

Is the American Church Vulnerable to Fake Revival?

There have been great revivals without great preaching. There have been great revivals without great singing. But there has never been a great revival without great praying.

Jonathan Edwards, the pastor and theologian of the Great Awakening in New England, was not a great preacher. In fact, most people reading this essay would not cross the street to hear him preach.

The Key to the Great Awakening

Edwards would write out his sermons word for word and then stand stationary behind the pulpit and read them without moving or making any physical gestures. Being nearsighted, he held the manuscript close to his face and read in a monotone voice, never raising or lowering his voice.

When he read his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," at the Congregational Church in Enfield, Connecticut, there was no praise band, gospel choir or worship team to stir the crowd. Yet, as he began reading his sermon, the Holy Spirit was poured out in great power. Hell was made so real that Edwards' voice was drowned out as the people cried out to God for mercy and salvation (Hyatt, *Pilgrims and Patriots*, 82-83).

Some were so stricken with the reality of hell that they gripped the back of the bench in front of them as if to keep from dropping into hell at any moment. Others, leaping from their seats, wrapped their arms around the pillars in the church as they cried out to God for His mercy and forgiveness.

The impact of this message, which was printed and spread throughout the Colonies, was not in the preaching but in the

praying that preceded it. Before going to the pulpit and presenting this message, Edwards had spent 18 hours in prayer, pleading with God, "Give me New England or let me die."

New England was transformed without great preaching. Entire towns repented and turned to God without great singing. There was, however, great praying. Edwards and others prayed the price necessary for genuine, authentic revival.

A Big Charismatic Mistake

Edward's example demonstrates how too often in the modern charismatic movement we have mistakenly associated revival with religious hype or a certain style of ministry. We have tended to measure the anointing by the decibel count, rather than by changed lives. And this is the point where the modern charismatic movement is vulnerable to fake revival. R.A. Torrey was an associate of D.L. Moody, the first president of Moody Bible Institute and a successful revivalist in his own right. He was addressing this issue when he wrote, "The most fundamental trouble with most of our present-day, so-called revivals is that they are man-made and not God-sent. They are worked up (I almost said faked up) by man's cunningly devised machinery—not prayed down" (Hyatt, *Revival Fire*, 114-15).

You Can Fake It

Several years ago, Sue and I were ministering in Florida and from there we drove up the east coast to Sue's home province of New Brunswick in eastern Canada. Since we would be passing through many of the towns impacted by the First Great Awakening, I decided to make it a prayer drive in which I would seek the Lord concerning another Great Awakening in our land.

We were three days making this 1,800-mile journey, and when it was complete, there was one clear message lodged in my heart. "Revival is from the Lord; you can fake it, but you can't make it."

In other words, true revival cannot be worked up; it can only be prayed down.

The Key to Authentic Revival

To avoid fake revival, we must allow God to purify our motives. We must seek the Lord, as God said in Amos 5:4, "Indeed, thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live!" This means that we seek Him for who He is, not just for what we think we can get from Him.

To "seek the Lord" means that we put His interests ahead of our own. We realize that He is the center of the universe, not us. We seek to know His heart and plan, not just tell Him about ours.

I believe that God is even now calling for a remnant in America, and every nation, that will lay aside selfish pursuits and truly seek Him. He is looking for a people who are no longer seeking importance, prominence or dominance, but only desire to see His kingdom come and His will done on Earth as it is in heaven. Such people God will use to change the course of American and world history. {eoa}

Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt *has a commission to call the church to seek the LORD and pray for another great Spiritual awakening. His book, Pilgrims and Patriots, which documents how America was birthed out of the First Great Awakening, is available from Amazon and his website at .*