

Melva's Corner



The Church . . . Birth In Prayer

July 16, 2007

(Isaiah 58:8 RSV)

Central Truth: "Let's not play games with ourselves. Let's not divert attention away from the weak prayer life of our own churches."

Have you ever noticed that Jesus launched the Christian church, not while someone was preaching, but while people were praying? In the first two chapters of Acts, the disciples were doing nothing but waiting on God. As they were just sitting there . . . worshipping, communing with God, letting God shape them and cleanse their spirits and do those heart operations that only the Holy Spirit can do . . . the church was born. The Holy Spirit was poured out.

What does it say about our churches today that God birthed the church in a prayer meeting, and prayer meetings today are almost extinct?

Am I the only one who gets embarrassed when religious leaders in America talk about prayer in schools? We don't have even that much prayer in many churches! Out of our humility, you would think we would keep quiet on that particular subject until we practice what we preach in our own ministries.

I am sure that the Roman emperors didn't have prayer to God in their schools. But then, the early Christians didn't seem to care what Caligula or Claudius or Nero did. How could any emperor stop God? How, in fact, could the demons of hell make headway when God's people prayed and called upon His name? Impossible!

In the New Testament we don't see Peter or John wringing their hands and saying, "Oh, what are we going to do? Emperor

Caligula's nuts . . . he wants to appoint his horse to the Roman senate . . . what a terrible model of leadership! How are we going to respond to this outrage?" No the early church didn't ring there hands at Caligula or any emperor's proposed actions, they just kept praying.

Let's not play games with ourselves. Let's not divert attention away from the weak prayer life of our own churches. In Acts 4, when the apostles were unjustly arrested, imprisoned and threatened, they didn't call for a protest; they didn't reach for some political leverage. Instead, they headed to a prayer meeting. Soon the place was vibrating with the power of the Holy Spirit (vv. 23-31).

As Christians, through prayer, we have the power to change things. We can reach out and embrace new opportunities with expectation. We can welcome the future with excitement.

The apostles had this instinct: When in trouble, pray. When intimidated, pray. When challenged, pray. When persecuted, pray. Always, yes, always pray!

I can't leave this message without reference to Daniel's prayer life, especially when his death decree was issued:

"Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he enters his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day giving thanks before God, as he had been doing previously." (Daniel 6:10)

I submit to you, that's an incredible response to one's own death warrant. Daniel's response reflects his consistent walk with God.

I think the last part of that verse is most remarkable: as he had been doing previously. Daniel did not turn to prayer in panic. He had been consistently on his knees three times a day before His God, day in, day out, year after year. By the way, remember, he was one of the top officials in the land, yet he had time with God regularly. The psalmist writes, **"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." (Psalm 55:17, KJV)**

Isn't that a great verse? "Evening, morning, noon, I will pray." Daniel was no stranger to prayer. But still he didn't flaunt the fact the he was a man of prayer. Notice his windows were already open. He didn't suddenly bang them open so that everyone would know he was praying and be impressed with his piety.

There was an advertisement some time ago from one of the airlines. It said, "When you've got it, flaunt it." That may work for an airline, but it doesn't work for an authentic man or woman of God. When you've got it you don't flaunt it. Why? Because when you flaunt it, you don't really have it.

Daniel just quietly walked up to the chamber in his home and again before God he poured out his fear, his concern, his future, his life. Daniel is phenomenal. Just very near unreal. We 21st Century Christians have a low threshold, don't we? When things run along pretty well, we can stay fairly consistent, but a little ripple comes in the water, and we plunge! We pray at those times, but they are usually panic prayers, "Help-me-out-of-this-mess" prayers. Not Daniel! The remarkable thing about him is that he simply went back to God as before. I think if they had had an electrocardiogram, his would have read just the same as always.

Daniel responded to his death warrant with . . . "Well, what else is new? What do you expect from this world?" So he heard about this news and he just went right back to God and told God about them. He had a place to meet.

How is your time in prayer? What does it take you to get your attention? A tragedy? A real emergency? This man had been doing this as a habit all of his life. He had a place to meet with God and he met. He consistently, kept his burdens, at the throne. Please don't excuse yourself because you are too busy. Not a person reading this message is busier than Daniel could have been as one of the three top men in the country. You can't get any busier than that. But somehow, his consistent walk with God was so important; he simply stayed before His presence.

As 21st Century believers are we going to let a lack of prayer rob Jesus of His goal in us, or will we seize the opportunities and seek the changes that bring Him glory?

Let's welcome the rebirth of the Church with prayer; When in trouble, pray. When intimidated, pray. When challenged, pray. When persecuted, pray. When things are going well, pray. Always, yes, always pray!

Scriptural References:

“Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard” (Isaiah 58:8 RSV).