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SEEKERS OF GOD

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“Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For [it is] time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10:12)

In 715 BC Hosea instructed God’s people with these words, he primarily addressed the northern kingdom of Israel who, toward the end of King Jeroboam’s reign and despite economic blessing, had fallen spiritually.

A similar pattern of moral and spiritual fall has taken place in the church today. In times of great

spiritual and material blessing believers often spiritually lay back and stop seeking God with their whole heart. When God’s people cease actively seeking God, moral and spiritual failure often follows, causing problems in all segments of the church.

Rather than seeking God, we become seekers of everything else but Him; the things of this world, material goods and ambition, grow more attractive to us. We renounce true power and

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become satisfied with crumbs. We put on a mask of godliness that leaves us all in a state of emptiness and barrenness without God's true life in us and in our churches.

Now is the time like never before to become seekers of God! The moral and spiritual failure of God's people has become evident to all; believers live immoral lives and divorce is on the rise; we are becoming just like the world as the line of separation continues to disappear.

The church has become apathetic and spiritually barren; people are satisfied with a religious form and do not want change. Some even do not want to see new people in their churches for fear that someone might sit in their favorite seat. We have grown hard and cold toward God and one another.

Just like in the day of Hosea – without a desire for true change – our hearts have turned to fallow ground that no longer brings forth the true fruit of Christ. The only way out is to seek God together for His presence to return among us again. This is why we ought to examine the

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requirements the prophet Hosea laid out for God's people in order to become morally and spiritually renewed.

▶ **1. SEEKERS OF GOD ACTIVELY WORK ON PREPARATION AS A PRECURSOR TO GOD'S BLESSING.**

“Sow for yourselves righteousness... break up your fallow ground, For [it is] time to seek the LORD, Till He comes....” (Hosea 10:12)

If we truly want to become seekers of God we cannot just pray once in a while, listen to sermons as if they are bedtime stories without really doing anything. Hosea sought of the people to actively do what it took to come to the place of God's blessing. They had to prepare themselves – sow righteousness, plow up the fallow ground (Hebrew: niyr), and seek God. All of these are active verbs that indicate an action of some kind.

What kind of preparations are we doing to in order to be blessed by God? We often think that a short prayer and seeking God for a couple of days is enough. We want to see the work of God, yet we do not want renounce our disobedience and sin; we do not want to turn from our worldly lifestyle and seek Him in fasting and prayer.

It is impossible to have God's blessing without preparation – it would be against His very character (please note that I am not speaking in terms of grace necessary for salvation).

Obedient preparation always precedes blessing. When the three kings allied against the army of Moab they had a problem – they wandered seven days without water. The Israeli king feared the worst but Jehosaphat called for the counsel of the prophet Elisha. While the music played he gave a very practical prophesy – God promised water, but they had to be obedient and prepare the ground for God’s blessings; they had to dig ditches in the valley in preparation for God’s miracle. “And he said, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Make this valley full of ditches.” For thus says the LORD: “You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.”’” (2 Kings 3:16-17)

This was similar Elisha’s second miracle. When the believers came to pay their debts, the widow, whose husband was also a prophet, sought for help from Elisha. However, for the miracle to take place she had to make some necessary preparations – she had to borrow jars from her neighbors in order to experience God’s blessings and, with the sale of a great amount of oil, pay back her debt while living on what was leftover. “Then he said, ‘Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors – empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.’” (2 Kings 4:3-4)

A similar occurrence took place with Naaman, who would not have been cured had he not

obeyed the prophet and actively done what was needed to become healed. He had to dip seven times in the river Jordan. Naaman was a man, just as many believers, who did not want to make the necessary preparations that pave the way for blessings. He wanted to take care of things in the Pentecostal style – in faith and in a hurry. “And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.’” But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, ‘Indeed, I said to myself, “He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy...”’ So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, ‘My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it...’ So he went down and dipped seven time in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (2 Kings 5:10-14)

So we see that preparation is necessary. Without the preparation of repentance there can be no

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peace with the Lord. Joel called the people to repentance and peace with God. "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.: So rend your heart, and not your garments." (Joel 2:12-13) There would not have even been the resurrection of Lazarus had the disciples not first removed the stone. "Jesus said, 'Take away the stone. 'Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone..." (John 11:39-41)

In the end, we cannot even get into heaven unless we prepare and cleanse ourselves. "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" (Revelation 7:13-14)

Therefore, without active and willful obedience and without preparation we cannot see God's renewal among us at all. If we continue to just

passively listen nothing will happen in our life, in the life of the church or in the town where we serve. Unless we do our part God cannot do His – this is very clear. On these principles many theological arrows are broken, because many claim that God will continue to work among us with grace regardless of the lifestyle of the believer. Some theologians say that we do not really have to actively seek Him because in his sovereignty He will bless and reward us anyway. I would like to be so bold as to say that this is one of the most proficient lies of the devil that has infiltrated the church today. In the end it is one of the reasons why we have spiritually dead and religious churches holding on to their phony status without true life and the presence of God.

It is as if Hosea is reminding us of the principles of sowing and reaping, which gives us a simple truth: what we sow is what we reap; if we sow passivity and our flesh, we reap failure; but if we perhaps sow obedience and preparation, we reap life and spiritual awakening. "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:8-9)

★ **We all desire for God to work in our lives and in our churches, yet we fail to turn from that which hurts Him.**

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap in mercy", says Hosea; if we sow in preparation of righteousness we will reap God's eternal mercy (Hebrew word "cheched"). "If you have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity" (Hosea

10:13). Active preparation for blessing though the principle of sowing brings God's blessing!

► 2. SEEKERS OF GOD CHANGE THEIR LIFESTYLE.

"...break up your fallow ground."

It is impossible to be a seeker of God and experience God's moral and spiritual renewal without leaving behind our old ways of thinking and living.

We all desire for God to work in our lives and in our churches, yet we fail to turn from that which hurts Him: our sin, iniquity, lust, immorality, selfish desires, lust for riches and recognition, disobedience, grumbling, lying, stealing, anger and resentment, unforgiveness and all other works of the flesh.

It is easier to raise our hands every Sunday, despite the fact that we hate one another, living in sin and darkness, than to forgive from the heart. It is easier to clap our hands than to turn from sin. We want to live according to our old, undisciplined way of life yet wonder why we do not have God's presence and power operating in our lives.

The time has never been more urgent for us to awaken from our life of sin and seek the Lord like never before, yet this time with a desire to change. We cannot seek Him as we ought if we are not willing to change our old way of thinking and

living (those things that are not pleasing to Him) and begin to live righteous lives. If righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne, who are we to live unrighteous and ungodly lives while expecting for God to work through us?

Without repentance and righteousness we are only playing church. One thing is certain: regardless of our music and preaching; regardless of our evangelistic efforts and Bible reading, God will not be with us if we do not repent and change. We may create an atmosphere that feels like His presence but it will quickly fall, leading us to simply maintaining an outer image void of His righteousness. Christ said, "...unless your righteousness exceeds [the] [righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

The Corinthian church thought that they were spiritual because they spoke "with the tongue of angels" and prophesied while at the same time openly living impure lives and fighting with one another. Paul wrote to them and told them to become sober minded because it is impossible to live in sin void of remorse and desire for change while at the same time be spiritual and in good standing with Almighty God. "Awake to righteousness (literally: "Come to your

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senses!), and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak [this] to your shame.” (1 Corinthians 15:34) We find that he spoke similarly to the Philippians when he told them to be: “... filled with the fruits of righteousness which [are] by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:11)

Until we experience change in our churches from the very roots religiosity will rein, relationships will grow cold, and the flame of our ministry will die out. We will become an unfruitful branch that the Lord will have to cut off. For that reason Peter implored us to “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...” (Acts 3:19) Without repentance there can be no refreshing. Let us cleanse our hearts of sin, eliminate from our lives that which is not pleasing to the Lord, and become true seekers of God!

► 3. PERSISTENT SEEKERS OF GOD WILL NOT BE LEFT UNREWARDED!

“For [it is] time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10:12b)

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If we are persistent with God He will reward us. Hosea showed that moral and spiritual decline (Hebrew word for “time”: eth –right time; season) is the right moment for seeking God. He told them that they needed to seek Him until they saw renewal. Originally this meant until He pours (Hebrew yarah), raises or restores justice.

Persistent seekers of God always obtain positive results. For example, when the prophet Amos, “who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa” (Amos 1:1) pronounced judgment on Israel – that is on the northern kingdom – because of their grumbling, idolatry, and persecution of the poor; God gave them through him (other than the messages of the coming judgment) a way of escape when He said, “For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek Me and live; But do not seek Bethel, Nor enter Gilgal, Nor pass over to Beersheba... Seek the LORD and live, Lest He break out like fire [in] the house of Joseph, And devour [it], With no one to quench [it]...” (Amos 5:4-6)

The Psalmist said “Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore!” (Psalm 105:4) Isaiah also said, “Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.” (Isaiah 55:6)

Ezekiel, in his prophesy, said that God would make a covenant of peace with His people and renew them; He said that if they would seek Him, “I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.”

(Ezekiel 34:26) Today we are witnesses to the blessing on the Israelis and the state of Israel; we are witnesses of the many good things which they have done in the field of medicine, technology and agriculture.

Every revival; every spiritual renewal and refreshing comes as a reward as people turn to God and seek Him with their whole heart. Before the historic revivals people intensely sought the Lord until He “rained down righteousness.”

Hosea also said, “Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter [and] former rain to the earth.” (Hosea 6:3)

God always rewards those who seek Him. If we seek Him with our whole heart He will return to us once again, refresh us, and fill us with new strength; He will give us renewed victory over the enemy and command the powers of darkness to flee from us and our city. We will once again bring forth the fruit of the spirit, our church will be filled with new people, our relationships will be bound by love, and we will be united and refreshed.

God came and visited the believers in central Los Angeles, in an old Methodist church that, possibly due to a loss of members, had been turned into a barn located on Azusa Street. We read accounts of those who were true seekers of God. I quote from “2000 Years of Charismatic

Christianity”; by Eddie L. Hyatt, “Prayer was the greatest activity in the Azusa mission. One man declared, ‘The entire place was used in prayer’” John G. Lake thus described the preacher William Seymour, “God placed such a great hunger in the heart of that man so that when the fire of God came on him God was glorified. I do not believe that there exists anyone in these modern times whose life is so filled with God. The power and might of Pentecost spread like wildfire around the world....that black preacher preached to my congregation of 10,000 people when all at once feel this power and might. People began to shake and cry out to the Lord. God was with him...” This happened because they were active seekers of God!

There were also two women who sought the Lord for their pastor, D.L. Moody, to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I quote, “while they sought God and prayed God rewarded them because in 1871 D.L. Moody experienced God in a way that radically changed his life.” This is how he described his experience, “I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York — oh, what a

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day! — I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted.”

This kind of blessing and refreshing for the whole world came as God’s reward because William Seymour and others like him were true seekers of God, they knew if they sought Him that God would bless them. One thing is certain; they were not passive observers, but active seekers of God.

And what about us? Will we continue being passive observers or will we decide to become active seekers of God; will we prepare the

ground, free our hearts from the blockage of sin, and change our thinking patterns, attitudes, and lifestyle so that we can finally experience the rewards of refreshing and power given to all that seek His face?

Today let us decide to be true seekers of God and in 2009 seek God as never before!

“Who [is] wise? Let him understand these things. [Who is] prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD [are] right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.” (Hosea 14:9)

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