

"THE CHURCH GOD WANTS!" - PT. 2

Revelation 3:7-13

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"You've kept my word and you have not denied my name."

If I were to ask you -- just in a heart to heart talk - "Do you feel as though you as an individual Christian and one who makes up the Church - because the Church is made up of people - do you feel as though that you are utilizing the fullness of all the Lord has?"

George Barnard did a survey of 2,000 pastors and asked the question, "If Christ were to return to earth how do you think He would rate the Church?" Less than one-half of one percent said that the Church would be fully doing its job. Only forty-three percent said that it would be respectfully doing its job. Fifty-three percent of the pastors said that it was not really making an impact on souls for society.

And here we find ourselves in what we often refer to as the "last days" and we come into this sanctuary on Sundays -- we enjoy the presence of the Lord -- and we have to decide whether we are really being the church that God wants.

When it talks about the Church at Philadelphia it was a revival Church. It was a revival church because it walked first of all through the open door. It was a revival church second of all because it kept the Word.

The big problem that most of us have as Christians is not keeping the Word of the Lord, not allowing the power of the Word to be the guiding force in our lives.

You see it is not the India paper, it is not the leather back, it is not the beautiful words that we read - but it is the power that is behind that Word because it is a person book. The person is Jesus Christ, Himself.

John gave the message -

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was in God. And all things were made by Him and without Him there was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and that life was the light of men.

Psalm 19 verses 7 through 11 it says -

The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart. The commandments of the Lord are pure enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and altogether righteous more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold and sweeter also than honey and honey in the honeycomb. Moreover - by them is thy

servant warned and in the keeping of them
there is great reward.

But when we talk about being kept by the Word and a Church that lives the Word and we keep the Word in our own lives, what does that mean? If we are really people of the Word then that means that we have the authority of Jesus Christ. Matthew 16:18 says -

Upon this rock I will build my Church and the
gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Luke chapter 10 verse 19 says -

Behold I give you authority or power to tread
upon serpents and scorpions and nothing by
any means shall offend you.

Christ gives us the authority of Himself.

What that really means if we are really keeping the Word and we are a Church that is based on the Word then that means that we have organic unity with Christ. When you read Ephesians chapter 5 verse 30 it says -

We are members of His body. Therefore, a man
will leave his father and mother and he will
be united with his wife and they will become
one flesh.

But then Paul said - "This is a profound mystery, but I am speaking of Christ in the Church."

If we keep the Word we are not only in the adhered of Christ but we are in the unity, the organic unity of Christ. We are members of His body. If we are really keeping the Word and we are a Church of the word then what that really means is that we have the influence in the world, that we can be the most powerful influence that the world has ever known.

That is what Christ was talking about in Matthew chapter 5 verse 13 and 14 when He said -

You are the salt of the earth but the salt has lost it's saltiness how would it ever be salty again. It is not worth anything but to cast out or throw out under the feet of men.

But then He goes on to say -

You are the light of the world. You are a city that is set upon a hill. And you cannot be hidden.

But what He really says to us also is that not only if we are keeping the Word are we in the authority of Christ and are we in the influence of Christ and are we in the organic unity with Christ but it also says that we are an exclusive people. We are exclusive before Him.

The biggest problem with most of us is that we don't understand our destiny. We don't know that we have been called into a special kind of relationship with God that unbelievers can't really fathom and can't really know. That's why we come across

weird to a lot of folks who come and see us sing and raise our hands and they think - "What is going on here?"

It is because they have never tasted of the fullness of the springs of living water. Does anybody here know what I am talking about? They have never understood their exclusiveness before Him.

You see what the problem is today - we have so many sagging Christians. Have you seen them - they just sag. They drag. It's like the Veterans of the Foreign War, they just limp as they march in the parade.

What I'm really saying to you today is that Christ is wanting us to raise up and lift up to be what He has really made us to be. In First Peter chapter 2 verse 9 Peter is writing to people who are persecuted. Peter is writing to people who are scattered out through Asia Minor because of their testimony to the Lord. Some of them have lost everything they have had. Some of them have lost their families. Some of them have lost their property. Some of them have had to get out of prison, escape from prison.

He says - You got to know who you are. He says to them in verse 9 -

You are a chosen generation. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. You are a people who belong to God. Now remains for you to demonstrate the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

I like this next verse -

When you were not a people He made you His people. You became God's people. When you had no mercy now the mercy of God belongs to you.

Does anybody here know what I'm talking about? You are an exclusive person. Look over at your neighbor and say - "You are exclusive." Do it one more time. Tell that person - "You are exclusive." You are a different kind of a breed. You are a different kind of a "cat" when you walk out of here.

Then what He says is - "I urge you as strangers and pilgrims in this land." Hello. Look over at your neighbor and say - "You are a stranger." And now it is telling you, "You are a pilgrim." Well, you say - "I always wanted to be a pilgrim - never wanted to be a stranger, but I wanted to be a pilgrim."

As strangers and pilgrims of this land I urge you to abstain from the lust of the flesh, from your lower nature which is always at war with the soul and you should live such good lives among the pagans...

Hello - you do know this is a post-Christian era don't you? You do know you live in a pagan nation don't you? You do know that if there is going to be any salt you have to be the salt. If there is going to be any light you got to be the light. If there is going to be any city that they can see, you got to be the city.

You cannot build the city of man unless along with it you build the city of God. And the only hope for this universe is for the Church to rise up and make known to the world - The way to live is to follow Jesus Christ and if you will follow me I will take you to Him. You do know that, don't you?

The life you live I want you to live it among the pagan so that even though they accuse you of doing wrong when they see your good works they will glorify God on the day that He visits us.

I like that. That's the exclusiveness we have. We have that exclusiveness because Ephesians chapter 1 beginning with verse 15 tells us He is calling us to have faith in Jesus Christ. He is calling us to love the saints. He is calling us to have our eyes enlightened. He is calling us to have hope. He is calling us to have the richness of the gloriousness of His inheritance. He is calling us to be energized with the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. And the exclusiveness of Christianity is not so much in the virgin birth as important as that is, it is not so much in the cross as important as that is, but the exclusiveness is in the fact that on the third day He arose again and He is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for the saints. That's the exclusiveness that we have.

Now we have that power that passage of scripture tells us because -

He is at the right hand of the Father un the heavenly realms, because He is far above ever ruler, every authority, every power, every dominion in this age but not only in this age but in the age to come.

The part I like - "He has been appointed to be the head of the Church." "He is the head of the Church and we are His body."

What God wants then is simplistic faith - just down to earth, home-spun, simplistic faith. Sometimes I think we have it so sophisticated, so complicated and so fouled up with orthodoxy, God can't find us and we can't find Him.

I'm not talking about denominationalism. I'm not talking about institutionalism. I'm not talking about organizationalism, I'm talking about those people who have been born-again by the blood of the lamb, billed with the Spirit and know themselves to belong to Christ - that is the Church of the living God. Hallelujah be to God.

TESTIMONY AND ILLUSTRATION

Sometimes out of the mouth of babes it comes. I run into some uncanny kinds of unusual kinds of testimonies. I had a young couple in my office just this past week and we were talking about their future ministry. They have been int he ministry some fifteen or eighteen years - something like that - I guess fifteen years probably. She gave me her testimony. She said - I've been a member here for seventeen or eighteen years and you don't even know

how I got saved. I said - I don't; but you don't know how I got saved either. She said - "No that's true, but let me give you my testimony."

Said - "I came out of testimony and I had grown up in the church but I always thought you people over at Mount Paran were weird. I knew about Mount Paran but I was always told by my pastor never to go there."

You know one of our members - a long time member - was walking out to the parking lot one day many years ago when we parked everywhere before the city got mad. And he heard a woman talking to her son and came up to him saying - as he walked along -

"Now look, we've never been to this church and they tell me they do weird things here - we are going to sit in the balcony. If they bring out the snakes we are getting out of there." I thought we would have a little test of faith - would you bring out the boxes please. No. No. I believe in handling snakes with shotguns and hoes and running - running is a great way to handle snakes. I don't shout a lot but when I see a snake I move.

So she said - "I was a cheerleader for the Falcons and I was dating a member of the Braves." She had two losers right there. And then she said - "I decided to go to college and I was going to go to the University of Georgia so I had a little lull in time and so I was having to make a little extra money so I went to work in a theater. I was selling popcorn and there were three people who worked in there who were members of your congregation."

She said - You remember when Star Wars first came out and the Premier showing and everybody was coming to see it. We had a long line of people nearly around the shopping center waiting to get in. We had it blocked off waiting for them to come and getting all set and low and behold the popcorn machine broke and it wouldn't work." She said, "I'm not going to be in here when those people come and no popcorn we will get lynched in this place." She said, "I'm going to quit." They said - "No stay we are going to get it fixed." Said, "How are you going to get it fixed." She said, "How are you going to get it fixed." They said, "We are going to pray." She said, "You are going to do what?" Said, "We are going to pray. We want you to come with us. We are going upstairs in the lounge and we are going to join hands and we are going to pray in the Spirit." She said, "Pray in the Spirit? What do you mean pray in the Spirit?" They said, "We will show you."

Went upstairs and they held hands and they go to praying and the anointing came and they began to pray in the Spirit in a heavenly language and she said, "You know I had one on each side, I couldn't get out - they had my hands."

They said, "OH Lord, we got to have help here. Do something. Fix that popcorn machine."

I'm talking about simplistic faith here -- you understand." I'm not talking about your sophisticated faith. You would never pray for anything like that, I know that. I mean you come down to the last resort when you are about to die and the doctor says -

"The only thing we can do now is pray." And you say - "Oh has it come to that."

So she said - "We prayed. And I thought this was going to be interesting. We got down and cranked that popcorn machine up and low and behold it worked." Said, - "We fed all of those hundreds of people and they had enough popcorn to last for the next ten years."

Said - "When it was over I was miffed by that." So I said - "Where do you get that?" Said - "You got to come to our church." "So I used to drop in on Sunday nights sometime and then they just kept praying for me.

She said - "I had Leukemia and came down with Leukemia and the doctors didn't give me a whole lot of time." She said - "They got me into remission and here I was with Leukemia and not knowing what the future was going to be. One day in my bedroom when I was down to the lowest ebb I began to pray and ask the Lord to give me some help. And said - You know the Holy Spirit came into my room. He filled me with the Holy Spirit and I began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance and I felt the healing presence going all through my body and she said - You know I went back to the doctor and they took the test at the appropriate time and said - You don't have a sign of Leukemia in your body anywhere." Hallelujah be to God. Anybody know that kind of God. Hallelujah.

She said - "I broke up with a guy who I was going with from the Braves because I told him what had happened and he said - you are out of your mind." She said - "What happened was I came to your church and I met my husband here and we have been in the ministry for the last fifteen years."

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Keep the Word.

PRAYER

(MESSAGE ENDS ON TAPE)