

**Leonard Ravenhill:**

The Cinderella of the Church today is the prayer meeting. This handmaid of the Lord is unloved and unwooed because she is not dripping with pearls of intellectualism, nor glamorous with the silks of philosophy, neither is she enchanting with the tiara of psychology. She wears the homespuns of sincerity and humility and so is not afraid to kneel!

The offense of prayer is that it does not essentially tie in to mental efficiency. That is not to say that prayer is a partner to mental sloth. But in these days, efficiency and smartness are at a premium. Prayer is conditioned to one thing alone, and that is to spirituality. One does not need to be spiritual to preach, that is, to make and deliver sermons of homiletical perfection and exegetical exactitude. By a combination of memory, knowledge, ambition, personality, plus well-lined book shelves, self-confidence and a sense of having arrived - the pulpit is yours almost anywhere these days. Preaching of the type mentioned affects men; prayer affects God. Preaching affects time; prayer affects eternity. The pulpit can be a shop window to display our talents; the closet speaks death to display.

The tragedy of this last hour is that we have too many dead men in the pulpits giving out too many dead sermons to too many dead people. There is a strange thing that I have seen even in the fundamentalist circles: it is preaching without unction. What is unction? I hardly know what it is, but I know what it is not, or at least I know when it is not upon my own soul. Preaching without unction kills instead of giving life. The unctionless preacher is a savor of death unto death. The Word does not live unless the unction is upon the preacher. Preacher, with all thy getting, get unction.

Brethren, we could well manage to be half as intellectual if we were twice as spiritual. Preaching is a spiritual business. A sermon born in the head reaches the head. A sermon born in the heart reaches the heart. A spiritual preacher will under God produce spiritually-minded people. Unction is not a gentle dove beating her wings against the bars outside of the preacher's soul; rather she must be pursued and won. Unction cannot be learned, only earned by prayer. Unction is God's knighthood for the soldier-preacher who has wrestled in prayer and gained the victory. Victory is not won in the pulpit by firing intellectual bullets or wisecracks, but in the prayer closet. The meeting is won or lost before the preacher's foot enters the pulpit. Unction is like perfume. Unction is like dynamite. Unction comes not by the medium of the bishop's hands, neither does it mildew when the preacher is cast into prison. Unction will pierce and percolate. It will sweeten and soften. When the hammer of logic and the fire of human zeal fail to open the stony heart, unction will succeed.

What a fever of church building there is just now, yet without unctionized preachers these altars will never see anxious penitents. Suppose that we saw fishing boats with the latest in radar equipment and fishing gear launched month after month and put out to sea only to return without a catch - what excuse would we take for this barrenness? Yet thousands of churches see empty altars week after week and year after year and cover this sterile situation by misapplying the Scripture. "My word . . . shall not return unto me void." Incidentally, this seems to be one of the very few texts that the dispensationalists forgot to tell us was written to the Jews!

The ugly fact is that the altar fires are either out or burning very low. The prayer meeting is dead or dying. By our attitude to prayer we tell God that what was begun in the Spirit we can finish in the flesh. What church ever asks its candidating ministers what time they spend in prayer? Ministers who do not spend two hours a day in prayer are not worth a dime a dozen - degrees or no degrees. Where are our unctionized pulpit crusaders? Preachers who should be fishing for men are now too often fishing for compliments from men. Preachers used to sow seed; now they string intellectual pearls.

Away with palsied, powerless preaching which is unmoving because it was born in a tomb instead of a womb and nourished in a fireless, prayerless soul. We may preach and perish but we cannot pray and perish. If God called us to the ministry, then I contend that we should be unctionized. With all thy getting, get unction, lest barren altars be the badge of our unctionless intellectualism.

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