

EXPERIENCING the POWER of “ONE ACCORD”

“...they lifted up their voice to God with one accord...And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” Acts 4:24, 31-33 (KJV)



Today’s Thought – Ash Wednesday February 10, 2016 Prepare your heart and mind for the Easter season

Hello and Happy Ash Wednesday 2016!

Easter comes early this year (March 27th), and for every Christian, ashes or not, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. You may be wondering, “What exactly is ‘Ash Wednesday’? Where does it come from? Is it mentioned somewhere in the Bible?” Well to try and answer some of your questions, **no it is NOT in the Bible**, but some of its ideas are.

Ash Wednesday has its origins in the early Christian Church – somewhere between the sixth and eight centuries. Originally, the idea was that a Christian, as a sign of repentance, would sprinkle ashes on his or her head. “Where did this idea come from?” Well, in the Bible, ashes were always associated with humility and mortality, fasting and remorse. If you had sinned against God, and you felt remorse about that sin, and you were repenting of that sin, then sometimes, in the Bible, you would sprinkle ashes on your head as a sign of sorrow and repentance. Ashes were supposed to remind you that you were mortal, that you will eventually become ashes after you die. We’re only ashes, and we need to repent of our sins now while God gives us a time of grace.

During the 6th or 7th centuries, Christian churches thought about this idea. People, (privately) at times, would sprinkle ashes on themselves as a sign of repentance. Eventually, this became a public practice. Instead of sprinkling the ashes on your head, the ashes would be rubbed onto the forehead in the shape of a cross. It was a sign of repentance, and a reminder of your spiritual baptism, when the sign of the cross was placed on you with water and the Word. The ashes would actually be taken from the palm branches from Palm Sunday, burned the year before.

Some churches today have retained this practice, while others have let the practice go. **In our church, we don’t carry out this practice at the present time, but we don’t believe that there’s anything wrong with it. It actually can be quite valuable for people who are doing it for the right reasons. What’s really important, though, is not whether you have ashes on your forehead. What’s important is what’s going on in your heart, what’s going on in your soul.**

Lent is a forty day span of time from now until Easter. During this time, the focus is on Christ’s battle with sin and Satan that He waged in order to win for us our salvation. The 40 days of Lent do not include Sundays, because each Sunday is considered a “*miniature Easter*,” a time of joy and celebration of Christ’s resurrection. During Lent, though, even on Sundays, the church should be talking about the battles that Christ fought for us on our behalf.

Why 40 days? Right after Jesus was baptized; the Bible tells us that He went out into the desert to fast and to be tempted by the Devil for 40 days. For Jesus, those 40 days were a time of introspection, a time when He battled the temptations of the Devil and emerged stronger than He had been before.

For us, Lent is a time when we make that journey with Christ. We think about **OUR** temptations, **OUR** sins, and we repent. After these 40 days, we should emerge stronger than we had been before. Take some time and begin today during this time of Lent, to evaluate yourself in light of God’s Word. It’s a time to abandon the sins you have grown accustomed to committing in your life. It’s a time to receive God’s forgiveness and strength to lead a Christian life. It’s a time to renew your desire to serve God, and to be the Christians that God has made you to be.

Let God strengthen you through His Word this Lenten season. Let God help you to “*quit that certain sin*” you want to be rid of in your life. That is Lent, and may this be something you do, not just these 40 days before Easter, but throughout your entire life. Amen.

Chosen in Christ ~ Called to Influence,
Pastor Charles L. King Jr