

Hoping for Brighter Days—Part 2

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Repentance

In the last issue, we looked at Steps to Revival, according to 2 Chronicles. The first step is acknowledgment of sin. The next step is repentance: *“If My people will ... turn from their wicked ways.”* It is not enough to merely acknowledge our sin; we must turn away from it.

Today, sin dominates the lives of many Christians. In 2002, Barna Research Group reported that less than half of all born-again Christians in America view the Bible as their primary source for moral guidance. Thirty-three percent say it is morally acceptable to view sexually explicit TV, movies, and Internet; 40 percent say reading magazines depicting graphic sexuality and nudity is okay. Many accept living together outside of marriage and divorce apart from adultery.¹

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Idolatry

Consider idolatry. You may not bow to statues or images, but idolatry is manifested in many ways. It is a matter of the heart and occurs when we allow something other than God to take the primary place in our life.

Pastor Chuck Smith has said, “The master passion of your life becomes your God.” If the Lord is your master passion, then you are in the right place. But if something else is driving you, then you are in idolatry. The love of self, the love of things, and the love of pleasure are common idols today.

Even Christians are susceptible. Self-love says, “It’s all about me.” Maybe you don’t verbalize this, but you live your life as if it’s all about you. You are on the throne. Calling Jesus your Lord is a contradiction because you do not obey Him or do His will.

There is the love of things: I want this, or I have to get that. In an affluent culture, we can get caught up in this. As we acquire more, a vicious cycle begins; we do not have time to devote ourselves entirely to the Lord because we have three jobs so we can get more things! That is idolatry. Materialism is idolatry. We don’t talk about it because we don’t want to offend the rich. But many people in the Church are living for things or for pleasure.

The Sensual Delusion

For others, feeling good is all that matters. Sexual immorality is rampant in the Church today. Adultery is becoming commonplace—within the congregation, and even among some pastors.

We have forgotten the seriousness of this sin. Under the old covenant, adultery was punishable by death. God has not changed His mind, so why do we tolerate adultery in the Church? I’m afraid we have convinced ourselves that God is a glorified psychologist who understands that we have “needs” and holds our personal happiness as His top priority. What a sad and tragic delusion!

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Fornication is as offensive to God as adultery. In churches, unmarried people are involved with one another sexually. This issue is often swept under the carpet.

We live in such spiritually distorted times that these sins have been renamed

“psychological disorders.” “Sex addicts” are given therapy and medication for “an incurable disease.” And many Christians are buying into this psycho-babble.

Pornography has become a plague. We blame the pornography industry, but who buys this stuff and goes to those sites? Unfortunately, Christians and church leaders are often caught up in this filth.

Divorce—The ‘Acceptable’ Sin

Next is the grievous sin of divorce, though many Christians don’t refer to it as sin. Today, preachers are afraid to call divorce a sin for fear that half the church will leave. They fail to remember God’s Word, which says, “He hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16).

There are circumstances under which God allows divorce: divorce before becoming Christians, unfaithful spouses, abused spouses who flee for their lives, an unbelieving spouse who leaves a believer. I am not talking about any of these situations.

What I am talking about are those who divorce with no biblical grounds—those who say, “My husband (or wife) doesn’t meet my needs anymore; therefore, the Lord has freed me from my marriage.” The Bible clearly states that a person who divorces a spouse for any reason except sexual immorality has committed adultery. There is a huge need for repentance in this area. The Lord cannot bless a church that ignores grievous sin.

These sins, and others, grieve and quench the Spirit’s work. If we hope to see brighter days for the Church, we must repent! If there

is any hope for our nation, it must begin in our churches and our own lives. We must humble ourselves and repent. We must turn from our wicked ways. ➔

¹ Barna Research Group, 5528 Everglades, Ventura, CA 93003. www.barna.org. <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/pagepressrelease.asp?pressreleaseID=97&reference=B>.