

Why Revival Tarries

Leonard Ravenhill

No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. The pulpit can be a shop-window to display one's talents; the prayer closet allows no showing off. Poverty-stricken as the Church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few prayers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.

The two prerequisites to successful Christian living are vision and passion, both of which are born in and maintained by prayer. The ministry of preaching is open to few; the ministry of prayer—the highest ministry of all human offices—is open to all. Spiritual adolescents say, "I'll not go tonight, it's only the prayer meeting." It may be that Satan has little cause to fear most preaching. Yet past experiences sting him to rally all his infernal army to fight against God's people praying. Modern Christians know little of "binding and loosing," though the onus is on us—"Whatsoever ye shall bind..." Have you done any of this lately? God is not prodigal with His power; but to be much for God, we must be much with God.

This world hits the trail for hell with a speed that makes our fastest plane look like a tortoise; yet alas, few of us can remember the last time we missed our bed for a night of waiting upon God for a world-shaking revival. Our compassions are not moved. We mistake the scaffolding for the building, Present-day preaching, with its pale interpretation of divine truths, causes us to mistake action for unction, commotion for creation, and rattles for revivals. The secret of praying is praying in secret. A sinning man will stop praying, and a praying man will stop sinning. We beggared and bankrupt, but not broken, nor even bent.

Prayer is profoundly simple and simply profound. "Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try," and yet so sublime that it outranges all speech and exhausts man's vocabulary. A Niagara of burning words does not mean that God is either impressed or moved. One of the most profound of Old Testament intercessors had no language "Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." No linguist here! There are groanings which cannot be uttered."

Are we so substandard to New Testament Christianity that we know not the historical faith of our fathers (with its implications and operations), but only the hysterical faith of our fellows? Prayer is to the believer what capital is to the business man. Can any deny that in the modern church setup the main cause of anxiety is money? Yet that which tries the modern churches the most, troubled the New Testament Church the least. Our accent is on paying, theirs was on praying. When we have paid, the place is taken; when they had prayed; the place was shaken!

In the matter of New Testament, Spirit-inspired, hell-shaking, world-breaking prayer, never has so much been left by so many to so few. For this kind of prayer there is no substitute. We do it—or die!