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Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Christ and the New Testament

Philip Schaff, **History of the Christian Church**. 1:862-3.

Taking our position at the close of the apostolic age, and looking back to its fountain-head and forward to succeeding generations, we cannot but be amazed at the magnitude of the effects produced by the brief public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, which sends its blessings through centuries as an unbroken and ever-expanding river of life. There is absolutely nothing like it in the annals of the race. The Roman empire embraced, at the birth of Christ, over one hundred millions of men, conquered by force, and, after having persecuted his religion for three hundred years, it died away without the possibility of a resurrection. The Christian church now numbers four hundred millions (first printed in 1858; final revision, 1890 — KS), conquered by the love of Christ, and is constantly increasing. The first century is the life and light of history and the turning point of the ages. If ever God revealed himself to man, if ever heaven appeared on earth, it was in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. He is, beyond any shadow of doubt, and by the reluctant consent of sceptics and infidels, the wisest of the wise, the purest of the pure, and the mightiest of the mighty. His Cross has become the tree of life to all nations; his teaching is still the highest standard of religious truth; his example the unsurpassed ideal of holiness; the Gospels and Epistles of his Galilean disciples are still the book of books, more powerful than all the classics of human wisdom and genius. No book has attracted so much attention, provoked so much opposition, outlived so many persecutions, called forth so much reverence and gratitude, inspired so many noble thoughts and deeds, administered so

much comfort and peace from the cradle to the grave to all classes and conditions of men. It is more than a book; it is an institution, an all-pervading omnipresent force, a converting, sanctifying, transforming agency; it rules from the pulpit and the chair; it presides at the family altar; it is the sacred ark of every household, the written conscience of every Christian man, the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of light by night in the pilgrimage of life. Mankind is bad enough, and human life dark enough with it; but how much worse and how much darker would they be without it?

Questions from Nigeria

Is there any time food is used to pay or support preachers in their work for evangelism. A Brother used those scriptures to support his argument. Acts 6;1-2 he said that food were distributed by the church as a support to the brethren, Another place is phil;1;25 epaphroditus ministered to his needs.

1. How can we harmonize these scriptures to prove that foods can be used to pay or as support to brethren in evangelism.

The brother reads into these passages more than they say or imply. Neither passage mentions or implies the form the contribution took, whether cash or kind. Brethren in Jerusalem converted their land into cash and donated the cash (Acts 4:32-37). The brethren in Philippi donated the service of Epaphroditus to minister to Paul's needs (Philippians 2:25). Mary donated the use of her house to the church (Acts 12:5, 12), as did Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3-5), and Philemon (Philemon verses 1-2). Thus, there is no specific for contributions to the church or preachers must take; it is generic. Food or any other donation may be given.

2. Can church fund be use to cook food that will be eaten during a business meeting as part of the support by the church. Think back with scriptures

The church functions in three ways: by the use of its treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1-4), by its authorized representatives (Romans 16:1-2; Philippians 2:25), and when assembled (1 Corinthians 11:18). Thus, church funds may be used for any legitimate work of the church. The church should not come together for the purpose of eating a common meal (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34). If eating is essential or incidental to legitimate church work, it is a liberty. Paul ate the Lord's Supper with the church at Troas (Acts 20:7) and ate a common meal in the same building the next day to prepare for his journey (Acts 20:7, 11). If brethren travel from distances to meet, and it would be a hardship for them to remain without eating, eating is incidental to the meeting, just as drinking water and toilets are. When brethren construct or set aside areas designated for eating common meals and schedule these meals, they act without divine authority and corrupt the work of the church.

3. How can you harmonize 1Tim;1;15 were Paul said he is a chief sinner, was he referring his first state or present. Can Christians to refer themselves as chief sinners, why such statement by Paul.

He was speaking of his past life as a persecutor of the disciples of the Lord (verse 13). His life as an apostle is an example for us to follow (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7,9), and he tells us to quit sinning (1 Corinthians 15:34). Yes, we are sinners in view of our past lives, but we are to live righteous lives.

Our Sins Were Laid On Jesus

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Isaiah 53:6c reads "... the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There may be some room for disagreement about what that verse means, but a brother in Christ ought to know better than to call this Bible statement untrue. And when brethren started doing just that, I decided to get involved.

The first quote I saw to this effect was when Maurice Barnett wrote in "Gospel Truths" (July, 2010), "It is said that Jesus took every sin of mankind into Himself on the cross ... I deny that any ... scripture says such a thing but to the contrary the scriptures deny it." Then I was sent a quote where Gene Frost had said in a March, 2000 sermon, "To the Calvinist that means ... they were put on Him ... Where is the passage that says that God put the sins of the world on Jesus?" I was incredulous. It would be one thing to say Isaiah 53:6c is true, but it is figurative so it means such and such. But it is quite another thing to say Isaiah 53:6c is untrue because it teaches Calvinism. Look at the Barnett and Frost quotes for yourself and see if you agree with me they are flat out denying the verse, whatever the verse means. To say the verse (as stated in the Scriptures) teaches Calvinism is a horrific mistake. In effect it is saying Calvinists hold the scriptural ground, and we should try to get around it.

So just what does Isaiah 53:6c mean? Well it certainly does not mean the guilt of our sins were laid upon Jesus. The guilt of sin cannot be transferred; one cannot rewrite history about who did what. To add the word "guilt" to Isaiah 53:6c is to add exactly what the Calvinist wants you to add to the verse. The correct meaning is detailed by the verse just previous "The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him" (**NASB**). So our sins were laid upon Jesus in the sense he took the punishment for our sins. He was punished so we could have peace with God. He was punished for our sins so we wouldn't have to be. And the punishment Jesus endured was literal, not figurative.

Isaiah 53:6c is talking about Jesus taking the responsibility for our sin. For example, if you pay my debt at the bank, somebody afterwards could say "the debt was laid upon you" (literal transference like Isaiah 53:6c), and then you took care of it. Sometimes a basketball team craftily tries to get a foul charged to the wrong player, to a player with less fouls or with less ability. Suppose that happened and it was correctly said - "the referee hath laid on Tom the foul of Dan." Wouldn't that mean Tom took the penalty for Dan?

What many are saying, in effect, is we should not believe what Isaiah 53:6c says because Calvinists believe that. But should we quit believing a sinner must believe in Christ to be saved (John 3:16) just because Baptists believe that same thing? Should we quit teaching there are three persons in the Godhead (John 1:1) because the Catholics believe that? Should we quit believing in the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3) because most denominational churches agree with that? That is never, ever a good (godly) reason to not believe something.

Consider the other standard translations for our phrase in Isaiah 53:6c:

NKJV - "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

ESV - "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

NIV - "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

ASV - "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

NASB - "the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him"

RSV - "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

So if there is anything that should be clear, it is that our sins were laid (placed) on Jesus. We shouldn't flatly deny that plain truth, whatever we think the details of that truth involve.

The History of the Institutional Controversy (Part 9)

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

From there we go on to challenges about the authenticity of Scripture.

"It is inconsistent to believe that the Bible is authoritative in matters faith and practice, but may be incorrect in geographical or historical details. Once a person abandons the concept of divine inspiration, he must abandon the idea of inerrancy" (William Abraham, a Christian College professor)

To look at the future, one needs only to look at the past. To read the debates and arguments of 100 to 150

years ago in the division with the Christian Church, one would think he was reading the debates of 50 years ago, as the same arguments were made then as in more recent times. Consider this example from the Christian Standard in 1893, as a writer is defending women having more prominent roles in the church.

“A principle may set aside an apostolic precept. It may brush aside an apostolic decree. We do that constantly. We follow the apostolic example whenever we like it; when we do not, we depart from it.”

Such thinking is still around, as I heard a prominent institutional preacher make the claim that “We do many things for which we have no authority.”

What we have been experiencing over the past 50-70 years is but a repeat of what has been transpiring since the beginning of time, as new generations arose in Israel that were not content with the ways of their fathers.

“And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel” (Judges 2:9-10).

In looking to the late 1800s, we see “the case with such men as J. W. McGarvey or Isaac Errett, first generation leaders who serve as a ‘bridge’ for a little liberalism often discover that succeeding generations are not content to stop where their forefathers drew arbitrary lines, and are determined to carry to logical extension the incipient practices of the former generation” (Steve Wolfgang, History and Background of the Institutional Controversy. 31).

Conclusion

The division in the late 19th Century eventually produced three bodies. (1) The conservative churches generally came to be known as churches of Christ. (2) The more liberal group was usually known as the Christian Church, although in some areas the instrumental groups were known as Churches of Christ. (3) In time an ultra-liberal group was spawned, known as Disciples of Christ. The division of the late 20th Century looks like it will have the same results. (1) The conservative churches which hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures and the insistence of having a “thus saith the Lord” for teaching and practice. (2) There are the “main-line” institutional churches that insist we do not have to have authority for all that we do, and then (3) there are the ultra-liberal folks who seem determined to have the church take its place among the denominations.

And how long will it be till some get the idea that churches of Christ in America need to follow the example seen in Nigeria. “Uchechukwu Onyeike National Secretary of the Church of Christ-(Nigeria) National Ministers' Forum (NMF), Nigeria”

And now we have a bonafide Church of Christ Missionary Society, as we did in 1849, (which was the beginning of the division in the church). This was established in Tanzania in 2000 under the auspices of the Bear Valley School of Preaching and under the over-sight of the elders of the Stonewood church of Christ in Mississippi. I have a copy of the Constitution, and will quote a few words from it.

The Constitution of the Church of Christ—Tanzania Missions

“In fulfillment of the need to preach and teach the Word of God and establish Bible Schools, the Board of Registered Trustees hereby establishes a Church of Christ—Tanzania Mission whose official and registered name shall be the Registered Trustees.

“The Headquarters for the activities of the Church of Christ—Tanzania Missions shall be situated at the School in the village of Kisongo.

“Initially all the activities of the Church of Christ—Tanzania Missions shall be conducted and or performed at the Headquarters herein the above mentioned on article 1(b) of this Constitution and later on may be decentralized and spread to any other location

as the Registered Trustees may deem fit and direct.”

The Constitution then goes on for some 25 pages outlining rules, objectives, etc. One interesting note on page 3 states--

“Duties Obligations and Conduct of Members of the Church”

“A member of the Church shall be subject to the authority of the bible through the Board of Registered Trustees and the Church shall be subject to the bible and reasonable orders, assignments, activities, duties, transfers of tasks given to him by the Board of Registered Trustees, appointed staff member and the Church is responsible to the Church and the Post he serves in the Church and finally he is under the authority of the Board of Registered trustees for the exercise and performance of his duties...”

Then on pages 7 and 8, the Board of Trustees is named, consisting of eleven men, with six from the church in Mississippi, and five from Tanzania. This document just boggles the mind to think this Missionary Society is actually based on Scripture. In scanning the pages, I found not one citation of a Bible verse to give credence to this organization. So, if we can do this in Nigeria or Tanzania, why not in the United States, or in the world, as Rome controls the Roman Catholic Church? If not, why not? (To be continued)

No Need To Stop The Chariot

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38).

If one is saved at the point of faith in Jesus Christ, why was this eunuch baptized on this occasion? He was reading from Isaiah 53 (verses 32-33), and from that Scripture Philip preached Jesus to him. Nowhere in those twelve verses of Isaiah 53 is baptism or water mentioned. Yet apparently part of what he was taught was the need to be baptized because of how he responds when he sees water (verse 36). This man, who had charge of Candace's treasury (verse 27), told the preacher he believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (verse 37). If his sins were forgiven at that point and he had been saved by the grace of God, no need to stop the chariot. He had done all which was required of him.

How many times have you heard someone say, "All you need to do is to invite Jesus into your heart and you will be saved?" Is that what Philip told the eunuch? Not at all! Where could you find such instruction given to an alien sinner, one who had never been saved by the grace of God? The closest thing to this I can find in the Bible is in Revelation 3:20. There Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." This was written to the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14); to people who had been saved, yet had become indifferent, shutting the Lord out of their lives and no longer enjoying fellowship with Him. Christ pleads with them to open their hearts, let Him rule their minds and govern their lives, and once again have a relationship with Him, His Father, and the Spirit. If all one needs to do to be saved is to invite the Lord into their heart no need to stop the chariot.

According to what some teach, no need to be baptized in such a deserted place (verse 26), just wait till we get back to Ethiopia, and once several are saved then all can be baptized at once. Baptism is just an outward sign of an inward salvation which has already occurred. I purchased a Bible from Goodwill and in the front of it on the page which has "Presented To – By – and the Date and Occasion it had a ladies name, the date she was saved, and when she was baptized. The date stated when she was saved was several weeks before being baptized. According to this false doctrine no need to stop the chariot, you can be baptized later.

Yet Philip did command the chariot to stand still, and he did baptize the eunuch (verse 38). After he arose from the waters of baptism, then he went his way rejoicing (verse 39). Baptism is an integral part of the plan God has designed to save man from their sins. The Bible says baptism saves us (Mark 16:16); it is for remission of sins (Acts 2:38); it washes away sins (Acts 22:16); and when we are baptized into the death of Christ, it was in His death that His blood was shed (John 19:33-34), it is there we receive the benefits of that blood (Romans 6:3-4). The burial that takes place in Romans 6 is a man who is dead (in sin), not alive (already saved). The baptism practiced by many today is to bury an individual whom they say is alive, not one who is dead. Such a false analogy does not fit what Paul says in Romans.

Philip stopped the chariot and baptized this man for the remission of his sins who believed Jesus was the Son of God (verses 37-38). This did not eliminate the grace and mercy of God, but his obedience to the Lord's will gave him access to it (Romans 1:5). May we all carefully examine the Scriptures to be sure we have followed Jehovah's plan to redeem us from our sins.

I have Never Sinned...

Mike Thomas | Bowling Greek, Kentucky, USA

Here is a list of things I have regrettably found to be true about sin, either through experience or observation. As a result, I have never sinned...

Without Regretting It

Sin brings a dark burden to our soul. Adam illustrated this well when he and Eve tried to hide from God because of their fear in the aftermath of sin (Genesis 3:8, 10). It does the same to us by plaguing us with shame, dread, sorrow, and regret. It is as David said, "For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" (Psalm 38:4-6). When I am thinking clearly, I realize that I want no part of that dark path because of the burden it brings. I am at my best when I remember I have never sinned without regretting it.

Without Thinking of Self

I have never sinned without placing my desires above God's will. The Bible says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Sin is a violation of God's word and can only come about when people choose to do their will instead of His. James says it this way:

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:13-15).

We sin because we want to. Gossip, hatred, lust, lying, sloth, neglect, and so forth all come about from seeking our will instead of God's. So if we are to be pleasing to Him, we must put off "the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed" in the spirit of my mind, and "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). I have never sinned without ignoring those instructions.

While Praying for Strength

I have never sinned while sincerely asking God for help. Oh I have yielded to sin even after asking for help, but not because of some shortcoming on God's part. It only occurred because I was not genuinely seeking the path of escape. God's promise is dependable: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). I have never seen Him fail to keep that promise. He truly is a God who "gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength" (Isaiah 40:29). But let us be resolved in our mind to genuinely resist the devil and put away wickedness. If we are not committed to coming out of the world and being separate, the prayer for strength and wisdom will not benefit us. We will be "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by

the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

Without Separating Myself from God

Most importantly, I have never sinned without fracturing my relationship with God. Sin always results in spiritual separation from God. Always! Even the prophet of old said, "The soul who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). He was referring to the same thing Paul referred to when he said the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). They both were describing spiritual separation from God. No one has ever sinned without experiencing that outcome. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. When we sin, we too lose our fellowship with God. If left unchanged, and we end our time on earth in that condition, we will experience eternal separation from God, which is the "second death" (Revelation 20:14). No sin is worth those consequences, especially when we may "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). There is no reason for us to remain in our sin when God's mercy is overflowing and available.

Thus, I have never sinned...without experiencing these conditions. I am confident the same is also true for you. Fortunately, because of Christ, we have hope past our sin and have the promise of being delivered from its struggle. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord..." (Romans 7:24-25). Paul could say that because he was in fellowship with God through Christ, like he taught others to do (Galatians 3:26-27). This precious covenant allows sinners to find forgiveness, even as erring children of God (1 John 1:6-9). Find hope past your sin today by walking with faith in the Lord. He wants to save you from your sinful rebellion and carnal choices. Paul said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). You and I have never sinned when that was not true.

How Great Is Your Faith?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

Throughout the Scriptures, we find many great people of faith, which should impress upon us the importance of having a solid faith. The apostle John wrote: "...this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith." (1 John 5:4) The Hebrew writer firmly affirmed that "...without faith, it is impossible to please Him..." (Hebrews 11:6). With these things in mind, it behooves us to increase daily in our faith toward Christ Jesus. Thus, let us see some examples of the faithful, and pattern ourselves after them.

ENOCH

"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5)

How pleasing Enoch must have been before the Lord! His faith was so great, that the Lord took him from this life of corruption and provided him a home of eternal rest. In a world where many are concerned with hearing and telling testimonies, may our testimony be that we pleased the Lord by keeping His commandments.

NOAH

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (Hebrews 11:7)

Faith toward the Lord motivated Noah to construct the ark according to the pattern God had supplied. He found grace in the sight of the Lord, for he was concerned with the will of God. Thus, he obeyed the voice of the Lord in all things, resulting in the saving of he and his family.

ABRAHAM

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promise offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

(Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19)

Abraham became a wanderer for no other reason than that God told him to do so. He knew not where he was going, just that the Lord wanted him to go. When asked to sacrifice the son of promise, Isaac, he willingly prepared as commanded, not questioning the Lord, but was satisfied that the Lord could raise him up.

MOSES

"By faith Moses when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them." (Hebrews 11:23-28)

A life of physical pleasures and riches awaited Moses in Egypt as the grandson of Pharaoh, but he forsook these things that he might live as a servant before the Almighty God. Moses was focused, recognizing that the things of this life are passing, but that by faith we can look unto the eternal reward.

THE NATION ISRAEL

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days." (Hebrews 11:29-30)

As stubborn and rebellious as national Israel were through much of their history in the Old Testament, when they placed their faith in the Lord, wonderful things took place. They passed through the Red Sea to safety from the pursuing Egyptians. They marched about the walls of Jericho, according to the Lord's commandment, and the city crumbled before their eyes. O, that we as God's people today would have such a faith in Him!

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABED-NEGO

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'" (Daniel 3:16-18)

Faced with death, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego found strength in the God of heaven. They refused to bow before the images and gods of the pagans but stood firm as servants of the Lord. Even a fiery furnace could not sway their determination to honour the one true God.

DANIEL

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his window open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."

(Daniel 6:10)

Daniel was a faithful man of prayer. It was "...his custom since early days..." to pray three times daily in the open window of his upper room. Though a decree had been signed by the king prohibiting any worship but that which was directed to the King, Daniel continued his custom. He trusted that his God would provide the way of escape, even when placed in a den of lions. Daniel's faith produced faith in king Darius, who spoke to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually. He will deliver you." (6:16) After Daniel's deliverance, Darius decreed that "...men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God." (6:26)

JOB

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' . . . But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 1:20-22, 2:10)

At the loss of all he had, save a miserable wife and friends, Job's faith in God and His goodness upon His people prompted him to declare, "...blessed be the name of the Lord." He willingly accepted good from the Lord, and was also willing to now accept adversity.

STEPHEN

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:59-60)

Surrounded by an angry mob, Stephen boldly stood for the truth. Though they took up stones against him, he continued in his stand for truth. Stephen's would not be broken, though his life lay upon the line. May we be of such a mind to uphold the word of God and oppose error.

PAUL AND SILAS

"Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them in to prison, commanding the jailor to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:22-25)

Having been brutally beaten, Paul and Silas, locked in a dreary prison, fastened in stocks, sang forth praises to God at midnight. At a time when most might grumble and complain, they became an example to those who were about them, and expressed their faith in the One for whom they suffered. They counted it an honour to suffer for the name of the One who suffered for them.

HOW ABOUT YOUR FAITH?

Is our faith as that of Enoch, such that God will delight in taking you to enjoy eternity with Him? Do we have the faith of Noah, bringing forth obedience to the will of God, even when it may not make sense to us? Would we become a Nomad for the cause of Christ, even as Abraham did? Are we willing to make a sacrifice for the Lord (note, some of the things we call 'sacrifice' are nothing more than a mere

inconvenience)? Consider Abraham's willingness! Will we pass up the pleasures this life would offer us in exchange for persecutions in serving the Lord? Moses did! Do we believe as Israel did, that God is able to win the battle, His way? Will we stand firm and strong for the faith, even if we are threatened with death, as Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, and Daniel were? Is our stand for the faith so evident and strong that others might be influenced by our trust in the Lord. Darius came to glorify the Lord in his kingdom on account of Daniel's unwavering faith. If we lost all we owned, would we praise the Lord for His greatness as Job did? Will we stand for truth as Stephen, Paul and Silas did, regardless of the consequences?

HOW GREAT IS YOUR FAITH?

What Was the Purpose of Miracles? (Part 5)

Julius C. Nwankwo | Ahiaba, Nigeria

The next miraculous tongue speaking took place in Ephesus. Paul was on his journeys and entered the city and preached to certain men who had been baptized with John's baptism. "They said, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'" Upon hearing Paul's message about Christ ". . . they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. . ." (Acts 19:1-7). It should be noticed that this occasion differs from the first two in that the Holy Spirit's power was given through the laying on of the apostle's hands.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Jews (apostles) received the gift of tongues directly from heaven. At the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), the tongues were given directly from heaven. But now these men at Ephesus received this gift indirectly. The first two times tongues were given without human hands. The third time the gift was bestowed by the laying on of hands. As a result of Paul's teaching and this miracle, they were baptized with the baptism which the Jews and Gentiles had experienced. It was in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5).

The miraculous tongue gift was also given to certain members of the church at Corinth. I Corinthians 12:8-10 lists nine spiritual gifts, which were, evidently, given to these Corinthian Christians. Not every Christian had all nine gifts (1 Corinthians 12:30). Also, there was no single gift (like tongues) that all possessed. He compared these gifts to different parts of the body (1 Corinthians 12:19). The purpose of these gifts was to edify and build up these Christians; so teaching in other tongues or languages is mentioned as one of these nine gifts. Paul goes into much detail in the Corinthian letter to make sure that these Christians used this gift of tongues for teaching with understanding. He said, "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26). Remember that the word unknown in this chapter is added every time by the translators and means not understood (never means jabbering or not any language). In every case of tongue speaking, it was for man's benefit that he might (intelligently) understand, what was said. It was associated with teaching people how to be saved and be built up spiritually.

Never Intended to Be Permanent!

These miraculous works of the Spirit (nine gifts of I Corinthians 12:8-10) were never intended to be permanent in the church. They were to be given in part. "But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13: 10). This new and perfect thing would be a much more excellent way (1 Corinthians 13:13). All of the gifts mentioned in the Corinthian church were to pass away, or cease. He said in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that prophecies would fail, tongues would cease, and divine knowledge would be done away. Now, when would these gifts cease? When that perfect thing (the complete will of God) should come (1 Corinthians 13: 10).

But What About Claims of Tongues Today?

Their claims must be false. There are at least four reasons we come to this conclusion:

There is no Holy Spirit baptism available today. The apostles and household of Cornelius were given

this gift of tongues directly from heaven in baptismal measure. But each was for a specific purpose. And there was never another single case of Holy Spirit baptism referred to in the entire New Testament! These were special cases and for special reasons, and were never promised or intended for all men in all ages. The apostle Paul says, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). What was this one baptism? Is it water baptism or Holy Spirit baptism? The apostle commanded and administered water baptism in fulfillment of the Lord's commission given in Matthew 28:18-10. They were to do this unto the end of the world. On both Pentecost (Acts 2) and at Cornelius' house, two baptisms were administered-- Holy Spirit and water baptism! But by the time Paul wrote the Ephesian letter there was only one baptism. Which baptism had ceased? Which one was to be administered to every creature until the end of the world?

Water baptism was used in every case of conversion in the book of Acts; whereas the Holy Spirit baptism was used only twice once on the Jews at Pentecost and then on the Gentiles when Cornelius was converted. Thus all flesh (Jews and Gentiles) had been given the gospel by a special miracle from God. Since all people had been given a chance, the need for the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit ceased, and the baptism of water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21) continued.

Apostles can no longer lay hands on people and impart this special gift. Of all the people who had these special miraculous gifts, only the laying on of the apostles' hands would give them these special powers. Philip was a spirit-filled evangelist from Jerusalem who could work miracles. But when Philip went to Samaria, because he was not an apostle, he had to wait for the apostles Peter and John to come and lay hands on certain people (Acts 8:14-19).

Since the death of the apostle John at the close of the first century there has been no possibility of men receiving miraculous spiritual gifts through these means. When the last man on whom the apostles had laid their hands died, miraculous gifts in special measure by the hands of men (like healing incurable disease, cleansing lepers, restoring sight to the blind, drinking poison, raising the dead or speaking in a tongue or language they had never heard or known so that people could understand) cease to exist.

Paul said by inspiration that miraculous gifts would cease when the Perfect thing was revealed unto men. Paul plainly taught all nine of those spiritual gifts would be done away when "that which is perfect is come" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The purpose for these gifts was to confirm and establish the gospel and to edify the Christian until such time as (1) the revelation of the gospel was complete (2) the church was growing strong within, and (3) church leaders could be developed by normal means.

Once the New Testament was completed and circulated, the need for these special gifts, such as tongues, ceased. God does for us through his inspired word what he once did through miracles before the truth was written down for us to know. Now we have in the Bible the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) which will give us "all that pertains to life and godliness" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

What purpose could tongues serve now in the plan of God? Spiritual gifts were helping hands to an infant church. Just as parents give support and special assistance to a baby to teach him to walk, the Heavenly Father gave special direct help to the first century Christians as they learned to walk. But when a baby begins to learn to walk, the parent gradually withdraws direct support and encourages his child to develop more strength and skill. To keep on holding the child's hand directly would stop his growth. So it is with God's dealings with His church. He has removed the miraculous, direct helps from her grasp and walks by our side, giving us direction and aid and warning in His word. We do not need special miraculous helps, for our Lord is not a respecter of persons and has given every Christian adequate instruction in His wonderful word, the Bible.

Conclusion

The very obvious and necessary conclusion from the facts presented in this work is that miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues, are not available to men today. Thus whatever else may be said of

modern day claimants of such powers, it cannot be said that such claims are based on scriptural authority. It therefore becomes our duty to refute such false claims and to brand those who make the claims as false teachers. They may fool you; but not the Lord. Beware!

Changing Oversight (Part 3)

Timothy Massawe | Moshi, Tanzania

You said neither the Bear Valley church nor the Hoover church has oversight of the church in East Africa, nor even in Tanzania, but they only have oversight of the work and funds of the Mission.

So, let's talk about the work and funds of the mission in biblical aspects.

Mission is an instrument that governs the local congregations. This is proved by modes of its operation and the document that was registered in 2008. Mission has a Board with power to hire and fire local preachers. There are several evidences for this claim.

Having this knowledge, if any congregation enters into agreement with the Mission it has agreed to pay a company that coordinates the affairs of the Lords' church in Tanzania. If there is any agreement the Hoover Church or Bear Valley Church could enter into and be safe with God it is to agree to cooperate directly with the local congregations here not the Mission. When the church in Jerusalem heard the good news about the church in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to encourage them (Acts 11:22).

This is how a congregation is to fellowship with another congregation without using an agent between them. If your congregation hears the good news about our congregation, your elders can send you to encourage us, and we will give you a chance to speak. Your message will encourage brethren to stay faithful and to continue to carry out the good work of evangelism.

It is very sad that the Lord's church here rarely receives this kind of treatment. Institutions started by men have won more attention, they enter into agreement with the Lord's church for evangelism and many other works that local congregations should do, and this practice has abandoned the pattern we received from the apostles.

Our church is doing this. We have sent our local preacher, Wilson Mtei, to different congregations in Tanzania to encourage brethren and they were amazed by that love. My congregation has sent me to Morogoro Congregation several times to encourage brethren in the Lord as they are doing so well, and it has been a very effective way to strengthen our brotherhood and cooperation among the body of Christ.

I travel to so many countries. When I go to Europe the first thing I ask is, where is the Lord's church so I can break the bread with my brothers and sisters. When I go to Asia I ask the same thing. I come to North America and I ask the same thing. My congregation here believes it is very disrespectful to seek partnership and fellowship with man made institutions while there are faithful congregations.

It has been argued that Mission needs to exist in order to keep the title deeds of the local church buildings in Tanzania, because a preacher may fall away from the faith and turn the entire church into denominationalism.

This argument is very weak, as it removes the trust from the Lord's church and puts it in a manmade organization. If you believe that the entire Lord's church can turn away from faith unless you keep their building title deeds, what makes you believe that the few men who are called the Board of Trustee at Kisongo will never turn away from faith? They are more focused on physical materials rather than the spiritual well being of local congregations. This argument was brought to us lately and we stated it kindly that is not so. Our faith is not guaranteed by the physical possession (Roman 8:35).

Lets now talk about the work. Who should evangelize? And who should pay those who are evangelizing? And how should they be paid? The biblical pattern I have is that the church should do that job. If there is a local church that can't pay a preacher or evangelist, several congregations can pay him directly without using an agent.

It has been argued that money is collected from various congregations, and in order to avoid the sending charge, it is sent to the Mission and the Mission through the school of preaching distributes to the preachers. That it is not the pattern we received from the apostles.

Churches of Christ, the church our lord Jesus purchased with his blood, should only partner with another local church to fulfil the great commission. Brother, we have a pattern for this.

It has been argued by some of the brethren who are championing the cause of church agents that Missions exist as expedient matters to fulfil the great Commission.

We state it kindly, that is not biblically correct. Expedience is applied where we have general command and no specific instruction or pattern to follow. Expedience can not overrule the pattern we have from the Bible.

There is no where in the Bible we see a congregation partnering with a man-made company to carry out the work of evangelism.

The school of Preaching. I believe this a small institution that belongs to the Mission. Realistically, you can't separate the school of preaching and the Mission therefore I can not comment much on this.

Raising Money for the Lord's Work: How and by Whom? (Part 4)

O. Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

Quibbles That Backfire (2)

Unbelievers Gave Properties To The Church To Use: it was said by the same preacher referred to above, that Jesus rode on an ass owned by an unbeliever and that He used an upper room owned by unbelievers for His Last Supper. It was also said that Paul used a school of Tyrannus owned by an unbeliever and that the church in Jerusalem used a venue that belonged to the unbelievers. Consequently, the man who used this argument said it would be right for the church to even solicit and get properties from unbelievers to use. But he was very careful not to say that the church could also solicit for funds from unbelievers but that is exactly the implication of his assumed inferences. It is sad when people build a doctrine upon assumption and hold tenaciously to it.

The truth is: this brother cannot prove that each of the aforementioned venues used by Christ or the brethren was owned by unbelievers. And even if he is able to prove it, he cannot prove that they were given freely to the church. We were not told if the venues were rented apartments or given freely and so no assumption should be insisted upon. And then, even if it is granted (for the sake of argument) that the venues were freely given to the church by the so-called unbelievers, it is beside the point as it does not help the argument a bit. What we are discussing is how and by whom should the church raise money to do her work and not the ownership of the venues that the New Testament churches used. After all, the UNIBEN church has been meeting in a structure not owned by her. That Jesus rode on an ass, has nothing to do with how the church should raise money to do her work. I, as an individual, even today could use a horse or car owned by an unbelieving folk and that does not translate me to become the church. Would this preacher argue, as some do, that the church should share money and food to unbelievers on the street to convert them since his supporters assumed Jesus did same when he fed the multitudes?

Our Congregation Did It: Not less than two individuals opined that their congregations engaged in a similar thing wherein monies were not raised by her members but from a separate body to acquire a land or erect a building. Unfortunately, their congregations are not standards to follow on what is right or wrong. The Bible should be our guide as congregations could be mistaken on some issues (Revelation 2 & 3). Can you imagine a member of the church in Sardis, a dead church, using that church as a template for others to emulate?

The Campus Church Is Not A Regular Kind Of Church: This reasoning implies that there is a kind of arrangement for churches known as “regular kind of church” and another arrangement for churches that are not “regular kind of church.” Or is he by this, positing that the so called non-regular kind of church is at liberty to flout the scriptural rules? COC UNIBEN is not the first church on campus and there are congregations on campus who have lands and/or erected structures for worship without violating God’s law. Hence, the statement that the campus church is not a regular kind of church is a lame excuse invented to deliberately disobey God.

Buying A Land Is A Need: It is strange and amazing to hear people refer to a planned project/programme as a “need.” A needy church is a destitute church of which UNIBEN church is not one. A church that has the money to organize ceremonies for her graduating students every year is not a needy church. But even if it is granted (for the sake of argument) that the buying of land is a need, it is the members of the church that should be responsible for that and not a different body, separate and apart from the church. Do the members of the alumni even realize that they have a primary responsibility to the church in which they place their membership? Have they finished discharging their responsibilities in their various congregations? Part of such is encouraging their respective congregations to attend to genuine needy brethren so they should stop dissipating energy in forming parallel bodies to encroach on church work.

The Alumni Is Not Overseeing Or Interfering With The Church: Some members of the Alumni keep saying that the alumni is not interfering with the church. I deny this! To interfere, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, is “to become involved in the activities and concerns of other people when your involvement is not wanted.” The alumni is interfering by becoming involved in the activities of the UNIBEN church when God does not want such involvement. Also, the fact that the alumni is in control of the funds coming in FOR the acquiring of the land, and telling the church what to do with the money, is taking oversight.

No Scriptural Command For The Church To Raise Money And Have A Purse: This is false for the church is commanded to raise and spend money on evangelism (I Corinthians 9:5-14), edification (I Timothy 5:17-18) and benevolence (I Timothy 5:9-17). I Corinthians 16:2 says to “store up” that there be no gathering when Paul comes. By application, we are to store up as a church so that there will be no gathering when the need to use the fund arises.

An Act Of Benevolence: Some insist that the work the COC UNIBEN ALUMNI has assumed is benevolence and cites Galatians 6:9-10 to encourage people to do more. However, buying of land is not benevolence. And the fact that one sends money for the endeavor does not mean such is meant for a benevolent work. If I support a preacher to preach, I am not doing a benevolent work, I am doing the work of evangelism by fellowshiping in the gospel with him (Philippians 1:5). And even if it is a benevolent work, it were churches that rose up to help, not a body, separate and apart from the church. Galatians 6:9-10 addresses the individuals and not a body or group action.

Conclusion

UNIBEN church is setting bad examples for other churches by not first sitting down to count the cost before building (Luke 14:28). If every church without a permanent site becomes like UNIBEN church and start begging for money to buy a land, it would be terrible and shameful. And the so called alumni is aiding and abetting its unscriptural practices. Of course, that is expected since the alumni was established on an unscriptural premise. The truth is that they will continue to beg for money perpetually until and even after they get the building done. If it is so difficult for the church in UNIBEN to raise money scripturally for her work of getting a land, they will soon resort to taking loans from financial institutions to erect the building. We hope they would not beg to pay the men they have elected to fill the unscriptural, self-created offices of the General Minister, Welfare Minister, and Evangelism Minister.

Let us conclude this session with this beautiful analogy as given by Brother W. Curtis Porter, in his

booklet, "Benevolent Societies:"

"When God made our physical bodies, He gave us bodies that were able to carry on the functions that God intended that they perform. When God gave the Divine body (the church), He gave a body that was adequate to do the work that God wanted done. Consequently, we do not need any human body set up in addition to it to take over and do the work that God designed the Divine body, the church, to do."

(Editor's note: I commend Brother Eghsarevba's excellent article. However, if a congregation obtains a loan from a financial institution, that institution is not donating to the church. The church must pay back the loan with interest. Thus, the church is paying for its own meeting hall through the contribution of its members.)

Our Children

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Many institutional churches of Christ have "children's church." During the worship assembly children go into a separate room where they have their own worship. By doing this, the adults in charge of the children miss the worship assembly of the church (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25), and the parents are robbed of the opportunity to teach their children how to behave in church (Ephesians 6:4). These are grave mistakes.

But another mistake made by many parents is to allow the children to play, make noise that disrupts the worship of others, run loose, or simply sleep (I'm not talking about infants). This is the problem that led to the unscriptural practice of children's church.

I advocate a third alternative.

Let's get some background.

Jochebed, Moses' mother, taught him from infancy that he was Israelite rather than an Egyptian (Exodus chapter 2; cf. Hebrews 11:23). Thus,

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses commanded parents in Israel:

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Israelite parents were responsible for teaching their children the law of God, and the divine law was to be their constant conversation with their children. But under the New Testament, teaching our children the word of God is even more important. Israelite children were born into covenant relationship with God and then had to be taught to know Him. Under the New Testament people can't even come into covenant relationship with God until they have been taught His will (Hebrews 8:10-11). Our heavenly Father has many children, but He has no grandchildren. To come to Christ and be saved, our children must be taught about God (John 6:44-45), and parents must teach them (Ephesians 6:4).

Hannah, Samuel's mother, "lent" him "to the Lord" for life at the time he was weaned (1 Samuel 1:21-28). From that tender age he lived with Eli the High Priest and Judge of Israel at the tabernacle. As a small child and as a boy he "ministered to the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:11; 3:1). He "did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him" (1 Samuel 3:7). But the Lord appeared to him as he lay on his bed about to go to sleep. Directed by Eli, he replied to the LORD, "Speak for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

“So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD” (1 Samuel 3:19-20).

If the boy Samuel could minister before the LORD and become His faithful prophet, why are our boys and girls sleeping or playing in church and missing Bible classes for school or recreational activities?

Jesus is God (John 1:1-3), but He “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren...” (Hebrews 2:17). He was and is truly a man (1 Timothy 2:5). As a child “He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52), that is, He grew in all the ways children are to grow, just as our children should. At twelve years of age He amazed the learned teachers of the law with his understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 2:41-47). Why should our children remain ignorant of the Word of God?

Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice taught him the Scriptures “from childhood” (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). He became the apostle Paul’s true and beloved son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). At one time the apostle had no other companion like him to sincerely care for the brethren (Philippians 2:20).

Parents, let’s get serious about the spiritual growth of our children. Study the Bible with them at home. On trips, take Scripture material with you to keep them occupied. Teach them to memorize the Scriptures. Have them in Bible class and the worship assembly. Don’t let school or recreational activities interfere. Make sure they sit up, pay attention, and even take notes. They can copy the main points of the charts before they are even old enough to understand them. If they’re good readers, have them read this article.

Are our children capable of paying attention and learning in school? Why not in church? Which is more important? What if your child gets a doctor’s degree or learns to be a great business person but never becomes a faithful Christian? (cf. Matthew 16:26-27)

Hosea warned Israel:

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6).

What’s going to happen to the next generation?

Protecting Each Other

Keith and Sandy Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Leviticus chapter 13 reveals the law of the Lord for Israel concerning contagious, possibly deadly diseases. After being checked (tested), one who had reason to suspect he had leprosy was to be isolated (quarantined) seven days and then rechecked. If he indeed was leprous, he was to be isolated until he was confirmed to be well, he could not worship with the congregation, and he was to cover his lip (wear a mask). Testing, wearing masks, social distancing, and quarantining to protect against a communicable disease are 3500 year old divinely instituted practices. Since modern medical scientists say these practices defend against covid19, they are also scientific evidences of the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15). No other ancient society had such effective practices to deal with disease.

In Exodus 21 the Lord declared that if a man had an ox that was known to gore, and the ox gored a person so that he died, the owner of the ox was to be charged with murder. There are other Old Testament examples of the Lord’s will concerning what today would be called “negligent homicide.”

When the Jews arrested Jesus, He told the soldiers to let His disciples go, physically protecting them (John 18:8-9).

When our children were small, we didn't take them to the worship assembly or class if they had a cold, and we didn't want others coming who were sick. The same should be true today. We should all take these precautions. If I cause someone to die because I refuse to take common sense precautions, the Lord will not be pleased with me (Matthew 7:12).

All of us should follow sensible precautions to protect each other from disease.



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