the church, if you like you can say it was my fault. I knew it was not a true New Testament church because I read of the New Testament church in the Acts of the Apostles, and obviously the church was not like that nor wanted to be. But it was as though God was hitting me in the eyes with truth. Before God sent me north I had come to a conclusion in my heart that I would not rest until I saw a New Testament church on the earth. Notice I did not say 'the perfect' New Testament church, nor did I say a first century church; but I at least knew what I wanted and that the way I was functioning and the system I functioned under was not remotely like the function of a New Testament system. The only standard of a true church and true church worship must be the New Testament.

So, when I went up north from the south, I went up having already declared this before God - that I would not rest until I saw a New Testament church. I did not go up there specifically to do it, but that was already in my heart when I went. Beloved, from the depths of all that I understand, I want to state plainly that 'as a man thinketh in his heart', so is he and so he does. Unless men and women are true to what is in their heart before God, he or she will never get anywhere in the kingdom.

I went up north eventually because God sent me there to a very small church. I sometimes think that may be an advantage. It must be a job if you inherit a thousand people and you don't quite know what all of them think, although they may be members of that particular congregation. So God had mercy on me, and I never even had 120 people to attend to, or to wrestle with. I just went there to a handful.

I had no plan. I was not seeking revival. God knows that. I am only telling you what I know, and what happened. I don't think there is any ready-made

formula. Somehow - and I can't tell you how, except by the mercy of God - a great desire to pray came upon me. It was from Heaven itself. The group I went to were in expectation, I expect you must be if you invite a man to come up and be your pastor, you must have some hopes of him when you ask him to come. They had been without pastoral oversight for nine months. The pastor before had been taken ill and had been forced to give up ministry. So they had laboured on for nine months, praying that God would send someone to them. If you ask me, 'Why didn't God pour out the Spirit while you were in the Baptist Church?'; if you ask 'Why didn't He pour out His Spirit on the people before you went there?' I do not know. I only know this: that if God has made up His mind and He says to you, 'Go to so-and-so' — that is what you have to do. You must not bring your well-trained intellect to bear, you must not resort to mere reasonings.

WAIT ON THE LORD

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of scriptures.

Acts 4:19 — Peter and John are saying, 'What do you think? Do you think it is right in the sight of God to listen to men more than to God?'

Acts 5:29 - Peter speaking, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'

Question and Answer - Do you think the answer is right? If you do, do you do it?

All I am telling you is that I obeyed God. God had mercy on me: I did not do it immediately. I followed the usual 'Christian' pattern of not believing God when He speaks. but trying to get proof of what He said by the 'fleeces' method. It seems so right, but it proves how untrusting we are, it is a cover for that kind of pseudo- righteousness so easy to assume, all the more subtle because it has scriptural precedent - 'we want to be absolutely sure we're doing right.' As though it is never right to trust God when He speaks, unless He speaks again or gives some kind of sign or proof acceptable to you. Obedience is the great key.

It is not only the key to revival or outpourings of the Spirit, it is the key to all spiritual life. The great things of God are very simple.

When people ask, 'How?' or 'Tell us what?' never answer them except from scripture and your experience of it, because if you do you will be guilty of misleading people. People must not be led that way.

God chose not to pour out the Spirit in the south of England. There is much in the prophets about rain; God made one such statement about cities saying He would cause it to rain on one city and not on another. We speak about this as 'showers of blessing.'

When I went up north, somehow a great desire came on me to pray, not that I was a stranger to prayer, but it seemed to really blossom forth. In those days the favourite text among us was very simple; 'Wait upon the Lord. Wait, I say, upon the Lord.' That and several related scriptures were constantly found in our mouths. "My soul wait thou ONLY upon the Lord." That is exactly what I and a few others did. Some of them had been praying long before I arrived, that God would send them a man. Not that I want you to look at a man, it is just what happened. Why he should send me I do not know. It was a move of God in His sovereign will, that is all.

We prayed constantly almost from the moment I got there. Of course there were the usual services. We had our Sunday meetings, morning and evening, and a mid-week Bible exposition, as God enabled me to give it. There were all sorts of other meetings as well; open-air meetings every Saturday, and when the lighter nights came we had an open-air in the mid-week too. All this talk about 'you can be too busy,' I disproved. We were up to our eyes in work, getting the manse ready, preaching sermons, Bible expositions, two open-air meetings a week, tracting, I don't know what we did. We weren't trying to work up or bring about revival, we just did it. I am telling you what happened.

On top of all that, waiting on the Lord. People are too slack, too lackadaisical, and too bone-idle lazy to

give themselves to the main thing. If you find that a harsh judgment — well, beloved, better hear it now than wake up in eternity and wish somebody had told you. I do not see that Finney had revival because he withdrew into near monastic states. I do not think that John Wesley had revival because he hid himself away somewhere in retreat. He used to ride all over the country on horseback. Sometimes they had to thaw him off his horse because he was frozen to his saddle. In between preparing sermons he occupied himself with writing primers and the like for Greek students. How did he do this? He would preach at five o'clock in the morning — that was just a beginning. Where would you be if you had to do that? I find that great things do not come about because as people say, 'we are far too busy.' I find instead that they are not busy enough in the right things, they are far too busy in the wrong things though.

That is what we did, it was a hectic programme. What members they all were! My Sundays were spent walking to and from the church, a mile or so in each direction, three times — somewhere about eight to ten miles. Some of you are born to inherit cars. I wasn't. I walked. These things are true. I am not boasting. Morning and evening meetings were preceded by prayer meetings. We loved to pray and pray and pour out our hearts together, we simply loved it. I have never heard outpourings of hearts anywhere as I heard in those days. Occasionally I have heard lovely prayers, beautifully phrased comparable with any you can read out of a book — they had not the power of hearts out-poured. I have heard noisy, shouted prayers too, but that is not what I mean, they have not been the same as the prayer that gripped us in those days. I have heard prayers vibrant with that 'something' of the heart, the Spirit of God and the whole spirit of man in it too. I have listened to the whole being of man praying, the utter outpouring. We used to gather and pray, and go home and pray. We loved it, loved it. The real difficulty I had was to stop the people praying. We just prayed and prayed.

I want to testify that when Duncan Campbell came and spoke about a woman crying out in the ditch. I knew exactly what he meant, because I'd heard it. We weren't praying in tongues particularly; we would speak in tongues if God wanted us to and wrought upon us for that. We were praying in plain English, pouring out unto God. We used to have a Saturday night meeting every week following an open-air meeting and house-to-house visitation or tracting in the afternoon. On top of all these things we used to have a Prayer, Praise and Testimony meeting at night. Our Saturday night used to start at two o'clock in the afternoon with a prayer meeting, and finish around 10.00 pm. Later a late-night drunks meeting was added, which finished around 2.00 am. You say, 'Well, we can't do that, we have fellowship meetings, and besides God isn't moving like that these days'. Everything has to be accommodated to our present states, it's the 'in' thing, nice little meetings arranged to fit in with our family programmes. How in the world can we expect God to do anything when everything is made to revolve around ourselves?

None of us knew anything about that. We just got there.

If you say, 'It is going to cost you everything to have a revival' — it is not true. Neither I nor anyone else had any sense of it costing anything. Friends, your mind is labouring and under strain because you are approaching it all wrongly. The testimony of all hearts and radiant faces was 'it was a delight', it was joy, it was indescribable. Utterly satisfying and strengthening.

THE TEMPLE IS FILLED...

So it continued, and one night, God came - that is about the only way to describe it.

'What did you preach on?' I didn't preach on anything.

'There you are then', you might say, 'revivals do not come by preaching'.

But I'd been expounding and preaching months

beforehand. Was that a preparation for it? There is no prescription for revival. You can bring all your wits and wisdom, all the ways of man to bear upon it, but I beg you to cease. It just isn't like that. It began with God getting hold of someone, I know. Let me ask you, brother - have you got a stirring in your bowels? Have you got a longing in your heart? Have you got a driving force that has become the dynamic of your being? Is it like that? If not, give up all ideas of anything mighty happening. Earnestness, sincerity, concern are good, indispensable, but not good enough, something must happen that will make you give everything up . . . or else give up all your ideas of a move of God. God must do something. As I look back upon it now, I realize how completely it ate me up. I was in the heyday of my physical strength and manhood and it not only ate me up, it ate up all that little group of which I was but one. Something came down, it was from God. I didn't set myself to do these things. I disown any part in it. I find this kind of thing going through people's minds: some young man will say, 'I want to serve God. I've always wanted to serve God. I've given up my work to wait on God, to get a call'. Calls do not come from God that way. I was doing all my work when God called me. I never laid aside anything; I was unaware of what He was going to do. I reckon that Jesus Christ was working hard at the carpenter's bench when the stirrings and calling of God took Him and thrust Him out to Jordan. The apostles were fishing when they received the call. They did not throw up their work or only do half a week's work in order to wait on God. Perhaps men easily catch the idea from Jehovah's Witnesses. Gideon was working hard, threshing wheat when God came to him. I find that another of them was following the plough when God spoke to him. David was minding the sheep; his family were saying, 'Well, it isn't David, it can't be David,' but it was. Moses was working, slogging hard, daylight to dark, in the back side of the desert. and one day God came to him, burning in the bush. Moses didn't go to the back side of the desert with the idea of waiting on God,

thinking God was calling him. At best a manufactured call can be the only result of such a folly and if nothing materializes from it, after a time you have to go back to work. God does not call lazybones. Preachers are many - it's workers we need.

On that Sunday night when God came, the morning message was 'The Glory filling the Temple'.

Afterwards, one of our young ladies came to me and said, 'I MUST HAVE this glory'.

So I said, 'Okay', and looked at my watch (because we had this mile or so trek home, have lunch, mile or so trek back for Sunday school, about half an hour's walk the way I used to walk then.) 'Alright', I said, 'after the service tonight'.

So we carried on, and at night I preached on 'entering into His rest'. There was a young woman present who did not normally come to the meetings. 'You know', she said. 'I'm not in this that you've been talking about'.

So I got hold of one of the elders in the church. and said, 'Look, this girl has responded tonight, and I have to talk to her. You go in there (the other room), Walter, so-and-so is in there and she wants the glory. Go in there and minister to her'. So in he went.

I knelt down with this precious girl and started to talk to her. She'd had this experience, she'd had that experience. Isn't it sad that people who say they are baptized in the Spirit are wanting heart-rest. There's something radically wrong with so much that is going on in these days.

Well, as we were talking I found I had to raise my voice louder and louder - there was quite a noise coming from next door. So I spoke louder and she shouted back at me - until at last I shouted back at her, 'It sounds as though what you want is going on next door. We'd better go.'

So in we went. Instead of seeing one young lady in there seeking the glory, there were about fifteen to twenty. She had passed round the message. There they were on their knees, some radiant with the glory, others crying out with tears to God. God had come.

...WITH THE GLORY OF GOD

We had those bender chairs, horrible for sitting on, but very good for what was going on then. I saw little lakes of tears gathered on the patterned plywood seats of those chairs as hearts wept out their cries and needs before God. It was awesome.

If you want revival you must have weeping, not just charismatic euphoria, real revival that brings regeneration comes through someone's heartbreak. It has to do with the heartbreak of God over sin. That is what revival is about. It is not making you happy over the top of sin in the heart. It is not God's means of repression or covering up or glossing over, it is thorough cleansing.

Tears at last turned to cries of joy as one after another stood up, lifting hands and faces to the heavens, filled with the glory of God.

That was the beginning and what a beginning it was, and it introduced all that was to follow. It continued exactly as it started. Numerically we doubled, we trebled, we quadrupled, we quintupled; it was all so effortless. We had to get into bigger premises, trying to keep pace with God. God moved and was still moving.

During those days of change and development, preaching, for me, became as new. Having never been one who needed, made, and preached from copious notes, it was perhaps not so great a change as it may have been for some other men in my position. All I was using was a bit of paper on a little desk with perhaps four or five headings, a 'pegs for preachers' idea. But from that occasion all notes were swept away. God came on the preacher as well as on the people, He came on everybody: it was indescribably wonderful and absolutely unforgettable.

I perfectly understood Dr. Campbell Morgan when he spoke about 'Divine Disorder'. It was utterly beyond anyone's power to shut people's mouths, they couldn't stop praying, praising, singing, shouting: the glory had come.

One man, a university graduate, stood up one night as if in pain, and said, 'Oh — if you don't let me pray, I shall burst' .

Very irreverently. I said, 'Perhaps you'd better burst brother, we'll get something good then'. He did, and we did.

Did miracles take place? Oh yes. miracles took place.

What did you see? I'll tell you — the greatest miracles I saw were people utterly transformed.

Oh, I thought you were going to tell me about the lame being made to walk. and bodies being healed.

Yes. I could tell you that, but compared with that glorious night which began weeks and weeks of unstinted outpouring they ought hardly to be considered. The greatest thing is that men and women were absolutely transformed and remained transformed.

I did not have to mount rescue operations anymore. Pastoral visitation went by the board. I was busy dealing with enquiring sinners. All quarrelling stopped dead, no-one seemed to have anything to complain about. Women weren't falling out anymore, men saw eye to eye, there was not a frown to be seen. The problem of the caretaking of the church premises was immediately solved, they all volunteered to do it. They used to stand up and announce 'scrubology' and all the ladies would come. All internal church problems vanished and stayed that way for years. I never heard a murmur or a complaint, all church decisions were unanimous. It has never been my privilege to hear or be involved in the kind of prayer that you read about in Acts 4. That surely must be the prayer-meeting par excellence. They all prayed in their mother tongue. That surely excelled the prayer that took place on the day of Pentecost. I suppose if you pray in tongues it is fairly safe. Everybody could be praying quite different if not opposite prayers, nobody knows what is being prayed. But they (according to Acts 4) all prayed exactly the same prayer in their mother-tongue. How about that! That would most probably frighten the majority of churchgoers to death — what a phenomenon!

But though I have not witnessed that. I have heard prayer that almost seemed as though it would tear the heart out of a man or woman, rising and rising and rising to God in ceaseless streams. It was wonderful.

Perhaps after two and a half to three hours I would say. 'Well, perhaps we ought to have a little break now'. We would get up off our knees, do the things needed to be done after kneeling for two to three hours, and then down again we would go.

As a preacher, I was produced from that. I did not learn it: it came from that — like the man in John 9:25, I can say, 'This thing I KNOW'.

DEDICATION

Some years after these things, I was taken by God's grace to a place called the Longcroft, where again we saw similar things. I've seen young men carried out of the meetings in the Longcroft, they were under the power of the Spirit of God and were overcome. They had been making Christian professions before that.

It was the same in Liverpool, the same sort of things were reproduced there. And you must have the same thing in your church. I guess that God will not really count it to be dedicated until it happens. You must have an out-pouring of the Spirit. Every church must have its own local outpouring of the Spirit of God. There is no substitute for it and there is no paper-made way in which you can have it — it has got to happen though.

Dedication. To what are you dedicated? It is of no use dedicating a place to the Lord unless the persons who are dedicating it are themselves dedicated. Dedication of a place is of far less importance than dedication of a person, that is the important thing. The instabilities of the human nature are such that until that nature and being be suffused with the power and spirit and glory of God, they are utterly unable to sustain their own desires — any man or woman, whatever their promises, whatever their visitations, whatever their intentions and promises,

will find that the waywardness of their own hearts overcomes the sincerity of their minds, and their first promises peter out and die away like water poured upon sand - swallowed up.

'Lovest thou Me?' He enquired of Peter. He did not say. 'I'm going to pour out My Spirit'. He had not really told them about that day. He had informed the disciples about His intentions. but He did not deal with Peter about that. All He asked was this: 'Do you love Me more than these?' The outpouring of the Spirit was a fixed event in God. He never consulted with Peter about that.

He must have his love. Dedication depends and turns upon love. If you love the Lord, somehow He will hold you there until it — whatever 'it' is - happens. It will be by the grip of God on your life. It will not be by just a touch in passing.

'Peter, I just recently died for you. Peter, I took your punishment'. I don't know all that Jesus said to him, it was a private meeting with him in the beginning — then a group meeting with the apostles; and again, another public one that early morning on the shores of the sea. 'Peter, do you love Me? Do you love Me? Keep My commandments'. Those men went from there (possibly to the room where it eventually happened) to the great outpouring.

How strong and how true is your dedication? God's determination and man's dedication go hand in hand.

'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching out unto that thing which lies before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. That is the mark of dedication. The dedicated heart is always pressing on, determined to reach the distant mark. Well, whatever was he after?

GO FOR IT!

'I want to lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of me.'

Have you ever let God lay hold of you? If you do not, you will not lay hold of anything worthwhile.

God is not purposeless in anything He does, in calling you He has a purpose. If He has brought you together in your church and there are aspirations in your heart, let Him now lay hold of you together. Do this one thing — lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of you and let everything else go to the winds.

If you will do that I think that permission is granted me of God to make this promise to you: He will fulfil that for which He has laid hold of you. He will do it and if in your hearts there has been lighted a fire, go after it! Let it burn and give yourself up to it. Let it consume you. Aim first at being consumed by the fire in your heart instead of killing it by the drenching cold water of your mind. Go for it. Let it burn in you until (if I may say so) God has to do it. 'You can't talk like that.' Well, only in this sense: that He HAS to fulfil His own designs. If He instigates it, if He lays hold of you with purpose and you come into line with that purpose, there is a sense in which He just has to do it. He WANTS to do it and He WILL do it. Do you believe that?

Do not be satisfied because you might have had what you call an Evangelical or a Pentecostal or a Charismatic experience, as though God intended man to rest in that as the acme of everything. I see, I believe, that in this New Testament of ours, the norm is that God should be moving by His Spirit in localities, bringing others in.

I believe that one of the fundamental reasons for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the salvation of souls. And if you are not getting souls saved there is something wrong. There are people who say 'Ah, well, we are not at that phase yet, we are in the establishing or building up phase at the moment.' I hear the nice little phrases, 'God has shut us up to this', 'we can't do that'. and the like.

Read the Book and see the great heart of God. It's above all this 'phraseology'. Dedicate yourselves. Be intense, it takes utter concentration, and total self-giving. This is the proven way. I have not proved other.

G W North