

Restoring Prophetic Distinction to the Last Days Church

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but they will gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, having itching ears, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths” (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

A lukewarm spirit incomparable to anything I've witnessed in my day has overtaken so many professing Christians. Many are falling away from a vibrant and living Christianity as the world gets all their attention. No longer are Christians in general open to penetrating and piercing preaching. They are afraid of truth that warns and convicts.

Years ago when I first started preaching I got discouraged after a meeting because no one responded to what I thought was a real word from God. The elderly pastor who had been around in the tent meetings of old with such names as Oral Roberts and Jack Coe encouraged me. He told me that if my message had been preached back in that day the people would've made a run for the altar before I had even finished preaching.

Decades ago people wanted to hear about sin and true grace, the law, the cross and the real gospel, repentance, holiness and sanctification. Christians even enjoyed hell, fire and brimstone messages. Today we've substituted it with "happy Christianity." If it hurts the flesh and the feelings, people don't want it. They want flowery-sounding words that tell them

how wonderful they are and how God will prosper them and make all their dreams come true. Worse still is that preachers accommodate their itching ears with more dainties for the sweet tooth. I fear that we are not properly preparing the majority of the church for the day of battle when they will have to endure hardness and tribulation.

The important thing now in the marketplace of Christianity is to be a success, to be somebody, to have material goods and enjoy the good life, which to many Christians, simply means fulfilling the American dream of happiness, peace and prosperity. Instead of having gatherings where prayer, repentance and revival are the focus, the popular notion is to emphasize entertainment, technology, arts and culture. Of course, we attach a nice little pep talk to it, using some Scriptures. And if a minister already has a large building and a large following, people will believe whatever he says. There is such a spiritual poverty on the listeners who swallow anything a popular, elevated teacher says without ever checking the Scriptures to see if it is really so.

The glory of preaching has diminished in these modern times. We've forgotten that the church is the only entity on the earth that carries the responsibility and stewardship of public proclamation. A value and esteem for holy Scripture has diminished. Paralyzed by worldly distractions it is only a minority now that really savors the living Word.

The church has lost its prophetic distinction in the world because of its own worldliness. Like Samson, we've fallen into the lap of Delilah and allowed her to take our strength. Ministers have failed to function effectively in their high-priestly role of prayer and the Word. The lethargy in our pulpits has been passed down to our pews.

We have mastered the art of performing services at the expense of incarnational preaching, where men speak, as it were, the utterances of God. Men are more interested today in the

preservation of their ministries than the salvation of men and edification of the Church. Penetrating preaching that brings a consciousness of man's condition before God and eternal realities has clearly diminished from mainstream Christianity. This again is a sure sign that the Church has left her first love, and the honor of the Lord is no longer the treasure of many ministers and saints.

When our vision of the Lord increases, when we see Him in the beauty of holiness and in His awesome majesty, we will catch fire inwardly and the exaltation of Spirit proclamation will be restored in our day. When it does, the hearer's conception of God will increase and His purposes will be esteemed as worthy of our time, labor, and investment. A vibrant affection for the Lord and a fresh zeal and eagerness to serve Him and do His will will grip the people of God again, and they will go forth truly empowered as faithful witnesses in these last days.

In the early Church the apostles were fit to proclaim eternal realities because they had been with Jesus and continued to devote themselves to prayer and the Word. They recognized that if fervent, unceasing, Spirit-wrought prayer should decrease in them and in the Church, the giving and receiving of the Word of God would also decrease.

Let us return to the old paths and true foundations of our faith. Let us preoccupy ourselves with the glory of God. Let us pray the glories of what Ephesians 1:16-23 and 3:14-21 promise us so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

I see this as a day of great searchings of the heart. It is a day of separation unto God. It is a day of purification and holiness. May the inward man awaken to such a consciousness of God's high and holy calling.

While many are departing from the faith in the present

apostasy, every true saint is pressing into God and preparing for that glorious attained place where they shall not be found naked, where they shall be blameless and immoveable, where they are being purified by the power of the Word of God. Having within them a consciousness of the very presence of God, their very nature being changed and preparing them for a greater thing and causing them to be ready for translation (Phil. 3:8-16).

Let us have this same mind.

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