



# and that's... **The Gospel Truth!!** with Pat Corn

a brief message of encouragement to make your day just a little bit brighter

I seem to meet an inordinate amount of folks who are very discouraged in their Christian walk with the operation of their church. It appears that most of these folks aren't discouraged with their Heavenly Father, but more so with their experience in their local church. The common thread that runs through most of these conversations encompasses being ignored by the leadership, leadership slothfulness, extravagant spending, blatant deception, attitudes of rejection rather than redemption, selective treatment of the wealthy, and so on and so on.

There are no surprises here. These same concerns have plagued the church for centuries. These same problems have caused rifts from the beginning of the Church as we know it today. Why, you ask?

The Church today is nothing like what God's intended purpose was in the beginning. The Church today is a professional entity. Much like the Church at Ephesus described in Revelation 2; a well oiled machine where the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Here the message that exiled John received for the church at Ephesus.....

*"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*

*These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*

Wow! What a glowing report to the church. That well oiled machine was running smoothly and they were doing great works. But then, the red highlight marker comes out!!!!!!

*Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans (they were the occultists of the day), which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

That well oiled machine must have had lots of committees and programs and done lots of "stuff", but that glaring statement chills the routine..."Yet I hold this against you"...AACCK!! God holds something against my church? Yes! It's scary to think, but the love and worship of God The Father had been forsaken and pushed to the back burner to be eclipsed by the churches "programs" and "ministries". Man's concepts had pre-empted God's precepts.

God's warning has gone unheeded in many churches. "*Repent and do the things you did at first.*" Stop what you are doing immediately and focus on the relationship that is God's greatest desire. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to "love the Lord, thy God, with all your heart, all, your mind, and all of your soul. Nowhere does His statement mention "stuff" or business transactions, or any programs. Yes, even evangelism takes a backseat to the true worship of God. It must or our evangelistic efforts are merely a political campaign and pep rally.

*"If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."* The lampstand is the illumination of the Holy Spirit. A church becomes robotic when the illumination of the Holy Spirit is removed. Don't think for a minute that the illumination of the Holy Spirit can't be withdrawn. This scripture vividly affirms it. The church operates under earthly principles of business and opportunity rather than the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The church's operation is motivated rather than inspired. Often times the exponential growth in church numerics is a result of a principal that is not "Christian". That is the principle of "tithing". Tithing is not a Christian principle, but the church has certainly made it seem so. Tithing in money, sewn seed, even talent and effort will return in greater numbers due to the principle of "seed, time, and harvest" which God put into place in the very beginning. Many churches whose lampstands have been removed simply operate on greater income generated by promoting the tithing principle which is practiced by the individual. They always need more because they are eating the seed.

So what is God's plan for the church? You'll find it in Colossians 3 and 4. This passage is the perfect "Statement Of Faith" for any church. The apostle Paul writes....

*"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."*

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