



# Spurgeon Baptist Association Of Churches

Weekly Update ~ May 8, 2008

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## The State of the Church, Part 18

In most articles I deal with a passage of Scripture and have it at the center. In this particular newsletter I am going to write in a general way. A more accurate way to say it would be that I have been reading Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea and I have also just spent two Sunday morning preaching from Isaiah 64:7. I have a burden on my soul and I am very concerned to see what is going on in the modern professing church and see it as a certain sign that the judgment of God is upon us. I cannot analyze everything and come up with precise causes, but I can simply tell you that according to the Word of God we are under His judgment and have been there for a long time. There is no way out of this judgment by our own works, morality or anything else we can do. We must seek the face of the Lord for broken hearts in order to truly seek His face for grace. The ministers in this land are not the cure; they are part of the problem. I am not just speaking of liberal "ministers," but I am speaking of conservative ones as well. It is possible to be conservative and not be saved. It is possible to be conservative and be a Pharisee. It is possible to be a conservative and have a hard heart. It is possible to be a conservative and be under the judgment of God.

There is no place to hide but in the real Christ Himself and there is nothing we can do to remove this judgment. We are in the hands of a sovereign God. Indeed many claim to be Calvinists, but they minister and function as if God is not sovereign and can be manipulated. Our hearts are so hard and we are so blinded by programs and methods that we cannot see the judgment that is upon us. God has turned His face from us and has given us into the power of our own religious iniquity. Our best sermons, best works, and our best prayer meetings are as unclean to Him as a menstrual cloth was unclean and a ceremonial separation from God in the Old Testament. In biblical words, our works of righteousness are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). What kind of life can dead sermons bring? A dead sermon can be very gracious and very active, but it does not have the life of the Spirit of God in it. A dead sermon can use the name "Christ" over and over and not preach Christ at all. A dead sermon can even speak much in words of the glory of God and yet not have the smallest amount of God at all in the sermon. A dead sermon can display marvelous exegetical prowess and have nothing of the life of God in it. One can analyze the text with great skill and miss the very glory of God in the

text. We can preach our expositional sermons and speak of being good moral people and all the time speak nothing that has the life of God in the text and say nothing that the Spirit will use that will bring the life of God to the souls of the people.

We have all kinds of movements within the visible Church. There are evangelistic movements, movements for missions and programs along with movements for prayer and on and on. But where is the movement of God? We get people to say prayers and walk aisles by our charming words, but are they going to God? Where is He in all of that? We are able to get people motivated to buy and build buildings, but where is the movement of God? We have mistaken movements and religious activities for

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## Isaac Watts

*Isaac Watts comments on the awakening in New England in the 1740s...*

*"There is a spot of ground, as we are here informed, wherein there are twelve or fourteen towns and villages, chiefly situate in New Hampshire, near the banks of the river of Connecticut, within the compass of thirty miles, wherein it pleased God, two years ago, to display his free and sovereign mercy in the conversion of a great multitude of souls in a short space of time, turning them from a formal, cold, and careless profession of Christianity to the lively exercise of every Christian grace and the powerful practice of our holy religion. The great God has seemed to act over again the miracle of Gideon's fleece, which was plentifully watered with the dew of heaven, while the rest of the earth round about it was dry and had no such remarkable blessing."*

To view back-issues of the Spurgeon Baptist Association weekly update, visit our website:  
[www.sbaoc.org](http://www.sbaoc.org)

If you would like to submit prayer requests or information for the weekly update, please email it to [trinityb@wamego.net](mailto:trinityb@wamego.net).

Richard Smith, Associational Missionary, E-Mail: [rsmith@sbaoc.org](mailto:rsmith@sbaoc.org)

PO Box 1179, Lawrence, KS, 66044

Eugene Jennings, Moderator ~ Curtis Knapp, Vice Moderator ~ Tony Mattia, Corresponding Secretary



## The State of the Church (Continued)

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the blessings of God. We have turned mission trips into pious vacations. We have heated speaking (yelling) and call it true preaching. We have turned evangelism into church growth movements which have nothing to do with who Christ really is. Where should we look to see the problem? Instead of blaming others, we should look to Scripture and then our own hearts. It tells us the real problem and it tells us the real cure. If we do not understand the real problem, whatever we do will be like applying band aids to help the victims of the guillotine. We have got to understand that we cannot do one thing for the self-sufficient God in our own power. One of the most basic things we have forgotten today is that we cannot do anything for God that He cannot do for Himself and do it infinitely better.

We have started groups to stress Reformed theology. There can be conferences and much writing on Reformed theology and they can be carried out entirely apart from the life of God. Reformed theology can be nothing more than a historical movement or a theological slant without the life and love of God. It too can become nothing more than a replacement for the true God and a focus on husks instead of kernels. We have groups started up to stress various religious things. But where are the groups that have a heart for the glory of God? We have many conferences on programs and theology and this and that. Where are the conferences on prayer and seeking God? Perhaps there are some of these around, but these things would be talked about instead of actually done. Do ministers get together to pray these days? Getting together to offer up some words skyward is not prayer, but to actually seek the Lord is true prayer. What would it take to get ministers to come together to seek the Lord in prayer and truth? What would it take for the hearts of ministers to be broken in our day? What would it take for ministers to be broken from methods, programs, and themselves and to look to the glory of God in Christ alone?

In times past ministers came together to confess their sins and seek the Lord for His blessing. Today we come together wanting music that we like and someone to tickle our ears with our favorite theological issue. We want to go to a conference that is easy to get there and convenient in all ways while giving us free books and good deals on all sorts of other books and media materials. Could that be a

way of shepherds feeding themselves rather than the people? But why don't we go to seek God? While some of us blast ministers who tickle the ears of their people, we want that to happen to us at conferences. Going to conferences is such an easy thing and we can pretend to be spiritual while in reality we don't have to deal with God while there. Instead of going to conferences on how to start churches and do this and that we need to come together to have the real Word of God driven like spears into our own hearts to show us our own idols and wickedness. Until ministers hear the Word of God as it is driven into their own souls and they are awakened to their own sins, how are they going to preach the truth to the people?

It may be true that conference organizers are afraid that no one will come and their conference will be a failure. So what! What we are doing now is at the very best a total failure in the sight of God and most likely just continuing on in our soothing of others and ourselves in our sins. A burdened soul will be sick of gracious, winsome and encouraging words and desire to hear someone declare the glory of God to his soul so that in His light his own blackness and then glory can be seen. We can pay any quack of a physician to tell us how healthy we are, but what we need is one who will tell us what is really wrong so that there is real help. Jesus came as a physician of souls and He only deals with those who are sick. We can listen to recordings of Robert Schuller and Jol Olsteen if we want to listen to heretics who will tell things that will make us feel good. What our souls need along with every other person in the world is to be awakened to the glory of God and to our sin. What our souls need is God Himself and not someone speaking soothing words that will continue the state of ice in our souls.

Pastors go to conferences and talk about how bad the sheep are. The sheep talk about how bad the pastors are. What we should be talking about is God Himself and His judgment upon us all. God judges churches by giving them inept pastors and He judges pastors by giving them a people with hard hearts and minds. Pastors and the staff are more concerned about their packages and salaries than the glory of God. We pursue higher degrees because they pay more. The pastorate is indeed a profession rather than a calling of God for others though we would not say that

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## The State of the Church (Continued)

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about ourselves. We have become a group of hirelings who are climbing ladders in the denominations for the good of our own honor and wallets rather than those who feed the sheep of the living God in the pursuit of His glory. We may not think of it in this way, but the Word of God needs to be applied to our hearts because we have modern methods and ways of committing idolatry that we are blinded to. How can we claim to be ministers of the living God while we come before Him and His people with idols in our hearts?

Pastoral searches resemble a beauty contest more than a group of people seeking the Lord for a man of God (not perfect) who desires to feed the sheep with the Word of God. The searches might have certain noble things about them, but people really want a CEO with a charismatic and charming personality as a hired gun to do the work for them. When the minister makes people uncomfortable, he is fired. Ministers understand that and so their greatest goal in life is to make people comfortable in their sin. We have forgotten that a minister is to be a man of God who knows God and proclaims the Word of God to the people in order to wake them up and to repent of their self-centered ways in order to pursue God in love and truth. The minister is to be first and foremost one who speaks for God to the people rather than doing what he can to make the people feel good about themselves. The minister is to be freed from other activities in order to seek the Lord in prayer and the Word and then teach the people of God to do the work of the ministry. But what we have instead are men who are paid to do the work and let the people sleep in their sins. This is judgment on both the people and the ministry.

The Word of God is quite plain in Isaiah 64:7: "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." What it tells us is that when no one is calling on His name (in truth and love) and who is arousing himself to take hold of God, then God has hidden His face from them and has delivered them into the power of their sins. We must remember that this was to the Israelites and they had continued on with their religious activities. The judgment of God in their case as well as ours is that it was the very

religious actions that were as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). They were just continuing on in their religious actions oblivious to their idolatry and sin because the Lord had blinded them to it. Could that be happening in our day? Could that be happening in the SBC and other places? Do we see people broken for their sin as against God and seeking Him out of nothing but love for Him and His glory? Do we see people arousing themselves to take hold of the true God? I don't think we see that at all, but instead we have religious action and that is also with the conservative and Reformed.

What we must understand is that the light of the countenance of the Lord is absent. Instead of increasing our programs and activities, we must repent of them as they are replacements for God. Instead of increasing the outward success of conferences, ministers need to be broken from self-centeredness and busyness in order to seek the Lord. If our churches are going to see true revival, then something like what happened in Scotland in 1596 must happen in our associations. A national Assembly of ministers met and a thorough catalogue was prepared of the sins of every class of persons. More space was given to the sins of ministers than to all the other classes of people put together. John Davidson preached on lying prophets and shepherds who feed themselves. Hundreds of ministers were broken and sobbed and cried before the Lord on the dirt floor. Until ministers repent of their idolatrous practices and sin, the people will remain in darkness and the judgment of God will remain upon us. Until the people repent, the Lord will judge them will false shepherds. Each of us must learn to cry out to the Lord for the grace of a broken heart and the grace to seek His face so that the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ will be seen and His light will shine in the churches to His glory.

Richard Smith

### *SBC Prayer Lines*

*Use these numbers year round to obtain current missions prayer requests.*

*North American Missions ~ 1-800-554-PRAY  
International Missions ~ 1-800-395-PRAY*



## Pioneer Gospel Work in Liberec, the Czech Republic

For ten years we, a married couple with four children, have been pioneering an Independent Reformed Church in Liberec in the North of the Czech Republic on our own. Zdenek is a native Czech; Nicola is from England and works full time at the Technical University of Liberec. The English department, where she is employed, is looking for a native speaker, or speakers, of English to teach full time here from September 2008. Our aim in publicising the university post below is to seek a serious-minded Christian, with a deep love of those who have never heard the true Gospel to join us here in Liberec. A university teacher would have ample opportunity to function as "salt and light" among hundreds of young Czechs who come here to study from throughout the country. The English-speaking Czech staff are very friendly and are extremely keen that they be joined by a professionally-minded native speaker of English.

### **Below is some information about the post produced by the English Department, Faculty of Education, Technical University, Liberec, Czech Republic.**

We prepare prospective teachers of English who will teach children between the ages of 10 to 15. Students are from 18 to 25 years old. Foreign teachers usually teach compulsory classes of language improvement, reading and writing, sometimes phonetics/phonology and elective classes of drama, journalism, conversation and again language improvement.

A common teaching load is sixteen 45-minute classes per week. The number of students taught at a time varies from about 12 to 25 (In year 1 it is often more). The academic year is divided into two 14-week semesters with 5-week examination periods in January/February and May/June. The teachers are supposed to teach, prepare tests as part of continuous assessment during semesters and examine students during examination periods. Both tests and exams are based on course books used in classes. Each teacher also provides office hours twice a week lasting about 90 minutes. Students come if they need advice dealing with study problems. Otherwise, more work is done on a voluntary basis. e. g. Every semester the department runs a series of lectures for students focusing on life and institutions of the English speaking countries. It is always highly appreciated when native speaker teachers give a presentation.

Gross salary is 12,100 – 13,100 Czech crowns (Bc. Degree), 13,800 – 15,300 Czech crowns (M.A. Degree), 16,300 – 22,300 Czech crowns (PhD. Degree) depending on the number of years of teaching experience. Taxation is about 22%. The salary is paid monthly after a month load has been taught. It is possible to earn more money by getting involved in Programmes for Further Education of Teachers and by teaching some private classes.

Accommodation is provided in a University hostel located in the surroundings of the town. To get to the University takes 15 minutes by tram that goes every ten minutes. Each teacher has a separate room and two teachers usually share a bathroom. A kitchen is shared by all the teachers living on the same floor. Accommodation is paid by the University.

The population of Liberec is about 100,000. It is located in a valley surrounded by mountains. There are very good conditions for hiking throughout the year and skiing in winter.

As for recruiting teachers from outside the European Union, the authorities in the Czech Republic have introduced some rules. If you want to work in the Czech Republic, it means you have to go for an interview to a Czech embassy or a consulate outside the Czech Republic (For Liberec the nearest consulate is in Dresden, Germany.) They tell you which forms you need to fulfill. They then process your application. The whole procedure may take even several months. After a successful interview we will get work permit for our future teacher and also help him/her to get a long-term visa.

To summarize: According to native speaker teachers who taught in the department in the past, working at this university is a rewarding job mainly in terms of what you do. It is also a wonderful and memorable experience.

#### **For more information contact:**

Zdenek and Nicola Karasek, Michelsky vrch 977, CZ 46014 LIBEREC 14, Czech Republic

Tel: 0420-48-5121221

E-mail: znkarasek@volny.cz