

## IS ANY CITY BEYOND REDEMPTION?

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It is not God who hinders the healing of our land. Rather it is our apathy, our own unbelief, which keeps us from grasping the potential offered in the Gospel of Christ! Do not marvel when I say entire cities can be saved. The Scripture tells us that nations will come to our light and kings to the brightness of our rising! (Isaiah 60:1-3)

"He then 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 (Matt 11:21); with tears, He cried out to Jerusalem (Lk 13:34). If He expected cities to repent in the first century, He expects cities today to repent as well.

It was in this very context of reproving cities, however, that Jesus made a statement which unveiled the scope of God's redemptive power. Listen to His rebuke, but also to 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).

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities known for their debauchery and sin. Yet, Jesus said that His life, revealed in power, can bring even the vilest of cities, places which 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, 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." Whether or not we actually attain Christ's level of faith, God "desires...all men to be saved" (I 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" (I Tim 2:1-4). The sacrifice of Christ provides for the salvation of all men. Heaven waits only for the church to act.

One may say, "But, that was then. Our cities are worse. They are beyond redemption." Not so. Jesus continued His rebuke of cities, saying, "If the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day" (Matt 11:23). Amazingly, when Christ is manifested in power, Jesus said even Sodom could find repentance!

I have heard many ministers compare Los Angeles or New York to Sodom. Good. These cities have seen hell, 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 Christ's power. If there is hope for Sodom, there is hope for your city as well!

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 infirm. 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 probe 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 person experiences as he 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 and amused, 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 which already had the blessing of Christ's healing---from embracing on-going 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 frighteningly similar in attitude to these ancient cities. The majority of the first century saints gave their lives to Christ with the full knowledge 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 re-evaluate our preaching. Are we preaching the cross and the call to follow Jesus? What are we training our people to become?

Please hear me, the Father's goal is not merely to bless us, but to transform us into the image of His Son! He desires to use us to turn our cities back to Him. But God has made no provision for the healing of our land apart from us becoming Christlike! Once we realize this vital truth, we shall return to the 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.

Let us pray:

Lord, forgive us for our unbelief and apathy. You have promised that even Sodom would come to You at the revelation of Your character and power. Transform us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of your glory and the renewal of our cities.

**Source:** Pastor Francis Frangipane