

Call to Obedience # 424
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Is Your Church a House of Prayer?

by Reimar Schultze

Unfortunately most churches do not have a prayer service even though Jesus said: *...It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer...* (Matt. 21:13). We do everything but pray: we have preaching, singing, meetings for singles and youth, fellowship dinners, Sunday school classes, Bible studies, classes on evangelism, on prophecy, on marriage, on finances, on missions, etc. The devil has convinced many that programs are a substitute for prayer. That is a lie. What breathing is to the body, prayer is to the church.

My friend, **when Solomon dedicated the first temple, he dedicated it as a house of prayer** in one of the longest prayers in the Bible. He prayed that it would be a place where people would pray for revival, for repentance, for restoration, for help in war, in famine, in pestilence, in sickness, etc. Indeed at the heart of this prayer is: *Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place* (2 Chron. 6:19-20).

Jesus later reiterated what Solomon said: *...My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer...* (Mark 11:17). Of course there are other things that belong in the house of God. But prayer was designated to be at the core of all that is worthy of the name, CHRISTIANITY, man communing with God. After Solomon was done praying, the house was filled with God's glory, putting everyone on their faces to worship. Glory requires praying. And glory brings transformation!

Is it any wonder then that the main driving force of success in the early church was prayer and praise resulting in mass conversions?

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple...Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:46-47).

We feel good about ourselves with all of our programs. We tell people to come to our church because we “have it all.” And indeed, the numbers grow because many like it and we claim that we are making an impact in the world and Jesus should be happy. What a terrible misconception. Jesus is not happy. Jesus is angry. He does not want us to just make a skin-deep impact. He wants repentance. Here is how Jesus feels about prayerless churches: *And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves* (Matt. 21:12-13).

The only time Jesus has ever been recorded as being angry to the extent of using physical violence is when He saw that His house was not a house of prayer. Do we have a different Jesus now than we had 2000 years ago? Has He ceased to be salt? I do not think so. I believe I am on scriptural ground when I say to you that Jesus is still greatly grieved at churches that are not houses of prayer. The church cannot conquer against the gates of hell without it. A Christian cannot get the victory nor keep the victory without prayer.

We make much of Jesus’ victory on the cross. But the battle for that was not won on the cross but in Gethsemane. It was in Gethsemane where Jesus prayed through; the rest was going downhill. The battle for Him was over after He agonized in prayer to the extent that *...his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground* (Luke 22:44). His first blood was not shed on Calvary but at Gethsemane! It is in prayer where you win or lose.

Let us go to the first prayer meeting recorded in Scripture. It was after the children of Israel had left Egypt, after they had tasted of the bread of heaven, and immediately after they had drunk of the smitten rock. It says: *Then came Amalek...* (Ex. 17:8), which is a type of the devil. My friend, as soon as you have tasted of the bread of heaven (Jesus) and have feasted of the water of life that comes out of our Savior’s smitten side, the devil will attack you. He wants you back and he keeps attacking you until you die. The devil works continuously to destroy you or immobilize you.

Here Israel, which symbolizes the church, would have been utterly wiped out if Moses, Aaron and Hur had not gone to the top of the hill to start a prayer meeting. This teaches us in Old Testament typology that without united prayer, the church will be destroyed. Without prayer, she is just a body without a

heart. Israel's victory against Amalek had nothing to do with how many men she had to fight or with what kind of weapons she had. They could have had just 100 soldiers and nothing but rocks and sticks. It did not matter. The Scriptures plainly tell us: *And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed* (Ex. 17:11).

Can you see why Jesus said: *...that men ought always to pray, and not to faint?* (Luke 18:1). The moment you faint in prayer, the enemy will prevail. This is why battle-scarred Paul said to pray without ceasing. You should not skip your prayer times. Whenever you do, the enemy will prevail in some area or all areas of your life. And between your fixed prayer times alone with God, you should keep on in the spirit of prayer while you attend to other matters.

Jesus is angry at a church that neglects prayer. But let me ask you, what is the church angry at? She is angry at the homosexuals, at corruption in politics, at the movie industry, at the world stealing her young people and at having her religious liberties stripped away. Jesus is angry when His houses are not houses of prayer.

Peter said: *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* (1 Peter 4:17-18). Because of prayerlessness we have this explosion of homosexual activity, we have adultery being justified by prayerless biblical scholars and we have the greatest gap between youth and adults in all of our history so that we cannot even worship together anymore.

The Church was at her best in all of history during Old Testament, New Testament or more recent times whenever she gathered together for prayer. The Church uniting in prayer has always been the most distinguishing mark of revival. Revival will not start without united prayer, and it will not continue without united prayer.

If a church does not have people (a Moses, an Aaron and a Hur) praying together, she will be spiritually defeated. Now you know why Jesus prayed so much and why Jesus said: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20). Yes, that first recorded united prayer meeting was just three people. What a difference they made: the difference between life and death for a nation.

I once had a lady who said, "Pastor, I do not think we need all these prayer meetings. People are busy and everybody has a lot of responsibilities these days. It is not like in the old days. And as far as I am concerned, the people who pray are no better than the ones who do not pray." Well, I think this dear lady made herself a mouthpiece of the devil. The point is not who is good and who is better when it comes to praying, the point is that no one can defeat the devil without going to prayer. Jesus told us ...*always to pray, and not to faint* (Luke 18:1). Are we going to obey Jesus or not? Are we going to be on God's side or the devil's? Are we going to rebuild our section of the wall of the church or are we not (Neh. 4:14-23)?

United corporate prayer meetings must always be at the heart of the church, and it should be one of the best and most exciting services in the church - it is war at its finest. My dear brother and sister, if you have drunk of the refreshing streams of the Rock, the smitten Rock called Christ, you will want to get into the war room of prayer.

Young people, it should not matter to you whether the people at a prayer meeting are old or young. When you go to a prayer meeting, do not look at how old they are. In the light of eternity they are all the same age. Instead, look at each one as a soldier that has come together to defeat the devil. Successful business men, you are also called to pray as much as others. You are in your position because you are disciplined. Therefore you are well-equipped to transfer that discipline to your spiritual life. If you honor God in prayer, He will honor you in business.

Does your church have a prayer meeting? If not, do not make a ruckus about it, but rather humbly and quietly start one. Start with one person; then let it grow. Jesus will attend it. HE NEVER MISSES A PRAYER MEETING.

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