

# The Dire State Of God's People

These are alarming times, yet not for reasons we think of right away. We have been warned as God's people for many, many years, of bad times to come. Not a bad economy, health scares, war, or some other physical thing. Right up to the very end things will seem to be going very *good!* (Revelation 18:15-17; Matthew 24:37-39) The fact is that most in the churches of God are in a *dire state*. The condition is widespread in the church, but most don't believe *they* are affected by it. Most are completely unaware, though it's in the Bible. It's actually part of the defining spirit of the time. Stories from many church members about the conditions they see among the people of God. How can they be *true*? On the other hand there are so *many* of these stories, they can't be untrue. We as a group, and as an individual brother or sister called by God, must alter course or there is trouble ahead. How can it be stated so everyone "gets it?" Those who don't have the problem will take it to heart. Those who *do* won't "get it!" Jonah preached to Nineveh and they repented. God changed the outcome. So it is not predetermined, it's not irreversible. It is a problem among all the Churches of God, regardless of their particular organizational title!

## God gives warnings to those He loves

It seems warnings from God perpetually fall on deaf ears. Satan's release and his stirring up rebellion at the end of 1000 years (Revelation 20:7-8) will succeed! People will fall for it. Though we will have been *warning* them for the *entire* time of the millennium. Today, of what are we being warned? A warning that most don't believe applies to *them*? --Becoming Laodicean, yes, **LAODICEAN!** It *can't* be us?! Yet, that *is* the prevailing church attitude in the end time, the *majority* of the church members will be that way. Everyone thinks they are the Philadelphians, the "good guys." But how can that be?

## Aren't we OK?

That's the very point. Those who *think* they are OK, *think* they are Philadelphians, are probably the ones who are NOT! In fact, thinking you are OK is the *exact* detail the Laodicean church has as its trademark!

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy, and have enriched myself, and have need of nothing

"I am wealthy," blessed with all spiritual knowledge. "And have need of nothing." Not like those "other" churches of God that don't have it right! Do you see the attitude? In this verse? In *your* church?

Philadelphia means "brotherly love." But do we see that if you are visiting "other" Churches of God? No, instead we find indifference to brethren who visit, members who are lax in faithfulness to God's laws, statutes and judgments, as applied to today's situation. An attitude that "all [professing Christian] churches are good." Thinking some just believe a "little differently" than our "denomination." That "we all worship the same God." They have no clear vision of the *absolute opposing* of God's *truth* and His *true church* to the worlds [professing Christian] churches. There is a reason!

Matthew 24:12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Because, just like the worlds churches that don't believe in keeping God's law, so the God's people have begun to relax, let it slip, not so "strict." And the result? Less keeping of the law, or law-*less*-ness. Because of that, love grows cold. Read it again! That's what it *says*. Cause and effect. The context (verses 9-13) is what the people of God will experience in the end time. It's happening. To *us, now*. "Love" here is the Greek "agape," godly love from God's Spirit in us. But the Spirit of God is given to those that obey Him, those who keep his *law*. (Acts 5:32) They are His sons and daughters. Not the *lawless*.

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Verse 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So it, the spiritual love from God, grows cold. And it says "many," not "a few!" That means most church members. And it's that way because of moving away from the law, which describes the nature of God! No enthusiasm for His law of love. It's how we show we love God's people. (1 John 5:2) Yet those who *say* they love God's way are moving away from *doing* what love *is*. All Churches of God, all members, regardless of their ".org". Are *you* concerned about these attitudes? In *yourself*? If you are that's good! We should be.

### **The direction we are going**

Granted, there are degrees of permissiveness and departure. Some seem worse than others. But all congregations are going in the same downward direction. All have the Holy Spirit available. If you visit, and people don't talk to or greet you, or want to fellowship, what can you conclude? Something is *missing*. People who are supposed to be family don't act like family, or act as if *you* are the "black sheep." If you have a child that gets left behind or lost, what do you do when you realize it? There is a bit of dread, and desire to immediately find them and be re-united! You do whatever it takes to find the lost child. Try to get them back with the family. Or a long lost friend that one day shows up? You try to catch up and get acquainted again.

### **Is there just one right group?**

Analogy of the church. There are many who have disappeared or been left behind, for whatever reason. There are numerous people who are not "with us." Or maybe just in a different ".org". How do you regard them? And why wouldn't you want to be together again? The church has been laid waste with apostasy and splits. Some have left the faith, but many are just left behind or forgotten.

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Are we living this way, or do we regard people not in "our group" as less? Is that how Christ did it? He died for *all* of us. He didn't treat people coolly, because they weren't meeting with "our group."

Mark 9:38-40 Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. "For he who is not against us is on our side.

There was someone in a different "group" than the disciples! And what did Jesus Christ say? How about us? Do we forbid others? Or are we willing to lay down our life (time) for others regardless of where they find themselves? Seeking out and finding other family members? If you are not showing love when you find one, you are becoming cold. Are you doing good for one another? It's what shows people we are Christ's own. Whether in or out of the church, but especially we are to love all true church members, in all the places we find them. If you are not showing this love your are growing cold, or *not even* part of the true church! What if a brother or sister comes into your congregation who has "dropped out of sight" for a long time? Do you welcome them with happiness? Glad to see them? There are many that have been thrust out on their own for whatever reason. Are you happy to see them? They are vulnerable because they are alone. We **MUST** be delighted to see them! If we aren't, what happens? What does it reveal? That we are in a *different group* than Philadelphia! That we belong to the prevailing church mind-set of the end time. You worry about a lost child and the potential danger they may be in. What about a lost child of God? Are you worried about them? When was the last time you even *thought* about them?

John 17:11 "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

Verse 21-22 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

Are we as "one?" With the same care and concern for all, no matter the "group" they have found themselves in? God's Spirit makes us one, and want to be one. Or are you moving away from our common beliefs? It's getting close to the end, we need one another. On the day whom will you call?

Jeremiah 23:1-2 "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD.

### **Where are you?**

Who will you help? To a great degree it's been the *shepherds* who have scattered the flock. God doesn't scatter! He isn't doing it. We must *not follow* such ministers/shepherds who come between brethren. Apply it to yourself. You also have responsibility. You can't be one who scatters, or accept those who do.

Isaiah 9:14-17 Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, Palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; The prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, And those who are led by them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord will have no joy in their young men, Nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; For everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, And every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still.

### **Who should we be with?**

Are *you* following someone that may be "causing you to err?" You can't be following bad leaders! Have you ever found them deliberately teaching something that wasn't true? Or bringing in "outside" viewpoints and presenters, portraying them as true and teaching truth? (Ezekiel 44:7-16) *You* have responsibility in this.

Yes, many ministers, elders and teachers (prophets) are off track, causing the people who *remain with them* to go off course. It will get *you* in the end, if you follow or support them. The people who follow wrong leaders receive no mercy from God!

### **How can we know?**

How do you know if *you* have been affected? God has given us His Holy Spirit to know right and wrong. You *believe* what God says. So, what *does* He say?

Jeremiah 23:16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD.

Everyone has responsibility! You can't say, "I just followed your leader!" (A leader that is off track.) God told you NOT to listen to them! Don't listen to false prophets - not keeping the faith once delivered. Those saying, "THIS is the one and only true church .org". And, "God has shown me..." Followed by some outlandish prognostication. (That fails to occur.) "They speak a vision of their own heart." That is a FALSE minister. (John 10:16) They are just doing and saying what *they* think is right. Asserting, "I'm OK, you're OK. We won't go into the great tribulation because *we* are Philadelphians!"

Verse 20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.

God will correct the situation. Do you want to be part of that correction? NO! *Get away* from bad people, leaders or others. (Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 3:5) One day you will be sorry if you don't. Do you put blinders on (blinkers), and say, "It's all good in *MY* congregation, *my* group. My friends are there and I don't worry about bad things some ministers do, or what some members do. Or, famously, "God is on His throne!" As if that releases us of all responsibility. "That's none of my business." It *is* your "business," if you empower them with your support. The true ministry would bring us all *together*.

Verses 21-22 "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.

We must do what *God* says, no matter what. Are you doing what *HE* says? Not necessarily what a minister says? There are "ministers" that say, "God talked to me in a dream...! Really? There is a story in the Bible about an old [false] prophet who said, "an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying," (it was the opposite of what *God* said,) and was believed! Because of that the one lied to disobeyed God, and was eaten by a lion. (1 Kings 13:7-34)

We must not be deceived by false ministers. There are *plenty* of warnings in scripture about false brethren, false teachers, and false ministers, even false apostles! (Ones who travel around the world "for the church.") For some reason these scriptures are *rarely quoted* by much of the ministry... (!) Lesson? Look at the parable of the 10 virgins. All were church members, i.e. spiritual "virgins." ALL fell asleep! It's where we are now, all seem to be *asleep spiritually*, and unable to perceive what is taking place around them. Then an alarm! All wake quickly, and get ready. But Jesus says of five that were too late, "I never knew you." *Never!* They were not living by the Holy Spirit, using it, growing in it. (Matthew 25:1-13)

Ezekiel 34:1-3 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

Many of the people of God are being *used*, but not *fed*. Messages are insipid, repeated by rote, lacking enthusiasm and sincerity. Not making any effort to meet the present needs of those challenged by today's world. Like the old professor, tediously droning on and on, reciting old notes. Rehashing subject matter, which was earth-shattering in the last century, but now tired, stale, and irrelevant.

Many in the ministry rail against the "bad shepherds." Roundly condemning "them," "out there." (Those in outside worldly churches.) But they *themselves* are the ones being addressed! When we look, what do we find? Ministers worried about themselves, their salary, their retirement, etc. Not too worried about the people. (Except to the degree they continue to give them tithes and offerings!)

You need to: A. yourself be one, and B. find those, who are strengthening the weak and caring for the sick. There are many spiritually ill and weak that we could be helping.

Verses 4-6 "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled [dominated] them. "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."

Shepherds are supposed to feed God's way to people, instead they drive them away, treat them harshly. Are *you* supporting them? As they ignore others of God's people? Shouldn't we gather them, and be one who helps do that?

This change has to happen soon, or it will be too late. Just like for the five foolish virgins. Don't focus on differences with our brothers and sisters of some minor point. Don't run people off because of an insignificant difference. Then they go off to some little group somewhere, (in the "hills.") No one searches and seeks for these people. Remember, church *members* have a responsibility too. Toward other members of the flock.

Verses 17-22 'And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. "Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture-and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?"



"And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet." "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. "Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, "therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep."

Sheep *mistreating* sheep, also playing a part in the scattering. Think about it. What are you doing? How do you treat the weak? The confused?

### **Conclusion**

So you see why the church of God is in a *dire state*. There is a limited amount of *time* to repent and change. To become more like God and the chief shepherd Jesus Christ, who cares for all! Now it's up to you. What will *you* do?