

The Welsh Revival c. 1903-1905 – What I make of it.

Why Wales? Wales was an industrial/coal mining area, rough to say the least. The revival literally emptied the pubs and stopped bad language - the mining donkeys no longer knew how to obey their master's voices as their tone and language changed.

After revival, people promoted socialistic "Christianity" and the Labour Movement. The revival has been said to have further impact around the world through to today.

A primary figure was Evan Roberts, a young man who had yearned for the Holy Spirit. One night, he began having ongoing lengthy visions with God. He was not trained in theology but he loved the bible. This caused some issues that people used to go against the work God was doing, or to point out he was off track and making mistakes. I want to come back to such criticism shortly.



Evan Roberts



100,000 souls



Packed churches

One can view accounts of the revival on YouTube or Wiki. Roberts said to his best friend, why can't we save 100,000 souls? And it happened. The revival church was once so packed, Roberts walked across the shoulders of men in the aisle to get to the front of the church. Sometimes we think why can't I pray for something when we can. Why can't we pray for revival?

Many women gathered around Evan, who became a critical part of the revival meetings. This of course annoyed certain people. The characteristic of the meetings was one not led by a person, but instantaneous leading by the Holy Spirit. All sorts of things happened. The duration went on to the wee hours of the morning for many days. People were inwardly driven to attend. People were convicted of sin, God's presence was palpable, each person prayed at the same time as others in earnest, and there was lots of singing. There were accounts of healing and casting out of demons. Roberts would not pre-prepare sermons. This was all unacceptable to critics.

It was several years before the revival that various seeds were being sowed for preparation by the Lord in Evan's life as he went from one church to another, bible and prayer meetings, encounters with people, his yearnings and prayers. He had an inner energy.

Roberts was quick and strong to point out, it was not his work but God's. One of the women in the music was eager to get to a Church service so people could hear her. Evan pointed out this was not the correct attitude. We mustn't try to be noticed, to do our own work, but just do it and let God have the attention, not ourselves. It was a subtle, real point that Roberts said would otherwise hinder the work of the Holy Spirit.

Along with the Gospel message and salvation, the main 4-point message repeated from Roberts was: (in summary)

- Confess all known sin, receiving forgiveness through Jesus Christ (know this)
- Remove anything in your life that you are in doubt or feel unsure about
- Be ready to obey the Holy Spirit instantly
- Publicly confess the Lord Jesus Christ

He wanted people to know Christ himself and was a message of complete denial of self. It is certainly a challenge to all of us, but not so achievable by many as the revival wound down, and afterwards as many people went in various directions.

As revival unfolded, some wanted to run their own meetings, travelling to other Churches in Wales. I wonder what would have happened if people had stayed together so the rest of Wales would come to them instead. I am glad the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem. Life is life though. I am sure some of the dispersal was based on human desires and wants. I think historically we see this all the time. There are moments of great experience with the Holy Spirit, then the times of what comes after and how people cope with crisis.

After revival, Roberts was physically and emotionally burnt out. He became ill and a recluse. When he had future rare appearances, it was said he was like a source of electric power, stunning in impact. Roberts found various activities such as Christian writing to help.

The opposition to Roberts was severe. It was said he was paving the way for the anti-Christ, that he did not know the ins and outs of scripture, some questionable views and obvious mistakes. I've seen and know this attitude when I spot it today – so as A.W. Tozer said, there is nothing new. These bad behaviours cannot enter in to the Kingdom of Heaven when we are with Jesus. I think some people will experience a great loss due to slander.

I find the exact same parallel today with critics in churches and on YouTube. When we set about as a practice to belittle people, to say what is not true, it is called slander. Scripture opposes slander. It is born from deeper darker places, such as not liking a person, or disagreeing with what they say as it does not fit one's own beliefs or investment of time and actions personally and publicly. Righteousness does not need to defend itself like this. The slanderous attitude is not checked, so people develop this pattern until it pervades more.

It expends a lot of wasted time, adding to continual emotional burden. It prevents people from moving their time to Christ's matters and His freedom. Once slander sets in, it dulls the mind. We find it hard to go anywhere positive with a person doing this. It is a distinct condition.

There are YouTube presenters with influence who denigrate many Christian people, saying they are false. Interestingly, some of what they say is correct. One person twists people's words, using words they never said, and has no awareness of the context. Evan Roberts had the same thing going on to him. What with pressures from people slandering, people running off to do their own revival meetings, the exhaustion, his inner frustration at seeing people still wanting to do their own thing, no wonder it had a toll.

In true revival, those who genuinely yield and come into the presence of God are permanently changed. You can see it in the interviews with these people decades later. The Welsh revival was a people's revival under the direct timing, choice and hand of God, at a time when people were deeply needing, wanting or praying for revival. Our part is to continue being genuine unto Christ.