

BUSY, STRONG AND WITHOUT GOD

A WARNING AGAINST HAVING CHURCH STRENGTH WITHOUT GOD

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A PROPHETIC WORD

In a Church age of frivolity, foolishness and fun there needs to be strong admonitions and warnings against this type of acceptance of Church practice and profession. Never in the history of the Church have so many false concepts crept in unawares beguiling many souls. This is the method of the devil to work all deceivableness amongst the Church as an angel of light to deceive even the elect! One of the most successful attempts of the subtle enemy of our souls is to teach and allow the Church to rely on its own strength rather than on the power of God. The saintly E.M. Bounds wrote a old article on this topic and it speaks with prophetic unction to our modern day stance we find ourselves in. May God minister it afresh and anew to our hearts in these terrible last days:

“This is one of the devil’s most insidious and successful methods to deceive, divert and deprave. He marshals and parades the most engaging material results, lauds the power of civilizing force and makes it glories and power pass in review till church leaders are dazzled, and ensnared, and the Church becomes

thoroughly worldly while boasting of her spirituality. No deceiver is so artful in the diabolical trade of deception as Satan. As an angel of light he leads a soul to death. To mistake the elements of church strength, is to mistake the character of the Church, and also to change its character all its efforts and aims. The strength of the Church lies in its piety. All else is incidental, and is not of the strength of things. But in worldly, popular language of this day, a church is called strong when its membership is large, when it has social position, financial resources; when ability, learning, and eloquence fill the pulpit, and when the pews are filled by fashion, intelligence, money, and influence. An estimate of this kind is worldly to the fullest extent.”

“The church thus defines its strength is on the highway to apostasy. The strength of the Church does not consist of any or all of these things. The faith, holiness and zeal of the Church are the elements of its power. Church strength does not consist in its numbers and its money, but in the holiness of its members. Church strength is not found in these worldly attachments or endowments, but in the endowment of the Holy Ghost on its members. No more fatal or deadly symptom can be seen in a church than this transference of its strength from spiritual to material forces, from the Holy Ghost to the world. The power of God in the Church is the measure of its strength and is the estimate which God puts on it, and not the estimate the world puts on it. Here is the measure of its ability to meet the ends of its being. These are signs that are unmistakable and of dire import that Protestantism has been blinded and caught by Satan’s dazzling glare.”

“On the contrary, show us a church, poor, illiterate, obscure and unknown, but composed of praying people. They may be men of neither power nor wealth or influence. They may be families that do not know one week where they are to get their bread for the next. But with them is ‘the hiding of God’s power,’ and their influence will be felt for eternity, and their light shines, and the they are watched, and wherever they go, there is a fountain of light, and Christ in them is glorified and His kingdom advanced. They are His chosen vessels of salvation and His luminaries to reflect His light.”

THE BARENESS OF BUSYNESS

Don Currin relates in a recent article on the theme of ‘The Tragedy of Substituting Work for Worship’ and gives two very strong examples of this in this article that is of vast utmost importance for us to hear:

“Satan called a worldwide convention. In the opening address to his evil spirits he said, ‘We can't keep true Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from having conservative values. But we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience with Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church, read their Bibles, and have their

conservative lifestyles, but steal their time so they do not have time to have an intimate fellowship with Christ. This is what I want you to do: keep them busy in the nonessentials of life and invent innumerable schemes to occupy their minds.' How tragic it is that the devil has been so successful in getting so many believers to overextend themselves today in this world's pursuits to the neglect of fellowship with Christ."

"Hudson Taylor warned of the danger of allowing the demands of this life to keep us from maintaining the vineyard of our fellowship with Christ. Our attention is here drawn to a danger which is preeminently one of this day: the intense activity of our times may lead to zeal in service, to the neglect of personal communion. Such neglect will not only lessen the value of the service, but tend to incapacitate us for the higher service. Let us never forget that what we are is more important than what we do, and that all fruit when not abiding in Christ must be fruit of the flesh and not the Spirit. As wounds when healed often leave a scar, so the sin of the neglected communion may be forgiven and yet the effect remain permanently. The story is told about a spring whose waters had certain medicinal properties so that those who drank from it were helped in the cases of various infirmities. In the course of time, homes sprung up around the spring. Later, a hotel was built, then stores of all kinds. Eventually, a town grew into a city! Years passed. Then there came a day when visiting tourists would ask, "By the way, where is the spring from which this grew?" Dwellers of the city would rub their hands in embarrassment and say, "I am sorry that I cannot tell you, but, somehow, in the midst of all our progress and improvement we lost the spring and no one knows where it is."

CHURCH WITHOUT GOD

We see a very clear picture in Scripture of the Church that does not rely on God's strength but on their capabilities and dependence. We see a picture of the mighty Samson who was used mightily of God before the Philistines. But alas let us read how the story ends: "And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times as before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." Oh tragedy of tragedies! "he wist not" Samson did not realize that the power of God had completely left him! Do we realize that God's manifest presence has left the North American Church? We are incapable of reaching this generation of lost souls without God no matter what mission organization statistics are saying in our day. We need to repent from any Laodicean spirit in us that says: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing..." Oh how we are in need of much today, we are missing the glory of God and a measure of Him that we never even realized that we could possess. There are very few people who realize what God has done in the past and what He can do today. The words in the book of Judges God speaks to us and shows us the condition of our day also: "and there arose another generation after them, which knew not

the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” We have people that know God even in the evangelical sense but have lost the sense of the beauty and majesty and awesome terribleness of our God. The fear of God has been lost as God said: “Fear ye not me? saith the Lord.”

Catherine Booth shares these stirring words of professors but not possessors of religion in her day: “The moment anybody attempts really to obey Jesus Christ, they cry, ‘Mad! mad! away with such a fellow; he is not fit to live.’ What a veritable laughing-stock to hell such professed Christians make themselves. The devil says, ‘All right; let them alone. Let them go to their sanctuaries, let them have their creeds and ceremonies, let them sing their sweet hymns, and amuse themselves with their religious entertainments and their Bible classes; do not disturb them, whatever you do, they are amongst my best and most successful allies.’ Oh, may God show us these things, and help us to set to work to awaken every backslidden, lazy professor within reach of us.” Those that truly know God will be active in obedience with God, we must persevere and give continued proof that we are indeed born again. God in us and in our midst! there is nothing more exciting and powerful in this world! Oh it has to change things, it must!

WEAK BUT STRONG

Christ uses the weak to shame the wise, the poor to usurp the rich, the meek to overpower the strong, the persecuted to give a manifest token of the perdition of ungodly men. It has been said that from the beginning with Adam and Eve that Satan desires for us to utilize our soulish capabilities rather than depend on the Spirit of God. This was the first subtlety and it continues to our day. God uses the unusable still! A.W. Tozer spoke prophetically of a generation of popular preachers that would lead the masses of Christianity into spiritual weakness. We need a revival where God uses the weak once again so that His strength may be shown. When we are weak we are truly strong!

The Apostle James wrote this 2000 years ago and it is a fresh word for our generation may we take heed to it: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” Surely also the older prophet word given by Joel needs to be taken heed to also: “Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

Oh Church of God to our knees! J. Hudson Taylor’s advice to his missionaries was: "You must go forward on your knees." William Cowper said "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." The Church need to be found on its knees in our day, may we be found there when God comes.