

Can Brownsville Revival Lightning Strike Again?

It started out like a normal, Sunday morning service. Little did everyone know that Father's Day, 1995, would go down in history as the beginning of one of the most powerful revival movements that would ever touch the United States.

On this day, lightning from heaven struck Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, not simply launching a five year series of sustained revival meetings, but loudly declaring to an often lukewarm American church that Great Awakening was possible ... for *whosoever* was willing to pursue God with revived zeal! Brownsville did not attract global crowds through cutting edge media presentations or seeker sensitive gimmicks. Rather, it was the presence of God that brought the world to this local church in the Florida panhandle!

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Brownsville Revival, I have edited a book co-authored by Brownsville leaders, Dr. Michael Brown and Pastor John Kilpatrick, called *The Fire That Never Sleeps*. This is *not* a nostalgia tour, focusing simply on what happened "20 years ago ... when God moved." God is moving now! You will quickly see that, even though the volume shares some of the powerful Brownsville testimony, your heart will be stirred afresh to cry out for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life and your world, *today*! If God could bring the nations to Pensacola, Florida, back in 1995, just imagine what He could do today.

A Supernatural Father's Day Gift

There was nothing particularly abnormal about the day when the Brownsville Revival broke out.

Good-sized crowds showed up for the services. Families were

getting ready for special lunches in observation of the holiday. Evangelist Steve Hill, however, started preaching a very different kind of Father's Day message.

From the moment Hill began delivering his sermon, he was already excited and expectant about the altar call. He kept telling everyone, "Folks, God is going to move this morning!" At the time, John Kilpatrick, senior pastor of the Brownsville church, was not as confident. "Yeah, sure, Steve," he mumbled under his breath. "I've heard this before."

After all, it's common jargon in Pentecostal/charismatic services. "God is going to move" could mean anything from someone getting baptized in the Holy Spirit to the choir delivering a stirring musical performance. No one was fully prepared for how God would show up that day ... even though, Kilpatrick and the church community of Brownsville Assembly had been preparing the way for 2 1/2 years by praying for revival.

At the end of the service, when Hill gave the invitation for people to come forward to the altar—for salvation or any other personal need—about one thousand responded. This is when heaven's lightning struck.

The Wind of God Blows In

Kilpatrick recalls, "Suddenly, I felt a wind blow through my legs, just like in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Both of my ankles flipped over so that I could hardly stand." The experience intensified. "I wondered what in the world was going on. I stood on the side of my ankles, unable to get my footing. Finally, I asked a friend to come over and help me. He lifted my legs by pulling on my pants and helped me walk back up the platform. At that point, I took the microphone and said, 'Folks, this is it. The Lord is here! Get in, get in!'"

It was then where theology became personal experience for Kilpatrick, who said: "I had preached about the glory of God

and the presence of God, but up until that point, had never fully experienced what I spoke about. As the Spirit fell that morning, I remember Steve walking by me and simply waving his hand in my direction, saying 'More, Lord!' I hit the marble floor like a ton of bricks—like I weighed 10,000 pounds. I laid on that floor from 12:30 through 4:00pm, until some men finally were able to get me up."

So it was, on Father's Day, 1995, the power of God invaded Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida. A city known for its tourism and white sandy beaches became the global epicenter for a revival that has been considered to be one of the most significant in America's history. From that day onward, Brownsville became an international hub of revival. From 1995-2000, it is estimated that over 4 million people visited the Pensacola outpouring and that tens of thousands either became first-time converts to Christ or experienced radical rededications.

Did God send a fresh wind of Holy Spirit visitation to His people in the 1990s? Perhaps the more relevant and pressing question is: Could there be *another* Great Awakening like Brownsville in the church today ... and on even a greater scale?

If so, are there ways that the Christian community can more effectively partner with how the Holy Spirit is moving in order to *sustain* revival and awakening?

Can Revival Be Sustained?

Some may look at a revival movement like Brownsville today and ask, *Why did the revival end? What happened?* Dr. Evan Horton, current senior pastor of Brownsville Assembly of God, commented, "Even though the revival services have ceased, the spirit of revival continues." Make no mistake, meetings or church services may conclude, but the impact of revival is long lasting. The key is appropriately defining revival. For sure, revival is not extended services or special meetings; it

is the unusual visitation of God's presence that deeply impacts the church and ultimately transforms culture.

Even though the Brownsville meetings stopped around the year 2000, many of the people who were touched by the Holy Spirit during that period of time have gone on to perform mighty exploits for the Lord around the world, fueled by revival fire.

Dr. Michael Brown, who served as president of the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry, notes that "since the birth of FIRE School of Ministry in 2001, we have trained more than 1,300 students, some of whom now serve in some of the most dangerous parts of the world, reaching Muslims and others with the gospel. Others are bearing fruit all over America and in the nations, still carrying the same fire and still raising the same holy standard."

While many use the language of "revival," it appears that God wants to do something bigger-greater in scope. Revival is intended to change the blueprint of how church is done. John Kilpatrick is often quoted saying that "once you taste revival, church-as-usual never satisfies you again." This is exactly what revival is purposed to do. It is heaven's way of jump-starting Jesus' original agenda for the church, bringing it back to the New Testament standard and making Christianity a transformative agent in the world again.

Mike Bickle, senior leader of International House of Prayer in Kansas City, defines how true revival should be measured: "Revival is not about buildings, meetings or church services. A move of God's Spirit is not measured by the quantity of gatherings; its success rate is evaluated by the quality of Christianity produced in the lives of those who were impacted."

During the Brownsville Revival, there was no social media or live Internet streaming. News simply went out through word of

mouth, television, news and print. Word simply got out that God was moving in Pensacola, Florida, and soon, the world showed up at Brownsville Assembly of God. With what the church has access to today, how much greater of a spiritual outpouring could be waiting at our door?

If revival lightning strikes again—and the church is positioned to receive and steward it—could it be that the next Great Awakening might bring in the greatest evangelistic harvest in history?

Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? Click here to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others.

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