

Readings

Lev. 2:1 (observe the references to fine flour and its place in the ingredient lists)
Num. 7:13
1 Kgs. 4:22
Ezek. 16:10-13
Rev. 18:11-14
Jn. 5:22

Introduction

The State of Many Churches Today

As I overview so many churches I am reminded of the young man who was dead but had the apparent functions of life. His body was warm, his oxygen level was excellent, and his heart beat rhythmically, but he was dead. It was a body functioning without life!

- a) The possibility is that many in the churches are functioning without fruitfulness, a union without unity, for most of the individuals have lost the true focus and priority.
 - i) They have left their first love which was and is not the new believers enthusiasm for having salvation, but affection for Christ (Matt. 10:37).
 - ii) The need to learn the lessons from the history of Israel and Ephesus.
 1. Israel was taken captive and when they saw the temple and what was happening they wept, but too late (Psa. 137:1-4).
 2. Ephesus was such, they were filled with truth but left their first love. Their priority was wrong, what danger they were in (Rev. 2:4).
- b) Today we are seeing churches closing and almost zero true evangelistic work being done.

What Is The Answer?

- 1) From what I have seen over the years, there seems to be a multi-faceted answer:
 - a) First there is a major need for the individual to know what it is to abide in the Lord, for only then will there be fruitfulness. The Lord said: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (Jn. 15:4). What is the fruit?
 - i) The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9-11)
 - ii) The fruit of Christ likeness, His zeal (Jn. 2:17); compassion (Matt. 9:36), God glorifying life (Jn. 17:4).
 - iii) When this is seen there will follow:
 1. Saints seeing the glory of the Lord, and lives will be changed. "But we all, with open face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are changed . . . from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).
 2. Saints will partake the righteous judgmental character of the Lord and hate sin, and knowing God's fury against sin, will preach as never before. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).
 3. There will be an increasing awareness of the preeminence of the place God has given to Christ (Col. 1:18) which will be followed by:
 - (a) The outliving of Christ as the preeminent, and the first love will never be left.
- 2) What are the results in individual lives and churches when the Lord is not preeminent?
 - a) Consider the letter to the Corinthians, what problems there were:
 - i) Allegiance to personalities (ch. 1:12)
 - ii) Two aspects of immorality: physically (ch. 5:1-13; ch. 7:1-40) and legally (ch. 6:1-20)
 - iii) Offering and eating foods offered to idols (ch. 8:1, 4)

- iv) Misconduct at the Lord's Supper resulting externally from association at the table of devils (demons) (ch. 10:21), and internally by their belittling lack of acknowledging the Headship of Christ (ch. 11:2-16), and being drunk at the Lord's Supper (ch. 11:17-34).
 - v) Their attitudes toward the others and their abilities from God by depreciating others or their own gifts (ch. 12:15, 21). The result of the lack of love is lives which are like "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1-3), and therefore failed to exhibit the characteristics of love (ch. 13:4-8).
 - vi) The abuse of tongues (ch. 14:1-40)
 - vii) Three queries concerning the resurrection, namely if there was a resurrection (ch. 15:12). "How are the dead raised up?" and "What body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15:35)
- 3) Where was the preeminence of Christ in Corinth?
- a) Laodicea, what was the problem there?
 - i) They had no idea how dreadfully pathetic they were. Concerning them the Lord says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Rev. 3:15-19)
 - ii) What if the Lord came walking:
 - 1. Into your church/assembly, would there be the evidence that He was preeminent, or would things have to change?
 - (a) In 3 John a man who was pre-eminent, Christ was displaced, can this happen?
 - 2. Into my home, as He did with Abraham, would there be the evidence that He was preeminent, or would things have to change?
 - (a) In the matter of Lordship of my life, is Christ preeminent?

Conclusion

If we want to see blessing there is a price to be paid. While it is easy to sing certain hymns, even while singing them, can we be telling lies? Consider the words of the hymn:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Frances R. Havergal

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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