

Howards Corner

Writings to the church -part 2

I left off last time with the thought that even though the real church, that is the born-again believers, were buried in the rubble of organized churchism. This churchism that was like a skeleton with no meat on its bones and no heart but was firm in doctrines of works, and self-righteousness and those were not righteous works, with no spiritual life. It reminds me of the passages in Ezekiel that describes the Jews as being dry bones bleached in the desert with no life – no meat on their bones and no breath in their bodies but God said to Ezekiel prophesy to these dry bones and bring flesh on these bones and breath into them that they may stand and be a people again. That prophecy will be fulfilled in future times but is partially fulfilled now.

But now we are talking about a dead and dry and even evil church structure that denied the power of God and relied on their human will and desire. Even out of this rubble of churchism God is not dead and began to bring some light starting around 1100's and 1200's in the western church even amid the evil inquisitions where those that did not agree with the catholic church were tortured and burned at stakes in the name of churchism. The eastern church was overrun by the Muslims in the 1400 hundreds and became the Ottoman empire. That empire was ended by World War 1 and was occupied by the British empire. This was God's plan to open the land of Israel for the people to return from being scattered throughout the world.

So, you can try to bury the kingdom of God, but it does have life of its own. Jesus is life and He sent men in those times to open the scripture and begin to share it with the everyday man, so the reformation started. You can try to bury the word and spirit with many dead bodies, but the kingdom and the word will never end. A sprout will spring up out of a dry and lifeless land.

So out of the reformation led by Martin Luther there came many different denominations. These different denominations had different slants on the gospel, but the word was preached, and many were converted to Christianity that came out of the catholic church. All the teachings that came from the catholic church

however were not examined and corrected but were carried forward and are still believed by a lot of the denominational churches of today.

But the gospel of salvation by grace through faith was finally preached and began to expand to Germany with the Lutheran church and throughout Europe but was still opposed by the gentile nations rulers in the west. It is amazing to me that it took that long for someone to read the scriptures for themselves, this great salvation of "salvation by grace through faith". This goes to show you that the word is our guide and not man's teaching.

Along came other denominations in Scotland with Presbyterian teachings then to England which was formal teachings of the Church of England being controlled by the English kings. So, we had a mixture of churches which for a while preached the gospel but were still under the control of the gentile kings.

In England John Wesley and a few others appeared on the scene and started to preach the gospel to the people on the streets and mining communities. The Holy Spirit was finally revealed and active in many and evangelism started to spread to every nation on earth. As the new worlds were discovered by exploration, started by Columbus. Once the new lands started to open all the kings of Europe saw the chance to grow their empires and as the nation's spread to the new world the words of churches were carried with them, so Christianity spread with them to the world.

As it has always been God uses even evil kings to meet His purposes. Some of this spreading of the word of God was true and some just carried the Roman church into the rest of the world along with the teaching of salvation by grace by the reformation church. So, the word was spread with varying messages, but the word of the bible was preserved and is intact for us today. Kingdoms may come and go but the word of God will endure forever.

When the Americas opened many fled from the church owned by the state for freedom in the foreign lands. During this time the church changed from the reformation church to the evangelistic church, and this progressed until around 1900 and many were brought into the kingdom. After 1900 the world was changed by many things like the first world war which reestablished the boundaries of nations. Ottoman empire was gone, and England became the world power that started change in the eastern church area.

Along with the rearranging of world power social and political changes started and the evangelistic church began to fade and became sophisticated and morphed into a social church, trying to fix the world problem with man's works. But sadly, to say the preaching of the Gospel was slowly lost and the word was not preached with power. So, we have now turned into the apostate church with a skeleton of Christianity but operating without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Man made up a lot of his own rules of what he wanted to from the bible, so we have churches that have thrown away the parts of the bible that they don't want and have added the things they want to be there. Hell is no longer preached so there is very little fear of God. People in the churches became much like the world's thinking. Many in the world think that when they die, they just cease to exist and that is the end of it. But the word tells us we will live eternally but is that with God or in damnation?

Then the people in the churches have settled into a belief that all are going to heaven just because they are a member of a church. So, the denominational churches' understanding of the word was watered down and became mostly ceremonies and rituals of the denominational teaching and therefore have not received the Holy Spirit and are not walking in the Spirit of Christ and have just gone to sleep and have no real understanding of following Jesus but are mostly following man's teaching.

Please understand that I am not talking about all church members, but a very large number today are deceived by false teaching and by no teaching of the bible. This growth of the apostate church has grown gradually over this last century. The churches have mostly gone to sleep and trust their denominational teachings for their salvation but have not understood that the church cannot give you salvation. It is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and you must be born again. Have you been born again, or do you think you were born again when you joined the church or at your baptism? The church organization has been given no power to give you the Holy Spirit and that is what being born again means.

You will receive the Holy Spirit through a total belief in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for the remission of your sins. He and He alone will send the Holy Spirit into your heart. ***“ Luke 3:16 John answered them all, “I baptize you with[b] water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of***

whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

So, you can see it is Jesus that baptizes with the Holy Spirit and that He will gather the wheat into the barn, but the chaff will be burned up. It is quite plain that churches cannot give you the Holy Spirit but only Jesus and therefore it takes a personal relationship with Jesus for this to happen and only those whose hearts He knows will be given the Holy Spirit. The chaff will not receive this necessary gift of eternal life but eternal judgement.

So don't be surprised if you have some testing before you receive the Holy Spirit. As for me I made my profession of faith and was baptized by water immersion which is unusual for the Methodist church and joined that denomination. This is a very weak church and did not teach me anything about needing to receive the Holy Spirit or how does that happen, nor did I learn anything at all about the bible. I guess I was supposed to just absorb by some strange osmosis process what I needed to know. I certainly did not see any evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor was I taught that I must be born again. I don't think the pastors even knew themselves.

This went on for 20 years and I was not growing and maturing in the faith then the Lord stepped in and took hold of my life. As us old southern boys would say “He took me to the woodshed and confronted me with the truth.” I had what I thought was a heart attack, but it turned out to be an esophagus problem but that night I knew for certain I was not right with the Lord and if I died, I knew I was lost. It did not help to know I was a member of a church. I got serious about following Jesus and started to learn or should I say the Lord started to teach me. After a period of teaching, He baptized me in the Holy Spirit. It was not like I got goose bumps or something but was immersed in the spirit –like liquid love was poured out on my head and it did not go away but remains with me to varying degrees until today which is 47 years later. I went from dark to light. Be aware that it is not by feelings but is by faith. You will not always feel His presence but must follow His word.

So, I must use the Methodist church as my teaching point of a weak and ineffective church. There are many others, but I can personally testify about the Methodist

church. It appears to be the mainline denominations that though they started out with preaching the word but have slowly faded from following the bible to following denominational teachings and not letting the bible do the teaching. If a church is dead spiritually, they will not be able to interpret the word correctly for it is spiritually inspired and can only be interpreted by the Holy Spirit and today's churches have denied the power of the spirit and are operating in rituals and form of righteousness but denying the power which is essential to interpreting the scriptures and to even "see" the kingdom. You are blind to spiritual things if you do not have the Holy Spirit abiding in your heart.

If we have blind men leading blind men, then they are surely heading to destruction. That appears to be what is happening in today's world. We are surely headed to the apostate church where men are following men and whole denominations of people are being led by churches who have not let the Holy Spirit show them the signs of the times. The signs are very ominous today and I am afraid that many churches are asleep and not even trying to find the truth. I am afraid many will be totally shocked when the Lord says to them "Depart from me—I never knew you."

The non-denominational churches have sprung up and are teaching the word correctly and are operating in the spirit which is holding together the true believers. There are some however that are teaching things that are not correct and many are flocking to them but are being deceived with cheap grace and other things like the prosperity gospel based on man's faith to make it happen. Some have a leader who is full of charisma, so people are led to him or her. Some are told they are saved by saying a few words that resembles repentance and belief but unless there is a follow through it is like the seed thrown on rocky soil that comes up quickly but fades away when the hot sun hits them. Repentance and humility must be genuine with perseverance to stay through the tough times of rejection by the world.

Then there are these conferences that bring personalities with a large following and it is mostly just a "rah-rah" gathering with no true word taught but is more like a cult gathering. I am especially concerned about those that flock to these events and make these personalities rich with pay to get in and then to sell their books. Are these books and teaching really the word of God or is it just another of man's words. There is no accounting for the funds. Are they used for the work of the Kingdom or for personal wealth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not for sale but is freely given for

all who will believe. Who is the watchdog to see if these teachings are in line with the real word of God? You must be on guard! Remember that Satan's strategy is to deceive with lies and partial truths and to make the truth sound like lies and lies to sound like truth. Remember that Jesus said the world hated Him and they will hate us also. The walk with Jesus is going against the grain of the world and it is hard to go against the grain. If it sounds too easy, then beware! You will have rocks in the road on the narrow path.

While it is "Today", make sure that Jesus knows you and you are abiding in His spirit and not in the spirit of the world. So, what are we to do? There is going to be an apostate church and it is already well underway today. So, it is written and will happen and is in process now. The question however is whether you will be a part of that apostate church or turn to Jesus to lead you to read His word with a repentant heart and abide in His spirit. Remember you cannot fake it—It is a narrow path, and few will find it.

With Christian love

Howard