

The Church Must Repent

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forces of evil? Should we not be satisfied just to maintain a little spiritual life, and pray God to fan it a little so that it does not go completely out? If Jesus had to give up at Nazareth because of unbelief, how can we hope to have revival in our day?

It is recorded of the church in Acts 2:42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Note carefully, these words are not written of just the apostles; they are not written of just Peter, or James, or John; they are not written just of the preacher, but of the entire church. It was the church that continued steadfastly. It was the church that remained true to the doctrine given them. It was the church that maintained a continuing fellowship and demonstration of brotherly love. It was the church that did not forsake the assembling together for communion and worship. It was the church that continually prayed. Therefore, we conclude that it must be the church as a whole that produces revival, and the outlook and vision that the church of apostolic days maintained. If the commandments of Christ, the Great Commission, and Pentecost mean anything at all to us today, then we must agree that the church and its program immediately following Pentecost is the pattern for our church in this day.

Then what can we do to bring revival? There are several things:

1. We can be sure that we as individuals are right with God. If any one of us has left his "first love" about which John wrote to Ephesus, then we are not altogether right with God. God's call here is to repentance and a return to our "first works" of love and devotion to God.

2. We can be sure that we are right with each other. There is no greater hindrance to revival than wrong relationships with fellow members of the church.

3. The church can repent—of her prayerlessness; of her lack of oneness; of her lack of vision; of her lack of personal concern for the unsaved; of her lack of interest in the mid-week prayer service; of her lack of interest in the Sunday evening service.

When I was a boy, I liked to play with fire, and I still enjoy it. May it be that with those who respond to the call of God to repent, there may be started a small brush fire that shall soon spread and consume the whole church. When God said, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door," He was speaking to the church (Laodicea). He speaks the same word to the church today. Will we hear Him? Our greatest problem is that we are not willing to admit that our greatest need is revival in the membership of the church. But if you will honestly search your own heart, many will be forced to admit that there is trouble inside; there is a lack; there is a need.

Local churches are in more or less degree infected and infested with conditions of which God does not approve. There is a type of worldliness (earthiness) that quenches the Spirit of God. There is unbelief, immorality, divorce, materialism, evil habits, and especially sins of the spirit or disposition. How often we refuse to touch these conditions or even admit that they exist. It has been argued that "nobody is perfect," and "it has always been this way." Scripture has even been quoted to prove this position—that if we pull up the tares, we may destroy some wheat in the effort. No attitude suits the devil more than this one. It's just what he wants. It's the way he planned it.

But judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. We dare not be satisfied with doing a lot in religious effort and evading our greatest responsibility. Judgment,

then, in the church suggests housecleaning. May I suggest it—at the individual level. And when the joy of salvation is restored to the believers in the church, then, and only then, will they teach transgressors God's way and turn sinners to Him.

God is calling the church to repentance, confession, renunciation of sin, reconciliation and restitution, separation from the sinful things of the world, the Lordship of Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There are no softer words I can use to effectively present this truth. It is of no use to apply cold cream to a cancer when the only cure is the deep-burning rays of radium.

There is a Lazarus who awaits resurrection, and we have the Christ who can perform the miracle. But there are too many Marthas standing around who fear the results of rolling away the stone from the door of the place where they keep the corpse.

God chastens those whom He loves. Can you believe we love our church, as we thus speak? We do. Nowhere has God let wickedness alone to prevent a disturbance. And it would be far better now to make some mistakes in grappling with the church that does not produce than to commit the greater sin of permitting evil to go unchallenged.

Whatever else we ought to be doing as a church, we must first repent.

O Church of God, awake.

You Follow Me!

by Rev. L. K. Mullen

What would the Church ever have done without Peter? He was the spokesman for the disciples, the preacher at Pentecost, and one of the outstanding writers of Scripture. Most of us like Peter, undoubtedly because we have discovered something in common with him. The charge is often made that Peter was impulsive. He spoke and acted with no apparent realization of the implications and consequences. His conduct at one time made him a hero, at another time a bungler.

It is not surprising then that Jesus' last personal encounter with Peter involved a typical scene in which Peter was the bungler and Jesus was required to issue a stern rebuke.

John gives us the record in Chapter 21:18-22. Jesus had just told Peter the manner in which he (Peter) would die, v. 18. Peter, turning to John and addressing Jesus, said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus' answer was swift and deadly. "Peter, that's none of your business. I'll take care of John. You follow me!"

The problem here is one worthy of keenest attention. It's all too easy to become concerned about the duties and obligations of the other fellow; to worry and to wonder what his lot will be and whether or not his "deal" is better than ours; to feel "I've got a hard place and he's got it soft." God save us from such!

The deeper task is to follow Christ. This is our only duty. To fulfill it acceptably will require all that we have—a mind guided by the logic of truth, a will governed by the disciplines of moral law, and affections wholly won by the grace of God. This is a minimum prerequisite. Anything less makes the Christian profession mere sham and pretense.

What then does it mean to follow Christ? One man said, "Master, I will follow thee." Jesus said in reply, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Apparently this man had good intentions, but was not

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