

## Preachers' Pen Points

### The Turn-Around from Decline to Growth Fervent Prayer Needed



#### **Prayer is vital to the growth of a congregation!**

We cannot read of the great growth that the Jerusalem church achieved without also seeing their great devotion to prayer. The disciples were “devoting themselves to prayer” in anticipation of the coming Holy Spirit (Ac. 1:14). Luke describes the newly- formed Jerusalem church as a people “continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Ac. 2:42). Prayer held a high priority in the lives of the church’s leaders and teachers as well (Ac. 6:4; 13:2 ), so much so that they would not sacrifice it even for other important pursuits.

#### **Prayer is vital to inward spiritual renewal.**

A church’s decline is not just about statistics. Often there are powerful spiritual forces at work. The decline itself may be the result of ailing spiritual health brought on by a neglect of prayer. Even where such is not the case, decline in a congregation has a powerful effect on each member’s state of mind that can only be remedied by refocusing on God and His power and blessing. Thus prayer helps facilitate the inner spiritual renewal we all need to refocus and get back to the work God has given us.

#### **Prayer is vital in manifesting love for one another.**

The love of the Jerusalem church for one another is seen in the great concern that led them to pray for one another in times of crisis (Ac. 12:5). Surely all can see that one would not be eager to be separated from any congregation where there was such a great manifestation of love and closeness among the members of the church as existed among the Jerusalem saints.

#### **Prayer is vital in maintaining our courage in the midst of spiritual warfare.**

Having described the Christian’s armor, Paul urges the Ephesians, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...” (Eph. 5:18). The prayers of God’s soldiers heighten their alertness and open them up to the possibilities of victory brought about by God.

#### **Prayer is vital to opening doors for teaching.**

Notice how often Paul appealed to the saints to pray for his work “that God may open up to us a door for the word” (Col. 4:3). He obviously believed that the prayers of the saints can bring about opportunities for the proclamation of the word to those seeking the truth.

#### **Pray daily for the Lord’s work at Perry Heights!**

George Barna makes this powerful statement about the importance of prayer in the transition from decline to growth: “Until the church owns prayer as a world-class weapon in the battle against evil and cherishes prayer as a means of intimate and constant communication with God, the turnaround efforts of a body are severely limited, if not altogether doomed, to failure (“Turn Around Churches, p. 97).” God forbid, then, that we neglect prayer! Instead, let us all pray the more earnestly that we may succeed in the work God has given us, doing it with joy, enthusiasm and the hope of a fruitful harvest of souls given to us by God and to His glory.

—Johnny Felker