

GOD'S PAVILION
XVII
Matthew 16:13-19

Introduction: The church is destined to be the repository of God's blessings. God appeared to Solomon in 2nd *Chronicles 7:14* and spoke in clarion terms stating what was required in order to receive God's blessings. While God is eager to bless His people, He gives cogent instructions on how to receive them. Having become complacent, the church has become more like an arid institution than a vital *house of prayer*. The greatest vacuum in the world today is for a true Bible-based Christianity saturated with the life of the Spirit. When we express a sincere desire to communicate with the Lord, He comes to fellowship with us. Anything less is only a lifeless formality. God is prepared to send an exponential, sovereign move of the Holy Spirit that will bring life into the church, equipping us with the power necessary to win the world for Christ.

A. The church, God's pavilion

1. The local church as the house of prayer

- a) Prayer and worship have much in common. Prayer is talking to God, and worship is expressing love and adoration to God. People with a life of prayer know that it involves thanksgiving and praise as well as petition. Dick Eastman devoted an entire section in his well-known book, *School of Prayer*, to "*The Prayer Warrior's Praise-Life*," because praise is so vital to prayer. E.M. Bounds clearly associates prayer and worship: "*Praise is so distinctly and definitely wedded to prayer, so inseparably joined, that they cannot be divorced.*"
- b) Prayer and the house of God – Jesus quoted from the prophet *Isaiah (Isaiah 56:7)* when He gave us *Matthew 21:13*. While the church is the home for many activities, such as preaching, education, the arts, music, and evangelism, the inviolable issue Jesus focused on was prayer.
- c) Jesus used the expression "*house of prayer*" to emphasize the necessity of congregating people for prayer. The Bible states in *Matthew 18:19*, "...that if two of you agree..." then in verse 20, "...where two or three are gathered in My name..." Corporate prayer in the church of the living God will produce mighty results.
- d) Solomon proved the value of *congregational prayer*. *2nd Chronicles 6:12-21*. When both *Isaiah* and Jesus spoke of God's house as a "*house of prayer*," they referred back to the original intent for the building as stated in *1st Kings chapter 8* and *2nd Chronicles chapters 6 and 7*, where Solomon's temple was a veritable *house of prayer*. Notice that after Solomon prayed, God answered in *2nd Chronicles chapter 7, verse 15*.
- e) With prophetic insight, *Isaiah 56:7* enlarged the Davidic concept of a "house of prayer for all nations." See *Mark 11:17*. Barnes, in his notes on the Old Testament, said, "*Isaiah's passage has two basic ideas: first, that the temple should be regarded as a house of prayer; and, second, that the privileges of that house should be extended to all people.*" This justifies Jesus' anger when he lashed out against those who desecrated the temple by turning it into a den of thieves.
- f) In the early church, prayer was one of the most important activities practiced by Christians, and apparently they prayed together frequently. *Acts 2:42*. After being ridiculed and castigated by the Jewish council, Peter and John returned to the church and held a glorious prayer meeting. *Acts 4:24-31*.
- g) The early leaders *watch cry* is recorded in *Acts 6:4*. When Peter was thrown in prison, the church went to prayer. *Acts 12:5*. Corporate prayer was offered at Antioch in *Acts 13:2-3*.

Conclusion: Corporate prayer prepares people for dynamic, spiritual worship. We should all think about getting to church early enough to intercede before the Lord. I believe that the services would be enhanced and filled with God's power. We must all re-evaluate our time schedule and make prayer a priority in our schedule.