

July 25, 2001

THE SPIRITUALLY BANKRUPT CHURCH

“These things says the Amen, the Faithful, and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of GOD;

I know your works, that you are neither cold or hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked –

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.”

(Revelation 3:14-19 Jesus speaking)

The church, as we know it today, is the mirror image of the Laodicean church that our Lord spoke to through John. This lukewarm church that our Lord will spew from His mouth is now found in full bloom in America from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. I am sure that there are a few exceptions here and there, but for the most part, we have become the modern day Laodicean church and not only are we lukewarm, but we are approaching “spiritual bankruptcy”! Now before you proudly proclaim that you and your local church are exceptions to this statement, let me urge you to read on and allow FATHER’S word and His Spirit to reveal our true spiritual condition.

As the term “spiritual bankruptcy” began to rise up in me, I immediately took a fresh look at the full meaning of the word “bankruptcy”. I trust that we all know what it means to be financially bankrupt – we are unable to pay our debts. So how does this apply to “spiritual bankruptcy”? This question is easily answered if we understand what FATHER’S word tells us that the church should look like and act like. When we know the level of spiritual maturity that we are to be revealing to the world and measure that level of maturity against our present condition, we quickly learn whether or not we are approaching “spiritual bankruptcy” or whether we are already there.

According to Webster’s Dictionary the following conditions would indicate “bankruptcy” was either a fact or about to become a fact.

1. Becoming destitute of a particular thing.
2. Severely depleted resources.
3. Being impoverished.
4. To be empty of a principal substance.
5. To lessen markedly in quantity, content, power or value.
6. When liabilities exceeds assets.

To see how far we, the church, have fallen from where we should be, we need only to turn to FATHER'S word.

In the second chapter of Acts, Peter preached his famous sermon centered on JESUS and called the people to repentance. Peter also referred to his generation as a "perverse" generation. The result of this call to repentance is outlined in Acts 2:41 through 47. There was unity among the believers, the fear of GOD came upon every soul and many signs and wonders were done. The Church grew daily and enjoyed favor with all the people.

In Mark the 16th chapter, verses 17 and 18, JESUS Himself described those who would make up the church.

"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

In 2 Corinthians 6:17 and 18 and 7:1 Paul instructed the Church as follows:

"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

"Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD."

JESUS identified those who loved Him as those who obeyed Him.

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21)

The Apostle John is quoted in I John 2:3 through 6 as follows:

"Now by this we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him", and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of GOD is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

If you want to know what the commandments of JESUS are just get your Bible and turn to Matthew Chapters 5, 6 and 7 – there you will find His commandments and His warnings as well. Our Lord concluded His message in Chapter 7, verses 26 and 27 as follows:

"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

And the rain descended the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 verses 1 through 13 we are clearly told that if we do not have "love" we are reduced to "nothing" - a big - 0!

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (Verse 2)

The love that we are to be reflecting is not a love of “our own”, for even the heathen love their own, as do the beasts of the field. The love that we are to be reflecting to the church as a whole and the world is “the unconditional love of GOD! That love cannot flow freely through us until we fulfill the greatest commandment of all. Listen to JESUS IN Matthew 22:37 –

“You shall love the Lord your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

JESUS went on to tell us that the second commandment was to love our neighbor as ourselves. The Apostle John said in 1 John 5:2 concerning the loving of others -

“By this we know that we love the children of GOD, when we love GOD and keep His commandments.”

Finally, we the church, when we gather in our church buildings, are to gather in “houses of prayer”. JESUS said:

“It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”
(Matthew 21:13)

We are also instructed to “*watch and pray*” (Matthew 26:41), “*to pray always*” (Luke 18:1), “*to pray without ceasing*” (1 Thes. 5:17), “*to pray continually*” (Acts 6:4) and “*to pray steadfastly*”. (Romans 12:12)

Saints of GOD the characteristics of those of us who make up the church should reflect the word of the living GOD. These characteristics should be the “rule” and not the “exception” in the church. The qualities that are to be found in the people of GOD, as outlined in His word, are to be found in each one of us! Not just a select few. We were created in His likeness and image and it is His likeness and image that we are to reflect to a lost and dying world. If this were not possible, FATHER would not have instructed us so! I say let the Word of GOD be true, and every voice that would deny or dilute that word be declared a liar.

Now, in light of our FATHER’S word let us evaluate the church in America, to determine if in fact we are spiritually bankrupt.

Paul wrote to Timothy and described what the people would look and act like in the “last days”. (See 2 Timothy 3:1-9) Among other things, Paul said that we would become lovers of ourselves (selfish), lovers of money, boasters, unholy, unloving, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of GOD. Paul said we would take on a form of godliness but would deny its power. In other words we would speak the vocabulary of Christianity, but refuse its reality. He further said, that we would always be learning and never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth. I believe that Paul’s letter to Timothy fairly describes the church in the year 2001. May GOD have mercy! For the most part, all fear of GOD has left the church. All reverence and awe of Him has left the church and we now mock Him and His word with our backslidden behavior. May GOD have mercy!

Remember the definition of a person or institution that is bankrupt. Let’s take another look at a few of the signs that indicate that we are in fact spiritually bankrupt. Have our spiritual resources (the confirmed word of GOD) BEEN SEVERELY DEPLETED? Has the church been emptied, for the most part, of a principal substance, that being the glory of GOD and the manifested power of His Spirit? Have our spiritual liabilities (weaknesses) now exceeded our spiritual assets (power)? Have we lessened markedly in spiritual quantity, in spiritual content, in spiritual power or in spiritual value? If our answer to the majority of these questions is “yes”, then we are spiritually bankrupt. It is just that simple!

I am told that today there is just as much divorce in the church as outside the church – just as much abortion inside the church as outside the church – just as much financial difficulty and debt inside the church as outside the church. May GOD have mercy! I have said it before and I say again, the church today in America looks like, talks like, dresses like, acts like and smells exactly like the world! For the most part, when we are taken out of our church environment, we cannot be distinguished from the rest of the world. May GOD have mercy!

Many of us today, especially those of us who consider ourselves to be “Evangelicals”, think that we are ahead of everyone else in the church, that we are more spiritually mature and somehow rank as FATHER’S special people. While in fact, we are filled with religious pride and spiritual arrogance. In many cases past and present we have brought more shame on the church than all of the other fellowships combined that we consider to be so immature. May GOD have mercy!

Our Lord identified us correctly when He said that we are spiritually wretched, spiritually miserable, spiritually blind and spiritually naked. Let there be no mistake about it – The church at Laodicean was spiritually bankrupt and we are just as bankrupt today! As further evidence of this truth, the most recent survey of Christians in America, by the Barna Research Group of Ventura, California revealed the following facts:

Only 41% of Christians claim to be “Born Again” Christians having made a personal commitment to JESUS CHRIST, as opposed to just a church. Only 7% of those claiming to be Christians could be classified as “Evangelicals” believing in the authority of GOD’S word. Of those who claim to be “Born Again”, 53% denied the existence of the Holy Spirit as a person! 47% did not believe in Satan! 31% felt that a “good” person would earn their way to heaven! 30% denied the physical resurrection of JESUS and 24% said they believed JESUS had committed sins! These numbers come from those who say they are “Born Again”! May GOD have mercy – May GOD have mercy – May GOD have mercy!

Think about it, the church in America boasts of having more church buildings, larger church buildings, more Christian superstars, hold more conferences, produce more Bibles, videos, teaching tapes, radio and TV programs, raise and spend more money than any other nation. We produce more Christian music, speak – pray and sing in tongues, dance in the spirit, organize prophecy clubs, put on more Christian bumper stickers, tee shirts, caps and wrist bands than the rest of the Christian world.

AND IN ALL OF THIS CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY WE ARE AS SPIRITUALLY WRETCHED, AS SPIRITUALLY POOR, AS SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND AS SPIRITUALLY NAKED AS ANY OTHER PEOPLE ON EARTH, WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE WORD OF GOD AS WE HAVE BEEN!

MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON US and visit us soon with a gift of repentance. Because if we fail to repent and get honest before GOD, things will get a lot worse and your children and grandchildren will suffer beyond your wildest imagination. JESUS said in Revelation 3:19-

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”

My brothers and sisters, I take no pleasure in writing a message such as this. Believe me when I tell you that these messages are not winning me friends among the majority. I am viewed as critical, judgmental and in rebellion against the church and its authority. But I cannot deny the burden for the Church that I have been given and I will not remain silent as long as FATHER gives me breath, even if it means receiving the left foot of fellowship from the church as we know it today. FATHER is speaking to us today just as He did in the days of Ezra when he said –

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

My prayer for years has been that FATHER would raise up voices that He can trust to deliver His word in the freedom of Abraham, with no hidden agendas. Voices that will speak with the boldness of Elijah and in the authority of the Holy Ghost. If the church ever needed to hear the call to repentance she needs to hear it now! If the church ever needed to hear the call to turn from her sin, she needs to hear it now! If the church ever needed to hear the call to pursue holiness and to seek the face of GOD, she needs to hear it now! I urge you saints of GOD to be bold for GOD. Do not turn away from the truth. Do not deny our present spiritual bankruptcy. Do not accept the present status quo in the church that smells of spiritual death. Confess before GOD our failure and shame and beg Him for mercy and Divine intervention before it is too late. (Read the 9th chapter of Daniel). FATHER loves us so much that He will not allow us to continue the way we are going for much longer. He prefers that we turn to Him and Him alone – not the church – not the Pope – not the preacher – not the evangelist – but turn directly to Him in the name of JESUS and seek His face and His will. Ask FATHER to temper His judgement with mercy and to spare lives. If we will yield to His word and do as He demands, He will be faithful to His word and heal us and restore us. At this point in the history of the church nothing else, except repentance, will turn the people back toward GOD and His highway of holiness. All of our programs, works, sermons, teachings, music, etc., etc., etc., will have little or no effect on the final outcome unless those efforts call the people to repent!

In conclusion, I ask again: Is the church, as we know it today spiritually bankrupt? Your writer has come to the conclusion that it is in fact, bankrupt! However, lets say that things are not quite as bad as I believe them to be, and that the Barna Research Group’s numbers are off by four or five percent in favor of things being better than reported. If this were in reality the case, I can promise you that we would still be teetering on the brink of spiritual insolvency and except for mass repentance by the church and Divine intervention, spiritual bankruptcy would be a certainty! In the financial world, most people will not honestly acknowledge their financial troubles until it is too late to do anything but declare bankruptcy. They keep thinking that things will get better regardless of their unwillingness to get help. I am afraid that is also the case in our present spiritual state of the church. Most of us are more interested in preserving a system that is obviously not reflecting FATHER’S word, and has become or is becoming spiritually insolvent, than we are to

“Buy from JESUS gold refined in the fire that we may be rich; and white garments, that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint our eyes with eye salve, that we may see.”

The church today is in need of a full measure of the grace and mercy of our GOD. If we only realized how needy we really are. May FATHER wake us up before it is too late!

*Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord;
Let us lift our hearts and hands to GOD in heaven.
We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned.”*
(Lamentations 3:40-42)

GOD BLESS

Tom

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