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Prayer: No Substitute for Obedience - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/9/3 11:34

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Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late—**and** how little revival has resulted?

Considering the volume of prayer that is ascending these days, rivers of revival should be flowing in blessing throughout the land. That no such results are in evidence should not discourage us; rather it should stir us to find out why our prayers are not answered.

Everything has its proper cause in the kingdom of God as well as in the natural world. The reason for God's obvious refusal to send revival may lie deep, but surely not too deep to discover.

I believe our problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying; and it simply will not work.

A church, for instance, follows its traditions without much thought about whether they are scriptural or not. Or it surrenders to pressure from public opinion and falls in with popular trends which carry it far from the New Testament pattern. Then the leaders notice a lack of spiritual power among the people and become concerned about it. What to do? How can they achieve that revitalization of spirit they need so badly? How can they bring down refreshing showers to quicken their fainting souls?

The answer is all ready for them. The books tell them how—**pray!** The passing evangelist confirms what the books have said—**pray!** The word is echoed back and forth, growing in volume until it becomes a roar—**pray!** So the pastor calls his people to prayer. Days and nights are spent begging God to be merciful and send revival upon His people. The tide of feeling runs high and it looks for a while as if the revival might be on the way. But it fails to arrive and the zeal for prayer begins to flag. Soon the church is back where it was before, and a numb discouragement settles over everyone. What has gone wrong?

Simply this: Neither the leaders nor the people have made any effort to obey the Word of God. They felt that their only weakness was failure to pray, when actually in a score of ways they were falling short in the vital matter of obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). Prayer is never an acceptable substitute for obedience. The sovereign Lord accepts no offering from His creatures that is not accompanied by obedience. To pray for revival while ignoring or actually flouting the plain precept laid down in the Scriptures is to waste a lot of words and get nothing for our trouble.

It has been quite overlooked in recent times that the faith of Christ is an absolute arbiter. It preempts the whole redeemed personality and seizes upon the individual to the exclusion of all other claims. Or more accurately, it makes every legitimate claim on the Christian's life conditional, and without hesitation decides the place each claim shall have in the total scheme. The act of committal to Christ in salvation releases the believing man from the penalty of sin, but it does not release him from the obligation to obey the words of Christ. Rather it brings him under the joyous necessity to obey.

Look at the epistles of the New Testament and notice how largely they are given over to what is erroneously called "hortatory" matter. By dividing the epistles into "doctrinal" and "hortatory" passages, we have relieved ourselves of any necessity to obey. The doctrinal passages require from us nothing except that we believe them. The so-called hortatory passages are harmless enough, for the very word by which they are described declares them to be words of advice and encouragement rather than commandments to be obeyed. This is a palpable error.

The exhortations in the epistles are to be understood as apostolic injunctions carrying the weight of mandatory charges from the Head of the Church. They are intended to be obeyed, not weighed as bits of good advice which we are at liberty to accept or reject as we will.

If we would have God's blessing upon us, we must begin to obey. Prayer will become effective when we stop using it as a substitute for obedience. God will not accept praying in lieu of obeying. We only deceive ourselves when we try to make the substitution.

A:W Tozer

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