

TROUBLED CHURCH - PART 1

Lesson 1

Lessons Learned in the Midst of Turmoil

Without going into too many of the details, suffice it to say that, practically overnight, we have had a major staff member departure. It has now become the catalyst for many previously-suppressed difficulties within the fellowship to surface. We are now faced with many of the same situations that Paul dealt with at Corinth - the fellowship split between, or behind, specific individuals with leadership roles or influence within the local church.

It is especially tragic in light of the extremely blessed fellowship that this church has enjoyed for a long, long time. We now see that fellowship shattered, fragmented, and splintered. Satan has clearly hit the church broadside, and it's listing. Over the past several weeks, we have been witness to a barrage of rumors, innuendo, gossip, misinformation, leadership issues, outbursts of anger, etc. These are all very, very unpleasant and even now difficult for me to mention.



Within this storm however, our class senses Christ's presence among us, and we are resolved to seek him out and to continue to focus on Him and the work at Southview in the days ahead. As I struggled to get last week's lesson out, it became apparent to me that part of the reason I was having difficulty doing so was because the real lesson is the one that we at Southview are currently living.

What is happening to us is exactly the sort of things that we have studied and learned about in the past. As such, this is an opportunity for us to fall back on all the lessons, all the memorized verses, and all of the discussions; seeking to apply them to a now very real situation. We are no longer dealing with a "what if" situation.

And so last week, I asked the class to think back over the past two weeks and see if they could verbalize what we have learned through this experience so far. I then shared with them my thoughts.

Collectively then, this is what we had learned to this point. I am praying that if you are struggling with Satan right now, perhaps these will help you as well. Following this, I have some additional thoughts for this week's lesson.

What we've learned the past few weeks:

1. Even though I'm saved, my old self is still very present in my life.
 - a. I know this from my desire to strike back, to seek revenge, to take immediate action -- before taking time in prayer to talk with the Lord.
2. We can truly know a person not by how they ACT in a given situation, but by how they REACT.
 - a. Reactions reveal what is on the inside.
3. Revival starts with me.
 - a. If I truly desire revival within the congregation, then I must first truly desire it within me.
4. I cannot see or know God's will if I am full of anger and bitterness.
5. God, through Christ, built the church, and is still building it - not men, no matter how righteous they may seem.

6. "Church" is way more than worship and Sunday School.
 - a. It is made up of people, relationships, love, and fellowship through our entire lives on a daily basis, not just Sundays. When these relationships are broken, "church" isn't church any longer and our lives are totally affected as a result.
7. God's wisdom is difficult to search for in turbulent times.
 - a. When the storms of life threaten to capsize the boat, most of us want to jump overboard, rather than to seek God's peace and plan for our lives.
8. We DO have to make judgments.
 - a. Just because we are Christians doesn't mean that we won't be asked to judge, or evaluate, or make choices. When difficult times come, we need to face them and not hide from them; and we need to be prepared to judge using God's wisdom - not our own.
9. It's easy to hate. It's harder to love.
10. James 1:19's admonition is difficult to do, but invaluable in times like these. (*...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*)
11. I was reminded of why I have always liked Romans Chapter 12. It's a sound foundation for times exactly like these.
12. In turbulent times, it can be hard to appreciate some of God's word: "all things work together for good...", "rejoice in all things...", "count it all joy...", etc. It is difficult for us to exercise the wisdom of these verses in the middle of a storm; but we must, because we know that they are true.

During our class time this week we will start to look at what it takes to have revival begin within the church, and, moreover, to begin within us. We will examine the verses listed below in the context of the events of these past several weeks, and we will look at how even we, as small groups and individuals, can play an active role in bringing about the start of the healing and revival process.

So, for this week, I would like you to consider the following:

1. Being right isn't good enough - *see 1 Corinthians Chapter 13*
2. You can't have love without forgiveness - *see Ephesians 4:32*
3. If you truly love, then you turn the other cheek; you forgive you don't lash out or strike back - *see John 13:34 and Matthew 22:37-39*
4. Love requires action - *see Romans 13:10-14*

I pray that all of you who study with us will be praying for our church and its leadership this week, as we cry out to our Lord for His help. Pray that, like the church at Ephesus, we can return to our first love.

Your in Christ,

Wes