

THE ELEVENTH IN A SERIES ON REVIVAL

Evan Roberts and the Welsh Revival:

'Bend the Church, Save the World'

BY KEN HORN

He was 27, one of the most famous men on earth, a man of God who had seen seldom-equalled evangelistic success. He had brought an entire country to its knees. Multitudes found their way into God's kingdom as a result of his ministry. Christians traveled the ocean to see him minister; the secular press desperately sought him for interviews. His name was a household word; he was literally on top of the world.

And, at 27, he was finished — a fiery meteor that had blazed onto the world's stage, and off, in little more than a year.

Evan Roberts stands as one of the greatest examples of Christ-like service the Christian church has produced, a firebrand worthy of emulation not solely because of his sensational evangelistic success but for his life of intercession and his humility. He never lost a deep-seated determination to give glory to Jesus alone.

Born in poverty, Roberts worked from the age of 12 in the coal mines in his native country of Wales. As early as age 11 he had a passion for revival. That passion would quietly be cultivated until, as an adult, he would come to be known as "the Revivalist."

The Welsh Revival of 1904 and 1905 is less known in our ranks than the Pentecostal outpourings at the beginning of the 20th century. It contributed to the Pente-

costal revival and was essentially a parallel revival — an indicator that the Holy Spirit cannot be contained and that God was moving in many places across the globe at this time.

Roberts, however, did directly influence American Pentecost. He met with Joseph Smale, a Baptist pastor from Los Angeles, and encouraged him to bring to California the hunger for a move of God and for the work of the Spirit seen in the Welsh Revival. Smale did so, and was instrumental in the move of the Holy Spirit in Los Angeles.

The roots of the Welsh Revival go back to 1904 and a young girl's testimony in a meeting in New Quay, Cardiganshire. When Florrie Evans, a new convert, gave a brief testimony in a Sunday prayer meeting for young people, the results were like "an electric shock upon the congregation," according to contemporary

revival. As Roberts knelt at the front, he prayed fervently, "Lord, bend me." The revival now had its theme and its leader.

"I felt ablaze with a desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Savior," Roberts said. "And had it been possible, I was willing to pay God for doing so." In a way, that is what he did.

Roberts drew out his life savings to support young people who began traveling to minister throughout Wales.

Soon Roberts began praying for 100,000 souls to be saved in Wales. He started meetings that were noted by the move of the Holy Spirit. One world-renowned preacher called the Welsh Revival "Pentecost continued." Speaking in tongues was not common, but it was reported that ploughboys and laborers with little education spoke in beautiful classical Welsh when moved by the Spirit.

Famous preachers of the day had little success. Nothing that focused on an individual succeeded.

journalist W.T. Stead. Many came forward in full surrender, and news began to spread that a revival was under way.

During succeeding months, many such instances occurred in various locales. But the revival exploded in September of that year, when, at the close of a meeting in Blaenannerch, evangelist Seth Joshua called people to the altar and spontaneously prayed, "Lord, bend us." The prayer struck the heart of Evan Roberts, who had long been praying for

Roberts' world was not one of privilege. He was accustomed to the dark confines of the Welsh coal mines. It was a hard life, and the atmosphere was profane. But God changed that. It was said that as miners were saved, the pit ponies became confused. Accustomed to hearing coarse commands laced with profanity, they did not at first respond to the elevated speech of the recently saved drivers.

Miners and their families repeatedly packed chapels, often to more

Evan Roberts & the Welsh Revival

THE ELEVENTH IN A SERIES ON REVIVAL

than double seating capacity. One such meeting began at 4 p.m., after the miners finished their workday. Roberts didn't arrive until 7. He pressed through the crowd and offered one word in Welsh, which meant, "Let us pray." God moved upon those gathered, and at 9 Roberts left to pray the rest of the night in his room. The meeting continued until 2 a.m.

Services were never advertised. When some traveler would arrive and ask, "Where is Evan Roberts?" the response would be, "Find the nearest church. He [God] will be there."

Indeed multiple chapels were frequently filled simultaneously, and Roberts would never let himself become the center of attention. He granted no interviews and allowed no pictures to be taken of him during the revival. If he felt people had come to see him, he would apologize and leave. Often he would sit among others in a pew and simply pray during the meeting. Once, he felt checked by the Holy Spirit and canceled meetings in the Welsh capital, Cardiff, where thousands were anticipating his arrival. He would go nowhere where he felt Jesus would not receive all the glory.

Famous preachers of the day had little success. Nothing that focused on an individual succeeded.

Roberts' sermons became briefer and briefer throughout the revival. F.B. Meyer told of a lengthy meeting, powerfully anointed of God, in which Roberts spoke a total of seven minutes.

The revival also reached children, who held their own meetings in homes, yards and barns. Children as young as 10 years of age were seen to exhort, sing and pray with anointing.

Humility was also evident in the way Roberts dealt with the heavy criticism he received from those who opposed the revival. He refused to defend himself, leaving that responsibility in God's hands. But the criticism, pace and strain of the revival took its toll physically upon him.

In early 1906, he went into seclusion and, with few exceptions, lived out the balance of his life in intercession.

The Welsh revival fires seemed to wane while Pentecost continued to spread. Some felt as though a great part of Roberts' life was wasted. To this he replied: "I work as hard at prayer as if I had undertaken any other form of religious work. ... By preaching, I would reach the limited few — by and through prayer I can reach the whole of mankind for God." Roberts completely cast off the fame that could have been his lifelong companion.


God answered Evan Roberts' prayer, "Lord, bend me," because

Roberts was willing to be bent. God also answered the nation's cry, "Lord, bend us." Of this we can be sure — Evan Roberts put Christ first; he humbled himself throughout his public and private ministry. And he left revivalism a legacy that we do well to heed today: Humility is part and parcel of a genuine move of God.

It is safe to say that relatively few have followed the Evan Roberts model. Are we willing to be bent? Can we pray with sincerity, "Lord, bend us"? Whether or not we have revival depends on the answer to that question.

We also stand to benefit by considering the repeated emphases of Roberts' ministry: Confess openly and fully any unconfessed sin;

put away from your life anything doubtful; obey promptly anything the Spirit tells you to say and do; confess Christ openly.

And remember the prayer for 100,000 souls? In a short article on Roberts, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* says this: "The revival ... was a national phenomenon, and it was calculated that it led to some 100,000 conversions." 

KEN HORN is editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel* and blogs at Snapshots (khorn.agblogger.org).

This series began in the Jan. 11 issue.

E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.

DIVINE HEALING



Salvation ■ Holy Spirit Baptism ■ Divine Healing ■ Second Coming

AG Core Beliefs Emphasis

Learn more about our belief in Divine Healing.
Watch video testimonies of lives healed.

Visit iValue.ag.org to learn more.

An advertisement for the Pentecostal Evangel Endowment. It features a silhouette of a person with arms raised against a sunset background. The text reads: "MAKE AN INVESTMENT IN SOULS THROUGH THE PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL ENDOWMENT. Since 1997, more than 22,000 individuals have reported their decision to follow Jesus Christ through reading the Pentecostal Evangel. Your planned gift or donation to the Pentecostal Evangel Endowment can help many more find eternal life. For more information, contact Ron Kopeziak at (417) 862-2781, ext. 4107."/>

MAKE AN INVESTMENT IN SOULS
THROUGH THE PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL ENDOWMENT

Since 1997, more than 22,000 individuals have reported their decision to follow Jesus Christ through reading the *Pentecostal Evangel*.

Your planned gift or donation to the Pentecostal Evangel Endowment can help many more find eternal life.

For more information, contact Ron Kopeziak at (417) 862-2781, ext. 4107



Teachers. Pastors. Business leaders.
Everyone leaves a mark.

Begin at SAGU.
Associates, Bachelor's & Master's Degrees
On Campus or through Distance Education

1.888.YES.SAGU | WWW.SAGU.EDU

southwestern
university
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR A HIGHER PURPOSE