

The Church: The Pillar and Ground Truth

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly,
But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave
thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the
Living God, the pillar and ground of truth.
I Timothy 3:14, 15

Presently, the Church is living in a time of revival and a time of apostasy. The two seem to be concurrent with one another. There is the certainty of moral declension and spiritual degeneracy. You see it each day in churches as pulpits are filled with unbelieving preachers and liberal apostates that deny the literal inspiration and sacredness of God's almighty Word. Our papers are packed with stories of those that mock Christians and would have the world believe that many of the problems of America are linked to her connection to 'preachers of righteousness.' I must state that what is needed today in our Churches is some good ol' fashioned Holy Ghost filled men and women of God who are not afraid to live separately and distinctively in the midst of this unclean world. Truth is never to be decided on the basis of general consensus but according to the Holy Writ of the Lord. God established His testimony in this earth from generation to generation by putting His Words in the mouths of believers who spoke and then later preserved the 'speech' of God.

The history of the Church is unique. The closest parallel in Jewish history is to that of the origin of the synagogue. It is believed in Rabbinic Judaism to have originated in Babylon during the time of the captivity; often citing Ezekiel 11:16 as the foundational text for its existence. The word 'Synagogue' means an assembly. In the Cambridge history of Judaism vol. III, the synagogue is shown to have been the very life of the Jewish people during their years of sorrow on foreign soil. (Actually, if you remember in Genesis Abraham never wanted his seed to return there but generations later because of sin in general and the breaking of the sabbath in particular (II Chron 36:21), they find themselves in the land of Abraham again)

The Church is an 'ecclesia.' This is a group of particular ones who have been called out from something or someone unto something or someone. This glorious calling is for fellowship with like-minded people who think the same way about sin as God does and who believe the same way about redemption as He does. It is within the Church that the believer's life is grounded in the Word of God. Much like the Jew in the synagogue who saw his life as revolving around the scrolls of the 'Torah, Prophets & Writings' in their history.

This newly redeemed blood-bought Church congregates for the purpose of individual as well as corporate edification. The life changing Word of God feeds and nourishes the souls of God's people but if somehow or another various members of the body are cut off from one another then, the life which was once apparent begins to cease. In John 15 we see it in the parallel of the vine and her branches. What is happening to the fruit of the Lord? I believe that an adversary has infiltrated the Church while we have slept and this enemy has come in and sown tares among us. Our new seeker sensitive Gospel has deposited seeds in the hearts of very sincere people who do not yet realize that what is needed is repentance not comfort in our personal sins.

What is the Church to do?

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to exemplify the life of the Godhead here in the earth. The mystery and purpose of God is often obscured by the fuzzy accusations leveled against the Church. At the same time, the Church must deal with her own sin problem. She's dressed in filthy rags when the Lord has garments of praise and righteousness awaiting her. As the Apostle Peter said

There must be a return to the preachers of days gone by. The old Holiness & Pentecostal preachers of yesteryear who came upon the scene with nothing more than a bible in one hand, hymn book in the other and a heart blazing with fire from on high. Those men were not afraid to go into a territory and 'pioneer' a work. They sought God incessantly in prayer and fasted, many times, because there was nothing to eat. Today's preacher is lost without power-point, a parsonage and 100 people who will guarantee a salary up front.

But the man of God sees the possibilities of God's life in the hearts of humble saints that are seeking to walk in the fullness of the Holy Ghost and in the revelation of God's Word to their heart. Surely we have come a long way since the days of the book of Acts. The Apostle Paul's ministry typifies the ministries of thousands of unsung heroes around the world who live to give their life in the service of the King.

I recently received a letter from a couple in their nineties. The husband is 95 and the wife is 92. They were commenting on the state of the Church and ministry as they have seen it in the last 80 years. And they said

"..The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.." {1 Pet 4:17} If she refuses to commit her way unto the Lord then the Lord will remove the candle from its lampstand {Rev 2:5}. All across the nation denominations are closing more churches than they are opening because of problems of sin and because of a lack of quality ministers being raised up for the final harvest. The average minister graduates from bible college or seminary having never learned what it means to be a 'minister of Christ' in the first place. "There doesn't seem to be many Holiness preachers these days..[And] Holiness preaching is what this country needs."

No, these were not advocates for a misguided message of no makeup, no pants and the like. They were contending for ministers who would once again preach 'sanctification of the heart.' Here is where we are losing the battle today. The taking up of the Cross of Jesus has been displaced by a Gospel that proclaims man's goodness and his need for money. The pulpit must redirect man's attention to the Cross which produces humility of heart and sanctification of the soul.

What is the Church to be?

Years ago, the wife and I were in the interior of Mexico preaching and I ministered for a man that had 5 churches. I wondered how in the world any man could shepherd 5 flocks of sheep. Yet, this man never even thought about the amount of Churches that were in his care.

He simply saw scattered sheep and was touched by the feeling of their infirmities and went daily to pour in the oil and the wine into their wounds. On Sundays he would walk the hills in one direction and his wife would go in the other direction and at the end of the day both would return to recount the glories of God in the service of the Lord. There must be a multiplication of these kinds of preachers in the last days to help in the final harvest.

God is pouring out his spirit upon all flesh and the power of God is being made known to saint and sinner alike. During the years that I spent in the Middle East we saw God's glory as souls were saved and hearts were radically changed by the grace of God. I saw many weeping under conviction and saw men and women baptized with the mighty Holy Ghost speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance. Unfortunately, all too many times dead preachers that were preaching dead sermons to dead congregations were starving their people to death with story after story of

The Lord Jesus Christ must verify the truth of the Gospel in order to ensure that multitudes will continue to know that He is alive. We are to trust the Word of God by faith and believe all that is written therein but we are never to tie His hands up with 'theology' that 'binds' Him. Hundreds of thousands of people are gathering in fields in foreign nations, why? because they are hungry to see Jesus. Also because hundreds of them are afflicted and wanting to see God's love manifested toward them. Through the years I have had people say to me to preach that Jesus heals today is to give people a false hope, my reply is normally from the Word of God.

'Cessationsim:' This teaching essentially teaches that God no long supernaturally answers prayer today thru any form of gifts of the Spirit. So there you have it! The devil is able to produce lying signs and wonders but the Church of the Living God is too anemic to resist, withstand or overcome the works of the devil. God forbid! We, Christians, are the Church, the pillar and ground of truth. All the world is to measure itself by the standards perpetuated in the Church.

What is the Church to say?

Psalm 78:2-8

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done.

For he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:

THAT THEY MIGHT SET THEIR HOPE IN GOD

and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God."

and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: says "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

As long as God's Word says that I am to encourage people with testimonies of God's power I will never believe that this is the dissemination of false hope. Millions are hopeless in these last days because some preacher has robbed them of the real hope in Jesus {Col 1:27,28}. Whether in Revival, camp-meeting, convocation or some conference, The Lord has shown himself faithful to the call of God on my life.

Years ago in Saudi Arabia, God gave us a mighty revival there in the underground churches. I remember preaching on one occasion and a man jumped up in the middle of

the message hollering that he wanted to be saved now. I was standing in the doorway of the kitchen and all of the living room was packed with Philipinos, Sudanese, British folks and many more. In the deserts of Arabia the Lord was revealing himself to people as they would stand testify to God's power.

Later in Turkey I met a man who told of how he was raised in a Muslim village and had never known a Christian but that the Lord had appeared to him in a vision and told of him the Good News of salvation. Can we deny that God Almighty is at work? Should we refuse to utter the things that God has done because some backslidden religious person says that the Lord isn't real today. No Sir! We must continue in the traditions received from the early Church, contending for the beliefs of FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANITY.

Where the Church must go?

The Church must once again seek to return to the old paths of 'truth.' Only then can this lethargy be broken in so many cities and communities. As the prophet Joel wrote, there must be found at the house of God ministers weeping between the porch and the altar. (Joel 2:17) The preacher must find a place to pray once again and contend for the faith that was once delivered and the latter rain blessing will return to the house. Otherwise Ichabod (I Sam 4:21) will be the terrible state of things. Once the river dries up in the house of the Lord God's written Word is replaced by 'supposed oral revelations' that push people to the bring of confusion and spiritual suicide. But if the man of God would labor at the altar he would find that there would always be manna there in the morning.

The state of Nebraska is filled with rivers of all types. We have a large reservoir of water beneath the earth. Wells tap into this water every day and rivers flow because of good spring rains and at times some decent latter rains. Standing on the banks of a river one is able to see beaver dams at a distance. You rarely see the beaver but you see the work that has taken place as they have tried to stop up the movement of the water. This is for their protection you see. We can draw some definite conclusions from this picture. The devil is doing much to undermine the free flowing activity of the river of God in the Church. Those 'unseen' things are the items that tend to prevent personal revival and corporate life. If we do not preach a message that convicts of sin and drives men & women into the saving arms of God we will be forced to worship with nothing more than a 'riverbank' experience but if we desire an outpouring that will cleanse the Church of wickedness there must be a man of God there who has discerned the condition.

Let's return to Paul's admonition to behave as we ought to in the house of God. I realize that this is a tall order in many quarters but for the sake of the next generation someone must see genuine Pentecost again. We need it and boy do we need it now!