Subject: "he being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. 11.4) Thoughts From HEF - Part 2
Posted by unclebob_5 on Mon, 22 Jan 2007 18:57:27 GMT
View Forum Message <> Reply to Message

"God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. 11.4) Thoughts From HEF (Part 2)

I have recently been (re-)reading HEF's book, "Deeper Life In The Spirit"; this was a book that has always blessed me, so I thought I would just excerpt from it a bit for the benefit of those who have never (or recently) read it - starting at the beginning...Here is part 2 (emphasis in bold is mine; my thoughts follow the excerpt). Read his teaching, meditate, and be blessed!

The Need for the Deeper Life

The present age is characterized by two evils affecting both the secular and religious spheres of life. One concerns moral discernment; the other involves moral authority. The spiritual and moral character of the present age shows how far conditions have deteriorated. At this point, the only solution, as well as the greatest need of Christianity, is the restoration of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. This is not to be construed as some sort of mystical empowering of the present religious institution, whereby its current programs, organization, and methods are made more effective. The need is for a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit by individual Christians in an experience identical to that received by the disciples at Pentecost.

To compensate for its lack of power and effectiveness against the present-day flood of wickedness and unbelief, the church has turned to such substitutes as increased religious activity, new methods, dynamic programs, and the merger of denominations in order to multiply its membership and increase its outreach. However sincere the effort may be on the part of some, all such attempts are destined to fail, just as they have in the past. Man cannot restore life to the body by means of artificial respiration when the spirit has departed, for "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Only an effusion of power from on high within the lives of Christians themselves can deliver the contemporary Laodicean church from the moral and spiritual chaos affecting the whole of mankind in this hour.

1. Moral And spiritual characteristics of our age.

The imperative need of the restoration of the sovereign operation and ministry of the Holy Spirit once more in the church will be seen, we believe, from the following discussion of the two moral and spiritual characteristics of the age in which we live.

a. It is an age without moral and spiritual discernment.

Although the present age has been described by some observers as an age of scientific

progress, human achievement, and tremendous advancements into new frontiers of technology, it may, from a moral standpoint at least, be more accurately described as an age of moral and spiritual crisis. This is reflected in such things as the phenomenal increase in crime, war, and drug addiction, the almost universal preoccupation with sex, the general disregard for authority, the great social upheavals and racial strife, and the almost abysmal lack of moral understanding and concern on every hand. We find ourselves living in an age analogous to the dark ages of the Judges when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The great apostasy of our day and the perilous times in which we live were foretold by the Apostle Paul as characterizing the last days:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.
â€“ II Timothy 3:1-5

Truly it is an age when men and women, in many respects, seem to have lost the capacity for moral discernment, calling darkness light and evil good, as was true of Israel in Isaiah's time when he declared, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

As in the period of the Judges, young and old alike consider themselves adequate authorities in spiritual and moral matters, judging what is right and wrong, scorning all attempts at instruction or restraint as outmoded "authoritarianism." The carefree moral philosophy of today is conformity and compromise. It is a time when, even among professing Christians, being "accepted" by the group seems to be more important than being accepted by God. The distinction between the sacred and the secular is rapidly becoming more difficult to discern; there is a loss of a sense of reverence toward God and sacred things; the concept of holiness in the life and character of the Christian is for the most part a thing of the past; and a lack of respect for parents and authority by the younger generation is reflected in a lack of respect for and fear of God. Within Christendom itself the church and family as the center of interest has been largely replaced with secular interests, and the once quiet Christian home is now monopolized by TV and rock music. Two global conflicts in this century, together with the constant turmoil, world-wide unrest, confusion, and uncertainty about the future have taken their toll, resulting in moral decay, increased drunkenness, divorce, juvenile delinquency, crime, and a loss of spiritual concern. Modern scientific and technological achievements, in spite of their beneficial results, have only added to the problem. They have placed at our disposal hundreds of improvements to save time and make life easier, but have provided thereby more time for development of the secular life, leisure, pleasure, and sin.

b. It is an age without moral and spiritual authority.

The prevailing moral philosophy of this age can be characterized by three words: everything is relative. Morals are relative to time, place, and circumstance. Conduct is largely determined by the principle "when in Rome do as the Romans do," and "right" is now defined as whatever is popular and acceptable by the majority, The erroneous notion that "the end justifies the means" frequently prevails both inside and outside the confines of Christendom. "Truth" and "right" are whatever work and produce results; failure is wrong and cannot be tolerated. Conscience is explained as merely the childhood memory of the "do" and "don't" of one's parents; so-called sins are written off as "mistakes" or "errors in judgment" in our evolution to a higher morality; and pleasure and happiness are seen as good ends in themselves, to be pursued for their own sakes.

What is responsible for such moral and spiritual confusion? For the majority at least, there is no longer an objective moral authority to guide their lives and conduct, to teach them truth, to indicate the difference between right and wrong, or to establish a standard. In this age of materialism and skepticism, men have lost faith in the integrity of the Holy Scriptures, and there remains, therefore, no reliable, unchanging standard of right by which to measure conduct and character. Moral conduct is largely determined by the principle of expediency. Without an infallible, objective moral standard (the Word of God), the principle of expediency reigns. If it works, if it relieves pain or displeasure, and if it promotes one's welfare and happiness, then it is right, Too often the contemporary church, denying the inerrancy of Scripture and influenced by the principle of expediency, asks but one question in conducting its affairs, in securing its funds, or in promoting its programs and institutions: "Will it work?" As a result, the church, more and more, has come to resemble the secular community in which it exists, reflecting its customs, attitudes, and moral values, rather than being seen as the moral and spiritual influence upon the community. Moreover, it has become increasingly indifferent to the moral declension, decay, and spiritual shallowness within its own confines, and as a consequence, can no longer speak with moral and spiritual authority to the community at large.

What is the solution, in an age without spiritual discernment and authority, for those who possess a measure of spiritual awareness and concern, and who desire to walk in the ways of truth and faithfulness? God Himself has provided the answer to the dilemma, thereby enabling the sincere Christian to rediscover the distinctiveness of his calling to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." The move of the Spirit of God throughout the world today, as God pours out His Spirit in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, is Heaven's answer to man's spiritual need now at the end of the age.

2. Significance of the present-day outpouring.

The significance of the present-day charismatic revival and outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers in all denominations throughout the world may be summarized as follows:

a. It is God's answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17, "that they all may be one." This is not an

organizational oneness promoted by ecclesiastical leaders, but a oneness of love and purpose in the Spirit. Through the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, God is gathering the divided, scattered members of His body, separated by doctrine, traditions, misunderstanding, fear, and distrust, and uniting them once more in a bond of love. What the religious leaders are attempting to do by organizational mergers, God is doing by His Holy Spirit.

When the church lost the reality of the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it lost its one true unifying force, and the body of Christ, as an inevitable consequence, became divided. But those who receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit can testify that an immediate effect in their lives is the restoration of a spirit of love and true oneness with all saints everywhere.

b. The present outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also God's answer for the Laodicean state of the contemporary church, a church which has the form of godliness, but denies the power thereof. Where the Holy Spirit has been invited to return, a charismatic revival is taking place: the gifts of the Spirit are being restored (1 Corinthians 12), the signs are following the preaching of the Word once again (Mark 16:17-18), and the supernatural character of the gospel is once more being demonstrated.

c. The great moving of the Spirit of God over the world in this hour is also God's reply to the great demonic flood sweeping throughout the world in preparation for the reign of Antichrist. We are witnessing a fantastic increase in Satanic wickedness and influence in the form of crime, sexual perversions, suicide, wars, fear, anxiety, divorce, physical and mental illnesses, drug and alcohol addiction, racial strife, hate, deceit, skepticism, and moral decay, as well as the spread of spiritualism and a phenomenal increase in occultism of all forms.

As the Apostle Paul has shown, the believer's warfare is not against flesh and blood, nor is he contending merely with contemporary secular and materialistic philosophies, but against the spirit of this world (Ephesians 6:10-12). This is the precise reason men and their methods of reform have failed and will fail to promote world peace, check the increase in crime and moral decay, or stem the tide of social unrest. The need of the hour is for Christians to experience once more a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit, and to rediscover His blessed ministry in their lives. Only He can bring the believer into a place of total consecration and the deeper life, so that he will be able to overcome the spirit of this age, to withstand in the evil day, and having done a& to stand. Never before in history has the church needed a baptism of power from on high more than at present, in an age without moral discernment or spiritual authority.

My thoughts (see text in bold)--

--As I was reading and thinking about this section of Dr. Freeman's book, I was reflecting on the popular trends we are seeing in Evangelicalism, like the "Purpose-Driven Church" and "Marketing the Church" movement -- find out what the people want, what they say they need, what they are comfortable with, and restructure the Church to give them those things.

--What would have been HEF's response to these these developments, if he were still with us? I think there are some clues in today's excerpt, for those of us with ears to hear!

--Notice how Br. Freeman zeroed in on the increasing tendency of the Church to buy in to the "Will it Work?" mentality, with the result that the distinction between the Church and the world is quickly evaporating. Right away, I thought of all those Barna surveys that we read about, that document this same profound shift in values - there is now almost NO DIFFERENCE between the lifestyles of those who profess to be Christian Evangelicals and the non-Christian population around us! God help us!

--We could become overwhelmed, depressed and disillusioned with all this mess, but Dr. Freeman caught the vision and saw the way out!...He spoke of those who had the "...desire to walk in the ways of truth and faithfulness." That's really the starting point, isn't it? Do I really...really...REALLY desire to walk in the Lord's ways? To do it His way...or mine?

--In the beginning of today's slection, HEF writes: "The need is for a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit by individual Christians..." That's me, friend...how about you? We need PENTECOST again! Let's open our Bibles to Acts 2, and together may we let the Lord have his way with us, just as He did at our first Spirit-Filling...

"He being dead...YET SPEAKETH!"
Your thoughts?

---