

“GREAT PREACHING ON REVIVAL”

By Dr. Shelton Smith

In his book *Great Preaching on Revival*, Dr. Smith compiled an extensive anthology of sermons from great preachers of the past and present. The overall purpose of this collection was to stir the revival fires within the hearts of God’s men and women.

Dr. Smith acknowledged that, “When the work of God wanes, crowds diminish, pulpits are dry, very few souls are being converted, and the baptistery is a haven of cobwebs, there is a need for revival” (p. 9). Dr. Smith carefully selected each of the revival preachers featured in this text and their messages were powerful and challenging. Every sermon was based upon the Word of God, convicting men of sin and compelling them to return with fervor to Christ and holy living.

The arrangement of the sermons was in such a way as to build one upon the other. The constant theme found in each message regarding revival, was the need for prayer. All of the evangelists requested much prayer in advance of their meetings and after reading their messages it is clear to the reader that great revival is precipitated by intercessory prayer.

The first message highlighted in the text was given by Billy Sunday over 80 years ago, and it is still a pertinent and surprisingly contemporary message for believers today regarding the church. Brother Sunday identified during his day a dilemma that still troubles many ministries today, “The church is losing her power, degenerating into a third-rate amusement bureau” (p. 16). Brother Sunday’s preaching style incorporated frank illustrations that provided a sting to his preaching. One of the examples he mentioned was the situation between two local pastors who had not spoken in over 8

years. After questioning the erring brothers, Mr. Sunday addressed them with the following question, “What sort of a Bible have you?” (p. 22).

Another featured preacher was Hugh Pyle. Brother Pyle laid out the detailed instructions of having a revival. All of the messages previous to his, spoke on revival and the need for it, but Brother Pyle showed how to conduct the actual revival services.

Dr. Tom Malone also shared four points on how to plan a revival and his message began by laying the Biblical foundation of what revival is and what it is not. Dr. Malone clearly identified why we need revival and why it is still possible today. His sermon gave the hope that great revival can happen no matter where you are.

R. A. Torrey ventured into controversial waters dealing with the baptism of the Holy Ghost being separate from receiving the Holy Spirit of Salvation. Dr. Torrey also provided a tremendous 10-point message on why God used D. L. Moody and encouraged us to do the same.

Pastor Robert Gray delivered a remarkable message in outline form from the book of Nehemiah regarding Ezra. Pastor Gray conveyed the premise that the preacher must first have personal revival; this will overflow into others and the revival fire will be spread. Pastor Gray demonstrated an amusing sense of humor and he preached without inhibitions.

After detailing these great statesmen and their sermons, Dr. Smith offered an encouraging comment when he said, “Some of those same pastors I read about then are still in the harness now” (p. 235). My heart also desires to be found in the harness.

As a result of reading this book I will plan further in advance and with greater detail to the time we have set aside for the evangelist and our revival services. I

thoroughly enjoyed reading from this book on famous preachers and how God used them. It was encouraging to see how God used simple men to preach powerful messages in the face of sin-loving people. I have given some of the sermons contained in this text to fellow lay leaders in our ministry in order to kindle their fire for revival.