

Anatomy of Collapse

Scott Brown

"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." I Tim 3:15

The recent Collapse of the financial markets should serve as a warning for the modern church. Examples of mortgaging the future for the present is a common activity among men. The collapse of the markets recently is due in part to this tendency to lose our way and be swept along with worldly wisdom by amassing debt to secure rapid growth. These companies had the growth. They had thousands of employees. They were flush with cash. But their business model required dangerously high amounts of debt and insanely high valuations in order to carry their debt structure and operating model. So far we have seen several large companies go bust because they did not build a solid financial foundation. I believe that we will see a flood of additional company failures in the coming months because of the lust for worldly success at the expense of substance.

This is a common tendency among men. Men tend to be posers. We want things to look good even though we know they are bankrupt. This is nothing new. Jesus referred to the posers of His day as "whitewashed tombs".

This tendency has affected our churches. We have large buildings and growing churches with programs that target every conceivable demographic slice. We appear to be reaching people. So, I must say that it is a good looking collapse. But, this is a façade. "Whitewash" too often disguises an inwardly decrepit building. The appearance looks good enough, but underneath there has been a breakdown of basic Biblical order, practice and authority.

In the process, we gained more church members, but sustained fewer long term disciples. We can boast of a full portfolio of programs, but we neglect the basic order and authority of the church and the family.

In our postmodern, relativistic culture, it is important to understand that when it comes to the church, there is a right way and a wrong way. There is a way that "you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God." (I Tim 3:15) One of the "wrong ways" that is commonly accepted in the church is the diminished role of the father in the spiritual training of children. This has collapsed the Biblical order. Fathers don't do this work anymore as it has been distributed to others.

My view is that we have come by the collapse honestly. We did not intend to reject the Biblical order. We got where we are, though a mix of creativity and good old American pragmatism. We even prayed about it. And, in our creativity, we have amassed so many non biblical structures, and have become so busy with them, that they have forced us to

push the Biblical things to the periphery. It was a poor swap that has caused the mortgaging of the future for the present success.

What we gained was programmatic Christianity where everything is packaged in a professionally run program.

What we lost was the relational model of Hebrew discipleship where the father was the chief delivery system for scriptural truth.

We gained youth groups, but lost our youth. We gained our Sunday schools, but lost our fathers. Collapse!

It is time for reformation. It is time for a return to the Biblical order for the home and the church for the delivery of the message of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world, for the eternal joy of all who believe, to a thousand generations.