

February 2014



In This Issue

May Women Speak in Church?
(Keith Sharp)

The Beatitudes (2)
(Patrick Farish)

Jamaica Patois Wisdom
(No. 12) Romans the Eighth
Chapter (No. 7)
(Jefferson David Tant)

Romans the Eighth Chapter
(No. 7)
(Elmer Moore)

The Seed and the Milk
(Tanner Campbell)

The Secret Things Of God
(Mike Thomas)

A Bond Of Duty & Love: Boaz &
Ruth
(William J. Stewart)

The Collection For The Saints
(Sean P. Cavender)

Divine Forgiveness and
Human Love: Parable of the
Two Debtors
(Keith Sharp)

Introduction to Lamentations
(Keith Sharp)



Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

You can read all of this month's MOTT content in the e-mail message below, but you can also download a copy to your computer to save or print out a hard copy by clicking [HERE](#).



"You cannot find happiness by trying to become something that God did not make you to be"
(Paul Earnhart, **Glimpses of Eternity**, 137).

Brother Earnhart wrote this as a comment on the "prodigal son," and it is altogether apropos and applies equally to all who are running away from the Father who loves them. Feminism notwithstanding, a woman cannot find fulfillment in the leadership role in the home or the church. God created her to be man's suitable helper (Genesis 2:18).

Regardless of political correctness, a man cannot find happiness as the sexual partner of another man. It is "against nature" (Romans 1:26-27). The prodigal who runs away from the will of the Lord is spiritually insane and will bring ruin and misery upon himself until he comes to himself. He looks for freedom and finds only slavery (2 Peter 2:19).

Not until he lost all self-esteem did the prodigal return to his father.

MAY WOMEN SPEAK IN CHURCH?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

In most churches today women preacher and in other ways take leadership roles forbidden to them in past generations. What does the Bible say on this subject? The Scriptures direct all Christians, men and women, to sing in the public worship assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15, 23; Ephesians 5:18-19). When women do so, they both speak and teach in church (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16).

But two passages limit the woman's role in the church. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul commands: *"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church."* To Timothy the inspired apostle wrote, *"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence"* (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

The Scriptures, being truth (John 17:17), do not contradict each other. In both passages, Paul defines the kind of speaking he forbids by demanding its opposite. In the church, women must not speak in a manner that violates their submission to men (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Thus, since preachers must address the church "with all authority" (Titus 2:15), women cannot preach. Women may not participate equally with men in making decisions for the church. A woman cannot be a teacher over a class containing men. In Bible classes, women should be careful not to violate their role of submission. The inspired Scriptures are our standard, not the modern philosophy of gender equality.

THE BEATITUDES (2)

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
(Matthew 5:4)

"Blessed", happy, are those who mourn - another paradox, perhaps more extreme than that of verse three ("poor in spirit"). Who is it who finds happiness in mourning, grieving? Yet Jesus says such an emotional condition is good for it results in comfort. How can this be? The Bible speaks of the benefit of grief to the person who is convicted of sin and knows it to have been inexcusable: rebellion against God; an expression of the ugliest ingratitude toward the heavenly Father; and knows that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). The proposition of the beatitude is that mourning produces repentance, which is accompanied by comfort. The apostle Paul had to write a letter to the Corinthians which, he knew, would cause them pain. Reflecting on that later, he wrote *"For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it - though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while."* He went on to say, *"As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation..."* (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

Unforgiven sinners are spiritually bankrupt, because of sin; this realization should cause us to mourn - and repent!

JAMAICA PATOIS WISDOM (No. 12)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witty as well as thought-provoking. I hope the readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. – Jefferson David Tant

Patois: Tek bad sinting meck laugh.

English: Take bad things and make them into laughter.

Meaning: Try to use your bad experiences to your advantage.

If you have not experienced trouble and sorrow in your life, just be patient. It will come. Job declared: *"For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward"* (Job 5:7). If you live long enough in this world, troubles will come. Just reading through the Bible gives evidence of the troubles, sometimes severe troubles, that the saints of old encountered.

The question is not "when," but "how do we deal with them?" The story of Job is one of the greatest stories God has given us. I cannot think of anyone who suffered as he did. He lost all his herds and flocks and his 10 children died in a storm. He lost his health, and his wife and friends turned against him. Job did not understand and bemoaned the day of his birth. But through all his travails, he said, *'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.'* *Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God"* (Job 1:21-22).

How did Job deal with all this tragedy? He had an asset. He had faith. *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth"* (Job 19:25). What a sublime statement. Job had something to look forward to.

Consider the apostle Paul. How many times he was in danger, stoned, hungry, cold, shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned. When Paul was in prison, and others were preaching in an effort to cause him more trouble, he wrote: *"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice"* (Phil. 1:18).

Some wonder about James 1:2-3: *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."* They wonder how we can rejoice when we suffer, when we are persecuted? Many years ago in the U.S. a young man named Charles Atlas weighed 97 pounds (44 kg), and was the object of scorn as he was considered a weakling. He decided to do something about it, and began a rigorous program of exercise, lifting weights, healthy eating, etc.. In time he had a healthy and strong body, and was named "Mr. Universe." But can you imagine the pain he must have endured as he put himself through his body building? Why did he do it? He looked to the reward. Thus James says our trials produce a reward. Every

trouble we meet and overcome makes us stronger for the next trial. Every temptation we resist makes us stronger for the next one Satan presents to us.

Something else to consider is the fact that we don't have to go through trials alone. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me"* (Psalm 50:15). The Psalms are filled with such expressions. Even when we are troubled with temptations, we have God's promise. *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13). Now, we may go ahead and yield to temptation, but not because "I couldn't help it."

Rather than letting trouble overcome us, let's use it to grow as we look to the reward. *"I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body ... the church"* (Colossians 1:24).

ROMANS THE EIGHTH CHAPTER (No. 7)

This series of articles by the late Elmer Moore is reprinted from **Truth Magazine** by permission of the editor.

In Romans 8:10 the writer declares, *"and if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."* The expressions "the body is dead because of sin" and "the spirit is life because of righteousness" are the results of Christ being in one. He writes IF Christ is in you. Thus, Christ being in them was the cause of the body being dead and the spirit being alive. One should not lose sight of the fact that whatever "body is dead" means, it is caused by being in him. In debates with Baptist preachers I have had them argue that the body of the Christian is an unregenerate child of the devil, and is thus dead. They further argue that the outer man is responsible for the sins that the Christian commits and that God chastises the body. Thus, they argue that the body is dead, separated from God, because of sin. If that is what Paul is teaching then such is produced by Christ being in you. Any position that one takes on this to indicate a sinful condition of the body faces the consequence that such a "sinful condition" is caused by Christ being in him. Paul is denying such a condition rather than affirming it.

Paul in the sixth chapter used similar language when he declared, *"We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein"* (Romans 6:2). We must not lose sight of the fact that Paul is still discussing the obligation of the baptized to live a godly life (see article 1). The word dead or died always carries with it the idea of separation. So, Paul is showing the obligation of the baptized to live right because he was separated from a life of sin. He declares, *"know this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away"* (Romans 6:6). Body of sin was a body devoted to a life of sin. They were dead to (separated from) a life of sin.

In precisely the same way he shows in Romans 8:10 that if Christ is in you the Spirit of God dwells in you. You are walking after the Spirit by being subordinate to the word of God (verse 7). Thus, the body is dead, separated from a life of sin, because sin is incompatible with such a life.

The expression "the spirit is life because of righteousness" is also the result of "Christ in you." I understand the word "spirit" to refer to the inward man set in contrast to "body" or outer man (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). In the contrast used by Paul you have a total man, both body and spirit. This man is either walking after the flesh or after the spirit. The one walking after the Spirit is the one who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and is being subordinate to the word of God. The one that Christ is in, is walking after the spirit, both body and spirit. The inward man is controlling the outer man, rather than using the body of self gratification. surely we know that the inward man is responsible for the actions of the outer (2 Corinthians 7:1). Thus, the "spirit of man is life" because of righteousness which walking after the Spirit would cause. This walk is said to be life in the sense that the one described is walking in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

In Romans 8:11 Paul writes, *"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead be in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you."* We must not lose sight of the context. I believe we successfully showed that the man who is "walking after the Spirit," the one in whom the Spirit of God dwelleth, is the man who is being subordinate to the word of God. Thus, the passage affirms that the man who is allowing the word of God to direct his thinking and his life is the one that has life given to his mortal body. The passage is not talking about the physical resurrection of man's body. The word of God has the power to raise the spiritually dead as well as the physically dead. In John 5:25-29 Jesus declared that the word has the power to raise the spiritually dead. He declares, *"verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and they that hear shall live..."* (John 5:25). This verse is obviously talking about the spiritually dead. Note that there is a condition that he must meet in order to live. He must **hear** (hearken to) the voice of the Son of God. In verses 28 & 29 he declares that the same voice (word) will raise those that are in the tombs. There is no condition stated for this. They **will hear and** come forth.

I submit that Paul in Romans 8:11 affirms this same truth. The bodies of Romans 8:11 are now used in service to God and not in self gratification. We can see that the writer is continuing his affirmation of the obligation of the baptized to live the right kind of a life.

THE SEED AND THE MILK

Tanner Campbell | Piggott, Arkansas, USA

The apostle Peter, in his first epistle, speaks of the life of a Christian from their birth and onward. He utilizes two illustrations for this purpose: a seed and milk. In 1 Peter 1:23-25, we see the comparison and contrast between a Christian's birth and the physical birth of all men. Firstly, both births come from a seed. Physical birth is made possible by the seed of a male. Peter explains the reality that all men

are aware of, that this kind of seed is corruptible, it doesn't last, and that which sprouts from it and is born a physical being will not last, it too is corruptible, and appointed to die one day. Peter illustrates this point by the grass and flowers of the field, which quickly spring up into a full luster and picture of life, but in a few days they wither away in death. This powerful message certainly teaches the foolishness of living for this life. But in contrast, to live for something beyond this life, changes everything about our lives, in fact, Peter refers to it as being "born again." This birth in "incorruptible," i.e. undecaying, because it is born from a seed that is incorruptible, "the word of God which lives and abides forever." How odd is it that so many today believe themselves to be "born again Christians," but they were never actually born from the word of God? To be "born again," according to this text, means that one must be obedient to the word of God. It is the commandments found in God's word that "endures forever." Man can follow after any of the commandments of men found in the religious denominations today, but they will never be born of the incorruptible seed if they continue to follow teachings contrary to the incorruptible seed, God's word. This text certainly teaches that to be born again, we must follow the commandments: believe (John 3:16), repent (Acts 2:38), confess (Romans 10:9), be baptized (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16), and continue in the commandments of God (Colossians 1:23; 1 John 1:7). All of these things are found in the incorruptible seed and are essential to salvation. If you have been "born again" any other way than what was just listed from God's word, then you are still decaying and dying in your sins, Hell is approaching for you, and you will remain there from everlasting to everlasting. How simple is it, when looking at these realities, to walk away from commandments of men, such as salvation through faith alone, or praying the sinner's prayer, and to come to incorruptibility by obedience to what God said. Let us never forget that we will be judged on the final day by what Christ commanded, not by what the minister teaches.

Looking back at the text, Peter now draws a conclusion to what he had just taught about being born again. In 1 Peter 2:1-3, he commands that "*all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking*" must be laid aside and no longer a part of the individual who is obedient to the undecaying word of God, born a Christian. Then Peter illustrates the next step for this "newborn" is to continue to partake of the milk. Every parent knows that it is not sufficient for a newborn baby to just be born; their life must be sustained with milk. And for the newborn, milk is desired every 2-3 hours day and night throughout their infancy. Likewise the newborn Christian must start their incorruptible lives with a steady supply of sustenance, the word of God. According to Peter, it is God's pure word that causes the Christian to grow (v. 2) as they gain knowledge and wisdom. Unfortunately, unlike newborn babies, many who are born again do not see the absolute need for sustenance. And while the baby longs for, and cries for that which sustains them each day, some Christians starve themselves by only hearing the word of God for a couple hours out of the week during the assemblies. Christian, do you not love yourselves? Why would you seek your own death? Why would you refrain from the word that God has provided for you to sustain you through eternity? How sad it is when one born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, once again chooses the ways of corruption. I believe Peter alludes to these ideas when he states "*if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*" Some who have tasted it can forget what it tastes like (Hebrews 6:5). What should we always be able to taste as a Christian? The Lord's grace! Which was shown to us in His sacrifice for sins. Those who cleave to their bibles are those who have never

forgotten the taste, i.e. the experience and knowledge of being stained with sin through and through, only to be obedient to the command of Christ and be made clean and pure. These who desire the pure milk of the word that they may grow thereby are those who refuse to leave the taste of it behind. They will not allow themselves to forget the grace of Christ.

How would you honestly describe yourself today? Have you been born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God? Or have you been born again into a religious organization full of the corruption of man-made teachings and traditions? What do you liken the word of God to in your life? Is it the source of all your living? Do you rely on its instructions to sustain you day by day? Is it your daily food? Or do you count it as just a book? Have you forgotten the grace that that book reveals? And that it is the seed and the milk of eternity?

THE SECRET THINGS OF GOD

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God," said Moses to the Jews, *"but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law"* (Deut 29:29). The apostles taught the same thing in Christianity; everything God wants us to know about His will has been revealed in His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3).

It is folly on our part to speculate in matters which God has not explained. From the forbidden fruit to what our resurrected bodies will look like, we are not given specific information on many things. Man in his ignorance has said the forbidden fruit was an apple and assumes our eternal bodies will be the same as our current ones, but God has not revealed the answers to these and many other questions.

Is there life on other planets? Are there other "earths" in the many galaxies we see? Has God experienced creation many times over and will He continue doing so after He brings this world to an end? Why is Satan more powerful than other angels? If he is an angel that rebelled, how come other angels have not succeeded him in evil and dominion? As we ponder the possibilities to these and other intriguing thoughts, let us not "ponder" ourselves into denial and disbelief. Paul warned, *"But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife"* (2 Tim. 2:23). There is such a thing as wrestling over uncertain things to the point of creating confusion, doubt and division. This is not only foolish, it can also lead to a bitter and divisive spirit, which God has made clear is an offense to Him (Pro. 6:19). Besides all this, He has given us plenty to learn and decipher from His word to keep us busy, instead of wasting time on wrestling over the unknowable.

How many churches did Jesus establish? What kind of music does He want in worship? When does He want saints to take the Lord's Supper? What kind of organization does He want in local churches? What role do women have in public teaching? What does He think about divorce? What is the church to do with unfaithful members? God has answered these questions (see Eph. 4:1-4; Col. 3:16; Acts 20:7; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Matt. 19:1-9; 2 Thess. 3:14). It is our responsibility to rightly divide the Bible to find these answers (2 Tim. 2:15) and to remain content with God's will (1 John 2:3-6). Anything not

given is not God's will for us to know.

A BOND OF DUTY AND LOVE : BOAZ & RUTH

Ruth

from the e-book, "...And They Shall Become One Flesh..."

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, 'We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. (Ruth 4:11).

Character - A Relationship Building Block

We had noted in a previous study the benefit of having a good character. In learning about Boaz and Ruth, we find two individuals of outstanding character. We can learn a great deal about someone by the decisions they make and the habits which they have. Prior to Boaz and Ruth marrying, we find wonderful characteristics in both of them; characteristics which would help to make their marriage successful.

Consider the character of Ruth:

- Faithfulness (Ruth 1:16-17)
- Faith in God (Ruth 1:16)
- Diligence (Ruth 2:2, 7, 11, 17)
- Humility (Ruth 2:10)
- Selflessness (Ruth 2:14)
- Obedience (Ruth 3:5)

Consider the character of Boaz:

- Faith in God (Ruth 2:4)
- Protective (Ruth 2:8-9)
- Attentiveness (Ruth 2:11)
- Compassion (Ruth 2:14-16)
- Honourable (Ruth 3:10-13)
- Diligence (Ruth 3:18)

An individual's character before entering marriage is a good indication of what he or she will be like in the marriage. The marriage relationship does not magically turn bad people into good people; nor good into bad. Thus, it is vitally important to know the character the person you seek to marry.

It does sometimes happen though, that through familiarity or laziness, we fail to maintain the same measure of goodness towards our spouse that we did in the beginning or currently show to others. This should not be. Our spouse should experience the best of all our qualities. In the most successful marriages, the husband and wife give their best to one another and bring out the best in each other. In marriages that fail, the husband and wife tend to mistreat one another and bring out the worst in their partner.

An Appeal That Can't Be Refused

The redemption of the inheritance of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband, is a major theme in the book of Ruth. Ruth and Boaz'

marriage affected people other than themselves. In fact, they likely would never have met, let alone married, had it not been for the issue of Elimelech's inheritance in Israel.

Boaz and Ruth, who came from two very different worlds, and who met, not through social pursuits, but through cultural necessity, had a successful marriage. Is it not alarming that so many marriages in our society, established on social interaction (dating), fail? What makes for the difference? Might it simply be this, that Boaz and Ruth entered the relationship (and continued in it) maintaining a high degree of integrity and mutual respect? It goes back to the moral character of the participants. Two cannot truly be one flesh if they do not share the same focus for their lives and marriage.

It is custom in most societies for the man to ask for the woman's hand in marriage. With Boaz and Ruth, it was more a case of the woman asking for the man's hand in marriage (Ruth 3:4, 7-9). It was Ruth who proposed to Boaz, "Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

Immediately, he commended her for the kindness she displayed to Naomi, for her respect of their laws, and for the fact that she came to him, rather than selfishly pursuing some young man for herself (Ruth 3:10-11). Again, the wonderful qualities which had already impressed him about her were evident, as this virtuous woman came asking for marriage.

Blessings Expected

When two people enter a marriage relationship with pure and sincere hearts, both focused on doing what is good for the Lord, the marriage will flourish. Such was the case for Boaz and Ruth. They would be blessed in their lives together, and God would use them to be a blessing to others, even to us today, as Ruth's great-grandson was David, from whom the Christ would come.

The people of Bethlehem specifically pronounced great blessings upon Boaz and Ruth. Among them, we find:

- Ruth being compared with the women from whom the nation began (Ruth 4:11)
- They were compared with Perez, a direct ancestor of many in Bethlehem (Ruth 4:12)
- They were wished fame in Bethlehem and all Israel (Ruth 4:11, 14)

Against The Grain

There are several things about the marriage of Boaz and Ruth which were certainly contrary to the norm. In fact, these facts about their relationship were taboo, and even in our day still cause offense to many. Consider:

- Cultural Differences - Boaz was an Israelite; Ruth was a Moabite. The book of Ruth does not speak of any detractors, but that doesn't mean they weren't there. Today, some are opposed to marriages involving people from different cultures or with different colour skin. Friend, there is one race, not many - human. And the colour of a person's skin should be as

important to the acceptability and success of a marriage as the colour of a person's eyes.

- Age Differences - We don't know their respective ages, but we do know that Boaz commended Ruth for not turning to a young man. the inference is that Boaz was not just a few years, but considerably older than Ruth. I wonder if they had anyone say behind their back, "He's old enough to be her father!" So long as the parties involved are eligible to marry one another, age should be of no consequence.
- A Marriage Of Duty - The word love appears just once in Ruth; speaking of her love for her mother-in-law (Ruth 4:15). The couple's love for each other is evident through the details giving in the book, yet the catalyst for their marriage was duty, not love. Their marriage redeemed all that belong to Elimelech and his sons Chilion and Mahlon (Ruth 4:7-10). The idea of an arranged marriage is beyond strange to most people today. And yet the key to a successful marriage is not the modern dating process or courting, but a commitment in both husband and wife to one another and to their God-given role.
- Ruth Proposed - It was Ruth who went to Boaz and requested that he marry her. There are several references to a man taking a wife in the Old Testament (Genesis 24:3; 27:46; Leviticus 21:13; Deuteronomy 24:1; etc.), but never do we find a woman taking a husband. And yet, essentially, that is what Ruth did! Many today (not all), would think such to be out of place, brash, brazen and too bold. Whether the man or the woman pop the question, both still need to agree. If it were not the right situation for Boaz, he'd have simply said no. He didn't.
- A Premarital Night Together - After Ruth asked Boaz to marry her, rather than send her home in the dark, Boaz permitted her to remain with him, but they both acted with integrity. He made sure that her return home in the morning was discreet (Ruth 3:14). In our society, there have been too many discreet morning departures which followed a night lacking integrity. Couples need to keep themselves sexually pure before marrying. To the best of their ability, a couple need to avoid opportunities for lust to take them into realms that are reserved for the marriage bed. Ruth and Boaz' situation was unique, unlikely to be repeated today. And yet it is entirely possible that a couple could get "stuck" together overnight due to a natural disaster or some other unforeseen situation. If so, may they keep themselves pure, and act according to the integrity of their hearts throughout the night.

THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS

Sean P. Cavennder | Bradley, Arkansas, USA

There have been varying opinions and teachings concerning the collection for the saints. Is it supposed to be a weekly collection? Do we offer a collection out of tradition or because it is a commanded aspect of our worship? Is the contribution merely something done out of convenience?

So much of the discussion pertaining to the collection is about *how* the

finances are spent. We must continue to stand for the truth in that regard. Another aspect we must consider is *why* we have the collection.

The first question that we must answer, as approaching any Bible subject, is whether or not the collection is authorized. If it is authorized then it is pleasing to God. If it is not authorized then we should cease participating in the collection now. Convenience and tradition do not matter.

Is There Authority For The Collection?

Believe it or not, some well-intended people have made statements such as, "there is no authority for a weekly collection." Such a statement should be alarming to us! When we admit there is no authority for a particular practice then we are admitting the sinfulness of that practice. There is no authority for using instrumental music, thus instrumental music is sinful. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire unto the Lord; it was fire that God did not prescribe nor authorize to be used. Their offering was sin and they were judged for their action. To make outlandish statements such as "there is no authority for a weekly collection" is to acknowledge we are participating in sin.

Bible authority is established through direct statements, approved examples, and unavoidable conclusions. The apostle Paul said, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye,"* (1 Corinthians 16:1). The word "order" means to arrange thoroughly, to charge, or appoint (NASB Dictionary). Swanson defines the word as "command, give detailed structure, tell what to do (Luke 8:55), arrange for, plan for a particular matter (Acts 10:13; Galatians 3:19)" (Dictionary of Biblical Languages). The Greek word for "order" is *diatasso* which is often translated "command." Paul "ordered" the churches to have the collection for the saints. The collection was supposed to be done by the instruction and command Paul was establishing in the passage.

Also, the example of the Macedonians show that the collection was not just given to the church at Corinth, but it was commanded in other churches (2 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1). Paul's command and the Macedonian's example show that the collection is authorized. Churches have biblical authority for the collection of the saints.

The Weekly Collection

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Some incorrectly assume that there had been no prior instruction or practice of collecting goods or money prior to Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 16. Clearly there was organization in the collecting of goods and money before (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; 6:1-4). The instruction of 1 Corinthians 16 was not a new practice that was foreign to the churches of Christ. It was an established practice and one without the intention of ending.

The collection was to be gathered upon the first day of the week and laid in store. Kittle defines the term "store" as putting in a place or a

location (cf. Luke 11:33). When the collection was made it was intended to be put in a common treasury under the oversight of elders in the local church. A church treasury is authorized and it was meant to be accessible for the purpose of benevolence towards needy saints.

Concerning The Collection

The purpose for the collection was to be used to help the saints. It was thus called "*the collection for the saints*" (1 Corinthians 16:1).

Churches are authorized to help needy saints. Those that are not members of the Lord's church are not to be helped with the funds of the local church. Local churches were to organize this collection. Paul directed the church at Corinth and the churches of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1). The saints in Macedonia had also been given the instruction, too (2 Corinthians 8:1).

Paul specified the day upon which the collection was to take place. The church is only authorized to collect its funds on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). Organizing car washes, spaghetti suppers, or raffles are not permitted ways to raise funds for the church. The day of worship, the Lord's Day, is the day that the church meets and would lay by in store.

Every member of the Lord's church is to contribute as he prospers (1 Corinthians 16:2). While the church organizes a collection, the individual has the responsibility to give. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). No one can determine the amount an individual is supposed to give, nor may they give for any person. The church cannot force anyone to give cheerfully. The responsibility to give lies within each and every person and individual. Our giving is supposed to be in proportion to what we receive. We cannot give what we do not have. However, this is not to be an excuse to not give as we should. We should consider the Lord as number one in our life and that should be reflected in every sacrifice that we make, even in our financial commitments to the Lord.

Conclusion

Much discussion is warranted in a study of the collection. It is a matter of our worship unto God and an action of the Lord's church. We must strive to make certain that we are obeying the Lord. We must seek the truth in all things. When we seek the truth then we may be unified and we may be pleasing unto God.

DIVINE FORGIVENESS AND HUMAN LOVE: PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS (The Parables of the Master)

LUKE 7:36-50

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

As the Master preached and performed miracles in Galilee a Pharisee named Simon invited him to his house to eat. Jesus ate with known sinners as well as with Pharisees, but Pharisees were the religious separatists of the Jews and refused to associate with sinners (Matthew 9:9-11; Mark 2:15-16; Luke 5:29-30). Although the Pharisees put their own traditions above the law of God (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:5-13), both the people and they themselves thought of them as the paragons of righteousness (Matthew 5:20; Luke 18:9-12).

Some knowledge of first century Jewish customs sheds light on this incident. Wealthier Jews lived in a square house composed of several rooms surrounding a tree shaded courtyard. During a meal people from off the street might come and go and even converse with the diners. The Jews borrowed from the Greeks the custom of reclining on their left elbow at meals while eating from a low table. Their feet would be behind them, away from the table.

There were three characteristic acts of hospitality a Jewish host performed for his guests. Since they walked to their destination on dusty paths wearing sandals which consisted of a leather sole held to the foot by a leather strap, a servant would refresh them by washing their feet. The host would place his hand on the shoulder of the guest and give him the kiss of peace. He would also anoint the head of his guest with a drop of oil such as attar of rose. These were common courtesies and to fail to do them was rude.

As the Lord ate with Simon a notoriously sinful woman entered, stood weeping at Jesus' feet, and began washing his feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing his feet, and anointing them with fragrant oil.

But this sinful woman was performing all the loving acts of hospitality Simon had coolly omitted. The water that bathed his feet was her own tears. The towel her own hair. She kissed not his cheek but his feet, not once but over and over again.

Two other Jewish customs make this scene even more vivid. It was considered lewd for an Israelite woman to loose her hair in public. Further, the women characteristically suspended an alabaster flask of fragrant oil from their necks.

What a scene! All in the room except the Master would have been shocked and embarrassed. But Jesus spoke not a word to or about the woman until Simon drew a conclusion about Him. Thinking a prophet would discern what kind of woman this was (cf. 2 Kings 5:20-27) and, just like a Pharisee, would therefore refuse to allow her to even touch his person, Simon concluded silently within himself that Jesus could not possibly be a prophet.

But, knowing what Simon was thinking, the Lord proved to Simon both that He was a prophet, indeed, far more than a prophet, and at the same time taught Simon a great lesson about sin. Still ignoring the woman, He informed Simon, *"I have something to say to you."* Simon replied respectfully, *"Teacher, say it."*

The Master related a story about a creditor and two debtors. One debtor owed 500 denarii, the other 50. A denarius was a Roman coin that equaled one day's wages for a day laborer in Palestine (Matthew 20:1-2). So, one debtor owed close to two year's wages, the other about two month's. Neither debtor had the ability to repay his debt, and the creditor freely forgave them both. *"Tell me,"* Jesus pointedly asked Simon, *"which of them will love him more?"*

Simon reticently replied, *"I suppose the one whom he forgave more."*

Christ congratulated him, *"You have rightly judged."*

Then the Master drove home the application to which Simon had in principle already consented. Simon had neglected even the semblance of courtesy, and courtesy is an expression of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). The sinful woman had gone far beyond mere symbolic gestures of courtesy. She had poured out humble, even personally humiliating gestures of deepest love.

Then the Lord made the most shocking statement of all. For the first time He spoke to the woman herself, and He pronounced the greatest words of love that can ever be spoken. Words that only the Lord could effectively speak. *"Your sins are forgiven."*

The other guests reacted in the normal Pharisaic manner. *"Who is this who even forgives sins?"* This they considered blasphemous, exercising a right that belongs exclusively to God (Mark 2:5-6; Luke 5:20-21).

But Jesus had already proven His right to do so. He had done what Simon had concluded He could not do, He had known what was in Simon's heart (cf. Psalm 139:1-2; John 2:23-25)..

But the second and final word of Christ Jesus to the woman did not mention her love. *"Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.'"*

Why faith? Unlike Simon and his other guests, she did believe in Jesus. She believed He had the power to do what He had stated. He had the power to forgive her sins. He was and is the Son of God. Her faith in His ability and willingness to forgive her sins led her to love Him (cf. 1 John 4:10,19).

So, does the parable teach that to love the Lord more we should sin more? Do the most depraved sinners become the greatest lovers of God?

No, those who have the deepest sense of their own sinfulness, their own unworthiness of divine favor and love, have the greatest love of the Lord. If our attitude is like Simon Peter, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"* (Luke 5:8), our love for Him will be intense when we have the obedient faith to be forgiven. If we can honestly say with Paul, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"* (1 Timothy 1:15), we will love our Savior from the depths of our being.

That anonymous woman was notoriously sinful. But her faith and love gained for her the hope of eternal life. Unless he repented, respectable Simon's skepticism, self righteousness, and lack of love kept him from entering the kingdom. Who pictures you and me?

INTRODUCTION TO LAMENTATIONS

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

*It is nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Behold and see*

*If there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
Which has been brought on me,
Which the LORD has inflicted
In the day of His fierce anger* (Lamentations 1:12)

Title

The word "Lamentations" means "mourning aloud, wailing, expressing sorrow." The title well describes the book.

Author

It is not certain who wrote Lamentations. Consistent tradition assigns the book to Jeremiah. This harmonizes with the internal evidence. The author was an eye witness of the destruction of Jerusalem (2:11; 4:17). Compare Jeremiah 38:6 with Lamentations 3:53-55.

Setting

The book was written in Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (1:3-4). Whereas the book of Jeremiah looks forward with warning to Judah's impending destruction, Lamentations mourns aloud the accomplished doom.

Theme

The theme of Lamentations is mourning over Jerusalem's destruction (1:12). In this doleful book the heart broken poet properly expresses the grief of the righteous in the face of great calamity brought on by the sins of his people. The author vents his grief but recognizes the justice of the punishment.

Form

The book consists of five poems, four of which are acrostic, that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in alphabetical sequence. This was a favorite form of Hebrew poetry, adopted to help the memory.

The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. In chapters 1, 2 and 4, each verse begins with a new Hebrew letter in alphabetical order, and in chapter 3 every third verse does (to see the Hebrew letters and their names, look at Psalm 119, which is alphabetic. Each 8 verse section begins with a Hebrew letter in alphabetical order through all 22 letters, making 176 verses. The translators have put the Hebrew letter and its name at the beginning of each section).

Outline

1. Zion Desolate - chapter 1
2. God's Anger Destroyed Jerusalem's Beauty - chapter 2
3. Jeremiah's Grief - chapter 3
4. Horror of the Siege - chapter 4
5. Remember, O Lord! - chapter 5

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Highway 5 South Church of Christ
2950 Highway 5 South
Mountain Home, AR 72653
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

