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"If the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day"

Matthew 11:23



Chapter Eleven

Even Sodom

God does not hinder the healing of our land. Rather, our apathy and

unbelief keep us from grasping the potential offered to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not marvel that entire cities

can be saved. Scripture tells us that nations will come to our light and kings to the brightness of our rising ([Isa. 60:1-3](#)).

Highland Village Church

Prayer and Fasting 2021

All We Lack Is Christlikeness

"Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent" (Matt. 11:20). Jesus has a word to say, not only to us as individuals, but to entire cities as well. In anger He rebuked Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (vv. 21, 23); with tears He cried out to Jerusalem (Luke 13:34). Yes, Jesus spoke to entire cities and expected them to repent, and He expects cities today to repent as well. The scale is different, but the grace to change is the same. Yes, Christ's message sounds a trumpet loud enough for whole cities to hear and be turned.

It was in this very context of reproofing communities, however, that Jesus made a statement that unveiled His redemptive power that is waiting and available for even the most wicked of cities. Listen to His rebuke and its hidden promise.

He said, *"For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. 11:21).*

Jesus said that His life, revealed in power, can bring even the vilest of cities—places that ought to be destroyed—to "sackcloth and ashes." The strategy, therefore, to win our cities is for the Church to reveal Christ's life in power. Yes, the revelation of Christ in us as individuals and the power of Christ displayed

corporately through us as His body can turn our worst cities back toward God!

Today, many cities are ripe for revival. What hinders the turning of the people's hearts? The answer lies with the Church, with our sins of self-righteousness, apathy, and unbelief. The Lord said, *"If My people humble themselves and pray, I will heal their land."* (See 2 Chronicles 7:14.) Whether or not we actually attain Christ's level of faith, God *"desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4).* With this in mind, Paul taught that entreaties and prayers should be made on behalf of all men, *"for kings and all who are in authority" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).* The sacrifice of Jesus Christ provides for the salvation of all men, and since God desires all men to be saved, heaven waits only for the Church to act.

You may say, "But that was then. Our cities are worse now. They are beyond redemption." Not so. Jesus continued His rebuke of cities by saying, *"If the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day" (Matt. 11:23).*

Amazingly, Jesus said even Sodom could find repentance!

I have heard many ministers compare Los Angeles or New York to Sodom. Fine. But these cities have seen hell, so now let the Church show them heaven. They need to see Jesus revealed in His Church. The promise of Christ is that even Sodom could

repent in the atmosphere and revelation of Jesus Christ's power. If there is hope for Sodom, there is hope for your city as well.

The Obstruction to Revival: Complacency

When we picture cities, we tend to see skylines and factories, streets and schools. Jesus, however, sees people. He beholds husbands arguing with wives while their children tremble in fear. He sees drugs being sold on playgrounds and teenagers having abortions. He suffers at the bedside of the hospitalized and the shut-ins. The heart of Christ grieves with the loneliness of the elderly and identifies with the struggle of the handicapped.

Yes, the eyes of the Lord see all things, but His heart probes the spirit and humanity of the city. From His eternal perspective He also beholds the most terrible event known to man. He sees the overwhelming horror, the utter despair an unsaved soul experiences as one realizes he is, indeed, dead and going to hell. And, in the midst of it all, He sees the Church—His Church, purchased at the cost of His own precious blood—sitting comfortably, remote control in hand, watching television.

Jesus does not have a problem with the hot or cold dimensions of life. It is the lukewarm that He will spew from His mouth (*Rev. 3:15-16*). What stopped the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—communities that already had the blessing of Christ's healing—from embracing ongoing renewal? They assumed Christ's love was given only to enrich them. All they saw were the rewards of Christ without understanding His requirements.

The Church today is so similar in attitude to those ancient cities that it is frightening. The majority of the first-century saints gave their lives to Christ with the full knowledge that they would face persecution, suffering, and possibly death for their faith. Such was the character and vision of the Church in the first century.

The main emphasis of much of our Christianity, however, is to help believers become "normal." So much of our contemporary teaching keeps alive the very nature Jesus calls us to crucify. We need to reevaluate our preaching. Are we preaching the cross and the call to follow Jesus? What are we training our people to become? Please hear me; God's goal is not merely to bless us but to transform us into His divine

nature. He desires to use us to turn our families, communities, and churches back to Him. But God has made no provision for the healing of our land apart from the Church becoming Christlike. Once we realize this vital truth, we shall return to the holy source of New Testament Christianity, and our cities will have hope for redemption. When the Church demonstrates the love and power of Christ, repentance and revival can occur even in a place like Sodom.

Kingdom-Conquering Faith

Often I have heard Christians presumptuously state what they were "going to do to the devil." The outcome, however, has often been a testimony of what the devil did to them. At one time or another we have all fallen into boasting of our plans or achievements only to fall headlong, tripped by our own pride. Consequently, it is vital to recognize the pitfalls of presumptuous or arrogant "faith" before we approach our cities.

Nevertheless, while we want to avoid the excesses of presumption, the consequences of unbelief are worse. Jesus never rebuked anyone, saying, "O ye of too much faith." We have suffered because we have been too weak to believe God's

Even Sodom Highland Village Church

promises. Regardless of excesses on either side of the faith issue, there is a legitimate dimension of faith that is coming from God. It is motivated by love and guided by wisdom, and it is coming from heaven to win the lost in our cities. It is no less powerful than the faith of those who "turned the world upside down" in the first century.

Abraham exercised this same faith in respect to the promise of God. Not wavering in unbelief, he grew strong in faith. He knew the heart of God and that it is the Lord's very nature to give *"life to the dead"* and call *"into being that which does not exist"* (Rom. 4:17). Abraham knew that if the Lord had but ten righteous men, He could deliver Sodom! God is giving us this kind of faith for our cities.

Look at the achievements of our forefathers in faith. Remember, these individuals served God in the Old Testament. God has given greater promises to us (Heb. 11:40). Through faith, God's people *"conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty*

in war, put foreign armies to flight" (Heb. 11:33-34).

Many Christians think knowing the promises is the same as obtaining them. True faith literally *obtains* the promises of God. In ancient times, through faith, men "conquered kingdoms." Faith can conquer our cities now! Faith can draw Christ's very righteousness into the Church, enabling us to lay down our lives for our neighborhoods as Jesus did for the world.

Our flesh says, "I am weak." Yes, but weakness is an improvement over all who are strong in their own strength. Through faith, which works through grace, we grow from "weakness," and in Christ we are "made strong." Faith "shut the mouths of lions"—those voices that would otherwise devour us with discouragement or fear. Because of Christ's accomplished victory, and through the knowledge of His Word, we are learning to become "mighty in war." We know that if evil can enter our cities through our negligence, evil can be driven out through our diligence. Indeed, it is possible to put the "foreign armies" of hell "to flight."

We do not know when Jesus is returning. What we do know is that the devil is here

now and has invaded our cities. Every generation has had to deal with the condition of their era, even those indicators that reinforce change and renewal are impossible.

Yet, where is the Church today? The body of Christ has been trapped in a doctrine that says that between now and when Jesus returns, only apostasy and more evil will exist. Paul warned about this time, saying, *"In later times some will fall away from the faith"* (1 Tim. 4:1). Knowledge and correct doctrines, as important as they are, should not be confused with actual faith. Jesus didn't say men would fall away from doctrines, but from faith. *Matthew 15:21-28* tells of a Canaanite woman who approached Jesus, crying out for her daughter. She didn't know doctrinally that Jesus was God, and doctrinally, Jesus knew that His initial role was to only go to the *"lost sheep of Israel."* Yet, she had great faith, which Jesus also saw. Thus, He said, *"O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish"* (v. 28).

If we could unite in faith for our neighborhoods and cities, we might see great breakthroughs.

Paul said that in later times

“some” will fall away. He did not say “all,” but “some.” From what will they fall away? They will fall away from *the faith*, not merely doctrines about faith! Faith believes that God is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (*Heb. 11:6*). If we believe in God, we must also believe He is the rewarder.

Let us become personal in this matter of the apostasy. At least for this next moment, let us not look for the apostasy anywhere else but in our own hearts. In matters of believing God to change us and our world, are we walking in *confident, expectant faith*? When we look at our cities, have we fallen away from the faith that believes God can, working through the Church, make a difference?

Apostasy is indeed here. However, those who see only a great falling away in the Church’s future are, in their own way, in an offshoot state of unbelief. They may accurately know what God has done, but they have no faith for what He is doing. They are blind to the harvest, deaf to the outpouring of the Spirit, and ignorant of the emerging, unified Church. What should we do about such people? Pray for them with love and earnest zeal, for we too were unbelieving not long ago.

Yes, there is terrible darkness in the earth and a

gross darkness upon the peoples; severe judgments are here, and they will get worse. However, the promise of God—no, the *command* of God—is full of both faith and power. In the midst of the most terrible of times, the greatest darkness, the Lord proclaims:

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
—Isaiah 60:1-3

In the midst of the deepest darkness, God is sending the brightest light.

If we remain trapped in fear and unbelief, we are already a part of the “falling away from the faith.” But if we are cleansing our hearts from sin, if we are uniting our hearts with that holy army being raised up in this hour, God will use us to bring nations to the light of the Lord. Kings will come to the knowledge of the Redeemer. Yes, there is hope even for

Sodom to be turned back to God!

My Prayer of Application

Dear Lord, we repent of our unbelief and apathy. Your grace saved us, and we know You can do anything. Give us faith—Your faith—for our cities. Help us see the expanse of Your love and its capacity to turn even Sodom back to You! In Jesus name, Amen.