

AS THE CHURCH GOES, SO GOES A NATION

Derek Prince

My theme is that in any nation where the church is established, God holds the church accountable for the condition of that nation. This is a sobering and far reaching thought.

Ultimately, what we want to do is reach and impact America. If I had to reach America directly today, this gathering would be the wrong place for me because all or nearly all of you are committed believers. But, to effectively reach America, anyone concerned has to reach the church. It is through the church that God reaches and impacts a nation. God also judges the church in a nation partly by the condition of the nation for which he holds the church accountable.

I don't know about you, but I am a little tired of that word revival. It is often wrongly applied to evangelistic church meetings. But in 1904 in the country of Wales in the British Isles, there was a genuine revival and it shook the whole nation. It affected everybody, everywhere. Wales was a nation of coal miners and the coal miners were wicked, foul-mouthed people. But when the revival hit the coal miners, it upset the whole of the coal mining operations. The mines used pit ponies to haul coal and the pit ponies were used to moving only when they were sworn at. When the miners no longer swore, the pit ponies didn't move. That gives you a little glimpse of the impact which a revival can have, a genuine revival.

"It is through the church that God reaches and impacts a nation."

When God used Charles Finney (1792-1875) to foster revival which swept across cities in this nation, the power of God was so powerful that people walked into the city, not knowing what to expect, and some fell to their knees on the sidewalk and began to cry to God for mercy. Others sensed the manifest presence of God and avoided entering the city. That is a revival. It's not just a few people getting saved.

Finney often pointed out that the word revival means "bringing back to life." Evangelism is not revival. I thank God for evangelism, and my whole heart is in it, but what the church needs in this hour is not evangelism; it needs revival by the Holy Spirit. The church has been dead and needs to be brought back to life. Any national reformation must begin with revival and restoration in the church. That's where the action starts.

I believe that's what America needs. I believe there is no alternative. We have no other hope, but that God will respond to the prayers of His people and move in such a way that he will sovereignly touch millions of people.

Let's explore the two phrases found at the end of Ephesians, chapter 1—the body and the church. The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head; the church is the body. An obvious fact, clear to all of us from our experience, is that my head cannot get anything done without the willing cooperation of my body. If I want to go through

"He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

—Ephesians 1:22,23

a door, my head may make the decision, but my feet have to take me through the door. If I want to pick up my Bible, my head makes the decision, but my hands have to lift the Bible. That is how it is with Christ as the head of the church. He has plans, desires and directives, but He cannot carry them out unless each member of the body cooperates.

You might say that Christ could set the body aside and just go ahead and do things Himself. Well, he won't. I've learned and experienced over the years that when God tells us to do something, He will never do it for us. You might contend that since Jesus told us to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations more than 20 centuries ago, and there are still many national groups that have never been reached, He might be tired of waiting and will come down and do it Himself. He will never do it. The job will not be done until the church does it.

Christ declares in Matthew 24:14 that He will not return until this primary mandate is completed: "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end shall come." Who is responsible for proclaiming the Gospel in all the world to all the nations? The church is. We are. Could you say, I am ("I am") jointly responsible ("jointly responsible") with all the rest of the body ("with all the rest of the body")? Jesus is not going to step down from heaven to take over. He's waiting. I think He's waiting patiently, but in another sense impatiently. How many other things have we permitted to take priority over this priority? A revived believer, a revived church, will earnestly endeavor to obey God in all things.

A related aspect is a little more complicated. The English word "church" is a very unfortunate word. Church obscures the real meaning of the New Testament Greek word for church, which is "*Ecclesia*"—from which we get such words as ecclesiastical. *Ecclesia* had a specific meaning in the Greek language in the time of Christ. It was the word for the governing body of a Greek city-state. Greece was basically made up of small city-states like Athens or Corinth. Each city-state had a governing body, which was called the *ecclesia*.

The word *ecclesia* is derived from a Greek verb meaning "to call out." Accordingly, the church is a body of people called out from the world to represent God and demonstrate His government. Here lies the problem with this

word church: it gives no indication of the fact that we are God's governing body in the earth. The most accurate English word is "assembly," but that too does not really do the job. In studying to catch up on American history, I found that at one time the Commonwealth of Virginia was governed by an "assembly of burgesses." In Colonial days assembly would have better connoted a governing body.

So what is the church? The *Ecclesia* is Christ's governing body on earth. We are responsible to heed His statutes, exercise "vice-regency," and administrate His government. You can see that this is a totally strange concept to the majority of churchgoers today. Yet, the Word of God is settled, and therefore Christ holds us accountable for the way we do it, or do not do it.

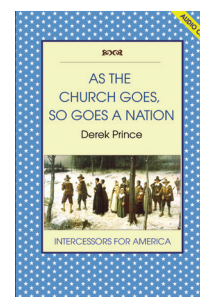
When we look at post-modern America and say "It's a mess; these people are awful," Jesus looks at us, the church, and asks "What are you doing about it? I hold you accountable in many respects, not all respects, for what your nation has become."

"Bend the church and bow the world."

Summing up—what God will do in America depends largely on what the church will do. Did you hear that? Should I say it again? What God will do in America depends largely on what the church will do. I'll give you one familiar scripture which is the number one scripture for all intercessors, 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people . . . I will heal their land." I've left out all of the middle, but what it means is that if God is to heal our land, His people will have to do something. If his people do not do it, He will not heal the land.

This is the bottom-line situation as I see it. I open and share this with you because if we want to change the nation, we have to start by praying for revival and changing the church. In the Welsh revival I referenced, God used a man named Evan Roberts. He had a slogan, "Bend the church and bow the world." If the church will bend, the world will bow. If the church will not bend to the Lord, the world will not bow. So in many ways, not in every respect, the destiny of America is in the hands of the church, people like us. Do we realize our responsibility? It is a very solemn responsibility.

**AS THE CHURCH GOES,
SO GOES A NATION**
Derek Prince



At the request of IFA Partners-in-Prayer, now available as audio MP3s on our new Web site and as a 4-Disc CD set! The above is excerpted from one of six messages delivered by Derek Prince at IFA's 25th Anniversary conference. \$19.95 + shipping. Order from IFA Fulfillment Center, c/o The Christian Shoppe, PO Box 1058, Purcellville, VA 20134. Credit card orders toll-free 888-349-4446 or via www.ifaresources.com.