

God's Call for Church Repentance

“If you return to the Lord then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion” (II Chronicles 30:9).

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel experienced twelve renewals.* These renewals were brought about by their prophets who made the people conscience of their sins. When these prophets found a response, the normal work was set aside and spiritual concerns were given a priority. The entire body of people affected by sin was required to be present.

Those were days of fasting and admitting their sins before the Lord. It was a time of willful repentance and remorse and of earnestly seeking the Lord.

A list of sins was together agreed upon, confessed, and posted. The time became a period of searching for truth from Scripture, a message that would reveal their wrongdoings and cause them to repent. Leaders then led the people into prayers of repentance. The circumstance was a family event of recognizing the authority and demands of God; as a result, God honored his word, as he had promised that he would when people wholeheartedly called upon him. For this reason, these events became a time of restoration and renewal.

“Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Joel 2:13).

The question for us, however, is “Do we agree that as a church we have sinned and are no longer formed and living by Christ’s design?” Is it true that we have failed the Lord in the following:

- By not demonstrating the unity and solidarity of the body of Christ, within the community in which the church exists, by practicing “closed shop” doctrinally, by striving for numbers growth, and by using cleverly designed earthly methods to keep functioning?
- By failing to present clearly and directly the good news of the Kingdom, the news that leads us to repentance and a spiritual rebirth evidenced through our lifestyles?
- By mistreating and ignoring the supernatural structure of the church through the centrality of the Holy Spirit, who seeks to control and direct the church by providing various people with spiritual gifts and enablements as he sees fit?
- By accepting and tolerating of our members a lifestyle which is non-distinct from the world; humanistic in ideologies; by indulging in self-gratification, while not caring for the poor and needy among us?
- By having the church exist, not as a service agency but at the level of affluence, consuming an excessive and disproportionate share of its tithes and offerings given to the Lord?

- By limiting the current authority of the Holy Spirit in blindly defending a secondary set of beliefs and actions, and not allowing nor considering other insights or directions the Holy Spirit may seek and lead us to consider?
- By operating the church as an institution, rather than a spiritual organism built by Christ and directed by the Spirit, and in the process, denying the uniqueness of character and potential impact Christ intended this dynamic supernatural body to have?

The Bible continually encourages us to

*“Seek the Lord while he may be found; to call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way; and the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him” (Isaiah 55:6, 7).*

Instead, through the years, Christ’s church has become severely deformed by being no longer structured or functioning by Christ’s design; in other words, we have tried to modernize and streamline the church. For example, we visit the mega churches that often stand or fall on the personality of one man. We invest in books on church growth and use consumer methods, instead of turning to the Bible, the book that says so clearly:

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:8, 9).

Yes, God is in control of the future, and he will bring his church with or without us in one way or the other back unto himself, because the Bible tells us that our Lord is coming for a glorious and spotless church. So many people have been praying for revival. When we experienced revival in Western Canada in the nineteen seventies, people not only prayed for revival but also confessed their sins and turned to the Lord in repentance. But did the church in its methods and structure ever come to repentance? No. They were grateful with the increase in membership and attendance, but quickly continued in their commercial ways and never came to repentance as biblically instructed. Soon it was as if the Spirit had departed.

Still having had this foretaste, many having had part in this have become convinced that the Lord is more than willing to restore his church to what he intended it to be. The question, however, is “are we?”

“...I have plans for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

*Revivals in Israel under the leadership of **Moses**: Exodus 32-40; **Samuel**: I Samuel 7; **David**: II Sam 6-7; **Asa**: II Chronicles 14-16; **Jehoshaphat**: II Chronicles 17-20; **Johoiada**: II Chronicles 23-24; **Hezekiah**: II Chronicles 29-32; **Josiah**: II Chronicles 34-35; **Zerubbabel**: Ezra 1-6, Ezra 7-10; **Nehemiah**: Nehemiah 1-13; **Joel**: Joel 1-2.

