



The State of the Church, Part 10

We are in the middle of a series on the judgment of God on the professing Church. We must not judge this by our feelings or even by what we see. This must be determined/judged by holding up what is going on in the professing Church and judging that by Scripture and the character of God. I think it is simply imperative that we stop deceiving ourselves about our religious games, plans and activities and begin to seek the Lord as He has set out that He should be sought. God alone knows how He is to be truly sought. Man cannot come up with some way of worship in His own wisdom and expect that God will accept whatever fallen man desires. In modern America we think that not only should the entire world fall at our feet but God Himself as

Am I sought out?

“You that have ability, and have talents, devote yourselves to God's cause. Give yourselves up to his ministry. I would to God there were more of those who are successful in professions, men who either in medicine or law would attain eminence, who would consecrate their talents to the ministry; they need not fear that in giving themselves to God he will not take care of them, and as to honour, if it be found anywhere, it is the sure heritage of the faithful ambassador of Christ. If you have been sought out, my brother, I do not blush to recommend you to give up the most lucrative employment to seek out others. If you have the power to stir others' hearts, if God has given you the tongue of the eloquent, devote it to the plucking of brands from the burning; become a herald of the cross, and let the whole world, as far as possible, hear from you the tidings of salvation. The preaching of the gospel is not the only means; it is a way of seeking out most commonly used, but there are other methods. We are not to preach merely to those who come to listen. We must carry the gospel to where men do not desire it. We should consider it our business to be generously impertinent; thrusting the gospel into men's way, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Let us hunt for souls by visitation. There are thousands in London who never will be converted by the preaching of the gospel, for they never attend places of worship. We may shudder when we say it; it is believed there are thousands in London who do not even know the name of Christ, living in what we call a Christian land, and yet they have not heard the name of Jesus.”

C.H. Spurgeon, Sermon No. 525, August 23, 1863

well. Modern America is in such spiritual darkness that it does not realize that the judgment of God is upon it. It is in such darkness that it does not realize that greater darkness is falling upon it at an alarming rate. What is the real problem? God has turned His face from the professing Church in this nation and has delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities,
like the wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities (Isa 64:6-7).

A nation is only as great as its spiritual state. The salt of the nation is the Church and when it begins to sink into the pit, the nation does as well. When the professing Church falls under the judgment of God and begins to be turned over to the power of its own iniquities, then the very means that God uses to preserve a nation from moral decay is itself in decay. The only result will be that the nation as a whole will rush down the hill into moral decay and will soon become a much weaker nation if it exists at all. The professing Church is under the judgment of God and this is the real reason of the moral decay of our nation. We must also not think that moral decay is just one part of the nation, but we must recognize that morality is the very fabric of a people. Whether it is the government, business, education or whatever other line there might be morality is the very fabric of all those things. Nothing can stand apart from morality. The highest and only true morality is the character of God in human beings. So when God withdraws from a Church and a nation, nothing is left to hold them up and they will go down.

Come might argue that we are not the worst nation on earth and we still have strong churches. When one says things like that there are many things that must be demonstrated in order to show those things as true. What standard are we going to use to determine which nation is the worst in the world? What standard are we going to use to determine what a strong church is? We can look (if we

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can bear even a glimpse) at the mega-churches in our country. Wow, look at Joel Olsteen in Houston, Texas. There is a really strong church since it has over 30,000 people in attendance each Sunday. Since when does Scripture determine the strength of a church or even if it is a church or not by the number of people that attend? If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not preached from the Scriptures a group of people meeting together is not a church. If we want to take a close look at Scripture and then the content of the messages of Joel Olsteen, we would have a more accurate way to judge. From the so-called sermons that I have heard him “preach” and from what I have read of his books, I think that the judgment of God is upon him and what he is doing. There is no Gospel preached and one looks in vain to see anything of the glory of God in Christ. Instead there is a mixture of man-centeredness and positive thinking presented to make people feel good about themselves. You see, the power of iniquity is not just that people are given over to external acts that are immoral, but it is when people focus on and worship themselves rather than God. This is done when people do religious acts as an effort to gain something from God for themselves. It is very deceptive since it is done in the name of God, but it is really an effort to use God and manipulate Him to obtain something for self. When that is done, all is done in the worship of self. Let us take the time and effort to think through this issue from II Timothy 3.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

We must understand that this text describes religious

people and not just those in the world. This is a sign that God has hidden His face and turned a people over to the power of their iniquities. People are not only taught in public schools that they should love themselves, but now they are taught that in local churches and by famous psychologists within Christendom. Scripture tells us over and over that we are to deny ourselves and to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength, yet we are taught over and over in our day within the professing Church that we should love ourselves. But the text in II Timothy 3 tells us that this is a sign of difficult times. This text also tells us that men will be lovers of money. In reality men do not love money but they love what money does for them which is just another form of self-love. Is there anyone alive today who would deny that the love of money is rampant in America? But even worse, can we deny that the love of money is rampant within the professing Church in America? Again, how do we judge a strong church? It appears that conventional wisdom tells us that we are to judge this by nickels and noses or money and people.

When God is with a people, He is loved by those people and they want to please Him and not everybody else. When God has withdrawn Himself, there is no power to withstand sin and temptation. Human beings do not have the power to be absolutely free. They will always love God or themselves as their chief love which is what the devil does. When he stopped loving God with all of his being, he loved himself with all of his being. There is no middle ground. If God withdraws from a people, then those people will pursue themselves in love. When we see people who love themselves and money, we can know that God has withdrawn and has turned those people over to their sin. The sin of seeking self in love is rampant within the professing Church. Judgment is here!

II Timothy 3:1-5 goes on to describe other ways that people act when they are in the bondage of self-love. They are boastful since those who love themselves

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want to talk about what they love the most (self) and desire others to talk about them too. They are arrogant since they love themselves rather than God. They are revilers since anyone who does not love them as they love themselves will be spoken against. They are disobedient to parents because they love themselves and not others or God. They are ungrateful since out of self-love they think they deserve what they get. They are unholy since holiness goes no farther than love for God does and these people love themselves which is unholiness. They are unloving because they love themselves rather than God and have no true love. They are irreconcilable because others will not be reconciled to their self-love. They are malicious gossips because they want to speak against others to build themselves up in their self-love. They are without self-control because they are controlled by self-love. They are brutal because they have no true love for others or God and so are brutal to the souls of others and at times the bodies of others. They are haters of good because they love self which loves what is evil. They are treacherous because they are not faithful to anyone but themselves in their self-love. They are reckless since they are given over to themselves. They are conceited because they love themselves rather than God or anyone else. They are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God which simply describes what it means to be a person that loves him self supremely. When a person is a lover of self, that person loves his or her own pleasure rather than God. They will have a pretence of love for God as long as He does what they want and gives them what they want. After all, those who are full of self-love will appear to love as long as people love them.

It is beyond question that these things are true of modern America and the professing Church in America as well. II Timothy 3 does not tell us that these things describe the world, but he specifically tells us that these things describe professing Christians. Here is verse 5 again: "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men

as these." The people that were behaving like this held to a form of godliness and denied the power of godliness. These were religious people and we see this same thing alive and active in the professing Church today. The professing Church is full of theologies that allow for such things rather than seeing these things as evidence that a person does not have the life of Christ in him or her and when it is widespread it shows that the judgment of God is upon us. Romans 1 specifically tells us how the wrath of God is revealed each day: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." When people have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and serve the creature, the wrath of God has arrived. The love of self which is a love for pleasure (internal, physical, spiritual Goosebumps) is nothing but living in the service of self which is to serve a creature. God, who is love itself, has withdrawn from a people when they are lovers of self and of the pleasures of self. It is a clear and specific sign that God is not among a people when they love self rather than Him. Without question we are under judgment if we judge by Scripture.

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