

"Has the Church Lost It's Luster?"

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Lamentations 4:1 (KJV) How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

Here in this passage of scripture we read of gold that has become dim and the most fine gold being changed. Now the second verse tells us that the precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold. Yet, the first verse declares that the gold had become dim! Its glory had somehow faded to that which once shined with glory and radiance had become dull, losing its luster.

This is what has happened to the Church in the last century. That which was once glorious and radiant has seemingly lost its luster and beauty. The Church doesn't shine in radiant holiness as it did just one century ago. It is amazing to me that we can spend millions of dollars on huge building projects and that we can have every luxury known to man in our sanctuaries yet something seems to be missing.

Yes, all of the pews are in place and the building shines beautifully but something seems to be missing but very few notice it. This missing element is the presence of God! Only one-hundred years ago we had much less as far as facilities are concerned. We had older buildings with no conveniences, yet, we had something that today's church cannot boast and that is a "tangible" presence of God.

We now have convenience and comfort but it cannot replace the missing jewel that shined with glimmer and glory of yesteryear's church and that is God's divine nearness! We dulled ourselves because of a lack of prayer! Beloved, fervent prayer is the divine solvent that keeps the gold shining and glorious. Without it we become dull once again! What concerns me is that we have become more attracted to the exteriors of religion than the internal working of grace that emulates God's greatness.

We try every worldly scheme known to mankind to draw men into this once divine institution. Prayer has been replaced by programs and the prayer room seems to have been replaced by a game room or an exercise room. Agonizing has now become organizing and the fruit is so very evident. We don't use the terminology "convert" any longer because people are not converted! We now call them "decisions" because converts are wrought by and through prayer. Decisions are something made in a business meeting.

It is so sad to witness this degradation but we do hold business meetings and we decide to hire the big guns of religious hype and entertainment to come to our church to put on a show so we can get some more decisions. Not converts - decisions! We feel so successful and we don't mind shelling out the large money because our quotas are filled and God is happy with us for one more year. It wasn't even that much work - right?

Of course two weeks later our new friends that made "decisions" are back living in sin with no tangible change in their lives. My thought is this: what were they saved from? There was no lasting change because it was only a "decision" instead of a "conversion". The shame of this counterfeit process is two-fold. Firstly, the decision is not a conversion and the partaker is deceived into thinking that he has something that he does not have. Secondly, the church's gold has become so dim that it cannot discern the difference!

When we study the scriptures as well as read church history we will find that the early church was successful in making converts to Jesus Christ because they prayed and fasted. Not played and feasted but prayed and fasted! _Isaiah stated this: "for as soon as Zion travailed (prayed) she brought forth her children. (Converts)

There are no short cuts in the kingdom of God. We cannot by-pass the necessary avenue of intercessory prayer. The hired guns cannot do for God's kingdom what the local church can do through perpetual and effectual intercession. The reason our altars are barren is because our prayer rooms are barren. The truth is that today we don't want to spend time at a prayer meeting. We are too busy with sporting events and other recreational agendas. Until we crucify these warped practices and return to the former paths we can expect to continue in our barrenness. As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children. If our gold is ever to shine again we must return to prayer.