

The No. 1 Way You're Killing Your Faith

As if God isn't concerned with prayer, humility and repentance: "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 20:12).

God's call is not to Hollywood, Washington or the media, but to us. If "My people" turn back to Me, I will heal and restore. Let's take a closer look at the second command:

Pray: A few years ago, I spent some time alone in a cabin to slow down, reflect, and pray—to renew my mind. The importance of time alone with God is invaluable. Renewal begins and ends with prayer. To renew means "to reestablish something after an interruption." Life can easily interrupt fellowship with God. We are renewed through prayer and time alone with Him—mighty times of revival often occur after extended times of prayer.

During this private time of prayer, I was reminded that the overall spiritual condition of our church will be a reflection of my prayer life. E.M. Bounds believed that without prayer in the pulpit, "The church becomes a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching encourage sin, not holiness ... preaching which kills is prayerless preaching." If the church is to turn back to God, I'm convinced that leadership must play a role.

Bounds continues, "Without prayer, the preacher creates death, and not life."

You may ask, "What does this have to do with me; I'm not a pastor?" Everything! Prayer moves the hand of God. Revival and prayer go hand in hand. Moses spent time on the back side of

the desert before leading Israel out of bondage. Elijah heard the still, small voice of God alone in a cave. Jacob wrestled with God in the stillness of the night, and his name was changed to Israel. John the Baptist lived alone in constant prayer with God. Jesus often retreated to isolated places for extended times of prayer.

How then are we to experience the blessings of 2 Chronicles 7:14 in these dire times if we do not cultivate a strong prayer life? The depth of God's blessings is in direct proportion to the depth of our prayer life. Prayer matters; it fuels the flames of revival. Charles Spurgeon said, "The power of prayer can never be overrated. They who cannot serve God by preaching need not regret. If a man can but pray he can do anything. He who knows how to overcome with God in prayer has Heaven and earth at his disposal. ... True prayer is measured by weight, not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. ... A true prayer is an inventory of needs, a catalog of necessities, an exposure of secret wounds, a revelation of hidden poverty." There is power in prayer.

Here are some examples from the past to motivate: E.M. Bounds, who was born in 1835, began his three-hour prayer routine at 4 a.m. To him, prayer was not a short prelude, but an empowering priority. Edward Payson, who ministered during the Second Great Awakening, was said to have worn grooves into his hardwood floor as a result of prayer. It was said of John Hyde who left for the mission field in 1892 that he would stay on his face before God until the answer came. William Bramwell, a powerful Methodist circuit rider, often spent hours a day on his knees until his death in 1818. Adoniram Judson attributed his success in Burma as a missionary to a life of prayer; as did J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. George Mueller who never asked for a dime, petitioned God for millions of dollars to fund his orphanages in the 1800s. John Fletcher, one of the leaders of the Methodist movement, stained the walls of his room with the breath of his prayers until his death in 1785. "When faith ceases to pray, it ceases

to live" (E.M. Bounds).