

God Moves in Pennsylvania

Evangelist Tom Palmer writes the following concerning God moving in an extraordinary way in Northeast Pennsylvania.

“The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad” (Ps. 126:3).

“This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23).

We arrived at Calkins Baptist Church, located in the small rural community of Milanville in northeast Pennsylvania, on Sunday, Oct. 7. We had traveled all day from Maine and late in the evening I met with the pastor. When I went home, I told my wife, that he was angry. He was angry at the devil, the world, playing church, and sin to name a few things. We agreed to meet on Monday for prayer. Throughout the week we continued to meet daily to share, pray, and prepare. Patty and I were gone for a couple days, but the daily prayer meetings continued.

We began the preaching meetings on Sunday, Oct. 14 and they were scheduled through the 21st. Two other churches from the area joined in the meeting, one of which we had been in for an 8-day crusade during September.

I would say an overwhelming sense of conviction moved in. God dealt with secret sins, offenses, and worldliness. We saw some people saved in rather unusual ways. One man prayed to be saved in the prayer meeting before the service. Another couple simply came in from the community before a service and asked to be saved.

On Thursday I preached on prayer. A prayer meeting for men was announced and 20 men gathered after the service and prayed until midnight. A similar meeting was held again the next week. Prayer became the highlight. Each night at 6:30 we had four prayer meetings going. One was for teens and we had around 30 teens every night. We really focused a lot of attention on the teens as Ben and Jennifer Haupt were with us as well as Julie and Edwin Barton (my daughter and son-in-law who are also going into evangelism).

During every service there were as many as 6 men downstairs praying through the service. Our evening services lasted up to 2 hours and even longer. This little 150 year old church building was packed. The little balcony was full every night and people sometimes had to sit in chairs in the aisle.

The decision was made to extend the meetings into a second week of preaching. Initially it was assumed that this would be a week of evangelistic effort but it became clear that there was still much to do in the lives of God's people. We prepared a "Sin Bin" which was filled a number of times. We had a big burning the next week after a meeting.

At the same time there was an increasing burden that swept over teens and adults from the church and we saw numerous conversions though that was never really preached. In all 20-25 people made salvation decisions. Many of them were prompted by the people themselves as they would come asking for someone to help them to be saved. Sometimes people were dealt with

until as late at 1:30 a.m. One man drove to the church in the afternoon but for 11/2 hours sat in his van so burdened down he couldn't get out.

On the third Sunday night we had a testimony service that lasted well over an hour. An invitation was given and God again moved mightily as people continued to clean house and deal with needs. Two people were saved that night, one being a lady who in her testimony said she wanted someone to tell her how to be saved.

The decision was made to have a third week of preaching, but to make the emphasis a youth crusade. Each night for another whole week we had as many as 30-35 teens present. The Haults needed to go home so the Bartons returned to help. That week we had services that lasted between 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 hours a night. We also had many adults attend. We had a teaching time on practical Christian living, a prayer meeting, and then a preaching time. The young people loved it. I honestly think we could have gone on longer if the Lord directed and they would have kept coming. Young people continued to be saved and the excitement kept building. Amazingly in almost 4 weeks of ministry, we never had pizza one time! After nearly four weeks we did leave on Friday Nov. 2. A combined baptism was held on Sunday the 4th with one of the other churches and 18 people were baptized. We were not present but heard it was a wonderful service of testimony.

I think there were several things that were significant. First, there was a sense of absolute desperation. Many came to the point of being totally fed up with our pitiful state of Christianity in the twenty-first century. Second, there was a great movement of prayer. There were days when we were in prayer meetings up to six or more hours. The prayer rooms became a highlight. Third, there was tremendous conviction that became inescapable and brought about many spontaneous decisions. Every day there was expectancy to just see what God would do next. Over and over again I heard people testify that their burden was lifted. The joy of Lord began to take over. People were thrilled and continue to rejoice. These meetings were not about a man like a pastor or an evangelist. This was a meeting with God and there was a God-consciousness that I personally have never known. It lasted 24 hours a day. My prayer is that God would do it again. Could it be that there are other places that could experience the same thing if there was a sense of desperation that moved people to pray? Could it happen again if we would prepare the way such that the Word of God and the Spirit of God could powerfully work? I believe so. My life and ministry will never be the same. God came, and the experience is continuing to change our lives. I hope that gives an overview. All glory to the Lord. I hope and pray that these simple thoughts will be encouraging.

Tom Palmer