



to SOW for a
GREAT AWAKENING

A CALL TO TRAVAILING PRAYER

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SEEDBED SHORTS

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A note to Readers: This call to awakening prayer was issued by David Thomas, a pastor, scholar and man of prayer, on September 18, 2015, on the occasion of the second annual New Room Conference in Franklin, Tennessee. For those present, it is destined to be remembered as a defining moment, a turning point, perhaps even of historic significance. Only time will tell the story. It is our joy to share it with you in the same spirit with which it was first given, as an offering unto Jesus Christ, our Lord, for the sake of the world he loves and the Church he is building.

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It is hardwired into us to have a soft spot in our hearts for awakening. Our origins, our kindredness, our instinct, and great yearning from the Wesleyan impulse is for awakening—for a renewing work of God, a fresh inbreaking of the Spirit’s love and power, and an abundant ingathering of the re-born into the church. It is there for the kind of healing and vitality and fervor and unity that is unexplainable in human terms, beyond human excellence, beyond what we can program or plan. We Wesleyans long for the things that only God can do—the effects of grace.

Awakening is beautiful, vast and glorious, and captivating. The First Great Awakening unfolded in three theaters of Scotland, England with the Wesleys, and in colonial America, between about 1730 and 1745, led by Jonathan Edwards. It was Wesley, in fact, who introduced the other two: having been contacted by the Scots regarding concerted prayer for awakening, he encouraged them also to correspond with Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts.¹ Wesley went on to publish more abridgements of Edwards than any other single author.²

Northampton appeared “full of the presence of God . . . in almost every house”³ according to

Edwards, spreading to more than twenty communities in western Massachusetts and Connecticut. And with the arrival of George Whitefield, the roving lightning rod of the First Great Awakening, revival spread through the southern, then the middle, and throughout the New England colonies. All the churches grew. Missionary work advanced. Six of the nine colonial colleges in America were the result of awakenings. A distinctive American theology began to form under the magisterial reflections of Jonathan Edwards, colonial America's greatest thinker. The soul of our culture was really formed in that Awakening.

Revival embers smoldering during the Revolutionary War were fanned back into flame in the Second Great Awakening, again developing in three phases with camp meetings bursting onto the scene at Cane Ridge near Lexington and spreading all throughout Tennessee in the early 1800s. There was the more learned but still very warm-hearted revival work of Lyman Beecher and others in New England. And then came Charles Finney, who blended a certain educated credibility with bold, frontier zeal across upstate New York to extend the Awakening into thirty-five or forty years of continuous advancement.

Finney took inspiration and many of his practices from the Methodists, who accounted for 40 percent of all clergy in America at the time. “We must have exciting, powerful preaching,” Finney lectured, “or the devil will have the people, except what the Methodists can save.”⁴

Beecher considered Finney’s first year-long meeting in Rochester, New York, to be “the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival of religion, that the world has ever seen in so short a time.”⁵ Taverns closed, the theatre became a livery stable, crime dropped by two-thirds, jails stood empty for years

American churches multiplied four-fold during the Second Great Awakening. The proliferation of the American missionary movement can really be traced to it. So much social reform in prisons, against child labor, for women’s rights—the first coeducational college in America was Finney’s Oberlin. We can follow all of it back to the Awakening.

Historians have attributed abolitionists’ refusal to accept any kind of gradualism in the freeing of slaves to the ethos of the need for immediate action, the need for one to make a decision on the spot in all the revival meetings of the Second Great Awakening.⁶ The YMCA, countless colleges and universities, the

American Bible Society, so much good all can be tracked directly back to the Awakening.

It is *that* beautiful, that vast and glorious and captivating. **There is this built-in self-correcting, re-animating capacity in the Christian movement due to the Spirit's residence in the church. Christian history is in many ways the story of successive seasons of awakening.** We love it. We yearn for it. We need it, desperately, more every day—in our culture, in our churches, in our families, in ourselves. We want to be in on an awakening, to be in on a work of God in our day. Again, we have a soft spot for this, a longing for this; we want to be about sowing for a great awakening.

But what about that sowing piece? Lots of spine-tingling anecdotes can be unwound about revival's triumphs and heroes. But in all honesty, where does it come from? **Where does awakening start? How do we sow for a great awakening?**

That's the question I took in the fall of 2010, as a part of my PhD research, to the Islands of Lewis and Harris in the Outer Hebrides of far-northern Scotland, searching for anyone who might remember something about the Hebridean Revival, what some

historians describe as the last real awakening in the Western world.

The key leader of that revival, Duncan Campbell, finally consented to come for ten days in 1949 and ultimately stayed for nearly three years. The best account of the Hebridean Revival is a book entitled *Sounds from Heaven*,⁷ which includes testimonials of twenty-three eyewitnesses, eleven of whom I was able to meet for interviews in the sanctuary of the Church of Scotland in the tiny town of Barvas, where the awakening began.

Tears still flowed freely as these men and women, now in their eighties, recalled what it was like when God moved among the people. I could go on and on about the miraculous stories they told to me.

But was it Campbell's preaching, I asked them? Or was it a certain method? Yes, these were important, they explained, but to a man or woman, they described something more essential: a kind of spiritual posture found among some who were the catalytic core—a spirit of urgency and audacity, an attitude of brokenness and desperation, a manner of prayer that could be daring and agonizing. These friends in the Hebrides called it travailing prayer, like the Holy Spirit groaning through them, they

said, like a woman travailing in labor, like Paul in Galatians 4:19 travailing “as if in the pangs of childbirth that Christ might be formed in you.”

And ever since I looked into the eyes of those people who once saw what we so passionately want to see, I’ve come to believe that the true seedbed of awakening is the plowed-up hearts of men and women willing to receive the gift of travail.

“Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy” (Psalm 126:5). That prayer—the precursor to the work of God, always the preparatory, anticipating act of awakening—is not a new idea. But this may be a type of praying that has been lost—not in Christian communities of Asia, or Africa, or Latin America, but somehow forgotten in the West.

This was the praying of the Hebrews who “groaned in their slavery and cried out” (Exod. 2:23) and God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant. This was the prayer of Hannah for a child, overcome to the point of being misunderstood as intoxicated in her petitions: “I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord.” (1 Sam. 1:15). Hezekiah took his desperation to the temple and “spread it out before the Lord” (2 Kings 19:14).

“We have no power to face this vast army,” Jehoshaphat cried out, “but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron. 20:12). When he heard the news of Jerusalem’s brokenness, Nehemiah “sat down and wept,” then fasted and prayed for days (Neh. 1:4).

This is the prayer of the prophets: that we “give [God] no rest,” (Isa. 62:7); that we cling to God “as a loincloth clings to a man’s waist,” (Jer. 13:8–11 nlt); that we “go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts,” (Zech. 8:21); that the priests might “weep between the portico and the altar,” (Joel 2:17).

Elijah “climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees” to pray for relief from drought (1 Kings 18:42). Scholars say it was the posture of a woman giving birth.⁸ Daniel 9:3 says he “turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition” for Jerusalem.

This is the praying of the Psalms.

“Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed” (Psalm 119:136); “Day and night I cry out before you” (Psalm 88:1); “Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need” (Psalm 142:6).

This was the praying of Jesus, who “offered up prayers and petitions with fervant cries and tears

to the one who could save him” (Heb. 5:7); “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it” (Luke 19:41).

He blessed those with spiritual hunger and thirst. He taught those who followed him to keep on asking and seeking and knocking. He told parables to illustrate how his disciples should keep on praying and not give up (see Luke 18:1–8).

He healed ten with leprosy who “called out in a loud voice” (Luke 17:13); the only child of a father who came saying, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son” (Luke 9:38); two blind men calling for Jesus’ help who, when rebuked by the crowd, “shouted all the louder,” (Matt. 20:31).

There is no deeper view of the heart of Jesus than Gethsemane, where the agony of prayer drew the first blood of the atonement.

This is the praying of the early church, cleaving to one another in expectancy before Pentecost, “earnestly praying to God for” Peter in prison (Acts 12:5).

This was the prayer of Paul, who implored the Romans, “by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle”—literally, to agonize with me—“by praying to God for me” (Rom. 15:30).

He commended Epaphras to the Colossians as “always wrestling in prayer for you” (Col. 4:12).

This is praying in the Spirit, who “intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Rom. 8:26).

And in the Revelation, the only recorded prayer of the Holy Spirit is the urgent cry, “Come!” which, when united with the prayer of the church, is addressed to Jesus beckoning his thrice repeated promise, “I come quickly!” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 17, 20)

The Bible seems utterly unfamiliar with casual prayer: prayer of the mouth and not the heart.

Travail—a kind of burdened, focused pressing—seems closer to the throbbing core of prayer in Scripture.

Tertullian considered prayer a kind of “holy violence to God.”⁹ Origen, in the second century, believed that “to weeping and weeping alone, God will pay attention.”¹⁰

In his *Confessions*, Augustine, referring to his conversion, called himself a son of his mother’s tears.¹¹

The Celtic missionaries expected that “Thy measure of prayer shall be until thy tears come.”¹² Benedict wrote the same understanding of prayer into his monastic *Rule*.¹³

In Eastern Orthodoxy, John Chrysostom advocated for travailing prayer, “for with these tears souls are planted.”¹⁴ Many accounts of those making pilgrimages during the middle ages include descriptions of sobbing and falling in prayer.¹⁵

Girolamo Savonarola, a Dominican friar in Florence, became controversial for his denunciation of moral corruption among clergy in the fifteenth century, and was known for how we would pray before the altar until it was wet with tears. Pope Alexander VI eventually excommunicated Savonarola and ordered him burned at the stake.¹⁶ Luther called him a Protestant martyr.¹⁷

Praying for the healing of his friend, Philip Melanchthon, Luther wrote, “I attacked [the Almighty] with his own weapons, quoting from Scripture all the promises I could remember, that prayers should be granted, and said that he must grant my prayer, if I was henceforth to put faith in his promises.”¹⁸

This was the praying of the Puritans, like Richard Sibbes, born thirty years after Luther’s death, who held that prayer is a kind of “wrestling [with God that] will prevail at length, and we shall have such a sight of him.”¹⁹

Which brings us to the eve of the Awakenings we described at the beginning: the first time traveling prayer became associated particularly with the sowing we are here for.

Wesley had been amazed at the praying he observed at Herrnhut so that in the first watch night after his conversion, New Year's Eve 1738, he was gathered with Whitefield and Charles and about sixty others at Fetter Lane, and he writes in his *Journal*: "About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out . . ., and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'"²⁰

Later on, similar to the counsel Monica received for Augustine, Wesley "called on one who was sorrowing as without hope, for her son who turned again to folly. I advised her to wrestle with God for his soul. And in two days he brought home the wandering sheep, fully convinced of the error of his ways."²¹

Wrestling, like Jacob, was a favorite image for Edwards and Finney of the prayer that sows for

awakening. They believed it was not irreverent to be obstinate,²² to grapple, to take up the “blessed struggle” of prayer, Edwards called it.²³

Both of them understood how the Spirit would sometimes brood over a church or community, as he did over chaos in creation, conceiving new life. But it was the church’s role then to pray that new life, those new births, into reality. They referred to the church as the “mother of the converted,” the “helpmate of God.”²⁴ And that praying could sound like a woman in childbirth.

These were intercessors who had been seized by the raw facts of our need for God. Duncan Campbell used to preach, “Let us be honest in the presence of God and get right into the grips of reality. Have I a vision of [our] desperate need? Oh, for a baptism of honesty, for a gripping sincerity that will move us.”²⁵

The First and Second Awakenings brim with stories of petitioners for whom this honesty produced an agony in prayer, becoming daring, unrelenting, insistent in prayer. They write of sweat and heaving and fasting.²⁶ Finney emphasized praying until we had “prayed through” to assurance that we’d been heard, that it had been done in heaven and we could wait and watch for it on earth.²⁷

Most important to the leaders of awakenings was that none of this courage and audacity and determination in prayer could be manufactured or self-generated. It was the ministry of the Holy Spirit, operating as the “spirit of prayer.”²⁸ Here was to them the key spiritual gift, the essential charism, of awakening: God himself, by his Spirit, providing the discernment, the faith, the energy, even the language, the breath and groan, for the seeds of awakening.

That’s how travailing prayer could surge like a spiritual geyser of overflowing holy love for God and for his world Jesus died to save.

“Sometimes the conduct of the wicked drives Christians to prayer,” Finney wrote, “breaks them down, and makes them sorrowful and tender-hearted, so that they can weep day and night, and instead of scolding the wicked they pray earnestly for them. Then you may expect a revival. Indeed, it is begun already.”²⁹

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

You know, I don’t know anyone who doesn’t feel deep down that they should be praying more, praying better, myself included. And talking about this kind of praying is not intended to give anyone a

guilt trip. Guilt is a very short-lived, shallow incentive for prayer, ultimately ineffective.

But I am wondering if all of us who love and long for awakening would offer God an openness to becoming less casual in praying about it. Some believe awakening is untenable today. The times are too different, our context is too resistant. And thinking about traveling prayer is not aimed at attempting to reconstruct the past.

But every context of awakening has seemed entirely impossible. And “the more we can learn from the past,” Howard Snyder wrote in *The Radical Wesley*, “the more useful we may be as agents of [awakening] ourselves. . . . God invites us to cooperate with him in the work of renewal, and his acts in history suggest clues we would do well not to ignore.”³⁰

Those in the past who had the same soft spot believed that this manner of prayer would cause us to prize the gift of awakening and to love the Giver all the more.³¹ The delay and persevering would purify and humble the church making us ready to receive.³²

Not turning prayer into a work, not in any way earning God’s favors with more volume or drama in our prayers, but being willing to be more experimental in our prayers, less inhibited, more united

in the true ecumenical spirit Wesley advocated and less worried about what others think.

“So far as I know myself,” Wesley wrote, “I have no more concern for the reputation of Methodism or my own than for the reputation of Prester John.”³³

The goodness and burden of awakening is not for careerists. **Awakening is sown by the company of the misunderstood, the downwardly mobile, the unthanked, the obscure, and criticized and burdened. Awakening is messy and costly to people who love it and long for it.** Reputation is the first thing to go in this kind of praying and leading. Jesus taught that our seeds have to die before anything will grow (John 12:24). And maybe it comes to mind what it is you may need to bury for awakening to spring up: distraction, pride, an attitude of expertise, self-sufficiency, being hip, affluence, avoidance, ease.

I wonder what else it would take for us to move into the direction of travailing prayer, how bad it will have to get—if we’re not there already.

I wonder if there are any sowers today who would be willing to regain an awakening sensibility: that grip of empirical honesty Campbell spoke of, a heartache that we cannot shake until we pray it

out. Is there anyone who would be willing to take on a knee-bending “sympathy with God”?³⁴ That was Finney’s phrase. He believed that the prayer meeting was more important than the preaching meeting for convincing sinners because if they came and saw the church agonizing over souls, they would have a picture of how God felt about them. Prayer was proof of the love of God in the Awakenings.

Who is willing to let God give you a share of that holy love for his world, voiced first not in pulpits or blogs or books or tweets, but in closets? Are any sowers willing to explore this gifting that has preceded the awakening works of God.

I recall a leadership conference in London, nearly six thousand of us in the Royal Albert Hall, when the speaker felt compelled to stop and invite us into a season of **waiting in prayer**.

And we did, for what became an awkwardly long time, maybe fifteen minutes of silence, until finally a few voices rose that I could only describe as contractions of prayer: sobbing, moaning, pleading, travailing, with no words. The speaker shepherded those moments perfectly. It was as though the Spirit was giving voice through some to our collective heartcry for his love and power in our day.

I spoke later with Pete Greig, a writer and leader in prayer,³⁵ who was there. He commented how he is becoming persuaded that the Spirit wants to reintroduce this gift in the West, that perhaps we are growing more ready to reclaim it. I have wondered if the Spirit may have withdrawn this gift from the church for a time because there were so few looking for it, wanting it, who felt the need for it. Is there anyone willing to explore this sowing vocation, the gift by which the Spirit gives our prayers integrity, their expression commensurate with, proportionate to the depth and intensity of our need?

These six years of research have convinced me that very little may happen in awakening until more of us step into that. Could we be willing to give up less easily in prayer, to take more risks in prayer, to be bold and tenacious again? That may mean becoming healed of past disappointments in prayer.

Whatever it might summon from you, is there anyone—fellow lovers of awakening—who would be willing to sow for it? **Travailing prayer is not the only thing we do. But it is the first thing, and the most important thing.**

Those who are now crying are blessed, Jesus promised in Luke 6:21, because you will laugh with

joy. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. That is his promise to travailing prayer. And he is too worthy, awakening is too beautiful, and the need for it is too great, to settle for anything less.

NOTES

1. In October of 1744, a number of Scottish ministers agreed to devote part of Saturday evening and Sunday morning every week and the first Tuesday of the last month of each quarter of the year to fervent, united prayer for the renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When John Wesley was invited to join, he replied to James Erskine on March 16, 1745, “Might it not be practicable to have the concurrence of Mr. Edwards in New England, if not of Mr. Tennent also, herein?” (Wesley 1982, 128. The text of the Scottish “Memorial” for union in prayer is found in WJE 5:324–28.)
2. Though Edwards and Wesley never met or engaged in any direct correspondence, the two men did have knowledge of each other’s work and ideas. Wesley published five of Edwards’s works, more than he did of any other individual. (Rogers 1966, 20, 22)
3. WJE 4:151.
4. Finney, *Lectures*, 273.
5. Finney, *Memoirs*, 325–26.
6. Paul Johnson cites Gilbert Barnes for having “discovered” the formative role played in the abolition movement by the urgent prayer and decisionism of Finney’s revivals: “Barnes wanted to explain why, in the 1830s, critics of slavery rejected gradualist techniques, recruited thousands of new supporters, and attacked the South’s peculiar institution as a national evil that demanded immediate abolition. He analyzed the rhetoric and tactics of the movement and the sources of its support, and

argued convincingly that antislavery immediatism was a direct outgrowth of the [Rochester] revival of 1830–31.” (Johnson 2004, 5) Barnes mentions Lyman Beecher ruminating after the departure of the “Lane Rebels”: “He discerned the true impulse of the antislavery movement, not in the noisy futilities of the Boston reformers, but in the expanding benevolence of the Great Revival. ‘Abolitionists,’ he concluded, were ‘the offspring of the Oneida denunciatory revivals.’” (Barnes 1957, 72; Beecher’s quote is from a letter to William Beecher, July 15, 1835, Beecher 1865, 2, 345.)

7. Peckham 2004.

8. Dutch Sheets comments, “We are told in this passage that the posture he maintained while praying was the position of a woman in that day giving birth. The symbolism is clear. Elijah was in travail. He was birthing something. Without any question, the posture of Elijah is to symbolize this for us. . . . *Even though it was God’s will to bring the rain and it was also God’s time for the rain, someone on earth still had to birth it through prayer*” (Sheets 1996, 132). This “squatting posture with the head between the knees” (Gray 1964, 359; Jones 1984, 324) does approximate a position of childbirth publicized in 1883 by George Julius Engelmann in his seminal work entitled *Labor Among Primitive Peoples* (Engelmann 1883, 61–139). At the least it appears that “Elijah assumes the posture of humble, intense prayer” (Nelson 1987, 118).

9. “Tertullian contended that prayer involves ‘a kind of holy violence to God,’ because it consists in fervent and unceasing supplication.” (Bloesch 1980, 132 [no reference provided].)

10. “The mighty Christian thinker Origen, ultimately rejected as a patristic authority, makes my central point, one repeated by many canonical writers of the Church. . . . Tears produce mercy, and there is hope of salvation. *To weeping, and weeping alone, God will pay attention.*” (Patton 2005, 262 [Origen, *In Ieremiam* (c240), 3:49]).

11. Augustine’s mother, Monica, approached a bishop asking him to speak with her son. “‘Leave him alone,’ he advised. ‘Simply pray for him to the Lord.’ . . . She pleaded all the more insistently and with free-flowing tears that he would consent to see me and discuss matters with me. A little vexed, he answered, ‘Go away now; but hold on to this: it is inconceivable that he should perish, a son of tears like yours.’ In her conversations with me later she often recalled that she had taken these words to be an oracle from heaven” (Augustine 1997 [397–400], 91). Augustine spoke of himself being reborn by his mother’s anguished praying as a “son of tears” nearly three centuries before Isaac the Syrian was reflecting on what happens when “the moment of the birth of the spiritual child is now at hand, and the travail of childbirth becomes intense.” (Ware 2005, 250 [Isaac, *Homily* 14, Wensinck (trans.), 85; Miller (trans.), 82–83].)

12. Ian Bradley has observed that “the rules for the Irish monasteries in particular have a severity not found in those associated with the Continental orders: ‘Thy measure of prayer shall be until thy tears come; . . . or thy measure of work of labour or of thy genuflections until thy perspiration often comes, if thy tears are not free.’” (Bradley 2000, 17 [The Rule of Columcille as printed in the appendix of Stone, S., *Lays of Iona and Other Poems* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.) 1897, 112].)

13. Benedict ensconced tearful prayer in his *Rule* as part of provisioning the optimal environment for life together in monastic community, requiring that brothers “everyday with tears and sighs confess your past sins to God in prayer.” Around the buildings of the monastery, especially near the chapel, Benedict encouraged monks simply to “go in and pray, not in a loud voice, but with tears and heartfelt devotion.” (Benedict 1981 [c530], 28, 72–73)

14. Patton, *op. cit.*, 257–58 (Chrysostom, St. John, “Homilies on Colossians,” Homily XII, on Colossians 4:12–13, Broadus, John [trans.] in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Schaff, Philip [ed.], [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers] 1994, 13:316–17 *passim*).

15. Bhattacharji has noted from “the most detailed account of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to have come out of [the medieval] period, that of the Dominican friar Felix Fabri,” that when pilgrims reached the church of the Holy Sepulchre, “they uttered groans, sighs, laments, and sobs, and some fell to the ground. . . . Men and women abandoned themselves equally to these behaviors; but in particular, he adds, the women screamed as though in labor.” (Bhattacharji 2005, 235 [Fabri, Felix, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem*, Hassler, C. D. (ed.), (Stuttgart: Societas Literaria Stuttgardiensis) 1843, 1:238–239. English translation: Stewart, Aubrey (tr.), *Felix Fabri (c. 1480–1483 A. D.)*, (London: Palestine Pilgrims’ Texts Society) 1892, 1:283ff].)

16. Duewel 2002, 147–148. “His hours of weeping intercession prepared God’s way for the Reformation.” (Ibid., 148) “His

followers were called ‘weepers’ as they wept over the sins of the people.” (Ibid., 152)

17. Lawson 1911, 73.

18. Hoffman 1976, 196 (no reference provided).

19. Sibbes 1973, 228.

20. Wesley 1990, 29.

21. Ibid., 260.

22. “Thoroughly obstinate and insuperable in his resolution” (WJE 24:181), Jacob “laid out his strength in wrestling” (Edwards 2003, “The Way to Obtain the Blessing of God Is Not to Let Him Go Except He Bless Us,” McMullen [ed.], 19) “How very affecting were the circumstances under which [Jacob] is represented as prevailing with God! He wrestled all night.” (Finney, “The Conditions of Prevailing Prayer,” *The Penny Pulpit* [London: J. Paul, c1853], May 21, 1850, 111, The Richard DuPuis Papers, Oberlin College Archive).

23. WJE 19:421.

24. WJE 13:440; 11:278. Finney, *Lectures*, 68.

25. Campbell 1962, 61–62.

26. Travailing in prayer, David Brainerd “was in such anguish, and pleaded with so much earnestness and importunity, that

when I rose from my knees I felt extremely weak and overcome; I could scarcely walk straight, my joints were loosed, the sweat ran down my face and body, and nature seemed as if it would dissolve” (WJE 7:261).

27. Soon after being licensed to preach, Finney was in Antwerp, New York, and rose early one Sunday morning, making his way to a grove “to pour out my heart before God for a blessing on the labors of the day. I could not express the agony of my soul in words, but struggled with much groaning and, I believe, with many tears, for an hour or two, without getting relief. I returned to my room in the hotel; but almost immediately came back to the grove. This I did three times. The last time I got complete relief, just as it was time to go to the meeting” (Finney [1984], 17).

28. Edwards taught that the “glorious day that the Church of God is to enjoy on earth” will be brought to pass when, at its beginning, “the Spirit of God . . . will operate in a remarkable manner as a spirit of prayer.” (MS Sermon 608 on Zech 12:10, Apr. 1741, Gen. Mss. 151, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, L.1r.) Finney uses the phrases “being filled with the Spirit” and “having” or “receiving the spirit of prayer” interchangeably: “The Spirit in the hearts of saints is pre-eminently a spirit of prayer” (Finney 1877, 255).

29. Finney, *Lectures*, 23.

30. Snyder 1980, 142.

31. “Fervent prayer in many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it” (Edwards 1998, “The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God,” Hickman [ed.], 116).

32. It was for this demolition of pride, Finney preached, that God wrestled with Jacob, who “needed to be humbled and broken down” in order to prevail in prayer (Finney, “The Conditions of Prevailing Prayer”, *The Penny Pulpit*, *op. cit.*, 111). For this breaking “often God delays that he may bring us lower in the dust before him” until, as in “the case of the Syrophenician woman . . . our blessed Lord [is] all overcome by such blended humility and importunity and faith” (Finney, “On Persevering Prayer for Others”, *The Oberlin Evangelist* XVII, 2, January 17, 1855, 10).

33. Wesley 1931, “Letter to Samuel Walker, September 3, 1756,” 194.

34. Finney believed that, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, “you will know what it is to sympathize with the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . O how he agonized in view of the state of sinners! how he travailed in soul for their salvation!” (Finney, *Lectures*, 116). “Without this spirit [of prayer] there can be no such sympathy between you and God” (Ibid., 104). “Let me say again: that all the hindrances of prevailing prayer, may be summed up in one, which is one of the greatest, if not the greatest of the difficulties—I refer to a want of sympathy with God” (Finney, “How to Prevail with God”, *The Penny Pulpit* [London: J. Paul, c1853],

May 22, 1850, 117, The Richard DuPuis Papers, Oberlin College Archive).

35. See <https://www.24-7prayer.com/team/14/greig/>.

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