

Restoring The Church To Its Originality

'Repent and turn again so your sins may be blotted out, so there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and so He may send Jesus Who was ordained for you before time, Whom heaven must receive (and retain) until the times of restoration of all things, which God spoke long ago by the mouth of His holy prophets' (Acts 3:19 to 21).

This is the time when the Christian church desperately needs refreshing and restoration. It needs the presence of the Lord to come and restore it so the Christians behave in a holy manner like they did in the early days. An unholy complacency has overcome almost every modern church in which sin is rife, compromise is accepted, the sick and aged are ignored or ostracised and corruption is hidden. Miracles rarely happen because of the cooling down of the congregations. The 'Prosperity' teaching has overcome many producing materialistic, selfish church-goers who claim to be Christian but live like the world. There is a distinct difference between modern day Christians and modern Disciples. When disciples stand up to rebuke complacent Christians for their lack of holiness they are criticised, ostracised, told they are too 'radical' or 'extreme' and ordered to be silent. Many of the Christian churches are in a spiritual mess and they need to wake up and repent then show the fruit of repentance. Too many modern Christians are complacent and lack holiness. Too many are materialistic, uncaring, side with wicked people, living sexually sinful lives, drinking to excess, gambling, smoking, taking illegal drugs, selfish, are violent towards their wives and are generally very carnal. Many believe they are spiritual children of Abraham and so their salvation is secure but they need to remember the stern words of John the Baptist who spoke to the real descendents of Abraham.

'John said to the multitudes who went out to be baptised by him, "You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance and do not begin to say among yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I tell you, God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones! Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the (lake of) fire."

The multitudes asked him, "What then must we do?"

John answered, "He who has two coats, let him give to one who has none. He who has food, let him do likewise."

Tax collectors also came to be baptised and they asked John, "Teacher, what must we do?"

John said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed to you."

Soldiers also asked him, "What about us? What must we do?"

John said, "Extort from no one by violence, neither accuse anyone wrongfully. Be content with your wages."

As the people were in expectation (awaiting the Messiah) they reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he was the Messiah. John answered them all, "I indeed baptise you with water but He comes Who is mightier than I, the catch of whose sandals I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit and fire, His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor (the church) and will gather the wheat (genuine disciples) into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff (carnal Christians) with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:7 to 17). What John was referring to was the verse, "Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). 'Owe no one anything except to love one another, for those who love their neighbour has fulfilled the law' (Romans 13:8). Then remember the stern words of Jesus. "I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (religious leaders, pastors, ministers, modern priests) there is no way you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

In the opening verse the word refreshing is applied to the renewing of the Holy Spirit. It can also be used to restore what has been stolen. The state of some people within modern Christianity can be described as spiritually 'lifeless'. There is a phrase that says, "United we stand. Divided we fall." Modern Christianity has been divided into so many different cults, sects and various churches, there is no consistency in their approach to the Gospel message. Most sects declare nobody is saved from hell unless they join their particular church and beliefs. That is opposite to what the Bible says. We all need to discern the Lord's Body of genuine disciples. We cannot all attend the same church so we need to accept there are people who do not attend our particular denomination who are true, genuine believers. We also need to accept, there are people who attend our church who are tares not wheat and they cause strife. The lifelessness and passivity of the modern church is brought on by a lack of the Holy Spirit and true worship within the services. That lifelessness can be attributed to two reasons. One, the pastor is weak and cannot hold office as he should do, caring, instructing and delegating authority as the Scriptures teach. Secondly, lifelessness can be attributed to a subtle attack of the enemy, slowly sucking the life out of the church. Either reason needs to be addressed. The church needs to return to a united front like they had in the early days two thousand years ago when all churches were called Assemblies and the belief in Jesus was called, 'The Way', after His comment, "I am the Way, Truth and Life and no one can come to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Unity in the Spirit was the reason the Apostles achieved so much in such a short time. Division is the reason genuine salvation and miracles are so scarce.

Notice the list of sins listed here in the following verses ending with, they have a form of godliness but deny His power. That is written for last day carnal Christians. 'Know (be aware of) this, in the last days (in our time) grievous times will come. People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness but having denied His power, so turn away from these people' (2 Timothy 3:1 to 5). 'The day of the Lord will come as (suddenly) as a thief in the night. The heavens (universe) will pass away with a great noise and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, the earth and the works in it will be burned up. Since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and Godliness?' (2 Peter 3:10 & 11). We need to submit ourselves to God, because after we have preached to others and led them to salvation, if we are not walking with God as we should be, we might still be rejected on Judgement Day (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The Holy Spirit is vital for restoration, glory, might and strength. He is our 'Key' to our own life and individual restoration. Without the Holy Spirit, the amazing feats achieved in the New Testament could not have been accomplished. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we cannot achieve the abundant life described so beautifully by Isaiah. 'This is the fast that I have chosen for you, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke (of bondage), to let the oppressed go free and that you break every yoke. Share your bread with the hungry and bring the poor who are cast out, to your house. When you see the naked, cover them and do not hide yourself from your own family. Then your light will break forth as the morning and your healing will spring forth speedily. Your righteousness will go before you. The glory of God will be your rear guard. You will call and the Lord will answer. You will cry and He will say, "Here I am." If you take away from the midst of you the yoke (of bondage), the putting forth the finger pointing and speaking wickedly, and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will rise in darkness and your obscurity be as the noonday. God will guide you continually, satisfy your soul in dry places, make strong your bones and you will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those who will be of you (your children) will build the old waste places. You will raise up the foundations of many generations and you will be called The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to dwell in. If you honour the Sabbath, refrain from doing your pleasure on My holy day and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holiness of God honourable and honour Him, not doing it your own way nor finding your own pleasure nor speaking your own words, then you will delight yourself in the Lord and I will make you to ride on the high places of the earth. I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father for the mouth of God has spoken it' (Isaiah 58:6 to 14). The holy prophet Isaiah depicts a person so deeply and continually guided by God they have within their Spirit a 'spring' of life that overflows deep into their personality and character, refreshing and renewing their soul. This is confirmed in the New Testament. 'Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again but the water I will give them will become in them a well of water springing up to eternal life' (John 4:14). 'Jesus said, "It is done! I am the Beginning and the End. I will give freely to those who are thirsty from the spring of the water of life" (Revelation 21:6).

As we see lawlessness increase, we need to stand firm with Jesus, not give in to temptation to sin and not grow spiritually cold. 'Because iniquity and lawlessness will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold' (Matthew 24:12). New life needs to be breathed into the church to wash away the lifelessness and complacency. Unity of Spirit needs to be restored. It was not God Who divided the church into splinters, it was the pride of so-called Christians who did that. No church is better, worse or more holy than another. No church has all the answers. No church is 100% correct. In our human weaknesses we need to face God prayerfully and ask for His guidance to see us through to the end. Only those who endure to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22). Repentance, humility and obedience will wipe the sin of complacency away. We must be consciously aggressive in our pursuit of our Lord Jesus so He can restore us and our church fellowship, resulting in our acceptance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nobody can be lukewarm in their approach to the Lord or they might end up as vomit. Jesus said, "I know your works, you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot but because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15 & 16). 'Wake up righteously and do not sin, for some (in the church) have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame' (1 Corinthians 15:34). Jesus said, "I know your works, you have a reputation of being alive but you (the church) are dead. Wake up and keep the things that remain which you were about to throw away. I have found no works of yours perfected before My God. Remember how you have received and heard (the Gospel). Keep it and repent. If you will not watch, I will come as (suddenly as) a thief and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Revelation 3:1 to 3). 'When they pray to God (in repentance) and they are favourable to Him so God sees their face filled with joy, God restores to them His righteousness' (Job 33:26).

Amen and God bless you.

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