



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

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

It's hard to believe that the first month of the year has flown by so quickly. New Year's resolutions are either successful or failing thus far for most folks. As for me personally, I am basically on track and this installment of "and that's....The Gospel Truth" is the third in a series in an effort to heighten your awareness of God's desires for His discovering "true worshipers", as is described in John, Chapter 4. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman the "the hours has come that the Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, for those are the true worshipers whom the Father seeks".

In order to understand what "in spirit and in truth" entails, we then turned to Romans, Chapter 12 to view what Paul says concerning "your spiritual (in spirit) act of worship". To view both of the previous installments, visit my website at <http://www.maizeone.com/atTGT.htm> and then click on "Worship 101" and "Worship 102". These two articles will give you an insight into the reality of God's precepts as to developing a relationship with his people that is dynamic and intimate. That type of a relationship is rarely found in the church at large simply because your worship experience is one-on-one and in no way dependent upon the organized church to foster for you. Your worship experience is between you and your Lord; up close and personal.

Let's take a look at what I deem "The Field Of Dreams Theology".

In Revelation, Chapter 2, we read the message given through John by the Spirit concerning the church at Ephesus. Keep in mind that John, while exiled on the island of Patmos, was given messages from the Holy Spirit concerning the major churches of that time in the first century. The term church simply meant a group of believers. In just a very few years, there were already situations that were worthy of God's commendation and his condemnation. Man, and particularly groups of men, certainly has an innate knack for perverting God's desires and plans.

Ephesus was a very large trade center in Asia. Having a long history in the "cultism" of Artemis, the Christian message definitely ruffled some feathers. John spent the years of 65-68AD in the locale spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many Christians were forced to seek refuge from the Romans because of their teachings of Jesus Christ.

The social and economic nature of Ephesus was considered a highly advanced way of life, and being such a vital trade center, was prone to good organization and concerned with amassing great wealth. A great influence in the cultural center was due to their religious influence of Artemis cultism and the Gospel was not well received by many of the inhabitants of the area especially the craftsmen. They were highly skilled artisans who had amassed great wealth by producing statues of Artemis made from gold and silver, and other precious metals. One craftsman named Demetrius was responsible for the stoning of Paul and his two colleagues by inciting a riot against them. They narrowly escaped with their lives as Demetrius boomed and shouted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" They didn't want anything interrupting their cash flow. There would be no "graven image" orders from the Christians!!

Keep in mind the mindset of these Ephesian people as we look at what the Spirit says to John concerning 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. 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, 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."

WOW! The first part of this message is a glowing commendation of the well-oiled church machine of Ephesus. The Spirit extols their good deeds, their hard work at spreading the Gospel, their perseverance under the oppression of Rome, their lack of tolerance for evil, their discernment of false teachers, their steadfast nature....WHOOOEE!! Pat your own church-self on the back boys!!! These guys in Ephesus were cut to be organized and pursue greatness in the eyes of the world. BUT WAIT!!

Then the Spirit says..."Yet I hold this one thing against you"....AAACCK!! Ouch! That cut goes deep!!! Now the last thing I would want to hear is that God holds something against me. All of the "good stuff" is eclipsed by one thing..."You have forsaken your first love!"

The "first love" of the Ephesian church, and all churches for that matter, was their love relationship of the Father as revealed in Jesus Christ. These first century Christians had forsaken their passion for the Lord for their passion for organization and programs and the practices of "churchdom". They had replaced their efforts to have dynamic fellowship with the Father with "good stuff" forsaking the desires of the very One whose mercy and grace afforded them the kingdom of God just like many churches today; modern day churches of Ephesus.

Do you remember your own "first love"?? Oh, I know you do. Do you remember how you wanted to be together constantly? You just couldn't get enough of each other. You wanted to know more and more about each other. You were compassionate and loving, wanting constant communication as you wore the phone line to a frazzle. No gift was too great for your new love. You couldn't invest enough! You would walk or drive any distance to be with each other often forsaking other relationships just to pour it all into that one person. His or her affect on your life was mind boggling and numbing. It took your very breath away. Just how high could you be??!!

That "love high" of the Father is exactly what the Spirit is saying to the Ephesians..."Remember the height from which you have fallen". This church had fallen from that passionate expression of love for the Father into a level of organization operation, with a goal of garnering public approval, and the appearance of success through "church" operations. How many churches throughout this world have succumbed to the same numbing effect of organizational operations that force passion out and "order" in. I'd be willing to bet that that's exactly what happened in that "first love experience" you personally had before. If you married that "first love" did the passion wane as you become more "organized" dealing with bills and children and work?

What does the Spirit say?? "REPENT!" The Spirit says knock it off and go back and do the things you did in the beginning. Go back to that passion for Christ that you had in the beginning. Revisit and establish new residence right there. If you do, you'll have the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God as an "overcomer".

And if you don't..."I will remove the lampstand from you", says the Spirit. The alliteration of the "lampstand" always refers to the "illumination" of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is saying here that if you (the church, and remember YOU are the church, not that crowd you hang out with on Sunday morning) fail to return to what you did in the beginning, the illumination of the Holy Spirit will be removed from you or your church. Then you are on your own. That's a very lonely place to be.

I firmly believe that the "church" that we know today as the organized structure, whom orchestrates our relationship with the Father based on whatever bias or agenda that it might promote, has caused the illumination of the Holy Spirit to be removed from many churches due to their focusing toward operating as a well-oiled machine. This machine is really a business that promotes many "good" things that take precedence over the one thing that God desires most....His worship through a dynamic personal relationship with you. That's why you should NEVER depend on the church, as we know it today, to "lead"

you into worship. Your relationship with the Father must be inspired and not motivated by the style and substance of an organization or individual.

Christ answered the elders of the community when he was asked as to what the greatest commandment of all would be. His answer was to “love the Lord thy God with all of your heart, mind, and soul and love your neighbor as your self”. If that’s the case, and of course it is, why do we spend immense fortunes on building programs, pastoral staff, elaborate furnishings, real estate purchases creating enormous debt, expensive “programs” and salaries that are completely out of line? Is your church benevolence budget as large as the building budget in order to “love our neighbors as our selves”? I don’t think I’ll have to scratch my scalp bloody figuring that one out!

One answer reigns supreme. Many churches operate without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, (What!? Oh yes, the illumination of the Spirit has been history for years in many church situations and remember He said He would remove it, not me) but operate, with the appearance of “growth” to the world, through the power the tithe. The law of the tithe is not a Christian concept. It was enacted at the very beginning of time and known as “seed-time-and harvest”, one of the three things that will never depart from the earth. If the money flows into a church, it will “grow” physically (but not necessarily spiritually), and so will the income of the one who tithes, thus more to tithe on again, just as is described in the book of Malachi. It is a Godly principle that works for anyone Jew, Gentile, or atheist. Sow and you will reap.

There are some churches whose supreme desire is to be a “mega-church”. All it takes is “mega-money”. It’s just that simple.... thus enters... “The Field Of Dreams Theology”.....(remember the baseball movie ‘Field Of Dreams’ byline?)...”Build it and they will come”.....If you question that concept, just tell your pastor that you are initiating a movement to downsize the church, build a much smaller building, sell the assets to liquidate all the debt, build seating for a fourth as many, and in order to reach the same numbers (because you must keep up appearances with the denominational reporting, of course) he’ll preach four times on Sunday morning and early afternoon, twice Sunday evening and twice Wednesday night and handle all the hospital visitation himself. Then see which way he’s “led”!!! Oh yeah! The gospel cruises with Bill Gaither are out and he’ll have to expel ALL of the immoral brothers, even the rich ones!

Oh yes, if you build it... more and more....bigger and bigger....they will come....and join the “Chosen Frozen” and be a church-clone...once again, and again, and again, and again, and again in the worship service. And it is certainly a worship service. It says so right there in the bulletin!!!

REPENT!!! And go back and do what you did in the beginning and you will have the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Love Him with all of your heart, mind, and soul!!!! He is seeking “true worshipers”!! He seeks YOU as a true worshiper, not an organizational intercessor!!

And that’s....The Gospel Truth!!

Your comments or questions are always welcome. Email them to: patcorn@maizeone.com

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