

Let's Brighten the Future

We are the light of the world. So, Christians of the world ... **ignite!**

The term three-ring circus is something most of us are familiar with. It's simply a circus with simultaneous but separate performances occurring in three rings. While viewing the unfolding of present-day events, I have often felt like I am watching three rings with separate yet connected events playing out before my eyes. (By no means do I feel that current affairs across the world even remotely resemble a circus. They are far more serious and important than that.)

I think these three rings are pretty easy to recognize. Let's take a look.

Ring 1. Life in America. A non-Christian man, who is now deceased, once noted what he called the "seven sins of a dying society." They were wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, business without ethics, science without humanity, religion without sacrifice, politics without principle.

It's interesting that as a nonbeliever he had this point of view. But he recognized that these sins, like a cancer, could destroy a nation from the inside out.

They all sound very dangerous to me. Every time I watch a TV program or read a newspaper I feel that the sins of a diseased society are being paraded before me. Hell is obviously attempting to drown this nation in a baptism of absurdity, perversion, stupidity and filth.

The latest trend of “reality show” television reflects not only the insane perception Hollywood producers have of the American viewer, but also the sad appetite of Americans who play along with that perception and watch these programs. We, unfortunately, must wake up to the fact that this is the world God has placed you and me in.

Ring 2. The Church. Similar to the list of “seven sins” just noted is American revivalist Charles Finney’s list of “seven signs of a needed revival.” Although written more than 100 years ago, these observations are as relevant today as this morning’s newspaper.

Finney said revival is needed when the following circumstances are true: there is a lack of brotherly love and confidence among those who profess to be Christians; there are dissensions, jealousies and backbiting among those who profess Christianity; a worldly spirit is in the church; church members are falling into gross and scandalous sin; a spirit of controversy is in the church or the country; the wicked are triumphing over the church and reviling it; sinners are careless and stupid and sinking into hell unconverted.

Praise God for pockets of Christian stirring, revival and renewal in the United States that sprang up a few years ago. Unfortunately, the American church as a whole remained unfazed, let alone changed. Our return to “normal” after September 11 included a return to a near-comatose state, and we never altered our own actions to reach the lost.

Ring 3. The Future. When the world around us looks like it might be “down for the count” and the church appears to be weak—or in some cases asleep—then the present as well as the future might look cloudy. We must understand that if God’s

people fall short of their destiny and mission, then people will suffer. The repercussions are often tragic.

But when God's people rise to the call, fulfilling their individual and collective destinies, the future gets brighter. In a sense, our world is waiting for Christians to come out of the closet and fulfill our God-given mission. As the apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:19, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (NIV).

Consider—when you are watching the events in the world's three rings playing out before you—that darkness sets the stage for light, despair for hope, poverty for provision, tragedy for triumph.

Is it possible that we can play a part in influencing—for the better—the future of those around us as well as our own? Of course. It is everyday followers of Jesus who hold the key to the future.

Can we literally brighten the future? Yes. After all, Jesus was blazingly clear when He said we are the light of the world. So, Christians of the world ... ignite!