

Let the Awakening Begin with Us

America's greatest crisis today is not economic, nor is it political, social or military. To be sure, we are a nation that is terribly divided, both politically and socially, while our economy continues to reel and anti-American riots continue to grow worldwide.

But our greatest crisis goes deeper. It is a **spiritual crisis**, and because it is a spiritual crisis, it is a moral crisis. The light within us has become dark (see Matt. 6:23) and the salt has lost its saltiness (see Matt. 5:13). The Church of Jesus, which is called to be the spiritual lamp and the moral preservative of society, has fallen asleep. The **awakening** must begin with us.

This is not to minimize the many acute problems we face in our country today. Abortion on demand still takes more than a million lives a year. The family unit continues to erode. Gay activism continues to challenge our biblical values and freedoms. **Human trafficking**, gang violence, teen drug use, and a host of other social ills stare us in the face. But our problem is not so much the presence of darkness as it is the absence of light. The finger must first be pointed at us.

You see, it is to be expected that sinful people do sinful things and that worldly people do worldly things. But it is unexpected when those called to be righteous live just like the world, when the sins of the society become the sins of the church, when it is the world that changes the church rather than the church that changes the world. Can anyone really dispute that for the last generation this is exactly what has happened?

It was Dr. Martin Luther King who noted that, "The church must

be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool." This certainly cuts to the core of the never-ending debate about the meaning of the separation of church and state. But King also issued this warning: "If the church does not recapture its **prophetic** zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or **spiritual authority**."

What an indictment of the American church today. Having lost our **prophetic** zeal—our consciousness of God, our conviction of sin, our brokenness for the lost, our courage to go against the grain and challenge the status quo, our moral imperative—we have become, in all too many cases, an irrelevant social club. In fact, it would not be that far out of line for many of our religious assemblies to change their marquees to read, "Irrelevant Social Club: Meets Sunday Mornings and Wednesday Nights."

Without a doubt, there is a godly remnant that is seeking God, reaching out, touching the world, making a difference, but we deceive ourselves if we imagine it is anything more than a remnant. George Barna discovered that the most accurate articulation of the moral standard of today's Christian teens was "whatever," while Prof. Kenda Creasy Dean in her book *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*, argued persuasively that the toothless and tepid Christianity found among young people in many of our churches has been inherited directly from their parents.

We have gotten to the point where we hope (rather than take for granted) that the famous pastor or evangelist or teacher whose ministry has so blessed us will not be caught in some kind of moral scandal, while on the local level, millions of people are dropping out of church participation because of boredom and disillusionment. This is not the "glorious Church" for which Jesus died and rose and sent His Spirit. Something is terribly wrong and something is clearly missing.

But it is not time for us to point accusing fingers at this denomination or that leader, at this local congregation or at that TV preacher. Rather, as Ambrose said, "Before God can deliver us, we must undeceive ourselves," and the **awakening** that we so desperately need, yes, the **awakening** that America must have, begins with each of us individually. Each of us must search our own hearts and lives and ask, "Have I left my first love? Have I become cold or compromised? Have the values of the world corrupted me? Have I become polluted by sin?"

As an old **evangelist** once counseled, the best way to pray for **revival** is to draw a circle on the ground, then step inside that circle, and then pray, "Lord, revive everything inside this circle." Let the awakening begin with us.

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