

Restoring the Moravian Fire

Contributed by James W. Goll
Saturday, 03 October 2009

The Moravians started a prayer meeting that went 24/7 for over 120 years and out of it the first Protestant Missionary movement was birthed. What did the believers at Herrnhut have that we don't have today? James Goll gives us the answer in this article.

Three Strands of Truth Long before I ever set foot in the Czech Republic (formerly part of Czechoslovakia) for the first time, I had read books and articles describing the Christian community commonly called the Moravians. Their story is intertwined with the lives and ministries of some of the most important church leaders in the Great Awakenings and revivals that transformed Western society in the eighteenth century. I learned that God gave them "three strands" around which they wove their lives, and these strands helped the Moravians become world-changers: 1. They had relational unity, spiritual community, and sacrificial living. 2. The power of their persistent prayer produced a divine passion and zeal for missionary outreach to the lost. Many of them even sold themselves into slavery in places like Surinam in South America just so they could carry the light of the gospel into closed societies. The Moravians were the first missionaries to the slaves of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands; they went to strange places called Lapland and Greenland and to many places in Africa. 3. The third strand was described by a motto that they lived by: "No one works unless someone prays." This took the form of a corporate commitment to sustained prayer and ministry to the Lord. This prayer went on unbroken for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of each year for over 100 years! The Moravians' over 100-year prayer vigil and global missionary exploits marked one of the purest moves of the Spirit in church history, and it radically changed the expression of Christianity in their age. Many leaders today feel that virtually every great missionary endeavor of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—regardless of denominational affiliation—was in a very real sense part of the fruit of the Moravians' sacrificial service and prophetic intercessory prayer. Their influence continues to be felt even in our day. The Lord is clearly planning to increase that influence once again. Just as the 120 believers tarrying in the upper room in Jerusalem on Pentecost were "baptized in fire" by the Holy Spirit of promise, so those who answer God's call to tarry before His face will also be baptized with a holy fire. The group of believers who gathered at Herrnhut to pursue their dream of religious freedom were in much the same state as most Christians are today. They came from widely diverse religious backgrounds. During the first five years of their communal existence after the community's founding in 1722, they experienced bickering, dissension, and strife. They were no better or worse than you or I, but they made a deep commitment to Jesus Christ and to prayer, which transformed and changed them forever. They began to think God-sized thoughts and feel a burning God-like compassion for the lost. They received supernatural faith to tackle challenges that would in many cases cost them their freedom or their very lives. Yet, they did it all in faithfulness and joy. The Moravians changed the world because they allowed God to change them. God wants to change the world again and He is looking at you and me. Are you willing to seek the same fire that inspired the Moravian believers two centuries ago?

A Hunger for God

The fire of the Moravian believers seemed to ignite hunger for God wherever they went. That hunger could only be satisfied by an encounter with the living God they served. Would to God that every believer, missionary, and minister today would walk, work, and worship with the same fire that the Moravians carried with them to countless cultures and cities! John Wesley was an ordained minister, yet he hadn't even received Christ as his Savior. He was fascinated by the Moravians' confidence in the face of impending death. He knew that he didn't have what they had, and he decided he wanted it—whatever it was.

God is out to ignite that fire again! Only this time He wants to see His fire roar across entire continents and cultures through the means of His whole body, the Church. As you read these words, the Spirit of God is igniting hearts around the world, drawing believers to their knees and sinners to the cross. He is out to cover the earth with the Father's glory, but He has been commissioned to do it through the transformed lives of fallen human beings who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. There is an incident involving Aaron, the priest and the fire of God that pictures the burden of my heart for this book and the work of God in this generation. It is found in Numbers 16: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.' Then they fell on their faces. And Moses said to Aaron, 'Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the Lord, the plague has begun!' Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly, for behold, the plague had begun among the people. So he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. And he took his stand between the dead and the living, so that the plague was checked. But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah (Numbers 16:44-49). Aaron provides a vivid picture of the intercessor. When the congregation of Israel sinned by rebelling against their leaders, God sent a judgment upon them in the form of a plague that killed nearly 15,000 people. Far more would have died, but Moses told Aaron, the high priest, to quickly put fire from God's altar into his censer, or container, along with incense. Then Aaron literally ran out into the midst of the congregation with the fire of God. The Scripture says that Aaron "took his

stand between the dead and the living.” The fragrant smoke ascending from the burning censer, as Aaron swung it to and fro, formed a line of demarcation between two groups—the dead and the living.

What Are the Applications for Today?

God wants to use more than a Moses or an Aaron today. One of the unique things about the Church of the New Covenant is that God has authorized and commanded every believer to do the work of the ministry! “Point people,” or church leaders, can’t do it all—in fact, their primary job or reason for being according to the apostle Paul, is “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). God wants an entire army of workers out doing the vital work of the ministry and building up His body, the Church. The plague in Numbers chapter 16 was stopped because Aaron stood in the gap. That is the classic definition of an intercessor: “one who stands in the gap for another.” Aaron stood in the gap for his generation, and the plague was stopped. There is a devilish plague running rampant today through our churches, cities, and nations. Now the Lord is calling for a priestly people to rise up and personally carry the holy fire of His Presence to their generation for their salvation and His glory.

Who Will Stand in the Gap?

Let me bring this a little closer to home: God wants to put His Spirit upon you in such a measure that you will answer His summons with a resounding: “Yes, I will stand in the gap for my generation right here and now. I will put aside every pathetic intimidation and every entanglement of namby-pamby religion. I am going to make a difference by willingly taking up the cross of an intercessor. I will lay aside my life for the sake of others before God.” God is restoring the ancient fire that once inspired the Moravians to launch what in their day was the greatest missionary campaign since the Book of Acts. He is restoring His fire to you and me in this generation because He wants us to reap His harvest. The first step begins with the restoration of the fire on God’s altar. Here I am Lord! Use me! Like Isaiah of old, I surrender to the call of my Master. Like the word of the Lord that came to Ezekiel, I declare, “By grace, I will stand in the gap for such a time as this.” Like Anna and Simeon in the Temple at the time of the dedication of Jesus on his 8th day, I say, “I will be your prophetic intercessor.” Here I am –right here – right now – write my name down in your book and sign me up to be a part of the watch of the Lord. For Jesus Christ sake and the rewards of His suffering. Amen and Amen! Blessings to You! James W. Goll