

LESSON THREE

And they overcame him [the accuser of the brethren] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 12:11

Deeper Spiritual Experiences of Famous Christians

JOHN WESLEY 1703-1791 (England & Ireland)

John Wesley, who was born in 1703 and died in 1791, was an English preacher with the Church of England. He became leader of a revival movement known as Methodism. He and his brother Charles, who was a prolific hymn writer, went as Church of England missionaries, at the request of James Oglethorpe, the founder of the Georgia colony, to start a parish church in Savannah. His ministry in Georgia, from 1736 to the end of 1737, was unsuccessful, and he returned to England a broken and defeated man.

On the way to America, the Wesley brothers were on a ship with a bunch of Moravian Christians. When a severe storm came up and broke off the mast of the ship, the Wesley brothers and the other English travelers panicked, but the Moravians calmly sang hymns and prayed. This made a lasting impression on John Wesley, and he realized that they had some personal inner strength in Christ, which I believe was the infilling of the Holy Spirit and which he lacked.

Returning to England, Wesley continued to serve in the Church of England, but did not forget the Moravians. Reluctantly on May 24, 1738, he agreed to attend a Moravian meeting. He recorded this in his journal:

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, *Christ alone*, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” Since there seems to be no doubt that Wesley was already saved, and because of the fruit that came from his ministry after this, I believe this was a baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Subsequently, John Wesley began his own ministry. While his fellow minister, George Whitefield, was very Calvinistic, believing that everyone was predestined, Wesley was very Armenian, believing that individuals had free will to decide themselves whether to follow Christ or not. They both, however, were very non-traditional for their day and were involved in travel and preaching outdoors. Wesley furthermore used un-ordained men *and* women, which was unheard of, promoted discipleship, and insisted on inward, personal holiness. He did, however, remain in the Church of England. He was very controversial and barred from preaching in many parish churches, and the Methodists were persecuted. He continued to persist steadfastly, and at the end of his life, he was widely respected and called “the best loved man in England.

(Information taken from Wikipedia)

CHARLES FINNEY 1792-1875 (USA)

Charles Finney was perhaps the greatest revivalist in American history. He would preach, and whole towns would be converted. Jails would have no occupants, and saloons would close. He was a licensed American Presbyterian minister, and a leader of the Second Great Awakening in U.S. history. He rejected traditional Reformed theology, teaching people have complete free will to choose salvation.

Finney believed in the abolition of slavery and, uncharacteristic of his time, in equal education opportunities for both women and African Americans.

Finney was born in Connecticut on August 29, 1792, the youngest of 9 children. He became a lawyer but gave up his practice after a dramatic conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit. After his conversion, he, a Master Mason, renounced the Masons and considered the group anti-Christian.

In his own words, he recounts his Baptism in the Holy Spirit experience:

“As I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was such a

thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Ghost descended on me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know, but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. The waves came over me and over me, one after the other, until, I recollect, I cried out, 'I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.' I said, 'Lord, I cannot bear any more; yet I had no fear of death.'"

(Information taken from Wikipedia and quote taken from *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* by James Lawson)

DWIGHT L. MOODY 1837-1899 (United States, England, Sweden)

Dwight L. Moody was born the seventh child of Edwin and Betsy Moody on February 5th, 1837 in Northfield, Massachusetts. He was raised in the Unitarian Church. His father died when he was four years old. He had to drop out of school after 5th grade to help work on the family farm. At age 17 he left home to seek for work in Boston. Reluctantly his uncle hired him to work in his retail shoe store, but the uncle set as a condition of his employment that he attend Mt. Vernon Congregational Church. At this church, in April 1855, Moody was converted to Evangelical Christianity by his Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball, who won Moody to Christ by telling him how much God loved him. Kimball later said that Moody had one of the most spiritually dark minds, when he first started coming to his Sunday school class, that he had ever seen.

In 1858, Moody himself started a Sunday school class. He was so successful that his Sunday school class ended up becoming a church in Chicago in 1864. In October 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed his church and his residence and the homes of most of his members. (Moody, by then, was married and had three children.) He said of this experience-the fire-that he saved nothing but his reputation and Bible.

James Lawson in *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* quotes Moody and writes about this period in Moody's life: "There came a great hunger into my soul. I did not know what it was. I began to cry out as never before. I really felt that I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service.' While Mr. Moody was in this mental and spiritual condition, say his son, Chicago was laid in ashes. The great fire swept out of existence both Farwell Hall and Illinois Street Church. On Sunday night after the meeting, as Mr. Moody went homeward, he saw the glare of flames and knew it meant ruin for Chicago. About one o'clock Farwell Hall was burned, and soon his church went down. Everything was scattered. Mr. Moody went East to New York City to collect funds for the sufferers from the Chicago fire, but his heart and soul were crying out for the power from on high. 'My heart was not in the work of begging,' he says. 'I could not appeal. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York...oh, what a day!...I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world-it would be as the small dust of the balance.'"

After all of this, Moody moved back to Northfield, Massachusetts. During a trip to the United Kingdom in 1872, Moody became well-known as an evangelist, considered by many as the greatest evangelist of the 19th Century and was even invited by Charles Spurgeon, the famous London Baptist preacher, to speak in his church. Moody and his song leader, Ira Sankey, held large revival campaigns in England, Sweden, and America, where he became a household name. He preached his last sermon in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1899 and died a little over a month later, presumably of congestive heart failure. R. A. Torrey took over what became known as the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

(taken from Wikipedia and *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* by James Lawson)

SMITH WIGGLESWORTH 1859-1947 (England)

I once read a book about Wigglesworth. He got on a train and took his seat. The presence of the Lord was so strong on him, that a man, who claimed not to know who Wigglesworth was, suddenly got up and went to Wigglesworth, fell at his feet, and asked what he must do to get saved.

Smith Wigglesworth was born June 10th, 1859, in England to a poor family and died in 1947. Since he had to work in the fields from a young age, he was unschooled and did not learn to read until he was grown and married. According to his own testimony, he was born again in a Methodist church at the age of 8, baptized by immersion in a Baptist church, and attended the Church of England, the Plymouth Brethren, and other Anglican churches on a regular basis. He married Polly Featherstone, who was a preacher with the Salvation Army, and they had one daughter and four sons. His wife taught him to read the Bible, and he often said that the Bible was the only book he ever read, and he would not even allow newspapers or other reading material in his home. He was a plumber, until he became too busy with preaching to do secular work, and became an internationally known minister.

Wigglesworth largely believed his ministerial success was due to his Baptism with the Holy Spirit. He said: *"I want you to see that he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself or builds himself up. We must be edified before we can edify the church. I cannot estimate what I, personally, owe to the Holy Ghost method of spiritual edification. I am here before you as one of the biggest conundrums in the world. There never was a weaker man on the platform. Language? None. Inability—full of it. All natural things in my life point exactly opposite to my being able to stand on the platform and preach the gospel. The secret is that the Holy Ghost came and brought this wonderful edification of the Spirit. I had been reading this Word continually as well as I could, but the Holy Ghost came and took hold of it, for the Holy Ghost is the breath of it, and He illuminated it to me."*

He believed in laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and prayer handkerchiefs. He believed in praying more than once for a specific healing was a sign of unbelief, and he sometimes attributed ill-health to demons.

The first major outpouring of the Holy Spirit in modern times had occurred in Los Angeles on Azusa Street in 1906. A year later the Holy Spirit was poured out in an Anglican church in Sunderland, England under the ministry of Reverent Alexander Boddy. A man who had been healed of leg cancer under Wigglesworth heard about the revival and offered to pay for Wigglesworth's expenses to attend. Although Wigglesworth had already had several events happen in his life that were labeled by some as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he was so hungry for more that he went to the meetings in Sunderland.

For four days he sought the Lord intensely in prayer, wanting "nothing but God." Though he thought he was already baptized in the Spirit, he did not have what those in the Sunderland meeting considered the baptism in the Spirit. He decided to go home, but went by the pastor's home to say, "Good-bye." There he was confronted by the pastor's wife, who told him that he needed the baptism, despite what he thought, and she lay hands on him and prayed. Interrupted by a knock on the door, she left the room. While she was gone, the fire of God fell on Wigglesworth, and he "was bathed in glorious power and received a consciousness that he was cleansed by the blood of Jesus....He had received his Pentecost. But this wasn't all! Filled with joy, he had a vision of the empty cross and of Jesus Christ, exalted at the right hand of the Father. Finally, praise in an unknown language started flowing from his lips—he was speaking in 'other tongues, as the Spirit gave [him] utterance (Acts 2:4)."

"Wigglesworth's hunger had at last won through all his preconceptions, through all that was thought of him, and through the rebukes he had received. Spiritual hunger is the driving factor, the force that will carry us through all opposition. It is the characteristic that makes a man or woman stand out in the kingdom of God."

(Quotes are from *The Wigglesworth Standard: The Standard for God's Endtime Army* by Peter J. Madden except Wigglesworth's Holy Spirit quote early in this section, which was taken from Wikipedia.)