

Spirit-Filled Pastor: The Great Cost of Preaching Without Prayer

Throughout church history – from the reformation to revival – pivotal shifts have taken place to get us back on track. These critical moments are often centered around sound doctrine, but the catalyst is always prayer, brokenness and humility.

Today we find ourselves in another dilemma. The drift of so-called “liberal” churches is apparent. It’s been estimated that nearly 72% of all churches don’t look to the Bible as their final source of authority and direction. No wonder America is crumbling from within – the foundation is deteriorating!

Although disheartening, my *main* concern is not necessarily with these numbers since God often uses a small remnant to fulfill His purposes. My *main* concern is with the remnant that needs to be awakened from their spiritual slumber. Conservative churches, this is our battle to lose.

Filled With Power From On High

Where are men with uncompromising power and authority in the pulpits today? Granted, there are some, and I appreciate their ministry, but as a whole the church is lacking.

In these immensely trying times, we need more leaders filled and clothed with power from on high. Those who do the most for God are always people of prayer. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.” And Calvin Miller adds, “Preaching, in one sense, merely discharges the firearm that God has loaded in the silent place.” Your prayer closet is also your power closet.

“The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher,” said E.M. Bounds. Who a preacher is all week is who he will be when he steps to the pulpit.

No More Business as Usual

As I’ve shared before, a friend of mine recently attended a large gathering of “conservative” Christian leaders. When I mentioned how powerful it would be if they added times of prayer, fasting and worship to the schedule, he responded, “That would be a game-changer. But many still have the ‘business-as-usual’ mentality.”

Even though the world is falling apart and our nation is sinking into a moral abyss, there is very little desperation for the things of God. “Business as usual” is not going to cut it! What’s it going to take to draw us back to the heart of God?

I love solid, life-changing, hell-shaking preaching, but desperate times call for desperate measures – corporate prayer and worship, along with deep brokenness and humility, must be center stage again if we are truly going to experience another spiritual awakening. Business as usual won’t cut it. *I’d rather cut time off my sermon than cut time from prayer and worship.*

A Dark Corner in the Church

Leonard Ravenhill once lamented that the Cinderella of the church was the prayer meeting. Sadly, not much has changed. The prayer meeting, if there is one at all, is relegated to a dark corner somewhere in the church on an off night so that there is little expectation that anyone will pay her any attention. She goes about unnoticed, unloved and uncelebrated, yet she is the one who keeps the house clean.

It's time for Cinderella to get dressed for our King and spend as much time in prayer and worship as we do preaching. The dry, dead, lethargic condition of the church simply reflects a life void of prayer. This must change!

To fuel the flames of revival, consider adding early-morning worship and prayer before Sunday services. We began this years ago and the fruit has been amazing. As E.M. Bounds said, without prayer, "The church becomes a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead."

The Plight of the Thirsty Pilgrim

Most church services have a few perfectly timed songs followed by announcements. Then the moment comes when the pastor opens the Word and points listeners to the Fountain of Living Water. Again, I'm talking about conservative churches here.

Jesus is exalted and God's Word is magnified, but where are the times of prayer and intercession? We boast of solid theology, but do we have brokenness? We are well versed in homiletics, but what about humility?

This unbalance has cost us dearly, and it reveals a deeper issue. It reveals that many leaders are not drinking deeply themselves, and it's hard to lead someone where you've never been.

We take time to stand and preach, but it's a prayer that has the furthest reach.

We love to study through and through, but only prayer will see you through.

We are busy striving to succeed, but real success comes from bended knees.

The great cost of preaching without prayer and theology without fire is that we miss the fullness of the Spirit.

Listeners are engaged and ready to drink deeply, but instead of satisfying the longing of the soul via extended times of prayer and worship, the thirsty pilgrim leaves parched and barren.

We Must Rebuild Intimacy

Is the Word of God truly “like a burning fire” in your heart (Jer. 20:9, NASB)? If not, be encouraged – a simple prayer of repentance can get you back on track. As David M. McIntyre once said, “As the electric fluid which is diffused in the atmosphere is concentrated in the lightning flash, so the presence of God becomes vivid and powerful in the prayer chamber.”

God must prepare the messenger before we prepare the message. We must return to the prayer closet and rebuild intimacy with God. Let it not be said of us today that we failed to defend the truth, restore our nation and guard our families because we didn't carry the burden of prayer directly upon our shoulders.

It's our choice – stand, or fall! {eoa}

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