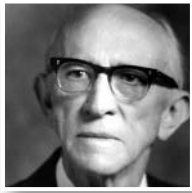




Desperation and Revival

by Vance Havner (1948)



This is an hour that tries the souls of men, especially of the saints. Wiseacres may laugh at the idea of demonism and spurn the thought that this present pagan, anti-Christian world-order is of the devil, but true believers

who have really contended with satanic forces in the heavenlies understand whereof we speak. Satan, knowing that his time is short, is using every wile and device, as a roaring lion, an angel of light or a great accuser, to devour, deceive or discourage God's people. He attacks body, mind and spirit.

While the Great Avenger tarries, the great adversary besets the widowed Church. Truth is on the scaffold, wrong on the throne. Bible students generally agree that our Lord's message in Luke 17 concerning His return, and the parable of the importunate widow in Luke 18, are one discourse. Woven together, they reveal that the last days will be marked by worldliness, as in the days of Noah and Lot; by corruption, as the carcass awaits the vultures; and by faithlessness: 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' In such an hour the Church, like a widow beset by adversaries, must find her greatest weapon in importunate prayer, lest she faint. The prayer is not for vengeance but for justice: 'Vindicate me against my adversary,' says a new translation.

Certainly we have today the worldliness, the corruption and the faithlessness. Surely we have the adversary. But the Church has not yet learned to pray and not faint. The situation is desperate, but we are not desperate. We have not come experientially to holy desperation, the extremity which is God's opportunity. We are still trying to save our faces, puttering around with pet projects and halfway measures. We have not learned that we are too far gone, that it is too late in the day for all that. When we find that out we shall quit boasting of our great numbers, our big preachers, the money we

have raised. We shall quit bargaining with the adversary, letting the King of Sodom make Abraham rich. As long as we have a few tricks left up our sleeves, we shall never get down to importunate prayer. We need to be "shipwrecked on God."

We have done and are doing a lot of strange things. We have failed to condemn sin. We have tried to adapt our gospel to trends and tendencies, instead of demanding that the age conform to the Gospel. We have acted as though we felt better about our religion every time a scientist spoke favorably of it, instead of letting God be true if Science never spoke in His behalf. We have let higher criticism almost scare us out of taking texts. We have made man and not God the center of the universe. We have confused evangelism with revival and added numbers to churches already loaded down with members that have been "starched and ironed but not washed." We have imagined that we had a revival every time a church paid out of debt. We have seen Modernism sneak in while shepherds have failed to warn of wolves in sheep's clothing. We have succumbed to the fad for tolerance until we have become "dumb dogs [that] cannot bark." (Isa. 56:10)

"The Savior, in the parable of the importunate widow, spoke concerning His return. That precious truth has become a poor relation in the family of doctrines, recognized with embarrassment, if at all. Yet it may be questioned whether there will ever be another awakening until the Church, aware of her desperation, recovers the prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus; avenge me of mine adversary." One does not hear that often, for since Constantine we have been building the kingdom here but not looking for the King hereafter.

But how could such a prayer produce revival? Because when men really have this hope within them, they purify themselves—and that is revival.

When the saints become as desperate as the situation, something will happen! □