

Have We Made a Mess of the Greatest Holy Spirit Movement in History?

The charismatic-Pentecostal movement finds itself at a critical juncture. On the one hand, our movement is arguably responsible for the greatest ingathering souls in church history, with well over 500 million new converts in the last 50 years. On the other hand, abuses abound in our midst, from sexual scandals to financial impropriety and from unaccountable prophecies to doctrinal deviances.

It is high time that we do some self-policing. Better that we judge ourselves than be judged by the Lord (see 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Cor. 11:31-32).

I recently signed up to receive emails from a well-known “prophet,” curious to see if he had changed his ways. (In the past, his fundraising methods were infamous.) Immediately, I received this appeal:

CLICK HERE TO SOW THE \$ for DEUTERONOMY 8:18

(Your urgent response is required)

- MIRACLE MONEY is coming, discover WHEN now!
- PROFITABLE CONNECTIONS are yours, discover WHO now!
- GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES will be found, discover WHERE now!

And it got much worse after this, including stories of people who had suffered serious losses because they failed to respond to the prophet’s word. What a horror. More horrible still, I’m sure hundreds or thousands of sincere but gullible believers wrote out checks for \$, even if they barely had a dollar to their name.

A critic of the charismatic-Pentecostal movement, of which I

am a joyful, committed part, emailed me a couple of years back. He pleaded with me to watch a segment from a recent broadcast of a famous TV preacher. I watched, and I was shocked. The critic was not exaggerating.

This prominent TV preacher brought a “prophet” onto his program and asked him to receive the offering. The prophet claimed to have received a direct, clear word from the Lord, warning of a major disaster coming that September, which was then just a few weeks off.

The good news was that if you gave an offering of \$500, you, your children and your grandchildren would be protected from this disaster, plus your debts would be cancelled and your body healed. And this was on national (and probably international) Christian TV.

How in the world did the stations allow this to air? And how could this prominent TV preacher allow this to happen on his watch? This is absolutely corrupt in every way.

Aside from the fact that no major disaster happened that September, it is complete manipulation to claim people must give a sacrificial gift to a particular ministry to be protected from a disaster.

What if they simply trusted God to protect them from this impending doom? And what if they could only afford to give \$250? Does that mean only half of their family would be protected? Yet people wrote out their checks and donated their hard-earned money, believing the smooth talk of this slick prophet. I’d be surprised if he didn’t receive a nice cut of the offering too.

But it’s not only prophetic abuses we’ve had in our midst. One megachurch pastor slept with his brother’s wife and fathered a child by her. Years later, that child, who thought he was the megachurch pastor’s nephew, took his place as the new pastor of the church, only to find out that his “uncle” was his

father. So, the leadership succession in this congregation went from the father to the son born out of adultery and incest.

Another megachurch pastor said God told him he married the wrong woman. Seven days after his divorce went through, he married his new wife and continuing to minister without interruption. Ironically, it was the pastor who slept with his brother's wife who performed the wedding. May God help us to repent.

I absolutely believe in showing mercy, and I live by the kindness of God 24/7. I'm all for restoration, knowing that our God is a Redeemer. And I'm the last one to throw stones at my fallen brothers and sisters, knowing full well that "there but for the grace of God go I."

But will we really see change if we don't preach the cross, don't preach repentance, don't call out sin and don't call out disobedience? We will really see change if we major on the minors and minor on the majors? If we put personal revelation ahead of the Word of God? If we preach a gospel of financial gain? If we substitute flakiness for fullness? As Derek Prince wisely said, "Do not expect New Testament results without New Testament methods."

I personally believe that the best is yet to come and that what we have seen so far is nothing compared to what is coming in the days ahead—the greatest outpouring of the Spirit in the history of the planet. All the more, then, it is urgent that we get our house in order, that we quit celebrating doctrinal silliness, that we hold our leaders accountable, that we quit manipulating people out of their money and that we show our Lord that we are ready to go to the next level in Him.

A dying world is watching and waiting. Heaven is looking down with interest. How will we respond? May we no longer play with holy fire. The flames of God are too sacred for silly games.

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(Some of the material in this article has been adapted from my new book, Playing with Holy Fire: A Wake-up Call to the Charismatic-Pentecostal Church, just released this week.)