

Dear Friend of [Abiding Above](#),

May 2012

It was an honor and a privilege to preach at the Mid-South Baptist Pastor's Conference at the historic Bellevue Baptist Church. I used this time to share my concerns about our churches across America.

I shared a few quotes from J.H. Jowett who pastored in the late 1800's:

“Never mistake the multiplication of organization for the enlargement and enrichment of service. Do not be deceived into thinking you are doing work when you are only preparing to do it. It is very possible to elaborate our machinery and not increase our products. We may have much mechanism but little or no life. We organize, and organize, and organize. Much of our organization is only an articulated corpse. It does not carry a burden; it is rather a burden that has to be borne. We have got organization enough to revolutionize the race. It is not more schemes we want, more associations, more meetings; we want the breath and fire of the Holy Spirit! A small organization, with breath in it, can do the work of an army. Today we ministers may be so keen on organizing that we rest contented when the body is articulated, even though it lies stretched and breathless on the ground. We may be so intent upon committees that we have no time for the upper room. We may be absorbed in devising machinery and careless about the power which is to make it go. That is our peril. I know it; I feel it. Be not deceived. Keep your eyes on essentials. Pray without ceasing, vigilantly watch for “the fruits of the Spirit,” and smother any satisfaction which does not honor your great Redeemer’s name.”

My friend, this was written in the late 1800's. We still have the same problem. We have lost our first love and do not want to admit or believe it.

Remember what our Lord said about the church at Laodicea in **Revelation 3:15-17** - ***“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked....”***

The church was lukewarm enough to deceive people into thinking it was a church of God. It was so disgustingly lukewarm about divine things as to nauseate the Most High. Furthermore, the church was characterized by pride, ignorance, self-sufficiency, and complacency.

Do you remember the occasion when Jesus cleansed the temple? We see this in **John 2:14-17** – “And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, **‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’** Then His disciples remembered that it was written, *‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’*”

I believe we need to return to our first love and to the first things. Many of our churches have become cluttered, so cluttered that people have a difficult time encountering the basic teachings of God’s Holy Word. Many people are so busy doing church instead of being the church out in the community where they live.

In our rush to be relevant and to hold people in our churches, we have compromised and lost our way. We have pitched our tent towards Sodom. Like Lot and his family, we have become like the culture. The culture has successfully changed us.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan once made this statement about the beauty of true separation:

“There is a toleration which is treachery. There is a peace which issues in paralysis. There are hours when the church must say NO to those who should ask communion with her, in the doing of her work, upon the basis of compromise. Such standing aloof may produce ostracism and persecution; but it will maintain power and influence. If the Church of God in the cities of today were aloof from the maxims of the age, separated from the materialistic philosophies of the schools, bearing her witness alone to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the perfection of His salvation, even though persecuted and ostracized and bruised, it would be to her that men would look in the hour of their heartbreak and sorrow and national need. The reason why men do not look to the church today is that she has destroyed her own influence by compromise.”

May we, like the pilgrims, board the ship of separation and set sail trusting the Lord with our whole hearts, not leaning on our own understanding, and knowing He will direct our path. Let’s get back to those first things as we see the coming of our Lord dawning.

Thank you for helping me spread the gospel around the world! We need you! Our launch on radio in Atlanta Georgia was a complete success! Thank you for making this happen! To God be the glory!

Abiding above,



Rev. Chris S. Hodges
President
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Colossians 3:1-3