

The University Heights Messenger

February 14, 2010

The Church At Antioch of Syria--4 A Prayerful Congregation

I was probably in my early teens the first time I heard of a congregation that each month dedicated an entire service to speaking to God in prayer. I remember thinking it odd at first as it was something I had never seen or heard done before. My family visited the congregation during one of those "prayer services" and I left with a question bouncing around in my mind. "Why don't all congregations do this?" There was an energy and enthusiasm in that place that, sadly, I have not experienced in many congregations since then.

I would think about that congregation from time to time throughout the following years. I asked myself why they seemed to be so enthusiastic and energetic when many congregations of the Lord's people just aren't? They never discontinued their monthly prayer service and a few years later I and some of my friends went to visit again. It was then that I received my answer. To my surprise, they were even *more* energy in that congregation then. This was a prayerful congregation. This was a congregation that knew how to talk to their Father because they spent so much of their time doing it. How could they *not* be energetic, enthusiastic, and zealous for the work when they talked to God so often?

I suppose they were taking their cue from the many examples of prayer found throughout the New Testament. One of those examples is seen in the church at Antioch of Syria. Acts 13:3 says, "**Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.**" In the previous verse we are told that they were worshipping and fasting. In verse 3 prayer is added to the mix. With men like Barnabas and Saul members of that group, is there any wonder that the prophets and teachers, and very likely the entire membership, spent so much time involved in the work of God? Is there any wonder that they eagerly sought Him out in prayer before

making decisions and sending men off to preach?

Prayer is such an important aspect to the Christians daily life. However, it is equally important to the life of a congregation. Let's consider prayer for a moment. When we speak to God we are not telling Him anything that He does not already know. In fact, His foreknowledge of our needs should never become a hindrance to our prayers, but greater incentive for it. When we pray to God we are not informing Him of those needs as if He required that, rather we are expressing our utter confidence in Him. This is confidence acquired through experience as He has answered our prayers countless times.

I can only imagine that the church at Antioch of Syria was following the Lord's example in their prayer lives. Truly there is no better example to follow. Our Lord prayed at every important event in His life. In **Luke 3:21** we find Him praying at His baptism. In **Luke 9:29** we find Him praying at His Transfiguration. Who can forget His prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane as the shadow of cross loomed over Him and the important lessons about submitting to the will of God taught therein (**Matthew 26:36-46**)? Even the choosing of the twelve would not take place without an entire night spent in prayer (**Luke 6:12**).

We also learn lessons from the subjects of our Lord's prayers. Sometimes His prayers were in thanksgiving to God (**John 6:11**). Not all who heard Jesus believed and obeyed. Even in those instances, as He noted the contrast between the believing and unbelieving, He found reason to thank the Father for His wisdom in revelation and its effects (**Matthew 11:20-26**). Sometimes His prayers were intercessory. Consider His greatest prayer of intercession encompassing the entirety of **John 17**. These few examples show us that there was no subject that was not worthy of prayer in the mind of our Lord.

The gospel's not only tell of the events leading to His prayers or the subjects of them,

they also tell us of the time. Sometimes Jesus spoke to His Father early in the morning (**Mark 1:35-38**). Sometimes He spoke to His Father at night (**Luke 6:12**). Sometimes He prayed in private where He could be all alone with His Father (**Luke 5:16**).

There's a lot to take from the example of the prayer life of those prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch of Syria. There's even more to take from the prayer life of our Lord, who has served as the model and example for Christians throughout the ages. Are we happy? Thank God for that happiness. Are we sad and grieving? Ask God for comfort. Are we concerned for the sick? Ask God for His merciful healing hand. Are we making decisions for the congregation, vital or ordinary? Ask God for wisdom. Are we preparing to collectively reach out to the lost? Ask God for open hearts. Are we sending someone away to preach or supporting someone in a foreign land? Ask God for His protection and blessings upon the work. At all times, in all places, and for all reasons, let us talk to God. Do not forget the monthly prayer service of this congregation. Take advantage of the opportunity it affords. Let us "**pray without ceasing**" and become a model of prayer.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

Jim Edwards and **Esmeralda Agustin** are struggling' spiritually.

Sister **Glenn Kimberlin** is shut in.

Jody Bowman's surgery went well.

Megan Davis' grandmother passed away. Let's remember Megan and her family.

Rachel Crawford's aunt, Gail Stein, is in the midst of her treatments for breast cancer.

Bill Morelan's mother is recovering from pneumonia.

Taylor Osterling has been hospitalized several times recently due to respiratory distress.

Shannon Gilbert is receiving treatments for breast cancer.

Rachel Knollman's treatments have begun. They are making her quite ill until she can build up some tolerance.

Robert Brundige, Richard's brother, is in Parkside Manor in Cynthiana dealing with some issues. **Sarah** Brundige, Richard's mother, is in Cambridge Place Nursing Home and in need of our prayer.

Let's also remember **David Day and his wife, Michelle Oxendine, Ron Catchen, Chuck McDavitt, and David Blakeman.**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The Men's meeting is this afternoon at 3:30. Please make your plans to attend.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE FOR 1/7-13:

Sunday: Gen 28-29, Ps 15, Matt 18

Monday: Gen 30, Ps 16, Matt 19

Tuesday: Gen 31, Ps 17, Matt 20

Wednesday: Gen 32-33, Ps18:1-24, Matt 21

Thursday: Gen 34-35, Ps 18:25-50, Matt 22

Friday: Gen 36, Ps 19:1-6, Matt 23

Saturday: Gen 37-38, Ps 19:7-14, Matt 24

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. The struggle with fear

Sunday PM. Defeating giants

CLASS INFORMATION:

We will begin this morning in lesson 11 at I, C, (Romans 1:14). Your participation has been tremendous and is much appreciated.