



ARISE

ISAIAH 60:1-3
ARISE, SHINE FOR YOUR LIGHT
HAS COME AND THE GLORY OF
THE LORD IS RISEN UPON YOU.
ANNUAL MEETING 2013
BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF NORTH CAROLINA

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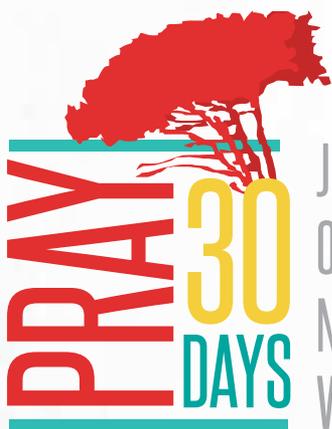
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JOIN US DURING THE MONTH
OF **OCTOBER** AS WE **PRAY** THAT
NORTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS
WILL **ARISE** & IMPACT LOSTNESS

ISAIAH 60:1-3

ARISE, SHINE; FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD IS RISEN UPON YOU. FOR BEHOLD, THE DARKNESS SHALL COVER THE EARTH, AND DEEP DARKNESS THE PEOPLE; BUT THE LORD WILL ARISE OVER YOU, AND HIS GLORY WILL BE SEEN UPON YOU. THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO YOUR LIGHT, AND KINGS TO THE BRIGHTNESS OF YOUR RISING.

DAY 1

REPUTATION OR REALITY

REVELATION 3:1 "I KNOW YOUR WORKS, THAT YOU HAVE A NAME THAT YOU ARE ALIVE, BUT YOU ARE DEAD."

Most rearview mirrors have a disclaimer attached that says, "Objects in this mirror are closer than they appear." I used to have a sticky note attached to my calendar that read, "Events on this calendar are closer than you think." A good dose of reality is always helpful to jolt us back to the real priorities and circumstances in which we live. For many centuries (700 BC-100 AD), the city of Sardis in Asia Minor had a rich history and name for being a luxurious and highly fortified city. Its location served the notion well since any approaching army would, at first glance, not welcome the opportunity to lay siege to a city with three sides being cliffs and only one side approachable. The inhabitants of Sardis also believed their city was easily defendable and impregnable. Appearance is sometimes deceiving, as was evidently true concerning Sardis. The city was conquered several times throughout its history and destroyed by an earthquake in AD 17 – so much for being impregnable.

The church at Sardis (see Revelation 3:1-6) also needed a good dose of reality. It evidently had a reputation for being a spiritually "alive" congregation. In reality, it was "dead." The Lord knew that the church's reputation was only an outward sign with no real evidence of a genuine inward spiritual life. How this death came about was not the real issue at hand. What mattered most was that they needed to come to grips with a true picture of their spiritual condition. In the eyes of man, it appeared that they were one way, and in God's eyes, reality was spoken. Reputation among men led to a false sense of security; it always does, until God speaks truth into the situation. What did God say? Their reputation did not match reality. That is why it is important for us to hear from God through His Word on a regular basis. It becomes a reality check, which we all need. Reputation or reality – where are you? Where is your church? What is God saying about your spiritual life? Do you need to "wake up" and have a reality check?

Ask the Lord to search your heart for areas where you have not been "real" before Him concerning your spiritual life

Pray that you will hear God's truth, wake up and return to Him through repentance and obedience

PRAY

DAY 2 | ARISE AND SHINE

ISAIAH 60:1 "ARISE, SHINE; FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME!"

Following the American Revolution our nation was in a very desperate situation morally and spiritually. Drunkenness was in epidemic form with some 300,000 confirmed drunkards out of a population of five million people. Bank robberies were taking place at an alarming rate and communities were becoming unsafe. Women in many communities feared to be outside at night as ungodliness was rampant throughout the colonies. Church attendance, conversions and spiritual vitality among believers was at an all time low and many denominations were seeing ministers leave the ministry to pursue other professions. The church was declining and only a mighty movement of God could turn things around. Sound familiar? Today, the moral and spiritual climate is rapidly declining in North America. The church is experiencing great decline and is mimicking the culture at large. God's judging hand is upon His church in America. Our backs are against the wall and the battle for the soul of America is raging. What shall we do? How should we respond?

God is calling His people to "arise" and "shine." The term "arise" in Isaiah 61:1 refers to arising from a humble state or prostrate position. "Shine" points to the radiating of the manifest presence of a renewed vitality in one's faith. These two actions are only possible through a fresh touch of God's power in a believer's life. Only after a believer is awakened to sin, humbles himself before God in repentance and seeks God's face can this shining take place. It's time to stop sinking in despair and defeat and see the hope that is found in a holy God who is able to do great things that we cannot even imagine. Isaiah's messianic message of hope in today's text points believers to the truth that the renewed presence of God's power being poured out on His people can be a reality. He can answer our prayers, He can forgive our sin, He can rest His renewed favor on us, He can impact lostness and He can heal our land! The church can experience revival and the culture can be awakened. Will it start with you? Will you "arise" and "shine?"

Pray toward personal renewal that leads you to "arise" and "shine"

Pray that believers and churches will see the desperate moral and spiritual condition, repent, arise and shine forth His renewed glory - impacting lostness

PRAY

DAY 3

HELL-CAN YOU PICTURE IT?

LUKE 16:23-24 "AND BEING IN TORMENTS IN HADES, HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES...THEN HE CRIED...HAVE MERCY ON ME..."

During the First Great Awakening that swept the American colonies from the early 1730s until the mid 1740s God used anointed preachers like Gilbert Tennent, George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards to proclaim His Word. Jonathan Edwards is best known as God's major instrument during the awakening in the New England states. Edwards pastored the Congregationalist church in North Hampton, Massachusetts, and saw revival sweep his church and many others throughout the Connecticut River Valley. Because of this Edwards received many invitations to preach in congregations across New England. His most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," was preached in Enfield, Connecticut, and had the most impact on an audience of any sermon he preached during the awakening. Preaching out of Deuteronomy 32:35, Edwards carefully, with vivid imagery, painted a picture of men slipping helplessly into the pit of hell, without hope and certain of destruction, apart from the grace, mercy and pleasure of God. God's Spirit fell and people cried out with fearful screams and constant tears. Conviction was so intense and the hysteria was so loud that Edwards had to ask for silence before he could proceed. Hell became a reality to the audience as God's Spirit supernaturally convicted people of their need to flee His wrath. Many were converted that day and saved from God's wrath and eternal hell.

Today's text points us all to the reality of hell. The rich man's plight is a sobering reminder that people really can spend eternity separated from God. It happens all too often in America and in North Carolina. With 5.8 million lost people in North Carolina alone, many will perish before you finish reading this devotion. What will you do to impact lostness? Will you pray for the lost? Will you share the hope of Christ with the lost? Will you care for the lost? Hell is real – can you see it?

Pray for a renewed sense of the reality
of hell in your life and church

Pray specifically for one lost person today – that they will
repent and trust Christ as Savior, before it is too late

PRAY

DAY 4

SUDDENLY-THE SPIRIT CAME

ACTS 2:2 "AND SUDDENLY...THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT."

It was a very hopeless situation. In May 1940, more than 300,000 British and French soldiers huddled down in full retreat and defeat at Dunkirk. *Hitler's Blitzkrieg* warfare had routed the allied armies and they found themselves facing certain annihilation or imprisonment. On one side was the shallow port of Dunkirk on the English Channel. On the other side, Hitler's war machine with panzer tank divisions, infantry and his esteemed *Luftwaffe* (airforce). As Hitler's armies prepared to make a final assault on Dunkirk, King George VI declared a National Day of Prayer to be observed on May 26. Churches opened their doors and prayer services were broadcast across the nation by the BBC. People united in focused prayer on behalf of the soldiers. What happened next has been aptly called the "Miracle of Dunkirk." God moved and began answering the prayers of the English people. Hitler suddenly changed his mind (going against all advice from his officers) and ordered his tanks and infantry to hold their positions while the air force finished off the British and French troops. Then, before the planes could get in the air, an intense thunderstorm followed by a dense fog covered Dunkirk and the channel. The fog set in for nine days and the channel turned very calm, which allowed small boats and naval vessels opportunity to come ashore and rescue the soldiers. Some 335,000 troops were rescued. God moved "suddenly."

In today's Scripture, about 120 believers were gathered in the upper room praying. Jesus had been crucified and they were all most likely wondering if the same fate was headed their way. But suddenly, like a mighty rushing wind God intervened, answered their prayers and a small band of eyewitnesses and disciples became bold, Spirit-anointed witnesses to the resurrected Christ. Funny how hopeless situations can suddenly turn around when we pray and God unleashes His Spirit on a situation. Think we need to unite in prayer across America today?

Pray for God to use you as a vessel to challenge believers everywhere to unite, and His Spirit to pour out in revival upon the church

Ask the Lord to blow the winds of His Spirit suddenly in your life, making you the bold witness He desires you to be

PRAY

DAY 5 | **WORRYING ABOVE YOUR PAY GRADE**

ACTS 1:7 "IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW TIMES OR SEASONS WHICH THE FATHER HAS PUT IN HIS OWN AUTHORITY."

I had a colleague who used to always make the comment, "No need to worry above your pay grade." He said this when faced with consequences that required decisions about situations that he did not have the authority to make. He was wise in not worrying about those things he could not change. That is difficult to do, especially if you want to fix things and have input into a particular situation. We often spend a lot of brain power and energy worrying about things we cannot affect. But sometimes we worry because we do not accurately or fully understand the situation or circumstance. It is bigger than the information we have regarding it and we simply cannot figure it out. Ever been there? This often happens with us as believers when we assume that the Lord is going to do something or answer a prayer in the way or time that we expect Him to answer our prayer. Our expectations are different from His ways and we end up being confused or disillusioned when His purposes are different from our expectations.

In Acts 1:1-11 the disciple's expectations about how and when Jesus would establish His Kingdom with Israel on earth were not correct. Their minds were still set on the temporal and earthly coming of the Kingdom. Their understanding of the "kairos" time of God was not correct and the focus of their lives was not on the mission. Jesus had to help them understand that they were worrying about the wrong thing. The ushering in of the Kingdom was not their concern; the mission was their concern. They worried above their pay grade and therefore were distracted from their primary role in the Kingdom, which was being on mission as the "sent ones." They were trying to figure out the Kingdom when they needed to be witnesses of the resurrected Christ to a lost world. Surely that never happens with you – does it?

Ask the Father to forgive you for the times
you become distracted from His mission
Pray for a fresh sense of mission and witness
in your life, family and church

PRAY

DAY 6

WITNESS WITH POWER

ACTS 1:8 "BUT YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU..."

Evan Roberts was a major instrument that God used to pray for, facilitate and fan the flames of revival and awakening during the 1904-1906 Welsh Revival. From the age of 13 Roberts had this deep desire to be filled and empowered with God's Spirit and to see revival in Wales. He spent the next 13 years praying toward that end. In a service one morning some 13 years later Roberts, with great passion, groans and tears, prayed the simple prayer, "Lord, bend me." Roberts encountered the Lord in personal revival and renewal that morning as waves of God's presence poured into his life. Following the encounter Roberts said, "I felt ablaze with a desire to go through the width and breadth of Wales to tell of my Savior." Roberts told a friend that they needed to get ready for a great revival and band together to go and preach all over the country. Roberts also shared his vision and prayer to see 100,000 souls saved. Within six months God sent revival in Wales. Churches and communities were ablaze with the power and work of the Spirit and more than 100,000 converts were ushered into the Kingdom.

Acts 1:8 is a flagship text for believers who are serious about sharing their faith and impacting lostness. When Jesus gave this commission to His followers, He did so with a precursor that they understand the Spirit's work in taking the gospel to the world. In essence, Jesus is saying that they will be witnesses only as they are first empowered with the Holy Spirit. Doing and telling the gospel is the mission Jesus has given us as His followers. The power to do so only comes through the manifest presence of God's Spirit that is alive and at work in and through our lives. Being the gospel through an intimate, surrendered and Spirit-anointed walk with Jesus is the key to being an effective witness. Do you need a fresh anointing of God's Spirit as a witness? How about your church? Maybe our prayer needs to be, "Oh Lord, bend me!"

Pray for the Lord to give you a revived life in Christ and His Holy Spirit

Ask Jesus to set His church in America aflame with revival and a Spirit-anointed passion to impact lostness

PRAY

DAY 7

HAVE YOU BEEN WITH JESUS?

ACTS 4:13 "AND THEY REALIZED THAT THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS."

From 1892-1906 John "Praying" Hyde labored in the Punjab region of India praying and sharing Christ with the native people. Hyde ministered for many years without any converts. The spiritual soil was difficult to cultivate with hard hearts and many barriers to the good news of Jesus. Hyde prayed fervently for the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon the Punjab people. He labored long hours, sometimes spending all night in prayer for the souls of lost men and women. When Hyde interceded all night he would often proceed out of his tent the next morning only to find many people lined up and ready to hear about and receive Jesus. He lived in a continued state of intercession, making obedience to Christ's mission a natural part of his everyday life. Friends and fellow colleagues called him a "Christ-intoxicated witness." The glow of the presence of Christ often radiated from his face because of his close and intimate walk with Jesus. In his last three years of service (1904-1906) the Lord gave Hyde the fruit of his many years of labor in the prayer closet. Hyde saw believers revived and an awakening take place in the Punjab region. Hyde had been with Jesus, the people knew it and God blessed as He poured out His Spirit.

In Acts 4:13 the Bible tells us that Peter and John were recognized as being men who had been with Jesus. After they encountered, prayed for and saw the Lord heal a lame man the crowd responded to the healing and were amazed. As Peter preached his second sermon to the masses, the priests, temple guards and Sadducees approached, being disturbed because he was preaching the resurrected Jesus. Peter and John were arrested and set before the Sanhedrian. As Peter boldly proclaimed that men can only be saved in Christ, the leaders commented that they knew he and John had been with Jesus. They knew Peter and John had been with Jesus. Not just because they were preaching about Him or were identified as His followers, but because His presence radiated through their witness. Do people recognize that you have been with Jesus?

Pray for an unwavering desire to live in intimate fellowship with Jesus through Bible study, prayer and obedience

Pray for the Lord to give you favor with people as they recognize that you have been with Jesus

PRAY

DAY 8

SOMETHING IS WRONG?

2 THESSALONIANS 3:1 "FINALLY, BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US, THAT THE WORD OF THE LORD MAY RUN SWIFTLY AND BE GLORIFIED..."

Theodore Frelinghuysen (1691-1747) came to the New England Colonies in 1720 to serve as pastor of four Dutch Reformed churches in New Jersey. His heart for revival and his pietistic roots immediately helped him realize that there was something terribly wrong with the spiritual life of the congregations he came to pastor. He encountered a casual and routine faith that seemed to produce a real lack of holiness and effective evangelistic witness in the community. Armed with God's Word, Frelinghuysen began praying and preaching toward revival and renewal. He preached evangelistically and proclaimed that Christians should exemplify a holy life and a definite conversion experience. As he preached many church members were converted and the flames of revival began to ignite. Many young people were saved and the laity organized in small groups for devotional accountability and lay preaching efforts. This aided in the lasting impact of revival in many churches.

Paul's plea to the Thessalonian believers for prayer was specifically aimed at seeing the swift running of the gospel take place through his ministry. Paul knew that a rapid running was what was supposed to happen. It was the norm when Spirit-anointed, bold proclamation took place. Paul experienced it in the past. Even when barriers or people opposed his preaching, Paul was confident that his God was able to give much fruit to his labors. Today in America, the church has become content with only a trickling of the gospel. The church seems satisfied with having little or no impact upon growing lostness. Despite all our praying, witnessing, preaching and strategizing, the gospel still creeps along slowly in our culture. And, on top of that, we seem powerless to turn the tide. Has the gospel lost its power or is something wrong with the vessel the Lord wants to use? You tell me.

Pray that the Lord will affirm your conversion experience in Christ with a fresh anointing and boldness to witness

Ask the Lord to awaken His people to the reality that something is drastically wrong when there is no swift running of the gospel

PRAY

DAY 9

UNLEASHING HIS POWER

ACTS 4:31 "AND WHEN THEY HAD PRAYED, THE PLACE... WAS SHAKEN."

Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60) grew up in a wealthy family without a father. His grandmother, a pietist, raised him and tremendously influenced his life. Zinzendorf was also greatly influenced by Hermann Francke while he was a student at Halle University. At Halle, Zinzendorf organized the "Order of the Mustard Seed," which was a group of students who committed to living holy lives focused on missions. Zinzendorf soon emerged as a great pastor/leader and founded the Herrnhut Community, originally an asylum for persecuted believers. This community soon grew and experienced a significant awakening as Zinzendorf led them toward united seasons of prayer and confession. The Moravian Church was birthed at Herrnhut in 1727. This united prayer burden spread to others and soon 48 adults committed to cover each day with 24 hours of prayer. This united prayer effort lasted an amazing 100 years and was influential in pioneering the modern missionary movement. United, "one accord" prayer will unleash the missional power of Christ!

In today's text the followers of Christ were gathered in "one accord" prayer as Peter and John returned from being imprisoned. Their immediate response to the Sanhedrin's restraining order not to preach was a prayer meeting. In fact, united prayer was their custom, as the term used in 4:24 for "one accord" prayer is used six times in Acts related to corporate prayer. As they faced this first major season of persecution, the believers knew that only the Father could overcome the persecution barrier and move the Kingdom forward through the nations. Their cry was for God to give them boldness and to demonstrate His powerful presence through signs and wonders. As verse 31 reveals, they received exactly what they prayed toward. God's power was unleashed, they preached with boldness concerning the resurrection of Jesus and "great grace was upon them all" (see Acts 4:33). Do you think united prayer is needed today?

Pray that the Lord will use you to unite God's people in "one accord" prayer for revival, awakening and the lost

Pray for the Lord to hear the cries of united prayer and to unleash His power and revive His church, impacting lostness

PRAY

DAY 10

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

ACTS 6:4 "BUT WE WILL GIVE OURSELVES CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER AND MINISTRY OF THE WORD."

The effect of the Layman's Prayer Revival of 1857-58 was felt for years following the peak of the movement. Although the Civil War loomed in the near future, prayer gatherings continued and the church was strengthened by hundreds of thousands of new converts. Christian organizations such as the YMCA were also greatly involved in the awakening and were strengthened. The nation was poised for war and had been mercifully prepared in many ways by the 1857-58 awakening. Christian men were renewed and strengthened in their faith as they entered the Army. Many generals were considered spiritual leaders. Robert E. Lee and George McClellan were influential in ensuring that the soldiers were given an opportunity to worship on Sunday and they sought to keep their armies as free as possible from military duties on Sundays. They also saw the great need for increased numbers of chaplains to assist with spiritual direction and encouragement for the armies. Lee was known for his sterling Christian character and was often with his men in worship and prayer gatherings. In 1862, the Confederate Army began experiencing great stirrings and seasons of revival. The Union Army followed soon thereafter. Historians estimate that about 300,000 soldiers were converted to Christ from 1862-65. These revival fires were fanned by strong Christian leaders such as Lee and McClellan who influenced their men toward Christ.

In Acts 6:1-6 the early church was in a bind and needed to add servant leaders to assist with the needs of the increasing numbers of new converts. What was the response of the disciples? An unwavering commitment to prayer and the Word. The disciples were spiritual leaders with spiritual priorities and solutions that allowed them to continue to effectively lead the growing church. Today the American church is in great need of God to raise up a new generation of spiritual leaders. Pastors are leaving the ministry in record numbers and the church seems to look more and more like the culture it is seeking to reach. Spiritual leaders are faced with a deepening apathy, complacency and spiritual famine within the church. How will this tide turn? Only by leaders who give themselves to earnest prayer and the ministry of the Word. Will it start with you?

Pray for the Lord to strengthen and refresh
the spiritual leaders in your church

Ask the Lord to raise up a new generation of
Christian leaders with Christ-like character

PRAY

DAY 11

PASSIONATE PRAYER

LUKE 19:41 "NOW AS HE DREW NEAR, HE SAW THE CITY AND WEPT OVER IT."

Jesus was headed to the cross and His face was set like a flint toward the completion of His mission in Jerusalem. Yet, His heart was broken because His own people were largely ignorant of the fact that He was ushering in the Kingdom as the long awaited Messiah. They missed the "kairos" time of God's visitation and now judgment was announced. Jesus also wept over Jerusalem and the lostness prevalent in such a religious city. Opportunities to believe and respond had come and gone and now it was too late. The city would be destroyed. Following this incident Jesus went in and cleansed the temple saying, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." Israel traded relationship for religious activity, missing the reality of a vital relationship through prayer with God. They missed God's revelation in Christ because they were not a "house of prayer for the nations" (Mark 11:17). Therefore, Jesus wept before His Father over Jerusalem.

In the middle 1830s God sent Titus Coan to the Big Island of Hawaii as a major instrument of revival. Coan and another missionary, Lorenzo Lyons, were co-laborers on the Big Island. They were both greatly affected by the Second Great Awakening in America and by Charles Finney himself. Both were eager to see revival in the Hawaiian Islands. God prepared the way for revival in many ways, particularly through raising up earnest, passionate prayer. In 1836, the year Coan and Lyons arrived, leaders witnessed a heightened desire and passion in prayer among the native Hawaiian believers. In fact, children led the way. One historian recorded that a person could hardly go by a sugar cane field or banana grove without hearing a group of children weeping and praying for revival. God answered their cries and sent revival with thousands being converted within the next couple years. How humbling. The question we all have to ask – where are our passionate tears and prayers for revival and lostness?

Pray for the Lord to give you passionate prayer with
tears for revival and the lost in your Jerusalem

Ask God to raise up believers who are broken over the condition
of the American church and the spiritual famine in our country

PRAY

DAY 12 | CAN THESE BONES LIVE?

EZEKIEL 37:3 "SON OF MAN, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?...
OH LORD GOD, YOU KNOW."

Out of the blue one sunny day there was a frantic knocking at our front door. Before I could get to the door, it was opened by our neighbor and she frantically asked if we would call 911. She said her son had done something to himself and she needed assistance. My wife and daughter called 911 and I ran next door with her to help in any way possible. When we arrived her son was not breathing and was lying on his back on the floor of his room. He did not respond as we shook him and called his name. I tried to find a pulse and finally found one but it was very rapid and shallow. Things did not look good at all. His mother began giving mouth to mouth resuscitation and started chest compressions. I remember asking the question, "Will he make it? Will the Lord bring him back?" After a few minutes (and many people praying), his color began to come back. The paramedics soon arrived and just as they were beginning their work he gasped for a breath and began to move and ask questions. Thankfully, this 20-year-old man was given a new lease on life as the Lord, and his mother, literally breathed life back into his body. How grateful we were for the Lord's mercy and grace that day.

In Ezekiel 37:3, the Lord asked Ezekiel if the dead, dry bones in the valley could live. His answer was wise ("O Lord God, You know") because he knew the Lord was the only one who would determine that. The Lord then commanded Ezekiel to proclaim His Word over the dry bones. They rattled and eventually came together. They were not alive but were together as dead corpses. Then Ezekiel was commanded to pray and ask the Lord to send breath to the dead bones. The Spirit came and breathed life into the bones and a mighty army was raised to their feet. This vision was given to Ezekiel as a message of hope that God would once again breathe life back into His people. They were judged by God for their sin and were in exile, yet God demonstrated His mercy, ability and promise to give life to a hopeless situation. The Lord is able to bring life through His Spirit into any situation. What about your spiritual life? Are you spiritually alive or, like the bones in the valley, do you need to be revived? What about your church? A revived life is available. Shall we pray?

Pray for the Lord to breathe new life into your spiritual life

Pray for the Lord to bring new life through revival
and awakening in complacent and dying churches
throughout North Carolina

PRAY

DAY 13 | SACRIFICE

ACTS 7:9 "AND THEY STONED STEPHEN AS HE WAS CALLING ON GOD..."

As the senior adult man stood to his feet during a recognition service for military veterans my heart was filled with gratitude for his sacrificial service as a World War II soldier. He served in the infantry and fought in the European theatre against Germany. He was a highly decorated war hero. At one point he was shot four times and suffered wounds from a grenade explosion as he destroyed an enemy tank during a battle. He later spoke of that moment as if it was nothing special. He said he was only doing what had to be done to win the battle and save his friends' lives. His humble spirit and deep sense of the need for sacrifice to defeat Germany and win the war was inspiring. The scars and physical trials that this U.S. soldier endured (he walked with a limp) throughout the remaining years of his life was all worth the sacrifice he gave personally. What a hero! Because of his sacrifice and many others like him, we live in a country where we are free to preach Christ to the nations.

In Acts 7 Scripture records the story of Stephen and his preaching, stoning and eventual martyrdom. Stephen was the first Christian martyr in Acts and was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice to see the truth of God proclaimed and the Kingdom move forward. He was faithful to preach the truth about how God's prophets were ignored and persecuted in the past by the religious leaders in Israel. Now, Stephen proclaimed that the Christ had come and they betrayed and murdered Him. He even called the leaders a "stiffnecked bunch" who always resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). The truth eventually pierced the hearts of his hearers, as they were enraged and immediately stoned Stephen to death. Following his martyrdom, a season of persecution arose in Jerusalem and the church scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. This eventually allowed the gospel to move forward through those areas. Is sacrifice even in our vocabulary? What are we willing to do or give up to see Christ made known among the nations?

Pray for the Lord to give you a sacrificial spirit to make Him known to others

Ask the Father to protect, encourage and bear fruit through the persecuted church around the world

PRAY

DAY 14

DO WE FEAR GOD?

ACTS 5 "YOU HAVE...LIED...TO GOD. THEN ANANIAS,
HEARING...FELL DOWN AND BREATHED HIS LAST."

In Acts 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira, who were followers of Christ, felt led to give to the apostles and the church. They sold some of their land for a nice profit and Ananias (with his wife Sapphira's knowledge) evidently said they gave the total amount they received from the sale to the apostles. This, of course, was a lie as Ananias kept back a portion. Peter confronted Ananias and Sapphira about lying to God and the Lord judged their sin and took their lives. Judgment was swift and the result was, "Great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things" (Acts 5:11).

It seems as if both the church and culture at large in America have lost their fear of God. The church is slowly acting and believing more and more like the culture. It has, for the most part, become inoffensive to the culture despite the rapid decline in the moral and spiritual climate in every community. In a recent magazine article concerning the ever-increasing gay political agenda in America, a photograph caught my eye that was taken during a gay pride march in Washington, D.C. The Capital Building was in the background and the photo showed a young man sitting on the shoulders of another young man holding a sign. The young man who was sitting on the other's shoulders was dressed from the waist up in a red fishnet shirt. He wore red lipstick and a set of red devil horns on his head. From his expression you could tell he was yelling and angry. The sign he held read, "Hell Must Be Fabulous!" Think he is a little confused and had no real understanding of the fear and judgment of God? I wonder how long God will be patient with His church and a nation that no longer fears Him?

Pray for a greater sensitivity to sin and
fear/reverence of God in your personal life

Pray for the church to become more concerned about its sin of
apathy, complacency and its attitude toward sin in America

PRAY

DAY 15

STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

ACTS 8:35 "PHILLIP OPENED HIS MOUTH,
AND...PREACHED JESUS TO HIM."

James McGreedy was a central figure in the western component of the Second Great Awakening in America. McGreedy was a fiery Presbyterian minister who began his sermons in a calm manner but usually ended with an intensity that always had a stirring affect on the crowds. In 1796, he was called to serve three churches in Logan County, Kentucky, in an area called Rogue's Harbor. The area was aptly named since most inhabitants were murderers, horse-thieves, robbers, etc. who fled impending justice from other communities. McGreedy, who would not back down to the lawlessness in the area, passionately preached about the glories of heaven and then moved straight to the reality of a devil's hell. He dealt with the heart of the problem of sin and separation from God. McGreedy and others soon began to see God's hand at work and organized several area-wide communion services at his Red River and Gasper River churches. Revival deepened and the crowds continued to grow, resulting in the organization of more camp meeting style gatherings. These gatherings eventually swept through Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Georgia, Pennsylvania and North Carolina in the coming years with thousands being converted and the moral fiber of communities being changed.

In Acts 8:35 Phillip was all about sharing Jesus with the Ethiopian eunuch. He did not beat around the bush nor did he shy away from the telling the truth about the Messiah. He simply shared the truth and reality about Jesus being the suffering servant who died for his sins. He went to the heart of the issue. What happened? The eunuch was converted and requested immediate baptism. He was truly changed! What a lesson to the church today. Maybe instead of trying to be so politically correct in sermons pastors need to go straight to the heart of the matter concerning the moral and spiritual collapse in the church. Maybe the same is true of believers in the work place. Maybe it's time for our words and deeds to be a little more direct and to the point, as we call people to forgiveness of sin and salvation through Jesus. Will it start with you?

Ask God for forgiveness for being more concerned about being politically correct than giving the truth about heaven, hell and Jesus

Pray that the Lord will raise up believers who will boldly speak the truth of Christ to a lost world, no matter the cost

PRAY

DAY 16

LOVE THEM INTO THE KINGDOM

1 CORINTHIANS 13:8,13 "LOVE NEVER FAILS...
BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE."

When I went back to school to obey God's call to ministry and become a pastor the Lord brought Mrs. Mary into my life. Her husband was deceased, but had been the biblical language professor at the college I attended for many years. Mrs. Mary knew five languages and soon became my Greek tutor. I met with her weekly and studied Greek for an hour. I had a Greek class in school, but really learned Greek on the front porch with Mrs. Mary's help. I also learned a lot about walking with and serving Christ. Mrs. Mary volunteered and tutored at the local high school where she taught students to read. She used the Bible as her textbook and each year led several students to Christ as she tutored them and taught them to read. She often said that the best way to win people into the Kingdom is to invest in their lives and love them into the Kingdom. She modeled this message of love as she invested in people's lives.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8, Paul speaks of God's agape love that never fails. In 13:13 he shares that God's agape love, even above faith and hope, is the greatest thing we can possess and extend toward others. It originates with God, flows outwardly and always considers the interests of others above our own. God demonstrated this kind of love when He sent Jesus to the cross to die for the sins of the world (Romans 5:8). John 3:16, often called the gospel in a verse, says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." D.L. Moody, after listening to Henry Moorhouse (a British pastor) preach seven messages on John 3:16 and the love of God, was convinced that he needed to emphasize God's love in his messages. Instead of just inviting sinners to flee from God's impending wrath, he also began inviting sinners to draw near and experience God's love through Jesus. How are you doing with the love of God? Are you loving people into the Kingdom?

Pray for a renewed love for Christ, His church and the lost

Pray for Jesus to use you as a disciple maker who invests
in and loves people into God's Kingdom

PRAY

DAY 17

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14 "THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US..."

One day while I was sitting on the couch and reading I looked out the window and saw five police cars pull up in front of my house. A SWAT team, along with five uniformed officers, ran through the yard with their weapons drawn and surrounded the house next door. As the raid unfolded, I watched the officers go into the house and search the premises. The officers soon escorted one of the young adults away. The police officers were there all afternoon searching the home, vehicles and outside buildings. I felt really sad for the family and knew that the days ahead would be difficult for them, especially the young man. In an earlier conversation with my wife, the mother welcomed prayer for her family. Even though we prayed for the family, I knew I could have done more to reach out to them. As I watched the events unfold next door, the Lord convicted me of my need to take more responsibility for the spiritual life and wellbeing of my neighbors. I remember asking the Lord's forgiveness and for His compelling love to flood my life for my neighbors who were lost.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul bears witness to the driving force that moved him toward being a witness for Jesus. He said the agape love of Christ was the chief motivating factor in his life. Christ's love "compelled" or "squeezed" him to outwardly live for Jesus because he died for him. The phrase "compels us" is a picture of something or someone being pressed in on every side or being shot out of a tube. Paul's passion to reach the lost originated in the love that Christ showed him. Therefore, he had no excuses and needed only to live and share that love with others. He took personal responsibility to be a disciple who was compelled and accountable to Jesus for the spiritual condition of others. What about you? What about your church? When are we going to take responsibility for the increasing lostness in our communities, state, nation and world?

Pray for the Lord to forgive your apathy
toward the lostness around you

Pray for the Lord to awaken, revive and renew His church in America
to its responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of this nation

PRAY

DAY 18

SENDING CHURCHES

ACTS 13:3 “THEN HAVING FASTED AND PRAYED, AND LAID HANDS ON THEM, THEY SENT THEM AWAY.”

Sandy Creek Baptist Church in Liberty, N.C., has a rich heritage of being a sending church. The church was organized in 1755 with 16 charter members. Founding pastor Shubal Sterns was infected with a deep desire to raise up evangelistic churches. He was greatly influenced by George Whitfield and the winds of revival sweeping the colonies during the First Great Awakening. Sterns, a Boston native, was an avid proponent of believer’s baptism and set out with Daniel Marshall and others to see Separate Baptist congregations planted throughout the colonies. As the revival fires spread, the Sandy Creek church quickly grew to more than 600 members in just a few years. What was remarkable was how the Lord gave the congregation such a passion for planting churches. By 1775 the church was mother, grandmother or great-grandmother to about 42 churches. Out of those churches God raised up and sent out 125 ministers. In Sandy Creek’s rich 250-year heritage of planting churches and sending missionaries it is estimated that hundreds of churches throughout the southern and eastern United States can trace their roots back to Sandy Creek Baptist Church.

The Antioch church was also known for sending missionaries. In Acts 13:3 Saul and Barnabas were sent on their first missionary journey to evangelize and plant churches. Fasting and prayer preceded the sending of these men and the Lord used this church to take the gospel to unreached areas of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia. This moment marks the beginning of the Gentile mission for the early church as it pours itself into the task of carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. Antioch not only demonstrates a passion to send and plant churches, but also models the biblical approach for sending. The emphases on fasting, prayer and being a community that “ministered” to the Lord provided a ripe environment for sending missionaries to evangelize and start churches. Can this be said of your church?

Pray that the Lord will use you and your church mightily to resource,
pray for and send missionaries to the ends of the earth

Ask God to call missionaries and church planters to impact lostness
throughout North Carolina’s eight unreached population centers
(Wilmington, Fayetteville, Greenville, Raleigh/Durham, Greensboro/High Point/Winston-Salem, Hickory, Asheville, Charlotte)

PRAY

DAY 19

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

ACTS 10:34 "THEN PETER OPENED HIS MOUTH AND SAID:
'IN TRUTH I PERCEIVE THAT GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY.'"

Racial and ethnic barriers are especially difficult to overcome as believers and churches seek to reach their communities. However, barriers of all kinds are usually not an issue when spiritual awakening comes to a church, area, region or nation. This was especially evident during the Global Awakening (1901-10). This worldwide awakening peaked with the Welsh revival (1904-06), which was a catalyst to revival across nations and continents. J.E. Orr, considered by most scholars as the most extensive historian of awakenings, contends that the spiritual movements associated with the worldwide awakening are the most extensive awakening movements of all time. This awakening crossed ethnic, social, religious, economical and geographical barriers. It is estimated that more than five million people were converted to Christ in the first couple years of the awakening. Countries such as India, China, Australia, England, United States, Manchuria and Korea, along with many other countries in Europe, South America, Africa and Latin America, experienced unusual stirrings of God's Spirit resulting in exponential church growth. The gospel was marching forward across the world on the wings of spiritual awakening.

In Acts 10:34, Peter's encounter with the Lord and Cornelius while praying proved to be a pivotal moment for the first century church. It was the time when the Lord birthed His heavenly vision in Peter's heart that all peoples and nations (the Gentiles) should be recipients of the gospel. Because of this supernatural work of the Spirit, the ethnic barrier was overcome and the gospel moved forward beyond the Jewish people to all nations. Aren't we thankful for Peter's obedience and the work of God's Spirit? Oh, that God would pour out His Spirit in awakening so that all kinds of barriers would be brought down, allowing the nations to hear about Jesus! Will you pray?

Pray for the Lord to awaken your church, overcoming any
barriers to the gospel that may be present

Ask the Father to awaken and pour out His Spirit upon His church in
America, using it as a catalyst for reaching the nations for Christ

PRAY

DAY 20 | DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

ACTS 7:60; 8:1 “LORD, DO NOT CHARGE THEM WITH THIS SIN...NOW SAUL WAS CONSENTING TO HIS DEATH.”

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, along with his brother Charles and George Whitfield, were used of God to spearhead the English Awakening that swept Britain from 1735-91. Throughout the course of his life Wesley experienced many divine encounters with people. No encounter so shook Wesley as his encounter with a Moravian following a storm-tossed ocean journey on a ship headed to Georgia in 1735. In route, John and his brother witnessed the calm spirit and peaceful assurance the Moravians demonstrated during a terrible storm that almost broke the ship apart in the Atlantic. When they landed in Georgia a Moravian named Spangenburg asked John a series of soul searching questions about his salvation. John later commented that he feared his answers were but “vain words.” When John and Charles returned to England they encountered yet another Moravian who pressed them concerning their salvation. Then, while attending the Aldersgate Street meeting on May 24, 1738, John Wesley surrendered to the living Christ in salvation. As he heard Luther’s commentary on Romans read aloud, he felt his heart “strangely warmed” and trusted in “Christ alone” for his salvation. He was a changed man, and the fires of revival began to flow through his life.

In today’s text, Paul’s (Saul’s) observance (Acts 7:58) and consent of the stoning of Stephen was certainly a divine encounter. He not only observed Stephen’s heated encounter with the Sanhedrin, but he also observed Stephen’s response and faithful witness while being stoned to death. As the stones crushed his body, Stephen prayed for those who were responsible to be forgiven by the Lord. Afterwards, Paul (Saul) became a persecutor of Christians but was gloriously converted to Christ on the road to Damascus. Following his conversion, Paul became Stephen’s successor, taking the gospel to the Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles. The great church leader and theologian St. Augustine believed that Paul’s conversion and call to ministry was likely tied to the answered prayer of Stephen. Have you experienced a divine encounter lately? Did you recognize it as a divine encounter? What did God say to you through the encounter?

Thank the Lord for the divine encounters He
has used to impact your life in Christ

Pray that the Lord would allow you to be used as an instrument
for Christ, impacting lostness, through a divine encounter

PRAY

DAY 21

DESPERATE BEFORE GOD

ACTS 12:5 "PETER WAS THEREFORE KEPT IN PRISON, BUT CONSTANT PRAYER WAS OFFERED TO GOD FOR HIM BY THE CHURCH."

During the Korean War, Delos Miles found himself the only one alive in his foxhole. He went to the back of the foxhole and laid down on his side and acted like he was dead. Almost immediately a Chinese soldier came into the foxhole shooting. Miles was only hit in the small finger of his right hand. He was a believer and trusted Christ as his Savior at age 11. But for the past couple years he had served self, strayed from Christ and had not prayed in awhile. The Chinese soldier came over to him, shook him and then placed his rifle on his forehead. In that instant, Miles silently, but with a desperate heart, prayed that the Lord would bring him out alive and promised to do anything God wanted him to do if he would spare his life. The Chinese soldier pulled the trigger and the bullet went around the right side of his head. It did not penetrate his head and did not knock him out! Eventually, Miles and 25 others from his company were able to get back safely to American lines. He spent the next nine months in hospitals and was awarded the Silver Star. What about his promise to God? With heart aflame Miles pastored four churches, earned his S.T.D. degree, served two state conventions as evangelism director and two Southern Baptist seminaries as professor of evangelism, all the while influencing thousands of students toward a wholesome and intelligent evangelism ministry. He also went on to become a prolific writer, publishing 12 books and numerous articles and chapters on evangelism. He is retired but still preaches when given the opportunity.

The church in Jerusalem was desperate before the Lord in earnest prayer (Acts 12:5). Peter had been arrested and was just short of being tried (and probably executed). The church earnestly prayed to the Lord for his release. As the church prayed, God miraculously delivered Peter from prison. An angel awakened him, his chains fell off and the angel guided him out of prison. When he was outside, Peter went to where the believers were praying and knocked on the door. At first the believers did not believe it was Peter at the door. They eventually let Peter in and rejoiced in the Lord's faithfulness in answering their desperate prayers. Have you ever been desperate before God in prayer? Do you think the time has come for the church to practice desperate prayer for revival and awakening in America? Will it start with you?

Ask the Father to give you a heart of desperation in prayer
for the spiritual condition of the church in America

Pray that the church in America will humbly and desperately
ask God for His mercy upon the church and our nation

PRAY

DAY 22

RETURN TO ME

REVELATION 2:4 "I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU,
THAT YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE."

Susanna Spurgeon, the wife of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who was pastor of the great Metropolitan Tabernacle in London and known as the "Prince of Preachers," was first introduced to her husband when he preached his first sermon at New Park Baptist Church. Susanna Thompson (her maiden name), was not overly impressed with her future husband. She thought his sermon was nothing special and he seemed like a "country bumpkin." Her lack of interest in the sermon was probably not due to Spurgeon's preaching, but rather to her spiritual apathy and complacency. She trusted in Christ earlier in life but had slipped into a time of spiritual indifference. Susanna often experienced seasons of darkness and doubt in her spiritual journey, but refused help from others. That all changed when she met Charles Spurgeon and began to sit under his preaching and was exposed to his personal witness in her life. Susanna soon recognized her complacent state and sought spiritual counsel. She came clean with Charles about her need to return to the Lord. She would later bear witness that Charles gently invested in her life spiritually through prayer, preaching and long conversations. A deep love relationship soon developed but only as Susanna's love and passion for Christ was restored. They became an inseparable pair, both romantically and spiritually, and were wed on January 8, 1856. As she returned to her first love (Jesus) she found the love of her life in her husband.

Like Susanna Spurgeon, the church at Ephesus had a problem (Revelation 2:4). The church left its first love in Christ and was reprimanded by Jesus. The church was told to remember from where they had fallen and to repent and return to the Lord. When apathy and complacency is present, our love for spiritual things wanes and our desire to walk in Christ's mission subsides. We become hardened to spiritual truths and focus on the world and its pleasures. The good news is that people and churches can return to their first love. However, this can only happen on Christ's terms, through repentance and the renewing work of God's Spirit. Do you need to return to the Lord? Have you left Jesus, your first love? What gift of God's are you missing because you live in indifference? What about your church?

Repent and pray for the Lord to forgive your apathy
and indifference toward your first love - Jesus

Pray that pastors, leaders and congregations
across America will return to Jesus

PRAY

DAY 23

TIME WITH GOD

MARK 1:35 "NOW IN THE MORNING...HE WENT OUT AND DEPARTED TO A SOLITARY PLACE...THERE HE PRAYED."

Susanna Wesley, mother of Charles and John Wesley, had an undying thirst to spend time with God in prayer. Her mark on revival and awakening was seen most through her prayers and spiritual influence in the lives of Charles and John. Because of the huge impact her sons made on the Eighteenth Century Awakening that swept Britain and the American Colonies, she is often referred to by scholars as a "Mother of Revival and Awakening." Susanna's heart for Christ led her to instill spiritual fervor and tenacity in her children. She was a busy homemaker (she gave birth to 19 children), pastor's wife and teacher. She spent at least six hours a day teaching and instructing her children. Despite this rigid schedule, the spiritually draining life of the pastorate and many trials (nine of her children died, their home burned, her husband was imprisoned and financial difficulties always abounded), Susanna always found time to pray. During some of the most trying and hectic times, when it was difficult to get alone and pray, Susanna would sit at the kitchen table with her apron over her head. This was a sign to her children to leave her alone – she was with the Father in prayer. It was that important to her!

Time with the Father was also of utmost importance to Jesus. Mark 1:35 shows His practice of prayer and His need to get alone with the Father in prayer. Even the pressing in of desperate people and the need of His followers to be with Him did not stop Jesus from time with His Father. This deep desire to commune with His Father allowed Him to keep His heart fixed on the Father's desires and priorities for His life and ministry. If Jesus needed time with the Father, don't you think the same is true of us? How is your time with God? If you are too busy to pray, then you are too busy. Revival and awakening will never come if the church is too busy to pray. Maybe that is part of our problem?

Pray for an unwavering desire to spend time with God in prayer

Ask the Father to raise up churches that are
houses of prayer for the nations

PRAY

DAY 24

PENETRATING LOSTNESS

ACTS 17:16 "NOW WHILE PAUL WAITED...HIS SPIRIT WAS PROVOKED...WHEN HE SAW THE CITY WAS GIVEN TO IDOLS."

As Paul entered Athens, he was greatly disturbed that its inhabitants were so absorbed in the worship of idols. This motivated him to pray for and seek to impact lostness in the city. He went to work engaging and "reasoning" with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogues. He also engaged in intense dialogue with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in the marketplace. Eventually Paul was invited to speak concerning this "new teaching" in the Areopagus (the governing council). Paul was faithful to not only reason with his audience, but to proclaim the resurrected Christ (Acts 17:18, 31). He knew they did not need a new teaching or philosophical argument concerning another foreign idol or deity. They needed to hear about the resurrected Jesus, who alone could forgive their sins. His desire was not to win an argument, but to impact lostness.

George Whitefield was also passionate about impacting lostness. Whitefield was one of the most passionate and colorful preachers of the Great Awakening in Britain and the First Great Awakening in America (1734-1790). Both Awakenings were greatly influenced by Whitefield as he traveled back and forth across the Atlantic (about 13 times) passionately preaching Christ to the masses in both Britain and the American colonies. Whitefield was used by the Lord to unify the revival fires on both continents. He crossed denominational lines and preached almost daily in churches, parks and fields. Therefore, he drew large crowds and sometimes preached to as many as 15,000 people in one city-wide campaign. He cooperated with all churches that wanted to see people converted to Christ. That was his heart – he wanted his life to count by impacting lostness. Can that be said of you?

Pray for the Lord to open the door for you
to share Jesus with a lost person

Pray that the church in America will experience revival
and be renewed in its desire to impact lostness

PRAY

DAY 25

NO REGRETS

ACTS 23:1 "THEN PAUL...SAID.. 'MEN AND BRETHREN, I HAVE LIVED IN ALL GOOD CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD UNTIL THIS DAY.'"

Peter Cartwright was a rough and tough frontiersman with a passion to see the Great Commission fulfilled in his Jerusalem. Born in 1775, his family moved west from Virginia and settled in Logan County, Kentucky. At age 16, Cartwright was destined for ministry and was licensed to preach as an exhorter with the Methodist Episcopal Church. He later married and fathered nine children. With little formal education, he supplemented his lack of education by continual reading. He was a circuit riding preacher and became very well seasoned and known as an excellent evangelist and church planter. He was also known for his ability to handle difficult ministry situations (that sometimes called for bare fists). He had a booming manly voice and was a leading organizer in camp meetings. Throughout his life he preached more than 14,500 sermons, planted hundreds of churches and received some 10,000 members into the church. His honest, simple, yet passion-filled preaching allowed him great rapport with his frontier audiences. He was genuine and real in his beliefs and mannerisms, well known for his integrity in ministry and with people. He later served in the Illinois circuit and was elected to the Illinois legislature. He continued to proclaim Christ until his death at age 87. He truly lived a full, transparent and genuine life, serving faithfully the Savior he loved with no regrets.

Paul had no regrets. His ministry was an open book before the Sanhedrin. He had just previously declared the resurrected Jesus to a group of soldiers and a mob. His life was certainly hanging in the balance, yet he continued to bear witness to Jesus. That was Paul, a former Pharisee of Pharisees, now a faithful, passionate witness to the resurrected Christ, persecuted and falsely accused, yet faithful and unwavering in his faith. If that day was to be his last it was fine. He knew he was in his Father's hands. He was confident of the integrity of his walk, witness and mission, and now sure of his eternal destiny. As it turned out, that was not the end but only another open door that allowed greater witness and impact for Jesus – for Paul was headed to Rome. That seems to be the case with witnesses who live with no regrets. Their influence is usually far reaching and long lasting. What about you?

Pray that your life in Christ is one with no regrets
because your conscience is clear before God

Pray that the church you attend will have great favor
with the community because of its integrity and faithfulness
to Christ as a light penetrating the darkness

PRAY

DAY 26

EVERY HEART CLEAR?

1 JOHN 3:21 "BRETHREN, IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD."

Unconfessed sin will destroy the vitality of a Christian's faith and witness. It destroys confidence with God and man. It also leads to apathy and complacency and will create a poison among believers as they seek true fellowship with one another. In January 1970, Dennis Kinlaw was genuinely concerned about the moral and spiritual condition of students everywhere and especially the students at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky. He was the new president at Asbury and longed to see revival sweep the campus. Meanwhile, a small group of students had gathered early and prayed together daily for several months. On February 3, 1970, the dean at Asbury shared his testimony during chapel and then invited students to come forward to share their testimonies. Students began confessing sins and asking forgiveness publicly as the fires of revival swept the meeting. Very few moved when the bell rang for classes to begin. At times, all 1,500-plus seats were filled as seminary students and people from the town joined the services. The altar was often filled with students praying and weeping after confessing sins. Classes were suspended for the week and the services continued some 185 straight hours before hearts were clear and the services concluded. Students formed revival teams and were invited to churches, seminaries and colleges all across the country to share what happened at Asbury. Thousands of people were converted because of this genuine move of God.

John's word to believers is straightforward and clear in 1 John 3:21: confidence before God in prayer and relationship only takes place when believers are free from sin. Confession, repentance and obedience are essentials for that to happen (verse 22). Today's text demonstrates the need to not only "do" the gospel but to "be" the gospel. As Christians, we cannot isolate who we are in Christ from our actions, and vice versa. Also, confidence to witness cannot be attained through giftedness or desire, but only through clean hands (right actions) and pure hearts (right attitudes/motives). When an entire group of believers experiences clear hearts, revival can take place, allowing for confident prayer and effective witness on a larger scale, impacting lostness in a greater way. Why would you allow unconfessed sin to remain if it hinders your prayer life and service to God? Is your heart clear?

Pray for clean hands and a pure heart before God

Ask the Lord to renew the church in America as believers get serious concerning confessing and repenting of sin before a holy God

PRAY

DAY 27

A LASTING IMPRESSION

ACTS 26:19 "I WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION."

Paul's encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road set the course for his life's mission from that point forward. The journey was not without its struggles. He was misunderstood, nearly beaten to death, imprisoned, shipwrecked, stoned and spent many long journeys away from his homeland taking the gospel to the Gentiles. In Acts 26:15-18, Paul shares his conversion and encounter with Jesus before King Agrippa. In his testimony, Paul gives great detail about the Lord's specific call to take the message of the resurrected Christ to the Gentiles. Paul's encounter with Jesus changed the direction of his life and launched him on a mission from which he never strayed. Soon, Paul headed to Rome and preached Christ to both Jews and Gentiles. He walked in obedience to his "heavenly vision" – one he received when he met Jesus.

In 1934, Mordica Hamm began 11 weeks of evangelistic meetings in Charlotte, N.C. One young man, 16-year-old William Franklin Graham, came under great conviction as Hamm preached. Night after night Graham attended the meetings, overwhelmed with the convicting power of God's Spirit, until one night he could stand it no longer. He turned to his friend and said, "Let's go." Both went forward to accept Jesus as their Savior. He would later finish college, pastor a church, work for Youth for Christ and eventually form the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Over the last 65-plus years, Graham has preached to millions worldwide in person, via radio, TV and the web; and seen hundreds of thousands come to Christ. His last major event is planned for November 2013, as he turns 93. Like Paul, Graham encountered Jesus and answered God's call to preach. He has been obedient to the Lord's heavenly vision. Can that be said of you?

Ask the Father to give and confirm His heavenly vision in your life

Pray for the Lord to give you and your church fruit for your labors
as you walk in obedience to His heavenly vision

PRAY

DAY 28

ICHABOD OR EBENEZER?

ROMANS 1:26 "FOR THIS REASON, GOD GAVE THEM UP TO VILE PASSIONS."

For many evangelical Christians, the natural disasters, socio-economic problems, soft-target shootings and acts of terrorism that have escalated throughout the last 15-20 years across America represent more than just a change in climate or events that just happen because evil is present in the world. Many believers recognize these as wake up calls to the moral, socio-economic and spiritual collapse in the church and in America. God is trying to get our attention, don't you think? Before the four major spiritual awakenings that took place in America from 1732-1906, each was preceded by seasons of any combination of moral and spiritual decline, economic decline or natural disasters. Just a cursory look discloses this fact. Parallel to the beginning of the Layman's Prayer Revival (1857-58) there was moral decline and the United States banking system collapsed. The Hawaiian Island Awakening (1835) was preceded by a tsunami that created a sense of reverence and awe of God just prior to spiritual awakening. Alcoholism and immorality was at an epidemic rate before the Second Great Awakening. Unless we try to say that these events were merely happenstance, consider this fact: prior to each awakening God had already begun calling His people to earnestly pray for revival and awakening. As God's people prayed, He began getting people's attention and issuing wake up calls for His people to return to Him in godliness and holiness. In essence, because He was merciful before these awakenings, God's hand was at work seeking to bring the nation back from certain judgment and destruction.

James Burns calls this the "ebbing flow." Impotence is rampant within today's church in America. The church seems to lack the ability to turn around the spiritual famine in the land. In response to the instances mentioned earlier, the church desperately cried out to God for His mercy, and God forgave their sin and healed the land as He sent revival. Will He do that today? Scripture and history is also replete with examples when God judged and destroyed His people, turning them over to the error of their ways (Luke 19:41-46) because they did not return to Him. What will happen in America? Will we repent and return to Him or will we be destroyed and turned over to our vile passions? Which will it be: Ichabod (my glory has departed) or Ebenezer (the stone of help)? Shall we pray?

Pray for God's mercy upon you personally
and upon His people in America

Ask the Father to raise up a praying army to desperately call
upon His name for His help in this season of "ebbing flow"

PRAY

DAY 29

FUTURE IMPACT

ACTS 28:30-31 "AND HE [PAUL]...WELCOMING ALL WHO CAME TO HIM, PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD...WITH ALL OPENNESS, UNHINDERED."

In 1857, as the Layman's Prayer Revival increased in growth and strength, the USS North Carolina was docked in New York Harbor. The Navy was using it as a U.S. Naval receiving ship. It basically became a ship that housed sailors who needed additional training before being sent to their next assignments. Aboard ship, four Christian sailors began meeting together for prayer. As they met and prayed they were praising and rejoicing in the Lord's nearness. Unbelieving sailors, with the intention of ridiculing and interrupting the prayer gathering, headed down the steps to the bottom deck where the Christians were praying. As the lost sailors entered the room, deep conviction from God's presence fell upon them and they were all gloriously converted. The prayer meeting continued nightly and hundreds of sailors were eventually converted. Then, as they were sent to other ports and ships, the sailors became instruments of revival wherever they were sent, complements of the U.S. Navy. God is great!

When you read the last verse of Acts you get the impression that Paul's situation afforded opportunity for greater impact through his witness than ever before. Because Paul was under house arrest, a single soldier was daily at his side. He boldly preached Jesus to visitors and guards. In a two-year period, there is no telling the number of soldiers and non-believers who were reached as Paul boldly shared his faith. The emphatic use of the term "unhindered" in this verse suggests that from that point very few restrictions were placed on Paul's preaching and the spread of the gospel throughout Rome and the empire as a whole. It is easy to imagine how, through the providential hand of God, Paul's preaching began to impact lostness beyond the immediate scope of his situation as soldiers became followers and were later transferred to other parts of the empire. The message of Christ went forth beyond Rome and to the ends of the earth. I'm sure Paul had no idea of the far-reaching future impact of his preaching and teaching among the nations. That is what happens when the gospel goes forth "unhindered."

Pray for the Lord to use your life as an instrument
to see Jesus made known to future generations

Ask the Father to give your church an "unhindered" burden to impact
lostness beyond your community and this present generation

PRAY

DAY 30 | NEVER GIVE UP!

ROMANS 8:31 "IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

Winston Churchill, who was often referred to by historians as the “British Bulldog” was a tenacious, outspoken and uncompromising politician and leader. He was not only a great politician but he was an excellent orator. When Britain was facing certain attack from Hitler’s army, Churchill gave a stirring speech at his first appearance in the House of Commons concerning his strategy to fight the Germans. He said, “You ask what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory. Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terror. Victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory there is no survival.” He would later make a similar rally cry to the British populace at the Harrow School in 1941 concerning the fight they were in with Germany. He said, “This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.” Britain never gave in and eventually did see victory – despite many dark hours.

The church in America is in a battle for the soul of America. In North Carolina, we are in the fight of our lives to impact lostness. At times the church seems defeated and unable to meet the demands of reaching an ever-increasing pagan culture. In some communities, churches are huddled down in their holy gatherings, content to just maintain the status quo and not rock the boat in any way. In other communities across our state, churches are reaching out but with few results and little impact. Discouragement is rampant and the enemy continues to gain ground. In today’s text, the Roman believers were reminded of the truth that God is our victor. In Christ, we have victory no matter how hopeless or dark the situation. No enemy is stronger or greater than our God. If He is for us – which He is – who is able to stand against Him? Don’t you think it’s time we remember that? It’s time to arise and shine and impact lostness!

Pray for a renewed passion to keep on praying, preaching,
serving and witnessing in order to never give up on
awakening and impacting lostness

Pray that the Lord will grant His church the mercy and grace
necessary to persevere and see the victory we have through Jesus

PRAY

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