

Pentecost – day of Prayer for World Evangelization

The calendar tells us that June 3, 1979, is Pentecost Sunday. On Pentecost we remember with joy the outpouring of the Spirit upon the small church in Jerusalem. Christ followers, empowered by the Spirit, went everywhere preaching the Gospel. A small tender plant became an enormous tree. Its branches spread over the whole earth. Pentecost is a harvest festival. God is gathering in His elect from every nation. Reapers are sent into the world to accomplish the Great Commission. No wonder that many churches emphasize missions on Pentecost!

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization issued a call for Christians around the world to set aside Sunday, June 3, 1979, as a Day of Prayer for World Evangelization. LCWE's executive secretary, Gottfried Osei-Mensah, a clergyman from Ghana, said that Pentecost Sunday each year should focus our attention on prayer for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as the church engages in global evangelism.

That emphasis on prayer for world evangelization was already stressed in the concluding paragraph of the historic Lausanne Covenant adopted at the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization: "We enter into solemn covenant with God and each other to pray, to plan and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world." LCWE asks in addition to prayer for evangelization of the earth's unreached peoples, prayer for the plight of those who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

How we need to pray in these days of international crisis for revival and empowering of the Church! How do we reach the world with the Gospel? Even in missions we have become so wrapped up with techniques and methodology that our reliance on the Holy Spirit is at times relegated to the background. We need spiritual mobilization! Mission techniques and methodology, as good and as necessary as they are, will never win the battle! We must reach the world on our knees! In our communal and private prayer we must ask the Holy Spirit to generate a continued flow of fresh enthusiasm and vision. What should we pray for?

The world

The world situation warrants earnest prayer. The most rapid rate of population growth is in the poor nations of the Third World. The prospects of economic growth are bleak. The energy crisis continues to make its harsh impact felt on developing nations.

Communism is spreading. The fall of Cambodia to Vietnam has raised prospects of increased instability in Southeast Asia. There is a world-wide political and spiritual unrest. We live in serious days. Paul said to the church: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (2 Timothy 2:1,2).

Mission opportunities

The task of missions is not finished. The Gospel has not made a decisive impact upon the Hindu population in India. It is estimated that only 1 % of the Christians now in the church of India have been converted out of Hinduism – this means that there are only about 200,000 converts out of Hinduism in India living today. Relatively few Buddhists have become Christians. In Thailand, Burma and Indo-China, Christian converts form only a tiny, despised or rejected element of society. There are countries where there are no known national believers – such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia. The statistics may be depressing; but the mission challenge is greater than ever.

Opportunities for witness are now everywhere as eastern religions, secularism and other "isms" make their inroads in North America. Christian radio and television are now the means of bringing the Gospel in many countries. The message of Christ penetrates Iron and Bamboo curtains despite the jamming efforts of the communists. Cambodia and Vietnamese refugees present an excellent opportunity for Christian witness in word and deed.

This is not the time to be discouraged. It is still the Lord Jesus who opens and shuts the doors of missionary service. (Rev. 3:7,8)

Leadership training

Trained church leadership is desperately needed. There is a world-wide lack of men truly called of God and continued capable of leading their people. There are too few who can expound Scripture and apply the Gospel message to every area of life.

Finances

Mission finances need to be remembered in prayer. The opportunities are there; but in our days of inflation, the decline of the dollar value, mission work is becoming increasingly expensive. The days that a few dollars could accomplish much are over. Missions are feeling the financial crunch and, instead of expanding, are cutting back programs.

Your missionaries

Are you praying for your missionaries? Pray for their health. Missionaries often work in a climate so different from their homeland. The tropics can bring out strange symptoms, which do not give a definite diagnosis. Sickness has shortened the careers of many missionaries. Pray for a continued fervor for the work. Interruptions and trivialities are so common. A sense of urgency needs to be maintained. No longer can a missionary count on a definite period of service in the country where he is stationed. The times are too uncertain. Political alliances shift rapidly.

6. Persecuted Christians

Are you praying for persecuted fellow-believers? There have already been more martyrs for Christ in our time than in any other period in church history. The light of religious liberty has been extinguished in many countries. The suffering of our fellow believers must not be forgotten. Fellowship through prayer transcends political boundaries. In Rhodesia, many Christians – living in isolated places – are in great danger. Where guerillas are in power, Bibles have been burned; churches have been closed. According to Out-look (African Enterprise), anyone who publicly stands up for Christ is liable to be shot.

Prayer is needed! Wherever the Lord's people gather for worship, may the prayers of intercession for world evangelization and the deliverance from persecution be offered. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).

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