

Evan Roberts



Evan Roberts (1878-1951) was the person most recognized in the 1904 Welsh Revival. He was one of fourteen children and was born on the June 8, 1878 at Island House near the banks of the River Loughor. His parents, Henry and Hannah Roberts, were committed Christians who attended Moriah Chapel on Sundays and also meetings during the week. The Bible was studied and held in honor in their home.

When Evan was 11 years old, his father had a serious accident in the coal mine which left him unable to work for 3 months. So Evan left school and worked to help his father. He took his Bible underground and read it at every possible opportunity.

One day, there was an explosion that took the lives of five of his fellow workers. Evan himself narrowly escaped death, and the flames scorched the pages of his Bible. The scorched pages were 2 Chronicles 6, the very chapter in which the prayer of Solomon is found regarding God's promise of revival.



HANNAH & HENRY ROBERTS



EVAN'S SCORCHED BIBLE



ISLAND HOUSE IN LOUGHOR

At the age of 16, Evan was appointed a teacher over the local children and he continued to teach Sunday School for the next few years. Initially, they were meeting in the colliery offices, but in 1895, the owner decided it was time to build a proper school nearer to the children's homes. Evan was asked to plan and oversee the new building. It was named Pisgah, and soon it became a chapel on Sunday as well as a schoolroom for the children in the village on weekdays. Evan showed himself faithful in the little things, and when he was 18, he preached his first sermon at Moriah Chapel. Two weeks later, he was sent out to pursue theological training. He was required to attend a preparatory school in Newcastle Emlyn before entering training at Trevecca. On September 13, 1904, Evan Roberts and other young men arrived at the grammar school at Newcastle Emlyn.

In a nearby town called Blaenannerch, a series of conferences organized by Rev. Joseph Jenkins was to begin. Seven months prior, his young people had experienced a spiritual awakening when teenager Florrie Evans rose to her feet and said, 'I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart'. After this meeting, he organized conferences for the youth and invited people such as the Reverend Seth Joshua, who had been praying for revival for years, to speak. Some students from Newcastle Emlyn, including Evan Roberts, were in attendance at one of these meetings. The 7.00 a.m. service was closed by Joshua praying, 'Oh Lord... bend us'. Evan did not hear any of the words except 'bend us'. Later, he would write,

'I felt in going to the meeting that I was compelled to pray. When the meeting commenced, many prayed, and I asked the Holy Spirit, "Shall I pray now?" "No," said the Spirit in reply. Shortly, some wonderful influence came over me. After many had prayed, I felt some living energy or force entering my bosom, it held my breath, my legs trembled terribly; this living energy increased and increased as one after the other prayed until it nearly burst me, and as each finished I asked, "Shall I pray now?" When someone finished I prayed. My bosom boiled all through, and had it not been that I prayed, I would have burst. What boiled in my bosom? The verse, "for God commendeth His love." I fell on my knees, with my arms outstretched on the

seat before me, the perspiration poured down my face and my tears streamed quickly until I thought that the blood came out.... It was awful on me for about two minutes. I cried – “Bend me, bend me, bend me; Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!” ... What came to mind after this was, the bending in the day of judgement. Then I was filled with sympathy for the people who will have to bend on judgement day, and I wept. Afterwards, the salvation of souls weighed heavily on me. I felt ablaze with the desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Saviour’.

It was in this way that Evan Roberts was filled with Holy Spirit and set on fire for Wales.

On October 31, 1904, he returned to his hometown of Loughor. Immediately his friends and family noticed the change in him. Once shy and nervous, Evan now came to meetings with confidence. This victory, did not come without contention and he was attacked with doubts about his right to lead the meetings.

Nevertheless, he pressed on. One day in church, he sat down at the organ and began to play, but then burst into tears and said, ‘*You shall see there will be a great change in Loughor in less than a fortnight. **We are going to have the greatest revival Wales has ever seen***’. He then got permission to hold meetings. The first one was that night, with 17 people in attendance.

Evan told of what had been happening in Newcastle Emlyn, and explained the importance of making a public confession of Christ. It was not the tradition at that time to do so, and this, combined with the fact that Evan was in the midst of people who had known him since he was a child, meant they found it hard to accept. However he persevered and the Holy Spirit softened their hearts, until finally each one of them confessed Christ out loud, including his own siblings.



The following day, November 1, he held a meeting at Pisgah Chapel where some who were at the previous night’s meeting testified to how changed they felt after their public confession, and how it had opened their hearts to the work of Holy Spirit. Six more confessed publicly that night. The meeting lasted three hours and consisted of confession, prayer and testimony. Evan was careful to only do what Holy Spirit was saying to him. This was also a feature of the coming meetings, which usually followed this structure: A reading, a hymn, and prayers. Then, Evan would urge the people to:

1. Confess all sins.
2. Remove anything doubtful from our lives.
3. Give themselves completely to the Spirit - to speak and to do all He requires of us.
4. Publicly confess Christ.



That week, the meetings continued and word got around that the Spirit was stirring. The meeting on Friday was the largest yet, with old and young, Baptists and Congregationalists joining the Calvinistic Methodists. People began to talk, some criticizing the method and even doubting Evan’s sanity. But the power of the Spirit in the meetings grew stronger, like a flame consuming tinder, and eventually spread throughout the nation. From November 1904 until the end of 1905, at least 100,000 Welsh souls were swept into the Kingdom of Heaven, kickstarting a worldwide revival movement and affecting the spread of the Gospel even to this day.

Evan Robert’s life is a beautiful example that the key to revival is simply to recognize that it is in the atmosphere, that it is God’s plan, and those who have an intimate relationship with the Lord can literally pull heaven down to earth.

End Notes:

<http://ukwells.org/revivalists/evan-roberts/>

<http://moriahchapel.org.uk/index.php?page=1904-revival>