

Chapter 6

Four Welsh Fathers - *The Synergy of Generations* -

Someone once said that if we want to be successful we should seek to find out what God is doing and do it with Him. This is a true principle but we need to look beyond our immediate limits of time and space and try to understand what God has been doing across the ages. Biblical scholarship and meditation upon the revealed word are the keys to this as well as an ability to discern our own spiritual history in the light of this.

Fatherhood is another important Biblical principle as Fathers are called to pass on collective wisdom, culture and blessing to the next generation. (Sadly the opposite can also be true when Fathers fail in their calling).

*"Posterity will serve him ;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
They will proclaim his righteousness
To a people yet unborn-.."* *Psalm 20 :30-31*

Prayer and Intercession are the keys to good Fatherhood.

Knowing a Father always brings strength and security to our work and identity. This is true for our family, as well as our national identities. We need to have some understanding of our roots. What baton have our natural and spiritual Fathers passed on to us ?

*"Look to the rock from which you were cut
and the quarry from which you were hewn;
look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth."*
Isaiah 51:1-2

Our first father is Abraham, who was crowned with a heavenly missionary call.

*"Leave your country , your people and your father's household and go to the land
I will show you."*
Genesis 12:1

May the inherited passion for mission burn strong within our hearts and may we own our call as Abraham.

"..all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
Genesis 12:3

My own particular prayer life and mission endeavour finds its roots in the prayers of four Welsh fathers. May they serve as living examples to help each one into their place of sonship and inheritance. Their prayers transcend time and leave a legacy of virtue and prayer to be taken up by those who have the faith and heart to follow.

My own Father was a Welsh orphan who owned a dream of having twin boys. On the verge of seeing the accomplishment of that dream he suddenly found his new born twins dying in hospital because of their premature birth.

He resolved to go home and throwing himself face down on the floor before God in the agony of prayer, he hung on for answer.

“Oh God!”,

he prayed.

“Give me the life of my boys. Let me love them. Let me feed and provide for them. Let me give everything for them, and then when they are old enough to look after themselves, then you can take them. Just give me time to love them now.”

As he rose up from the prayer he knew that he had touched God’s heart. The contract had been signed and faith for the future rose in his heart.

His prayer example gives flesh to the rather misty, super-spiritual idea of intercession we sometimes have. He was willing to put everything he had into the prayer. To own it, possess it personally with love and sacrifice. And once possessing it, give it back to God, surrendering his own sovereignty in submission to God’s best. This is the kind of intercession Jesus’ life shows us. He owned the pain of suffering humanity giving His all, His last drops of blood, to buy us back from death. He then gave it all back to God in faithful expectation of resurrection life. My Dad summed up another aspect of this prayer when he said to me.

“I went deep to the very depths. And there at the very bottom I touched a heart....The heart of God.”

Going deep and touching a heart ! What a fulfilling definition of prayer.

Sadly, since beginning work on this book, I have received the news of my Father’s death. (10.01.2004). There are the obvious tears, and yet much gratitude and thanks for a life of service and prayer. He fully accomplished his role as a Father. I go back to words which accompanied Abraham at his time of passing.

“Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.”

Genesis 25:8

The French translation says he was “reunited with his deceased ancestors”. My “orphan” Dad is probably rediscovering the joys of finding an eternal family again. Reunited at the very least with his own believing Mum and Dad. We were once chatting about how he might recognise his parents in heaven and he added:

“It’s the love in them that I will recognise”

Profound words from a Father whose life was marked by deep contentment, service, thankfulness, happiness and big strong hugs! One of his last encouragements to me was when he remembered a poem he used to recite at Sunday School in Cardiff called,

“Life.”

*“Life? Did you think was easy going, with no ruts to mar the way.
With nought to cloud the sunshine through the whole long Summer day.
Did you think it would be all harmony, no discord sharp or flat,
And everything a holiday...No, life’s not like that.
Life’s often full of battles, where a strong man needs his strength,
Life’s often like a highway with wrought miles of wearying length.
And sometimes laughter’s crowded out, and often eyes grow wet,
And sometimes people miss the prize on which their heart was set.
But don’t lose courage ever, mysterious though it be,
Life holds a mighty purpose, and Christ our captain holds the key!”*

Thanks Dad for your love, inspiration and example.

Au-revoir et à bientôt !

I’d like to introduce you to the second Father, Rowland EVANS, the founder of at least two mission movements, *World Horizons* and *Nations*. Five years of hidden intercession gave birth to these works. And what was the burden of the prayer ?

In the early 70’s the church in Britain was experiencing a breath of renewal and many new house groups were forming. Rowland became a very popular itinerant Bible teacher for such gatherings. As he was at the height of his ministry and in much demand, the Lord challenged him to consecrate the next years of his life to total prayer and, in doing so, to pull out of public life. A burden of intercession seemed to descend on his heart as dew. The days came and went in prayer. Days became weeks, weeks months and months years. The Lord was leading Rowland to a prolonged period of intercession. After three years of intense prayer followed by two more years the burden seemed to gently lift. Five years of prayer! I remember asking Rowland how he managed to pray for that long. What did he pray? Did he have a long list of subjects? His answer surprised me.

“You know,” he said,

“Intercession is like your heart is breaking. It’s a sharing in Jesus crying out for the nations of the world. Sometimes a prayer is simply expressing the inner longings of Jesus for a world of people. I can sum up the prayer God gave me in one sentence:

“Oh God ! Give me your work to do..”

Intercession like a “broken heart”. Another beautiful sonnet to the glory of prayer.

In this centenary year (2004) of the 1904 Welsh revival I’d like to introduce you to another more historical, yet prophetically vital, Welsh Father. Evan Roberts. From his boyhood in his home chapel of Moriah in Loughor, Evan Roberts had known a compelling desire to honour God in every aspect of his life and to serve Him faithfully. This had increased to the point where he was constrained at last to leave his employment and prepare for the ministry. In explaining his decision to a friend, Roberts wrote,

"... On examination I find the following motives constrain me:

1. The passionate longing of my soul for ten years which I cannot quench...
2. The voice of the people of God...
3. God's infinite love together with the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Last Sunday night while thinking about the greatness of the work and the danger of my dishonouring God, I could not but weep. And I prayed that the Lord should baptize you and me with the Holy Spirit".

This letter and other writings by Roberts at the time revealed a characteristic which was common to many who were seeking God so earnestly, namely that the deep longing of their hearts was inseparably linked with an unshakeable confidence that a visitation of the Holy Spirit would be granted. This willingness to take God's promises on trust and to look to Him to honour His Word was also experienced by the prominent leaders in the religious awakenings in Wales of 1859 and 1735.

Another experience which Evan Roberts shared with those in earlier revivals was an overwhelming sense of God's presence drawing near to him. This moment of intimate communion was granted to Roberts in the spring of 1904 and can be best described in his own words.

" One Friday night last spring, when praying by my bedside before retiring, I was taken up to a great expanse - without time and space. It was communion with God. Before this I had a far-off God. I was frightened that night, but never since. So great was my shivering that I rocked the bed, and my brother, being awakened, took hold of me thinking I was ill. After that experience I was awakened every night a little after one O'clock. This was most strange, for through the years I slept like a rock, and no disturbance in my room would awaken me. From that hour I was taken up into the divine fellowship for about four hours. What it was I cannot tell you, except that it was divine.

About five o'clock I was again allowed to sleep on till about nine. At this time I was again taken up into the same experience as in the earlier hours of the morning until about twelve or one o'clock... This went on for about three months".

He was led to be part of a revival meeting. On the opening day of the Blaenannerch conference Roberts described his spiritual condition as "**waiting for the fire to fall**".

The main sermon that day was preached by Rev. W.W. Lewis of Carmarthen on the text :

" among whom ye shine as lights in the world," (Phil 2 :15)

and his message was endued with an unction which Rev. John Thickers, the organiser of the conference, believed could only have been God-given. **The party of students including Evan Roberts arrived on the second day in time for the early morning session which was again led by Lewis. The meeting was closed in prayer by Seth Joshua and as he implored God to have mercy upon them and make them submissive to His Will, Evan Roberts felt one phrase of the prayer burning in his heart :**

"O Lord, bend us".

The words remained indelibly impressed on his mind throughout the interval for breakfast and afterwards when the meeting was resumed, the power of the Holy Spirit became so compelling that Roberts fell to his knees in tears. The truth of Romans 5 v8,

"But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us",

flooded his whole being and caused him to plead with God to bend him to His will. After this he experienced a profound sense of peace, followed by a feeling of great **"compassion for those who must bend at the judgement"**.

Finally, in Roberts' own words,

"the salvation of the human soul was solemnly impressed upon me. I felt ablaze with a desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Saviour" .

After that " most terrible and sublime day" at Blaenannerch, Evan Roberts was irrevocably committed to serving God in whatever way he was called. His life was in God's hands and the flood of revival blessing was about to be released.

It was also during these weeks that Roberts experienced heavenly visions of a mighty in-gathering of souls to the number of **one hundred thousand and he was given the assurance of faith to claim this as a promise which God would not deny**. Roberts soon began to know yet more of the mighty power of God in his life and ministry. During

a meeting at Capel Drindod in Cardiganshire he was deeply constrained that all present should give honour and praise to the Saviour and he poured forth with prayer which transformed the service in such a manner that one of the congregation recalled later,

"It burst through to the hearts and consciences of many, Christ was glorified from that moment: it was an extraordinary meeting."

For Roberts the experience did not end with the close of the service. He found it was impossible to sleep when he returned his lodgings, and wrote in awe in his journal,

"The room was full of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring was so overpowering that I had to shout and plead with God to stay His hand."

His heart cry in prayer:

"Come Holy Spirit !"

God moved powerfully in Robert's meetings and in answer to faithful prayer the Holy Spirit was blowing around Wales and changing a nation. The following account expresses the way God moved in the meetings.

"After some more singing led off by one of the five young ladies from Loughor, an elderly man gave some reminiscences of the great revival of 1859.

"I am a child of that revival",

he said. He told his hearers how in those stirring times publicans took down their signboards, how people gathered in the woods and the open fields to worship.

Speaking for the second time, Mr Roberts said that policemen in Loughor were having an easy time, and the publicans deploring the loss of customers. He knew of one young man who had left a public house with the remark,

"I am going to hear that lunatic"

meaning him (Mr Roberts). That man came to the service and left a penitent convert. Another man had suddenly dropped on his knees in front of a pint of beer inside a Loughor public house.

During the remainder of the night men and women broke forth in prayer and song, and a meeting that had opened so coldly was in a white heat of religious enthusiasm before the last word had been said."

By the time the meetings at Trecynon came to an end, there were many other places in Wales where the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work and Roberts realised that careful discernment was required on his part to ensure that he went wherever God wanted

him to be. The revival was continuing to spread in South Cardiganshire where his friend Sidney Evans and ministers such as Rev Joseph Jenkins had busily engaged in conducting meetings in a widening circle of towns and villages from Cardigan to Tregaron. Similarly the area around Loughor was experiencing intense spiritual awakening and when Rev. Jenkins fulfilled a preaching engagement at Ammanford on Sunday 6th November he found the response so encouraging that he immediately arranged further meetings for the following week. It was during these gatherings that the prayers for a visitation of the Holy Spirit were answered as conversions occurred nightly. A week later a mission previously arranged by the Forward Movement of the Calvinistic Methodist church was due to begin in the town and after the first meeting, the leader, Seth Joshua noted

"There is a wonderful fire burning here. The ground is very prepared, thank God."

The Sunday services conducted by Joshua were some of the most remarkable he ever experienced and he wrote of them,

"Even in the morning a number were led to embrace the Saviour. In the afternoon the blessing fell upon scores of young people" while in the evening, "Numbers confessed Jesus, but it is impossible to count".

At the same time places in North Wales were experiencing the touch of God's power, particularly at Bethesda where a mission led by Rev Hugh Hughes was mightily blessed, the Nantlle valley which became the centre for the evangelistic outreach of Evan Lloyd Jones, at Rhos where Rev. R.B. Jones held a mission which resulted in a flood of conversions, and even in small villages such as Egryn, near Harlech where Mary Jones the wife of a local farmer was greatly used in bringing over seventy of her neighbours to faith in Christ.

Evan Roberts was not directly associated with many of the events taking place in Wales and claimed no credit for them, for he well-knew that the out-pouring of grace was from God alone and he trusted that the Holy Spirit would guide him to the places of God's choosing. As a result when he left Trecynon, he felt constrained to visit the Garw valley and hold meetings at Pontycymmer, Pyle, Bridgend and Abergwynfi where he even visited the coal-mines early in the morning to speak to the miners coming up from the night shift who were not able to attend the usual evening services.

The following weeks saw revival breaking out in place after place and sweeping through towns and valleys in a manner that defied human explanation and confounded sceptics of all kinds. To the criticism and opposition which were raised against the revival, Roberts wisely refrained from replying and neither did he associate himself with places where he believed counterfeit movements were at work. He had always recognised that one day the tide of blessing would recede and he continued urging people to pray for God to work on until February 1905 when he felt compelled to rest from his intense activity which had so completely absorbed him since the previous November.

There is good season to believe that in Wales alone the 100,000 souls for whom he had entreated God, had been added to His kingdom, while the consequent effects of the revival spread to many other parts of Britain and into the wider context of church and missionary development throughout the world.

In his foreword to the book 'The Welsh Revival of 1904' by Eifion Evans, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated that it was his hope and his prayer that reading about the events of that time would

"lead many so to realise anew and afresh the glory and the wonder of the power of God that they will begin to long and to yearn and to pray for another 'visitation from on high' such as was experienced in 1904-05" .

Our final Welsh father is Rees Howells, who founded "*The Bible College of Wales*" in Swansea. After a life of intercession , faithfully documented in Norman Grubb's book "*Intercessor*" , which saw revival come to East Africa, Howells had a vision for every creature hearing the gospel. One of his last recorded prayers pulsates with this missionary passion.

"Everything in me is praising God because the Holy ghost can say, 'I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do.' Every creature will hear the Gospel, the finance for the Vision is safe, and the King will come back."

An American intercessor, Dutch Sheets, talks about the "**synergy of generations**" or our ability to mesh our present day prayers with the passion and purpose of former generations. We will thus benefit from the power and destiny of what has already been given. Let us learn to flow with God's prophetic intentions.

Gaining understanding of our spiritual inheritance is vital if we are to successfully build a ministry in prophetic prayer.

We can charge on alone in an attempt to re-invent the wheel or humbly learn on our knees. Obviously the "Welsh" prayers, as the "Welsh Revival", found their own culturally relevant expression. Our challenge is to take up the baton of intercession which posterity has passed on to us and incarnate it in our many nations and situations. God will meet us in His plans and purposes. Let us learn to re-interpret history from God's perspective.

Christ ever lives to intercede for us (*Hebrews 7:25*), and prayer has an ability to transcend time. Let us discover the Christ given burdens laid on our Fathers (and Mothers), add our own measure of intercessory grace and put them into flesh for our own generations. Just as Isaac unblocked the wells dug by his Father Abraham (*Genesis 26*), so God is calling this generation to unblock fresh wells of intercession for the nations.

“ Oh God! Give us your work to do and may many others find their life’s work through the discipling environments we create. Come Holy Spirit and bring revival to our lands and may the gospel go to every people....”

