

FIRESTARTERS 5

PRAYER TOOL

Igniting Prayer for Revival in our City • 5 Minutes to Read • 5 Minutes in Prayer

FOR THE WEEK OF Jan 23 - Jan 29, 2022 - **Volume 89**

THEME VERSE:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12

THE GOD OF REVIVAL:

The Revivals of the Carolinas: 2nd Great Awakening (Pt 5): Lessons from Finney

As the 2nd Great Awakening gathered strength on the East Coast and at the western frontiers of America, it saw God raising up courageous and innovative new leaders. One such leader was Charles Finney. Finney had grown up in a conventional church environment and even helped lead his church's choir, yet he was a very vocal critic of Christianity and certainly lived like an unbeliever. In 1821, he had a very personal and powerful encounter with God that led to his putting his trust in Jesus Christ. He soon closed up shop as a lawyer and instead applied his heart and mind to serving God.

Starting in 1825, he began ministering in towns in upstate New York. He spent many years in what was known as the "Burnt-over District", an area of New York that had seen more than its fair share of revival meetings as well as cult activity and unbiblical spiritualism. There was a lot of spiritual history there but also a sense of jadedness and weariness. It would be a challenge to light a fresh fire in this place.

Finney stepped onto the scene armed with two key weapons: 1) Prevailing prayer, and 2) Persuasive preaching. Early on, Finney knew that spiritual breakthroughs required a certain kind of prayer. Besides his own times of praying, he unashamedly enlisted others to partner with him. His personal intercessor was a man named Daniel Nash. Nash would ride into town days before Finney was scheduled to speak. Then, he would recruit a few men to join him in prayer, and they would seclude themselves in a dank cellar or a boarding room for the duration of the meetings. There, they would agonize and groan. They would fast from all food. They would call upon God as they waged a fierce war against the forces of darkness. They interceded relentlessly for a supernatural victory and prayed down the power of God and a mighty anointing upon each of Finney's meetings.

Finney also preached in a way few had seen before. He used his training as a lawyer and brought to bear an intense logic and reasoning as he spoke. At the same time, he expressed God's heart directly and personally to those in his audience. He pressed and pleaded with people to use their free will and choose God this day, this moment. There was an urgency to his messages as he passionately called them to relinquish their all to God.

As Finney and his team traveled all around New York, they saw God pierce the hearts of their listeners. They saw many miraculous conversions and heard powerful testimonies of God's transforming power. In 1830, Finney was invited to go to Rochester, New York. He was not interested. His research unveiled a city laced with the disunity of bickering churches and the stain of desensitized immorality. He methodically listed all the reasons why he should not go. But the Holy Spirit challenged him: "Maybe you are needed all the more because of all these problems." The next morning, Finney packed his bags and immediately headed west by boat to Rochester.

Finney, as usual, sent Brother Nash ahead to sow the atmosphere with prayer. After arriving in town, he started to preach every evening, three times on Sunday, and to take questions from seekers during the day sessions. He added a new element to his services, the "Anxious Bench", which was a row of empty seats set aside at the front of the room. After he had given a call for salvation, anyone who was anxious or uncertain for their soul could sit in these seats. Finney and other leaders would then pray for them. And God saw fit to show up with great power during these meetings, releasing revival and bringing deep conviction and heart

surrender. All in all, in a little over 6 months, revival fire would sweep across more than 1500 towns and draw over 100,000 people to choose to follow Jesus.

Although Finney generally worked in the New York area, his spiritual example and ideas found their way to the American frontiers and throughout the fabric of modern Christianity. His time-tested approaches shaped how people prayed for revival and how preachers delivered their messages through the 1800's and into the early 1900's. In North Carolina, revivalists borrowed Finney's ideas, such as the Anxious Bench, in camp meetings at Wilmington, Catawba County, and Iredell County. Finney reminded the Church how revival is available when we pray and preach in the power of the Holy Spirit and give folks an opportunity to respond with their whole heart.

THE GOD WHO ANSWERS PRAYERS:

Thank God that the latest wave of massive snowstorms dropped a lot of snow but did not lead to long-term power blackouts. There were short-term blackouts on Sunday and hundreds of car accidents on the road, but it could have been far worse. Thank God for folks working together to keep people safe and warm. Continue to pray as more snow is predicted this weekend: for traffic safety, for unhindered air travel, and for quick resolution of any power outages.

PRAYER REQUESTS THIS WEEK:

FOR THE CITY:

- **OMICRON TO DIMINISH.** Pray that Omicron will soon peak and rapidly subside in the United States (just as it did in England), and that infections will drop drastically. That hospitals will resume functioning at normal capacity in a few weeks. Pray that God will end this pandemic soon.

FOR JOBS, BUSINESSES, AND THE ECONOMY:

- **EMPLOYEE BURNOUT.** According to the Charlotte Business Journal, 89% of full time U.S. employees say they have experienced occupational burnout over the past year. This contributes to soaring turnover, record levels of absenteeism, and reduced employee engagement. Pray that employers, even as they face uncertainty relative to mandates and safety-related issues, would seek God's wisdom as to how to mitigate these issues and help their employees, and that followers of Jesus would model a Kingdom view of work which will draw others to Him.
- **UPCOMING BUSINESS LEADERS SUMMIT.** Pray for the upcoming Queen City Leaders Mini-Summit on March 4th featuring David Hoffman. Pray that followers of Jesus will take advantage of this opportunity to invite friends & associates who are unconvinced of the truth of the Gospel, and that hearts will be opened at this event. Pray also for the planning for the QCL Summit in September: venue, for speakers, guests, and God's favor to impact the city with His Gospel.

FOR LOCAL MINISTRIES AND REVIVAL:

- **LOVE LIFE MINISTRY.** Pray for Love Life Ministries as they bring churches together to peacefully take a stand and pray on-site against abortion and to remind people they can choose life when there is an unwanted pregnancy. Pray for the leadership staff, many who are experiencing sickness or afflictions. Pray for Josh's mother-in-law, who went to the hospital this week with COVID complications. Pray also for the Love Life California conference next weekend on Saturday 1/29: for safe travels, favor for the staff, and all attendees, Of course, pray for the re-launch of Love Life prayer walks on February 12th in all of their cities. And pray for more pastor engagement and partnering churches to end the abortion and orphan crisis nationwide.
- **REVIVAL.** Pray that God would spark many more hearts to seek after a great move of God to wake up His church. Ask that the Holy Spirit would set ablaze a new generation of revivalists who will creatively and powerfully minister to the lost with the Good News of Jesus. Lord, send revival!

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