

General Topics :: Apostasy Even When the Pews are Still Full.

Apostasy Even When the Pews are Still Full. - posted by CofG (), on: 2019/3/13 18:23

A PLEA TO REPENT

Israel, return to the Lord your God,
for you have stumbled in your iniquity.
Take words of repentance with you
and return to the Lord.
Say to him: "Forgive all our iniquity
and accept what is good,
so that we may repay you
with praise from our lips.
Assyria will not save us,
we will not ride on horses,
and we will no longer proclaim, "Our gods!
to the work of our hands.
For the fatherless receives compassion in you."

A PROMISE OF RESTORATION

I will heal their apostasy;
I will freely love them,
for my anger will have turned from him.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
he will blossom like the lily
and take root like the cedars of Lebanon.
His new branches will spread,
and his splendor will be like the olive tree,
his fragrance, like the forest of Lebanon.
The people will return and live beneath his shade.
They will grow grain
and blossom like the vine.
His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.
Ephraim, why should I have anything more
to do with idols?
It is I who answer and watch over him.
I am like a flourishing pine tree;
your fruit comes from me. Let whoever is wise understand these things,
and whoever is insightful recognize them.
For the ways of the Lord are right,
and the righteous walk in them,
but the rebellious stumble in them. -- Hosea 14:1-9 (CSB)

These verses are so applicable to us today in the church.

Apostasy is a process. It is a slipping away from God to the flesh and to the world. Many in the church have succumbed to the power of the flesh and money in ministry. Supernatural Christianity has been replaced with the strategies and strength of men. We have sown with the flesh and reaped merely flesh. That is a truism that is proven by the wood, hay and stubble that we find so much inside the church walls. In addition, we have mixed with the world and become stained by it. We have allowed wealth to overtake us and we have made wealth our strength and eventually an idol. That is the process of apostasy.

God has been calling to us patiently and kindly to repent and return to Him, to separation from the world and the flesh and to come to Him who gives help to the needy and powerless, to protect and provide for them like they are the fatherless. He wants to provide supernatural spiritual help to the humble of heart. He only helps the humble and those who come to Him like they are children in great need. Wealthy people don't need God to do church. But to be supernatural, their strength and their wealth are no help at all. They are a hindrance.

Jesus is the true Israel. In Him alone we find the Kingdom of God and in His shadow, as we abide in Him, He produces His fruit in His people. He is calling His people to return to their first love, to open the door to His supernatural presence in the church and to experience the abundant fruit that only He can provide and produce in His church.

We are the branches of John 15 that are in danger of being broken off because our abiding has diminished to the point of fruitlessness. We have little to no power and we have little spirit life in us. We are a "natural" church depending on the strength of the flesh and on the gold of the world. Wealth was used as our servant but has become our Master as it always does with God's people. We thought prosperity could be the strength of God's people, His church and His Kingdom's advance. Moral deism combined with wealth could change the world so we think. So we have exported our weakness and fleshly kingdom to other peoples. We have deceived ourselves and the world but not God.

Hosea 14 was an invitation and promise for the people of Israel but they ignored the offer. Jesus came to make good on the offer and the promise but the people by that time had become so completely blinded to their idolatry and to their spiritual weakness. Instead of living like foreigners and pilgrims in the world, a foreign power had become their masters and that captivity had become their home. For many, the world is now home and we have become captive to the foreign power of money and fleshly strength, fleshly ideas and fleshly kingdom work.

Hosea 14 is a light for us and I believe a last hope for us before He comes the next and last time. Apostasy is rampant. It is an accelerating darkness. We just don't perceive it. It is an apostasy not from general doctrine or traditional church practices but from the manifest presence of Jesus and His Spirit in the church not only on Sundays but in lives. You can have right doctrine but be far from supernatural life in Christ. That is true spiritual apostasy. Israel had all the trappings of the Kingdom in the letter but relied on the strength of flesh and the service of idols to give Her power in the world.

The sheep will follow Jesus to where He is even if they have to leave the dead churches to find Him. Apostasy is not only when people leave a church. It's when the church has left Jesus even if they haven't changed locations.

Re: Apostasy Even When the Pews are Still Full. - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2019/3/15 11:32

Robert: You touched upon something I have experienced time and again for more than a decade. The manifest ABSENCE of God's presence even though the whole congregation sings, preaches and prays. It's as though the absence of God's presence is normative and to expect it is just some old Pentecostal tradition.

There was one Church who understood this and sought the presence of God in their preaching and worship, you could immediately sense the difference while worshipping and singing praises. But this is the only one of a dozen I have attended over the past several years.

I expressed similar to this post in my 'forest for the trees' post some time back. The Spirit of God is speaking, and I believe we are hearing a word for the Church.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2019/3/15 20:49

Hi Marvin

I'm as concerned about His manifest presence or as you say "absence" in daily Christian life. A "natural" Christianity versus "spiritual" or supernatural.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2019/3/15 21:48

Marvin: I agree. I have noticed this too. It simply means that much religious activity does not translate into much presence of God. I will take His presence every time. I love His presence. It is so sweet.

Re: Apostasy Even When the Pews are Still Full. - posted by savannah, on: 2019/3/16 11:24

My guess is that this might speak to your hearts, as well as to the hearts of some others;

<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=697>

From the article;

"Evil company is to be sedulously avoided by the Christian lest he become defiled by them. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20). Nor is it only the openly lawless and criminal who are to be shunned, but even, yea especially, those professing to be Christians yet who do not live the life of Christians. It is this latter class particularly against which the real child of God needs to be most on his guard: namely, those who say one thing and do another; those whose talk is pious, but whose walk differs little or nothing from the non-professor. The Word of God is plain and positive on this point: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). This is not merely good advice, but a Divine command which we disregard at our peril."

That really hits the nail on the head!

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2019/3/16 16:55

Thanks Savannah,

The article speaks well to the fellowship of God's people to the clearly false professor. What would you say about the situation that seems to also abound of the born again who do not walk in the Spirit as much as they ought?

I know many Christians that I feel confident truly believe and have been regenerated who nonetheless walk as infants in Christ as they operate in the power of the flesh, not in wanton sin, but rather they are dependent on their own strength, their own intelligence, their own will. People who have the money and the worldly intelligence to accomplish things in the church but lack any supernatural power or spiritual life and they aren't even aware of their condition. Jesus and Paul admonished and exhorted such people often.

There seems to be a strong presumption that if we are born again, that if we are sincere and if we try to serve the Lord, that we automatically are living in the Spirit.

Scripture does not seem to support that view. Biblically, there seems to be strong warnings and firm instruction to avoid that presumption and to direct the people to pursue the Spirit's work much more actively and much more intentionally to ensure against fleshly Christian living, work and worship.

It would seem that the broader professing church has 3 classes of people. Those who are fake or false professors who do not treasure Jesus nor are regenerate, those who are truly born again but have their spiritual lives weakened and made ineffective for a season by not abiding closely in Christ and in His Spirit and finally, those who are "spiritual"; that is, those who are walking in the Spirit and living a Spirit filled life.

I am afraid that Western Christianity has permitted the second group of immature Christians to flourish in their sleepy state. The lack of persecution, abundance of money to accomplish ministry, the traditions of "church" and the ease of life have and are choking off the Spirit in their life. In short, a falling away from Christ that is not final but is so prevalent that the people are weak and asleep to the loss of true supernatural living in Christ and in the Spirit.

The Lord will be gracious to restore such people who turn, repent from their self reliance or reliance on money (in the Hosea text "foreign power") and who turn childlike to depend on the good Father who gives His Spirit freely in love to His children who ask with needy hearts.