

REVIVALISTS AND MYSTICS

THE POWER OF PREVAILING PRAYER: CLASS 4

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1. Review

- a. Last week we looked at two Mystics who through radical commitment sought to walk in total obedience to the will of God. This week we will see how prevailing prayer correlates directly to power in preaching as seen in the First and Second Great Awakenings.

2. The Great Awakenings

- a. Let's look at Charles Finney's words regarding seeking "the Spirit of Prayer:"

"Break up all the ground and turn it over. Do not balk, do not turn away because of little difficulties. Drive the plough right through them. Go deep and turn the ground up so that it will be mellow and soft. Then it will be ready to receive the seed and bear fruit a hundredfold. When you have thoroughly gone over your whole history in this way, go over the ground a second time paying special attention to it. You will find the things you put down will suggest other sins of which you have been guilty. These new ones are usually connected with original offenses. Then, go over it a third time and you will remember other things. You will find, in the end, that you can remember particular actions which you did not think you would even remember in eternity. Unless you consider your sins in this way- in detail, one by one- you cannot comprehend their number. **You should go over this list thoroughly, carefully, and seriously as you would if you were preparing yourself for the final judgment.**"

"As you go over the catalog of your sins, make a resolution to reform your ways now. Wherever you find anything wrong, **resolve at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way.** It will not benefit you to examine yourself, unless you decide to change every fault you find in your heart, temper, and conduct."

"You must honestly look at yourself, using your Bible as your checkpoint. Do not expect God to miraculously break up the fallow ground for you. You must actively participate, and you must submit your will. If you look at yourself accurately, taking note of your sins, you will definitely feel something. You cannot see your sins for what they are without deeply feeling something."

"Experience proves the benefit of going over our history in this way. Start your work now. **Resolve that you will never stop until you find you can pray.** You will never have access to the full power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you unless you completely confess your sins. Let there be this deep work of repentance and full confession, this breaking down before God. **Then you will have as much of the spirit of prayer as you can tolerate.**¹

¹ Finney, Charles. "How to Experience Revival" pg 29-30.

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3. Prevailing Prayer & The Gift of Travail

- a. Two intercessors stand out in each of America's Great Awakenings. The first, is a man by the name of David Brainerd, a close friend of Jonathan Edwards who spent his last days alive in Edwards' home. What we know of Brainerd's life comes through Edwards' publishing of his friend's journal posthumously.
- b. The second is a man that Charles Finney referred to as "the prevailing prince of prayer" Daniel Nash. He, along with a man by the name of Abel Clary were Charles Finney's intercessors, this team often preceded his evangelistic campaigns into a city, and would remain there in prayer until they possessed a "breakthrough" or "prevailed" in intercession. Then Finney would come in and preach the Gospel, and power would follow with multitudes swept into the Kingdom.
- c. The secret of these men's success was not complex: (1) Consecrate yourself fully to God (2) Receive a burden of intercession from the Holy Spirit (3) Tarry under that burden in intercession until you pray through or "prevail" (4) Receive the release of power from on high (5) Preach the Gospel in the power of the Spirit. This process is profoundly simple and biblical, but requires persistence. (See Acts 1:8-2:17)
- d. Throughout history, when the spirit of conviction has been fully manifest, the Word took hold of the hearts of people until they were powerfully converted as seen in Acts 2 and Acts 19.

Acts 2:37 When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter..."What shall we do?" 38 Peter said, "Repent...41 that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...43 Fear came on every soul (Acts 2:37-43)

Acts 19:10, 20 All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks...20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. (Acts 19:10, 20)

1Co 2:4 And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1Th 1:5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

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- e. Finney states, “I have many times seen people unable to endure the Word. The most simple and ordinary statement would cut men off from their seats like a sword, take away their bodily strength, and render them almost as helpless as dead men. Several times, it has been true in my experience that I could not raise my voice, or say anything in prayer of exhortation except in the mildest manner, without wholly overcoming those who were present. This was not because I was preaching terror to the people; rather the sweetest sounds of the Gospel would overcome them.”
 - f. Receiving the Spirit’s burden is the first step in prevailing prayer & receiving the gift of travail in intercession. Travail is a deep and agonizing burden in intercession that comes as a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit. The inward burden often manifests in weeping and deep groans. While travail is not essential to prevailing prayer, prevailing prayer unto “praying through” often comes much more speedily when travail is entered into. This power of prayer unto anointed preaching was profoundly evidenced in the life of David Brainerd & Daniel Nash.
- I. David Brainerd & Daniel Nash
- A. David Brainerd (1718--1747)
 - 1. Brainerd was a missionary to the Native Americans in Northeast America (New England) during the 1700s. He gave his life for the Native Americans, spending hours in prayer as he labored for their souls. He would often have to preach through a drunken interpreter. He didn’t see multitudes of conversions, but those that were saved under his ministry were so deeply converted that they lived wholeheartedly for God and never backslid.
 - 2. Brainerd lived a life of hiddenness and obscurity. After 4 years of ministry, he died from Tuberculosis at 29 years old. From all outward accounts, his life was not that impressive, but he has done more to influence modern missions than any other man through his commitment to fasting and prayer.
 - 3. Many church leaders have read Brainerd’s diary and have been forever changed. William Carey read it and was set on fire and immediately headed out to do missions in India. Payson said nothing impressed his spiritual life like reading Brainerd’s diary. Robert Murray McCheyne read it and was changed forever. ²

² Bounds, E.M. *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), p. 432.

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4. Jonathan Edwards, who hosted Brainerd in his house during Brainerd's final days said, "I praise God that it was in his providence that he should die in my house, that I might hear his prayers for the conversion of the world, and that I might witness his consecration and that I might be inspired by his example."

5. John Wesley was also deeply impacted by the life of David Brainerd. Wesley wrote, "Find preachers of David Brainerd's spirit and nothing can stand before them..."³ He also emphatically answered the question, "What can be done in order to revive the work of God where it is decayed? Let every preacher read carefully over the "Life of David Brainerd."⁴

6. "He was sweating so profusely that all the snow around him was melting. He had tuberculosis; so he was coughing up blood. They describe the scene: the snow was melted, and it was red with blood, but Brainerd wouldn't let go of this because God would not let go of David Brainerd. He was crying out for the salvation of lost souls under the authority and the unction of the Holy Spirit."⁵

7. "Brainerd would talk about when that grace for travail would fall on him, how he would go preach, and the power of God would fall in an awesome, terrifying impact. He would preach to the Native Americans through an interpreter, but the only interpreter who he could find for a period of time was a drunk. The interpreter might be able to speak English, but he did not love Jesus at all, and he just did it because he needed the money. So Brainerd paid him because he was the only guy who could speak both languages. Brainerd would talk about the power of God hitting him in prayer, and he would preach through this drunken interpreter. The Spirit of God fell in such power that the Native Americans were wailing and weeping."⁶

8. Here are some quotes from Brainerd's diary:

*O my blessed God! Let me climb up near to Him, and love, and long, and plead, and wrestle, and stretch after Him, and for deliverance from the body of sin and death. Alas! My soul mourned to think I should ever lose sight of its beloved again. O come Lord Jesus, amen.*⁷

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Emory, John. *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* (New York: Mason and Lane, 1839), p. 232.

⁵ Bickle, Mike. IHOP-KC Prophetic History, Anointed Intercession & the Harvest.

⁶ Bickle, Mike. IHOP-KC Prophetic History, Anointed Intercession & the Harvest.

⁷ *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* (Ed. Jonathan Edwards. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), p. 76.

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I think I had some faith and power of intercession with God. I was enabled to plead with God for the growth of grace within myself; and many of the dear children of God then lay with weight upon my soul. Blessed be the Lord! It is good to wrestle for divine blessings.⁸

I was especially assisted to intercede and plead for poor souls and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and for special grace for myself to fit me for special service. Was enabled to plead with fervency for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world and to intercede for dear absent friends. At noon, Christ enabled me to wrestle with Him and to feel, as I trust, the power of divine love in prayer.⁹

*I set apart this day for fasting and prayer to God for His grace; especially to prepare me for the work of the ministry, to give me divine aid and direction in my preparations for that great work, and in His own time to send me into His harvest. I endeavored to plead for the divine presence for the day, and not without some life. In the forenoon, **I felt the power of intercession for immortal souls; for the advancement of the kingdom of my dear Lord...**¹⁰*

God enabled me so to agonize in prayer that I was quite wet with perspiration, though in the shade and the cool wind. My soul was drawn out very much for the world, for multitudes of souls. I think I had more enlargement for sinners than for the children of God.¹¹

I think my soul was never so drawn out in intercession for others as it has been this night. Had a most fervent wrestle with the Lord tonight for my enemies. I hardly ever so longed to live to God and to be altogether devoted to Him. I wanted to wear out my life in His service and for His glory.¹²

This morning I spent about two hours in secret duties and was enabled more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal soul. Though it was early in the morning and the sun scarcely shined at all, yet my body was quite wet with perspiration. I felt much pressed now, as frequently to plead for the meekness and calmness of the Lamb of God in my soul.

...God was pleased to pour such ineffable comforts into my soul that I could do nothing for some time but say over and over, 'O my sweet Savior! O my sweet Savior! Who have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none that I desire beside thee.' If I had a thousand lives, my soul would have gladly laid them all down at once to have been with Christ.¹³

⁸ *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* (Ed. Jonathan Edwards. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), p. 77.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 80-81.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 81.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 83.

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*Oh, that my soul might never offer any dead, cold, services to my God!*¹⁴

*While I was pleading for more compassion for immortal souls, my heart seemed to be opened at once and I was enabled to cry with great ardency for a few minutes.*¹⁵

*I went to the meeting trembling, but it pleased God to assist me in prayer and sermon. I think my soul scarce ever penetrated so far into the immaterial world in any one prayer that ever I made...*¹⁶

*However, I withdrew for prayer, hoping for strength from above. And in prayer I was exceedingly enlarged and my soul was as much drawn out as ever I remember into have been in my life or near. **I was in such anguish and pleaded with so much importunity that when I rose from my knees, I felt extremely weak and overcome—I could scarcely walk straight. My joints were loosed and sweat ran down my face and body, and nature seemed as if it would dissolve...***¹⁷

*When I waked, my soul was burdened with what seemed to be before me. I cried to God before I could get out of my bed. As soon as I was dressed I withdrew into the woods to pour out my burdened soul to God.*¹⁸

*Then divine truths were attended with a surprising influence, and produced a great concern among them. There were scarce three in forty that could refrain from tears and bitter cries. They all at once, seemed in agony of soul to obtain an interest in Christ; and the more I discoursed of the love and compassion of God in sending His Son to suffer for the sins of men; and the more I invited them to come and partake of His love, the more their distress was aggravated, because they felt themselves unable to come. **I was surprising to see how their hearts seemed to be pierced with the tender and melting invitations of the gospel, when there was not a word of terror spoken.**¹⁹ **I stood amazed at the influence that seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge, that with its insupportable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it whatever is in its way.** Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together, and scarce one was able to withstand the shock of this surprising operation. Old men and women, who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children, no more than six or seven years of age, appeared in distress for their souls, and it was apparent these children were not merely frightened with seeing the general concern; but were made sensible of their danger, the badness of their hearts, and their misery without Christ. The most stubborn hearts were now obliged to bow.²⁰*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 173.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 215.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 216.

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They were almost universally praying and crying for mercy, in every part of the house, and many out of the doors, and numbers could neither go nor stand. I had not discoursed long before their concern rose to a great degree, and the house was filled with cries and groans. When I insisted on the compassion and care of the Lord Jesus for those that were lost, who thought themselves undone and could find no way of escape, this melted them down the more and aggravated their distress that they could not find and come to so kind a Savior.²¹ Sa

9. Moment for Reflection:

For Discussion: Which quote from David Brainerd stands out to you? Why?

B. Daniel Nash (Father Nash, 1775-1831)

1. Daniel Nash was a pastor of a small church in New York for six years, where he experienced two revivals. After being rejected by the church he pastored, he traveled with Charles Finney as his intercessor for 7 years until his death.

2. Like many intercessors, Nash lived a life of hiddenness and obscurity. “No books tell his life story, no pictures or diaries can be found, his descendants (if any) cannot be located, and his messages are forgotten. He wrote no books, started no schools, led no movements, and generally kept out of sight.

3. Yet this man saw revival twice in his pastorate, and then was a key figure in one of the greatest revivals in the history of the United States. In many ways he was to the U.S. what Praying Hyde was to India. He is known almost exclusively for his powerful prayer ministry.”²²

4. Before going into a city to preach, Finney would send Father Nash there three to four weeks in advance to intercede in order to prepare the place and the people for his coming. “When God would direct where a meeting was to be held, Father Nash would slip quietly into town and seek to get two or three people to enter into a covenant of prayer with him. Sometimes he had with him a man of similar prayer ministry, Abel Clary. Together they would pray fervently for God to move in the community.”²³

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 265.

²² Reno, J. Paul. *Prevailing Prince of Prayer*, (Asheville, NC: Revival Literature, 1989).

²³ *Ibid*.

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5. One record of such is told by Leonard Ravenhill: "I met an old lady who told me a story about Charles Finney that has challenged me over the years. Finney went to Bolton to minister, but before he began, two men knocked on the door of her humble cottage, wanting lodging. The poor woman looked amazed, for she had no extra accommodations. Finally, for about twenty-five cents a week, the two men, none other than Fathers Nash and Clary, rented a dark and damp cellar for the period of the Finney meetings (at least two weeks), and there in that self-chosen cell, those prayer partners battled the forces of darkness."²⁴

6. Another record tells: "On one occasion when I got to town to start a revival a lady contacted me who ran a boarding house. She said, 'Brother Finney, do you know a Father Nash? He and two other men have been at my boarding house for the last three days, but they haven't eaten a bite of food. I opened the door and peeped in at them because I could hear them groaning, and I saw them down on their faces. They have been this way for three days, lying prostrate on the floor and groaning. I thought something awful must have happened to them. I was afraid to go in and I didn't know what to do. Would you please come see about them?' 'No, it isn't necessary,' Finney replied. 'They just have a spirit of travail in prayer.'"²⁵

7. "Often Nash would not attend meetings, and while Finney was preaching Nash was praying for the Spirit's outpouring upon him. Finney stated, 'I did the preaching altogether, and brother Nash gave himself up almost continually to prayer.' Often while the evangelist preached to the multitudes, Nash in some adjoining house would be upon his face in an agony of prayer, and God answered in the marvels of His grace. With all due credit to Mr. Finney for what was done, it was the praying men who held the ropes. The tears they shed, the groans they uttered are written in the book of the chronicles of the things of God."²⁶

8. I cannot emphasize how strongly Finney relied on the power of Nash's prayers in his preaching. He waited until Nash got breakthrough in prayer before he ministered. He fully depended on the intercessions of Father Nash to usher in the spirit of revival in his meetings.

9. "Charles Finney so realized the need of God's working in all his service that he was wont to send godly Father Nash on in advance to pray down the power of God into the meetings which he was about to hold."²⁷

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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10. "I have seen Christians who would be in agony, when the minister was going into the pulpit, for fear his mind should be in a cloud, or his heart cold, or he should have no unction, and so a blessing should not come. I have labored with a man of that sort. He would pray until got an assurance in his mind that God would be with him in preaching, and sometimes he would pray himself ill. I have known the time when he has been in darkness for a season, while the people were gathering, and his mind was full of anxiety, and would go again and pray, till finally he would come into the room with a placid face and say, 'The Lord has come, and He will be with us.' And I do not know that I ever found him mistaken."

11. Moment for Reflection:

For Discussion: What stands out to you about Charles Finney/Father Nash's perspective on prevailing prayer? Are there any invitations you sense in that?

II. Anointed Prayer + Persistence = Anointed Proclamation

A. Consider the following verses that give a biblical foundations for the principles of travail in intercession.

Luke 22:41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

John 11:38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

Heb 5:7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

B. Consider what Charles Finney describes concerning the necessity of prayer to produce anointed proclamation and what he calls "saving impressions".

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1. "To the honor of God alone, I will say a little about my experience in this matter. I was powerfully converted on the morning of the tenth of October. In the evening of the same day and on the morning of the following day, I received overwhelming baptisms of the Holy Spirit, which went through me, as it seemed to me, body and soul. **I immediately found myself clothed with such power from on high that a few words dropped here and there to individuals were the means of their immediate conversion.**
2. My words seemed to fasten like barbed arrows in the souls of men. They cut like a sword. They broke the heart like a hammer. Multitudes can attest to this. Oftentimes, a word dropped, without my remembering it, would fasten conviction and often result in almost immediate conversion. **Sometimes, I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power.** I would go out and visit and find that I made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray with the same result. **I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would inquire anxiously after the reason for this apparent emptiness. After humbling myself and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness.** This has been my experience throughout my life." (Power from On High, Pg 17)
3. "I once preached, for the first time, in a mill town. The next morning, I went into the manufacturing establishment to view its operations. As I passed into the weaving department, I saw a large group of young women, some of whom, I observed, were looking at me, and then at each other, in a manner that indicated a frivolous spirit and that also showed that they knew me. I, however, knew none of them. As I approached nearer to those who had recognized me, they seemed to become more silly and giddy. Their levity made a peculiar impression on me; I felt it in my heart. I stopped short and looked at them, with what expression I do not know because **my whole mind was absorbed with the sense of their guilt and danger.** As I steadily looked at them, I observed that one of them became very much agitated. A thread broke. She attempted to mend it, but her hands trembled in such a manner that she could not do it. I immediately observed that the sensation was spreading and had become universal among the group. **I looked steadily at them** until one after another gave up and paid no more attention to their looms. They fell on their knees, and the influence spread through out the whole room.

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4. I had not spoken a word, and the noise of the looms would have prevented my being heard if I had. In a few minutes, all work was abandoned, and tears and lamentations filled the room...(the work at the Mill was then halted, and a space was prepared where Finney could preach and pray with those under conviction) The word was with power. Many expressed hope in Christ that day; and within a few days, as I was informed, nearly every person in that great establishment, together with the owner, had hope in Christ." (Power from on High, Pg 17-18)

III. Conclusions