

# A Red Hot Coal For Christ

By E. A. Johnston



**Bible Text:** Isaiah 45:2  
**Preached On:** Monday, October 10, 2016

**Evangelism Awakening**  
Tampa, Florida 33607

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/9225](http://www.sermonaudio.com/9225)

I heard a message recently, friends, that really impacted my life. It was one of those messages that begins to gnaw at you and disturb you until you do something about it. I haven't heard a message like that in years, I guess it's because those kinds of messages aren't preached much anymore. In fact, this message that I heard was a tape recording of a message preached about 50 years ago but it still had a lingering anointing of the Spirit of God attending it because it occupied my thoughts for several days and it challenged me. It was one of those incarnational messages that can't be preached unless the truths mentioned and the sermon are real in the preacher's life, and it had a power attending it, second generation. I say second generation because the man giving the message was relating a story of a friend's sermon that he had heard and the incidents behind it. I'll do my best, friends, to try and explain the story to you.

There was a Presbyterian pastor who longed to see revival and he prayed for revival all the time. One day he went to his mailbox and there was a survey in there from his denomination asking him and other pastors around the country to list the reasons why they felt they weren't seeing revival in their church and to list what they saw as the main hindrances to revival and the survey was collected of several hundred Presbyterian ministers. This particular pastor was troubled by the survey because he wanted to give an honest appraisal of why his church was not seeing revival so he shut himself up with God for several days in prayer and from that time he concluded that the main hindrance to revival in his church was himself, the pastor, and he put that reason on the survey and mailed it to his regional director.

It was time for their general assembly meeting and the main topic of this meeting to ministers was to read aloud the results of this survey. The meeting was held in a downtown hotel ballroom and the moderator read out loud to the assembled pastors the results of the survey. He said that one third of the ministers responded that the main hindrance to revival in their church was because of the deacons. Another third listed the main hindrance of seeing revival was in their congregation. And the other third said that it was the deterioration in society which was the problem. Then the moderator said that he had to just read this one peculiar letter he received by a pastor because of its uniqueness and he read that pastor's response that the main reason why his church wasn't seeing revival was because of the minister and when the other pastors heard that, they rocked back and forth in their chairs and grabbed their stomachs in raucous laughter at such a foolish statement. And when the meeting was over, the pastor who wrote that letter approached the moderator and informed him that he was the man who had sent in

that response to which the moderator gave him a sneer and turned his heels on him and walked away.

Well, this broken-hearted pastor went back home and to his church and he sought God's face in prayer on what message to bring before his congregation the following Sunday and God gave him a message that would have made old Charles Spurgeon happy because Spurgeon used to advise his young preachers to pick a topic that was so gripping it would gather a crowd at 5 a.m. Well, this pastor felt he had that kind of message from the Lord and it was from Isaiah 45,

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight.

And before this pastor could preach that message to his congregation, he had to straighten out a few things in his own life and he wrote two letters and mailed them to straighten out those things before he delivered his message on making the crooked places straight in your life to his congregation.

Well, Sunday came and while he was preaching, he noticed that a few people got up and left in the middle of his message while others squirmed in their seats and looked either uncomfortable or mad, and at the evening service, the church was almost empty. The next day, he was summoned into the mayor's office and the mayor said to him, "Alright, pastor, give me the names of the individuals who told you those things about me that you mentioned yesterday." The pastor said that nobody had done that but the mayor did not believe him. Later that morning, he ran into a garage mechanic on the street who said to him in a wounded voice, "I've been waiting for your apology from those terrible things you said about me in church yesterday morning." And that afternoon, he was ordered to go and meet his head deacon at his place of business and the man stood there shaking, angrily rolling a cigar in his fingers as he demanded the names of the informants who had told those horrible things about him to his pastor.

Well, the result of this pastor's sermon was he was put on suspension without pay and the church voted to get rid of such a troublesome pastor. But God gave this man another church in a different city where the people were more receptive to the things of God and a revival broke out under his preaching that so crowded the church they had to move the meetings to a large auditorium where many souls were gloriously saved and that revival under that faithful pastor ended up shaking his entire community for Christ and the Gospel.

Well, that's the end of that story, friends, but it's not the end of my message. Like I said, the story about the pastor who saw revival began to gnaw at me. I have prayed for several decades to see revival. I've seen a few dewdrops here and there but nothing earth-shattering. I do believe, though, that when we get serious with God, he gets serious with us. I can personally testify to that, friends. But this man's sermon on making the crooked places straight really bothered me. As preachers, we must be in alignment to the heart of God and anointed by the Spirit of God, at least that's my definition of a God-called preacher who fearlessly preaches God's message to sinful men no matter the cost like this

Presbyterian pastor did to his people, then they turned him out on his ear but he pressed on, preaching the truth as he knew it and God attended his ministry with an outpouring of his grace.

That's why I go so excited about that story, but part of it gnawed at me. You see, friends, we must be able to say with the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And that word "castaway" in the Greek is the word "adokimos" which means "worthless and useless," meaning that your preaching has no power and no impact in regard to eternity. And as I chewed on that text from Isaiah about making the crooked places straight, I asked God to show me the crooked places in my own life bent by sin which needed to be made straight.

I was out walking by the ocean one morning and as I walked I was praying, which is my usual custom, and a person came to my mind that had wounded me and I began to get upset over it as I thought about it, but then I stopped and looked heavenward and prayed, "Lord, make this crooked place in my life straight by the power of Calvary." And quite suddenly, those bitter feelings were completely gone. Then as I walked a little more, disturbing financial circumstance entered my mind and began to trouble me and began to worry me and I stopped again and looked heavenward and I prayed, "Lord, I give you this crooked place in my life. Please make it straight by the power of the cross." And instantly I had peace. On and on throughout the day, I entered an introspective process of giving to God each broken and crooked thing in my life that needed to be made straight and I would face each of them individually with the prayer, "Lord, please make this crooked place straight in my life through the power of Calvary." I ended the day standing on the beach as the sun set with my heart lifted heavenward as I made a few more crooked places straight in my life and do you know what, friend? I actually believed God was able to do it, to affect change in my life by the power of the cross.

In the Gospel of Mark in chapter 11 and verses 20 to 24, we are confronted with the reality of prayer in regard to faith and believing God to perform what we ask. Listen to this passage, friends. "And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." I really believe, friends, that God will answer the prayer that is in perfect alignment with his will, that if we pray for God to make an effectual change in us to make us more obedient, to make us more useful to him, more fruitful to him, he will answer that prayer. So when I asked the Lord to straighten out the crooked areas in my life bent by sin and to do it by the power of the cross, I fully expect that crooked place to be made straight by God because with God all things are possible.

Do you believe that, friend? When Jesus was here in his earthly ministry and as he passed through towns and villages, all who encountered him experienced change. Do you know what, friends? Jesus hasn't changed. My Bible states in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." But you must have an encounter with him to experience change. Perhaps there is an area in your own life, friend, that is crooked and needs to be made straight to align yourself more to God and his will for your life so your life will be more in harmony with him. Brother Pastor, will you take an introspective look into the crooked places in your own life that may hinder revival in your church?

Remember our story about the pastor who desired to see revival and he admitted he was the number one hindrance to it and he had to straighten out some things in his own walk with the Lord before God could move in marvelous blessings. Revival is getting serious with God. If you want a personal revival, friend, then get serious with God about the crooked things in your life that need to be dealt with, to be made straight. Ask the Lord to make them straight by the power of the cross and believe he will accomplish it. This is the pathway to revival. The Christian life is lived via the cross.

Well, that pastor was allowed to witness a mighty move of grace in another church because the people were receptive to God. Let me ask you, friend: if there was a crooked area in your life that is displeasing to God, wouldn't you want to know about it? Wouldn't you? I would. I don't want to risk being a castaway when I preach. God declares in Amos, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Can they? Don't you want to get serious with God, friend, and encounter him and experience real change in your life instead of just talking about it? You have to desire that change, friend.

My memory goes back years ago when I received a telephone call from a pastor who is now in glory. He was an elderly pastor and he had read my book, "Realities of Revival," and he said he'd buy my lunch if I met with him to talk about revival. Well, I couldn't turn down a free lunch, so I met with this dear saint. He told me he had been a pastor for nearly 50 years and he wanted to see revival come before he died and would I help him. I looked him in the eye and said, "If you are sincere in that you want to see revival come to your church, then you must repent of your sins for revival begins with you." He looked at me strangely and silently stared at me while we quickly finished our lunch and said our good-byes. I didn't think I'd ever hear from him again but the following week I received another phone call from him inviting me to lunch with two of his pastor buddies and when we got there, they asked me if I would meet with them and pray on a regular basis for revival. Of course I would, and a time was set and after several months of meeting for prayer with these men, I'll never forget it, this old pastor while we were praying stood up erect, his body rigid and then he groaned and then he fell to the floor and he cried out, "Dear God, forgive me for all my dirty rotten sins! I want to see revival and let it start with me!" Well, let me tell you, friends, that man was making the crooked places straight in his life and God honored that for this old pastor was a real ball of fire in the pulpit after that. He flamed out with his boots on and went on to glory a red hot coal for Christ.

How about you, friend? Are you ready for change? How bad do you want to be a red hot coal for Christ? Give him the crooked places and believe he will straighten them out by the power of the cross.

Let us pray.