

Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 2/28/07

Repentance: What's the Big Deal?

The word *repentance* was repeated often this past weekend at our *Heal My Land* gathering. In fact, it was spoken so often and with such conviction that it would be hard to miss that repentance is really a big deal to us! And it's an even bigger deal to God, as many times over in Scripture God proclaims that repentance is the means toward covenant relationship with Him.

It is fascinating to interact with Christians—and even church leaders—about the place of repentance as the requirement for God to come in His manifest presence in transforming revival. One of the most common questions we hear is *What do we need to repent of?* Churches assume that because their programs are running well, their services are full, and people are even coming to Christ—that everything is just fine. God is blessing, things are good, and there is no great need for repentance among God's people.

And if we measure success by statistics of the American church, it would seem that the question is valid. *Why should we repent when we are having such great success?* We have a record number of mega-churches continuing to grow in numbers. We have national and international initiatives that produce plenty of activities to keep our people busy and engaged. We have political and social ministries that effectively engage our culture. In fact, we are so relevant to today's culture that you can now stop by the coffee bar and grab a latte before you head into worship services! Aren't we a model of successful Christianity that we should export to the rest of the world?

Of course, there are the George Barna surveys that crop up from time to time that suggest differently. They may seem a bit disturbing and cast a different light on the American church. But should we really be concerned that the surveys indicate that there is not much difference between the moral choices of evangelical Christians and the rest of society who claim no faith in Jesus Christ? Perhaps we can dismiss those surveys if our other “measures of success” are still in place.

Not so! Listen to this quote from Richard Owen Roberts, a statesman and historian for spiritual awakenings: “The sobering truth is that the greatest hindrance to the growth of Christianity in today's world is the absence of the manifest presence of God from the Church. The Lord has been so deeply grieved by the refusal of the church to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit that He has largely withdrawn from the church and left her to her own devices. The heart cry of God is most certainly, ‘Return to Me, and I will return to you.’ (Malachi 3:7).” (Taken from his book, *Repentance, The First Word of the Gospel*, Crossway Books, pg. 16.)

The Presence of Jesus

If we measure the health of the church by the barometer of her activities, we certainly seem to be vibrant and robust. However, if we gauge her health by the Presence of Jesus in her midst, there is great cause for alarm. If we compare the American church to the more than 500 places around the world where Presence-based, transforming revival is happening, we have to admit that something is amiss. Comparing ourselves to ourselves only ends up in delusion. Comparing ourselves to those experiencing true transformation highlights our own spiritual deficit. And ultimately, in comparison to the holy standards of a thrice-holy God, we are left with no doubt about why repentance is absolutely necessary. The Prophet Isaiah was simply undone in the presence of the Holy God (Isaiah 6).

Repentance is not an elective course in the school of God. It is the pre-requisite, the core class, and the continuing education. Are you confused about what you need to repent of? Without being facetious—start with reading the Bible. You can't possibly read Ephesians 4-6 or Philipians or Colossians without finding a

lifetime of biblical standards to keep you in continuing repentance! If that's not enough to convince you, try asking the Lord to show you your heart from His perspective. He alone knows even the dark recesses of your heart. Nothing is hidden from His holy gaze. Go ahead and ask Him. And when He answers, you will know why repentance is such a big deal!