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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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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 VIRTUE 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.

Question from Nigeria

Question

1. Is it right for a brother officiating the Lord's Supper to make comments while the bread and the fruit of the vine are being passed? Some brethren hold the view that at such times congregations should be silent.
2. Is it scriptural for the church to organize send-forth programme for its outgoing preacher, an elder or a faithful member who is relocating? The programme typically involves citation, extolling of virtues, prayer and presentation of gifts purchased by both the church and individual brethren.
3. Is it biblical for youths in a congregation to raise funds to buy gifts for a fellow youth who will be getting married? Also, how about sisters doing the same?

Answer

These are good questions, and I appreciate them. They demonstrate you recognize the need for authority from Christ for what we do (Colossians 3:17). I will answer them in order.

1. The Master Himself officiated when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20). He spoke to the disciples explaining the significance of the Supper. Thus, we are most certainly authorized to explain to the audience what we are doing and why.
2. The church is authorized to help evangelists in whatever needs they have (2 Corinthians 11:8;

Philippians 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 9:4-14), and to honor those who are worthy (Philippians 2:25-30). Yes, without condoning an elaborate ceremony; it is fitting to so honor a departing evangelist.

3. Such expressions of love are fitting (Philippians 2:2), as long as they are kept strictly individual rather than as a work of the church (1 Timothy 5:16).

Further Questions

Based on the answers given, I would like to ask the following for the sake of clarity.

1. If making comments is right while the bread and the fruit of the vine are passed around, how about singing?

2. Would it be right for the church to also organize send-forth for a faithful sister?

3. If the youths of a congregation can raise funds to purchase gifts for a member who is involved in a social event such as marriage, would it not justify the youths having a purse (or treasury)?

Answers

1. First Corinthians chapter 14 contains instruction for the use of miraculous, spiritual gifts in the worship assembly of the church. The word for speaking appears 18 times in the chapter. There is no limitation on when during the assembly comments may be made. The chapter gives four universal principles that limit speaking in our assemblies today: (1) all things must be for edification (verse 26); (2) there must be peace and not confusion (verse 33); (3) a woman may not speak over men (verse 34-35); and (4) all things must be done "decently and in order" (verse 40). A brother may make comments any time during the worship assembly as long as they meet these criteria.

2. Yes (Romans 16:1-2), as long as her work is authorized by the Scriptures as the work of the church and is legitimately women's work (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

3. As long as this has nothing to do with the church (1 Timothy 5:16).

God Forsook Jesus On The Cross

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

There is controversy among Christians about whether God actually forsook Jesus on the cross. What do the scriptures teach on this question?

My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?

I suggest Matthew 27:46 ("... Jesus cried ... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") means the obvious, that Jesus was forsaken. How could one deny the Father forsook Jesus when Jesus is plainly asking the Father why he did just that? When Jesus asks the Father "Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?," that is equivalent to asserting "You have forsaken me. Why?" Was Jesus' assertion wrong? If yes, what else was Jesus wrong about? If Jack asks John "why did you forsake me?," doesn't that mean one of three things?: either (1) Jack is lying, (2) Jack is mistaken, or (3) Jack was forsaken. Which was it for Jesus?

If we can read "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and somehow conclude Jesus was not really forsaken, then I suggest something has gone completely haywire with our method of Bible "interpretation." We certainly can no longer claim the common man can understand the Bible as written (Ephesians 3:3-4). Me thinks a Christian couldn't reach the conclusion Jesus was not really forsaken without help from someone else; it would never occur to them from the text itself.

Thirty-One Examples Of Jesus Asking "Why" Somebody Did Something

To nail down what the plain meaning of Matthew 27:46 is, consider all 31 examples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of Jesus asking why somebody did something. In each and every case, Jesus' question implies the person or persons had done exactly what Jesus is asking about. For example when Jesus asked his disciples in Matthew 8:26 "Why are ye fearful?," doesn't that mean the disciples were fearful about the winds and sea? When Jesus asked the rich, young, ruler in Matthew 19:17 "Why callest thou me good?," doesn't that mean the rich young ruler had called Jesus good? In Matthew 26:10 "Jesus ... said ... Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me." Did they trouble her or not? In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked "why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Doesn't Jesus' query imply they were calling Jesus Lord? In Luke 22:46 Jesus asked "Why sleep ye?" And verse 45 says "he found them sleeping." John 7:19 has Jesus asking "Why go ye about to kill me?" Weren't they conniving about His death? Matthew 12:14 and 26:4 say the Pharisees were doing just that. Jesus asks in John 18:23 "why smitest thou me?" because they had struck him (verse 22). In John 20:15 "Jesus saith ... Woman, why weepest thou?" because she was weeping in verse 11.

Everybody agrees "what Jesus is asking why about" actually happened in all of the other 30 cases. Why should it be any different in Matthew 27:46? All these cases serve to confirm for us what we already know inherently - if Jesus asks somebody why they did something, they must have done that something.

David Only Appeared To Be Forsaken In Psalms 22:1; Likewise Jesus?

But some reason since Jesus here is applying Psalms 22:1 to himself, and David (assumed) wasn't really forsaken in Psalms 22:1, then neither is Jesus here. For example my friend Doy Moyer said in his article "Was Jesus Literally Forsaken" in The Auburn Beacon (2010) "In the psalm, the ... phrase does not intend to express the idea that God has ... actually forsaken anyone. The forsaking is in appearance, not in reality." But why would anybody conclude David was not forsaken in Psalms 22:1-2? Wasn't the writer inspired of God when he wrote "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not" Many say David just felt like he was forsaken in Psalms 22:1, but he really wasn't. You mean David was inspired but wrong in Psalms 22:1-2? Have we forgotten the Holy Spirit is the real author of Psalms 22:1-2? If the Holy Spirit was mistaken when he wrote the inspired text "O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest"? (ESV), then how can we trust anything in the Bible? For example, how do we know Paul's prohibition against "women preachers" in I Timothy 2:11-12 is divine truth, and not just how Paul "felt" at the time? And suppose for the sake of argument David was wrong. Was Jesus also wrong when he applied these words to himself on the cross? There would be no end to questioning everything the Bible affirms as true.

Forsaken Then Expected Deliverance

It seems Doy's main reason for his contention David was not really forsaken in Psalms 22:1-2 is because verses 22-31 discuss his deliverance. But expected deliverance doesn't necessarily imply never forsaken. As a matter of fact, the frequent pattern we see in God's word is just the opposite. Observe just how many times Old Testament passages fit the Psalms 22 pattern of what I call "forsaken then expected deliverance."

Judges 6:13c-14 *"now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord ... said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"*

Isaiah 54:7-8 *"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee ... but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."*

Psalms 60:1,9-10,5,12 *"O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased;*

O turn thyself to us again. ... Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? ... That thy beloved may be delivered ... Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

Psalms 79:5,8,9-10 "How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? ... O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. ... Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed."

Psalms 13:1-6 "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

Psalms 44:22-26 "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake."

And we have many other instances of David and/or the Israelites being forsaken including Psalms 89:38-46, 80:4-6, 43:1-2, 35:1,17, 88:1-2,14,6-7, 108:11-13, Jeremiah 7:29-30, etc. In view of all these other Old Testament illustrations of "forsaken then expected deliverance" (that everybody agrees with), I think it is safe to say the only reason some claim in this one case that the writer of Psalms 22:1 was not forsaken is because Jesus applied the passage to himself. And for some reason that revealed truth scares them.

Reading further down the chapter confirms this obvious meaning of Psalms 22:1-2. No less than three times in verses 19-21 David (using the second person to refer to himself) asks God to deliver him – so he hadn't been delivered yet. Then in verse 24 he switches to the third person to assert it is God's general practice to hear the afflicted, and so David expects the same out of God in his case. So as of the writing - David is in the position of the one afflicted asking God for deliverance, and anticipating deliverance based upon what he says in verse 24 has been God's usual practice in such cases. And when that deliverance comes, David will praise God for it (verse 25). This is parallel to Christ: forsaken on the cross but expecting deliverance through his resurrection.

Conclusion

So as we've demonstrated, the writer of Psalms 22:1 was forsaken, and since Jesus applied that to himself in Matthew 27:46, the inescapable conclusion is Jesus was also forsaken. In short we should accept that Jesus was forsaken by the Father on the cross because Matthew 27:46 says He was. What do we have to gain by struggling so hard to work against that plainly revealed fact?

The Bible and the Catholic Church | Part 2

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

The Catholic Church's opposition to the Bible in the common language goes back centuries. John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English in 1380 A.D., and a Catholic Council condemned him for this. He died in 1387 and 23 years later his library was burned. In 1428 the Council of Constance ordered his remains to be dug up, burned, and his ashes scattered in the River Swift.

In 1525 William Tyndale translated the Bible into English in Germany. Copies were smuggled into England and sold, but owning a copy of it attracted the death penalty. The authorities regarded the distribution of the Bible in English to be a danger to the established church. In time, Tyndale was arrested, strangled and burned at the stake in October, 1536. The Catholic hierarchy confiscated all the Bibles they could find. They arrested the distributors, placed these men on horses, facing the horses tail, with copies of the Bible fastened to their clothes. They were then taken to public places and compelled to throw the New Testaments into the fire.

John Frith went to England from Antwerp to “set forth the mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He favored the English translation. He was jailed and placed in stocks. A young man named Hewet, a tailor, let it be know that he agreed with Frith, therefore he was also arrested. They were both bound at the stake and committed to the flames of Roman Catholicism. A priest warned the crowd not to pray for the burning men “anymore than you would pray for a dog.”

The Burning of Bibles

Many aren't aware that for a long period the Catholic Church forbade reading the Bible, and even forbade having a Bible in one's home. These were the “Dark Ages,” when the Church was at the peak of its power and feared that if her subjects owned and read Bibles, they might question some of the church's practices and teachings. This time was from around 500 to 1500 A.D.

The Church admits this in her own Laws: “Canon 14. We prohibit also that the laity should not be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.” “No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days, so that they may be burned....” (The Church Council of Toulouse, 1229 A.D., The Church Council of Tarragona 1234 A.D.; 2nd Cannon—Source: D. Loritsch, **Historie de la Bible en France**, 1910. 14).

In an attempt to erase history, **The Index of Forbidden Books** and all excommunications related to it were officially abolished in 1966. The Inquisition itself was established by Pope Gregory IX in 1233...” (Vatican Archives).

Bible Burning in the United States

It's hard to believe that the Catholic Church has burned Bibles in the U.S. “The following account of this sacrilegious outrage is from an official statement of facts, signed by four respectable citizens appointed as a committee for that purpose.” (Dowling's. History of Romanism)

“About the middle of October, a Mr. Telmont, a missionary of the Jesuits, with one or more associates, came to Corbeau in this town, where the Catholic Church is located, and as they say in their own account given of their visit, ‘by the direction of the bishop of Montreal.’ On their arrival they commenced a protracted meeting, which lasted several weeks, and great numbers of Catholics from this and the other towns of the country attended day after day. After the meeting had progressed several days, and the way was prepared for it, an order was issued requiring all who had Bibles or Testaments, to bring them into the priest, or ‘lay them at the feet of the missionaries.’ The requirement was generally complied with, and day after day Bibles and Testaments were carried in; and after a sufficient number was collected, they were burned. By the confession of Telmont, as appears from the affidavit of S. Hubbell, there were several burnings, but only one in public. On the 27th day of October, as given in testimony at the public meeting held there, Telmont, who was a prominent man in all the movements, brought out from the house of the resident priest, which is near the church, as many Bibles as he could carry in his arms at three times, and placed them in a pile, in the open yard, and then set fire to them and burned them to ashes. This was done in open day, and in the presence of many spectators...” “In the affidavit of S. Hubbell, Esp., above alluded to, who is as respectable lawyer of the place, it is stated that the President of the Bible Society, in company with Mr. Hubbell, waited upon the priests, and requested that inasmuch as the

Bibles had been given by benevolent societies, they should be returned to the donors and not destroyed; to which the Jesuit priest, perhaps with less cunning than usually belongs to his order, coolly replied, that "they had burned all they had received, and intended to burn all they could get."

While public opinion may have changed the Church's banning and burning of Bibles today, the truth is that the Church's doctrines and practices are still in opposition to plain Bible teaching, and many Catholics really don't have a good Bible knowledge. As one young woman said, "I don't have to read my Bible. My priest tells me what it says."

(In Watertown, New York, August, 1996, Skip Sebree and I were seated in the booth of the Tri-County Church of Christ at the Jefferson County Fair. The sign over the booth read, "Is That in the Bible?". We invited people to take a computerized Bible quiz and sign up for home Bible studies or take a tract. A young family walked by, glanced at the booth, and kept on walking. Skip said to them, "Come test your Bible knowledge." The man never looked back, replied, "If I want to know anything about the Bible, I'll ask my priest," and kept on walking.

In my experience in Northern New York, where the overwhelming majority of natives are Catholic, long time residents knew absolutely nothing about the Bible. Mennonites and Amish have moved in, and they do study their Bibles. - KS)

Distractions

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

While sitting in my office this morning trying to get some work done, there is a constant noise of nail guns and roofers putting shingles on our house. A few weeks ago, the wind blew off a shingle and it became apparent the roof needed replacing. It is extremely hard to focus on the task at hand with all these sounds just above my head. Yet you put forth the effort, concentrate, and work can be accomplished. This reminds me of the life we are to live as Christians, a lot of distractions to hinder our efforts to serve the Lord, yet if we remain dedicated and focused, certainly we can succeed.

One of the great distractions all face as disciples of Christ is the "noise" of the world. It certainly has its attraction. Paul tells us, "And do be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2); John says we must "not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15-17); James reveals "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4) and that we are to remain "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). In the Parable of the Seed or the Sower, which Jesus revealed, some seed fell among the thorns. Notice why this seed did not produce: "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22). It does not have to be sinful things like adultery, fornication, stealing, drunkenness, lying, etc. Many times, it is that which is lawful, but which one may place ahead of his service to the Lord.

Another is pleasure. The "noise" which it puts off can hinder one from faithfully serving their God. It is the time of the year for vacation. I think everyone looks forward to a little time away, to rest, relax, to sight see, or to participate in one of their favorite activities. Yet is it a time for one to forsake the assembling of themselves together with other Christians? Does one locate a body of God's people so he can worship his Creator and attend all the church services? While away from home, does one fail to pray and to read their Bible? What kind of activities does one participate in? Is it something which will cause one to dress immodestly? Will it cause one to lust because of how others are dressed? There is never a time for a Christian to moderately drink, yet it seems some think so when away from home and while traveling it is OK. In Luke's account of the Parable of the Seed, notice what Jesus said about pleasure. "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14). The word "Pleasure" is defined as "Pleasure,

gratification, enjoyment. In the NT, used only of physical pleasure” (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament**). **The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** says it is “sensual pleasure.” Yet any pleasure, when put ahead of God, becomes sinful.

What about family, friends, or loved ones? This is a “noise” which can distract as well. Those of us who are married have responsibilities toward our spouse (Ephesians 5:22-33). All are to honor their mother and father (Matthew 15:4-6; Ephesians 6:1-3). Parents are to love their children, teaching and instructing them about the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4). We are taught to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:9). Jesus even said we are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-45). Yet who must come first?

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves sons or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37-38).

One must love the Lord supremely. Make whatever sacrifice which is necessary to be a faithful servant of Christ. He is not asking you to stop loving your spouse, mom and dad, children, best friend, etc. Yet what He does expect is obedience to His will even if others try to lead you astray or you are tempted to put them first (John 14:15).

The roof is finished, the noises are gone, and now I can finish the work I started without any distractions. Yet I am still faced with those sounds coming from the world, trying to draw my attention away from faithful service to my God. It is my hope and prayer we will all consider the cost and be willing to pay the price, keep our priorities in order, and always be focused on heaven (Luke 9:58-62). Do not let the “noises” hinder you.

What Covid Revealed

Mike Thomas | Bowling Greek, Kentucky, USA

We are all a little different as a result of the last year. This pandemic has opened our eyes to things that were new concepts for most of us: social distancing, wearing masks, virtual services, etc. It has also revealed a couple of other things that should be equally obvious.

1. There are no miraculous gifts

In the New Testament, we read of God giving some Christians the ability to heal the sick and perform miracles. Paul, in addressing the “diversities of gifts” present with the Corinthians, said God gave some of them the gift “of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy...” (1 Corinthians 12:4, 9-10). It is abundantly clear that these gifts no longer reside within men. (Mainly because they were not needed once God completed His revelation, 13:8-10.) That is not to say God does not heal or perform miracles; He just no longer does so through the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit like He did with the apostles and first Christians. The lingering presence of Covid-19 helps validate this.

Everyone in the world has been affected by this pandemic. That includes every religion and religious leader – all of whom have had to respond alike in preventing and treating this harmful disease. The majority of the world knows what it means to be confined to home and to shut down businesses and borders. Yet, no one – not one – in the religious world has been able to come forward with a miraculous antidote to this disease. That will not happen because God no longer gives that ability to humans.

2. Some Christians are not committed

Unfortunately, the so-called miracle workers are not the only imposters exposed in this virus. It is heartbreaking to see how many Christians have let it become an excuse to quit serving the Lord by no longer attending public services. Are virtual services sinful? Absolutely not. We all benefitted from them at the onset of this plague and still do in many ways. There are those who legitimately avoid public gatherings because of their health vulnerabilities, yet still seek the Lord first through online options. However, we have also seen evidence of those who say they cannot assemble yet still go about their normal routine of life by

gathering in public for other reasons. This does not match up with righteousness nor does it say favorable things about us.

If our health is too poor for worship, why is it strong enough to frequent stores, workplaces, restaurants, and public places throughout the week? What are we saying to our friends and family when we demonstrate such inconsistency? (And we can be assured they notice it!) Are we letting our light shine as God's people when we put forth an inferior effort in response to public worship? Is that an example of faith that will win people to the Lord?

If you no longer attend public worship because of this pandemic, I ask you to honestly consider if you have let this virus (and the fear promoted in the media) overthrow your faith. I say that with all sincerity because I believe we were all tested in one way or another this last year. I am concerned if we have the faith and conviction we think we have. Honestly, how many of us have the same courage of Daniel and his friends when they were confronted with life-threatening ultimatums? Will we be cast to the lions' den if prayer becomes illegal for us? Will we be willing to be burned alive to avoid bowing to a graven image (cf. Daniel 3:13-18)? I am afraid this virus has shown that some of us are not at that level of commitment and that we will do everything we can to stay comfortable in this world, even if it means abandoning God.

The good news is we are still here and have opportunity to improve our faith. Our God is rich in mercy and ready to forgive (cf. Ephesians 2:4-10) if we have the humility and wisdom to depend on Him. Hopefully, this pandemic has made that abundantly clear as well. We are vulnerable and hopeless without Him! So whatever the crisis, let us cling to God in faith in the same way David did. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I will fear no evil; for You are with me**; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

The "My Jesus" Mentality

DO YOU REALLY KNOW JESUS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

According to The Word Factbook (1), almost one third of the world's population identify themselves as Christian. This includes everyone from those who are Christian in name only to those who might be viewed by others as fanatical. For the former, the idea of knowing Jesus may be far fetched - how can you really get to know a man who lived almost 2,000 years ago? However, for many in Christendom, getting to know Jesus better is a daily pursuit.

I appreciate those who seek an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Getting to know Him is not the same as getting to know other prominent figures from history. We can study and learn facts about people like Laura Secord, Sir John A. MacDonald, Alexander Graham Bell, etc., but we cannot really know them - it is not possible to have a relationship with them. They are all dead and buried. Jesus is different. Peter spoke to the crowd at Pentecost about the Lord in this way:

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

(Acts 2:23-24)

Jesus is alive! Knowing facts about Him is not enough. The Bible tells us that we need to know Him, not know about Him (Philippians 3:10). We are called to follow Him (Matthew 28:19). We are to imitate His character (Philippians 2:1-8). He wants us to be fellow heirs with Him (Romans 8:17). All of this requires that we know Him and are known by Him.

It is not uncommon to hear someone speak about their "personal relationship with Jesus." As spiritual as that sounds, in my experience, those who use such language generally have created their own concept of Jesus, something very different from the Jesus we read of in the Bible. Some have created for themselves

an accommodative Jesus, who desires and approves the same things they do.

Several years ago, a young couple visited our assembly a few times. In a conversation with them, they asked why we have no instrumental music in our worship. We spoke of the nature of authority and of the need to respect God's silence. As we look into the New Testament, we see nine times where worship in song is discussed, and each time, we're told to sing. Not once are we told to play an instrument. Seeking to do God's will and not our own, we refrain from the use of instruments in our worship. They didn't like what they heard. The young man bluntly told me, "My Jesus wants me to use my musical talent to praise Him." He didn't tell me what the Jesus of the Bible wanted - he told me what he wanted. But, unable to support his desire for instrumental music in worship from Scripture, he conveniently created a Jesus in his own mind who desires exactly what he wanted.

For many, the authority of God's word takes a backseat to personal preference. But, so we don't sound selfish, let's invoke Jesus' name on our whims, whatever they may be. But what do we do if my Jesus and your Jesus do not agree? We just go our separate ways so we can serve ourselves (uh, I mean God) in the way we (uh, I mean Jesus) wants us to. When people follow what their manufactured Jesus will approve, divisions are sure to come.

A "my Jesus" theology is contrary to the idea of truth. Jesus, in prayer to the Father said, "Sanctify them by Your word. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

A "my Jesus" theology creates confusion. We have 1000s of different churches all teaching different doctrines. Jesus is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus prayed for the unity of those who believe in Him (John 17:20-21). That unity is supposed to be an evidence to the world, so that they too might believe. I wonder how many people have been discouraged from seeking Christ because they have witnessed the selfishness and division of the "my Jesus" theology? God's will is that we all speak the same thing and have the same mind (1 Corinthians 1:10). That will not happen if people seek their own will and not the will of God.

Friend, let us seek to know Jesus Christ. To have a relationship with Him as our Saviour and Mediator before God. He wants us to know Him, and He wants to save us from sin and preserve us in heaven. For us to know Him, we need to know His word and to serve Him we need to walk in His way, not our own (Colossians 3:15-17).

1 cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/religions

Raising Godly Children (1)

Julius C. Nwankwo | Aba, Abia State, Nigeria

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. Says the Lord (Genesis 18:19).

Do we want good children or godly children? This question lies at the heart of our true desire for our children. In the midst of a secular society, it is easy to leave God out of the training of our children. For any child to be a "good" or "godly" child he must be raised by God's truth, even if the parents do not acknowledge they are doing so. We want godly children who know the principles of good living but also who know God Himself. We desire for our children to have a love and passion for God that overflows in a love for mankind.

Without Jesus Christ our ability to forgive, have compassion, and to love is greatly limited. In Christ we have the ability to have Christ live His life in us. Our goals for our children must go far beyond what we can do in our own strength, which only feeds our pride. We must train our children to trust God and live a godly

life in which they walk in His Spirit.

There are many voices telling us how to parent, but the majority of them reject God's purpose for our children. Because many Christian families have bought into secular thinking, their children are living as immorally as the society around them.

Now is the time to change the course of history through our own families. God can do great and mighty things through a small number of families that live by His great and glorious promises and purposes contained in His word –the Bible (Matthew 18:20).

In this session, we will first focus on God's principles for raising our children by mentioning some practical points on how we can implement these life-changing principles.

Godliness is being Christ-like. Jesus showed us how to be pleasing to the Father, conformed to His will, and molded to His character. If you want to raise a godly child, you must model godliness in your life and in your parenting.

Godly parenting means engaging your kids in a way that most accurately reflects the life and words of Jesus. To parent in a way that pleases God, you must seek, depend on, and live through Christ. "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it," says God (Proverbs 22:6) . Being a Christian is challenging these days. If you want to be a part of raising a godly generation, it can feel like an uphill battle. To help you, here are some godly parenting principles to incorporate as you raise your children in a God honoring home. Raising godly kids requires learning what the Bible says about parenting. The following biblical parenting principles are firmly grounded in scripture.

What Makes A Godly Person?

As you pursue godliness and raising godly children it helps to have a firm grasp of what it means to be godly. Here's how scripture defines godliness.

In 1 Timothy 3:16 (**NKJV**), Paul says:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

Godliness is being Christ-like. Jesus showed us how to be pleasing to the Father, conformed to His will, and molded to His character. If you want to raise a godly child, you must model godliness in your life and in your parenting. Godly parenting means engaging your children in a way that most accurately reflects the life and words of Jesus. To parent in a way that pleases God, you must seek, depend on, and live through Christ. It is this pattern of Christ that informs the

Godly Parenting Principles

Love And Honor God Above All Others

1. Be a steward of your children.

The first principle of godly or Christ-like parenting is inspired by one of the 10 commandments. The most important commandment according to Jesus is, "... You shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37, **NKJV**). Or as God said it in Exodus 20:2-3, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage .You shall have other gods before Me."

As narcissism has crept into the church, so has narcissistic parenting advice. The doctrine that parents

are like God or that parents are God on earth is dangerous. It is the original appeal of Satan, “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Rather, you are to have the mind of Christ, “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6). God is God, no need for you to step in His place. The biblical role of a parent is to be a steward of His children. Only God knows what each child was created to be and do.

2. Establish and live by God’s standards. In Deuteronomy 6:1 God said to the children of Israel:

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess,”

In the chapter before this, the Ten Commandments were clearly given to the people again. God is holy, therefore, we must do things His way in order to please Him. Therefore, we must know what the Lord says and then actually obey Him by doing just what He says. Moses taught the Israelites God’s commands in order to help them live out godly lives among the heathen nations. Our standards must come from God’s standards. As these commands have been taught to us, we need to teach them to others (especially our children).

3. Love Your Children As Jesus Loves You

In John 13:34 Jesus called his followers to a very high standard. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” We are called to love all others, our children included, in the way Jesus showed us to love.

The command to love presupposes there is a choice, an action that you can take. How did Jesus love? Jesus gave us the example of how to love well. You can love your children like Jesus by choosing to treat them like Jesus treated the disciples.

Matthew 24 (Part 6)

Patrick Andrews | Conway, Arkansas, USA

Destruction Is Now Knocking at Jerusalem's Door

Matthew 24:33

In previous articles we have noticed that Christ prophesied that the temple buildings inside the walls of Jerusalem would be razed to the ground. He warns them that this will occur sometime in the future, but He doesn’t give a specific date. He does tell His apostles that it would occur in that present generation.

We’ve also discussed that there would be three different time periods that would lead up to this destruction. The first of which Christ called, “**The Beginning of Sorrows**” (Matthew 24:4-8). In this first period of time there would be wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes that would occur in other parts of the world. Jerusalem would not be affected by these events physically. However; it would cause those in Jerusalem to fear (Matthew 24:6).

The second period of time (Matthew 24:9-14) refers to signs that show the destruction is getting nearer. During this period of time, all the civil unrest that was in other parts of the world would have made it to Jerusalem. In this period of time, all of those who had “named the name of Christ” (verse 9), would be hated, persecuted, and killed, not only by Jews, but by other nations as well.

I stated a couple of months ago that in this period of time no foreign nation would be persecuting the Israelites. That statement might have been misleading unless you understood that Christ and the first Christians were first persecuted by Israelites. That hatred, of Christians would quickly carry over into other parts of the world. Israel, at this period of time was doing the persecuting, but her persecution was fast approaching.

The third period of time (Matthew 24:15-35) concentrates mainly on the destruction of Jerusalem and a hatred of all Jews. Christians would have been hated and killed for decades, not only by Jews but now by Gentiles also, as the Gospel was carried away from Jerusalem. Read the book of Acts and you will get a clear picture of where the persecution of Christians began and how far it spread.

Around thirty years after Christ prophesied the coming destruction; Rome began marching on Jerusalem and besieged it. The promised destruction was now knocking on Jerusalem's door (Matthew 24:33).

Those who believed in Christ and placed their trust in the words that He spoke would have fled Jerusalem by this time. To those who believed His words but failed to act on their belief, they were now in danger of facing the same fate as those who did not trust in the Lord's word to begin with. Their faith wasn't like the faith of Rahab (Joshua 2:18-21). Rahab acted immediately once she was told what to do. She didn't wait until the Israelites were marching around Jericho. She didn't know when or how Jericho's destruction would come, but she wasn't taking any chances. There might have been some who were saved at the last minute, but Jesus had pre-warned them of the difficulties that they would be facing if they lingered (verses 16-20). Those who were still in Jerusalem as the Roman Legions were surrounding the city remind me a lot of Lot and his family and their hesitancy to leave Sodom even though they were told it was about to be destroyed (Genesis 19:15-17); same scenario, just different people and cities. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

There are a couple of topics here that deserve a lot more space than what I'm allowed in this article. I will deal with them, God willing, in the near future. These topics would include, "The abomination of desolation" (verse 15), "great tribulation" (verse 21), and the apocalyptic language that is used to manifest Jerusalem's destruction (verses 29-33). All three of these topics deserve their own space in these articles. So please allow me to place these three topics off to the side and continue on sequentially.

I've mentioned over and over that the apostles asked Jesus more than one question in Matthew 24:1-3. I've explained that there is some confusion to some as to whether it was one question, two questions or three. I've also pointed out that the last two questions are so interrelated that they could be combined into the same question. Regardless of how many questions the apostles asked, Jesus answered more than one and less than three. That allows me to believe that regardless of what the apostles believed at the time, they actually only asked Jesus two questions. The reason I know this is because Jesus only answered two questions.

The first question as to the destruction of the temple buildings in Jerusalem were answered in verses 4-35, and as we have noticed all along, the answer to that question would take close to 40 years before its culmination.

The second question, "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" begins to be answered in verse 36.

Notice that the very first word of verse 36 is the word, "but", which is an adversative conjunction that not only shows a shift in the topics being discussed, but also contrasts the two topics against one another. In verses 4-35, Jesus spoke of many different signs and many different time periods, and He uses the phrase, "those days" that are leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in vs.19, 22, and 29. He contrasts "those days" with "that day and hour" in verse 36 and verse 42.

Notice also that in regards to the destruction of Jerusalem in verses 4-35, Jesus tells of signs that would warn His believers to flee for safety, but when He begins to answer the question of his "Parousia," i.e., His coming and of the end of the world, He states that, that knowledge is unavailable to everyone including Himself. He further states that His Parousia would be like the destruction that came upon the world in the days of Noah. There were no signs leading up to the day when God shut the door on the ark (Genesis 7:16).

Of course there were warnings given. After all, Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and then there was that humongous ark and all those animals that were marching into it. That should have given those who perished in the flood some kind of clue that something drastic was about to take place. But, they just carried on with their life as always, until that day that Noah entered into the ark (verse 38).

I'll stop here for now, but God willing, I will pick up at this point in the next article.

Imputation

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Calvinism is the theology of the Protestant Reformation. We usually think of Calvinism as being summarized in five points that make the acronym TULIP: Total Hereditary Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. But there is far more to Calvinism than the five points. In fact, the mechanism that ties all points of Calvinism together is that of imputation.

But in each and every case alike imputation is simply the act of setting to one's account; and the act of setting to one's account is in itself the same act whether the thing set to his account stands on the credit or debit side of the account... the three-fold doctrine of imputation - of Adam's sin to his posterity, of the sins of His people to the redeemer, and of the righteousness of Christ to His people - at last came to its rights as the core of the constitutive doctrines of Christianity - the sinfulness of the human race, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and justification by faith. The importance of the doctrine of imputation is that it is the hinge on which these three great doctrines turn, and the guardian of their purity.
(Warfield. 263, 266)

Professor Warfield, perhaps the greatest Calvinistic scholar of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, regarded his Calvinistic concept of imputation as "the core of the constitutive doctrines of Christianity," "the hinge on which these three great doctrines turn, and the guardian of their purity."

For the record, I believe the human race is sinful because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), that Jesus satisfies the demands of justice for sin because He died for us (Romans 3:24-26), and that we are justified by a faith that works (James 2:24).

The Greek word underlying the English term "impute" is found thirty-nine times in the New Testament. It is a term used in accounting and means "*reckon, calculate -a. take into account.*" (Arndt & Gingrich. 476) It's what the accountant puts down on the ledger to one's account, whether for good or bad, credit or debit.

Calvinism affirms a divine juggling of the books. It teaches that Adam's sin, eating the forbidden fruit, is set down to the account of all mankind as actually our sin, that the sins of God's elect are set down to Christ as actually His, and that the righteous life of Christ is set down to those whom Christ redeems as actually theirs. Thus, Calvinistic imputation is a transfer of the blame (or credit) from the one who really did the act(s) to others. Is this what the Scriptures teach?

Adam's Sin to His Posterity?

The basic passage Calvinists appeal to to prove that Adam's sin is charged to all the human race is Romans 5:12-19. Please read this passage. It does not say one word about Adam's sin being imputed to his offspring. It does teach that sin and death (spiritual) entered through Adam (verse 12). It also teaches that sin and death spread to all (Ibid). Why? "because all sinned." (Ibid) It does not say all sinned in Adam. Calvinists assume and assert this. It says all sinned (cf. Romans 3:23).

The same "all" who have become sinners through Adam have "justification of life" through Christ (verse 18). If spiritual death through Adam is the unconditional inheritance of all mankind, then life through Christ is

also the unconditional inheritance of all mankind, and all who have ever lived shall be saved.

Rather than proving that Adam's sin is imputed to all mankind, i.e., that all people sin because we are sinners, the passage proves that all people are sinners because we have sinned. We are condemned for our own transgressions, not that of Adam (cf. Ezekiel 18:20).

The Sins of the Elect to Christ?

Calvinists appeal to 2 Corinthians 5:21 to prove that God actually charged Christ with the sins of the elect. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Obviously the apostle is using a figure of speech when He calls Christ "sin." Surely no one would contend that Christ is literally "sin." Again, Calvinists simply assume and assert without proof that the figure means our sins were charged to Jesus. Why not take the figure to mean what we know to be true, that Christ was made a sin offering for us? (cf. Isaiah 53:4, 10; Ephesians 5:2) This is the figure of speech called "metonymy," in "which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation" (Bullinger. 538). This specific usage is the word "sin" to mean the "sin-offering" (Ibid. 584).

Righteous Life of Christ to the Elect?

What does God impute to His people? The word translated "impute" is found eleven times in Romans chapter four. Since this chapter contains over one fourth of the New Testament uses of the word, obviously it is a crucial passage on imputation. In fact, Romans four is the chapter that tells us what God imputes (accounts) to His people.

For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' (Romans 4:3)

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.... (Romans 4:5)

The "work" of Romans four refers to keeping the law of Moses (cf. Romans 2:12-15, 17-20, 25-27; 3:19-21, 27-31). Notice, verse five doesn't say, "to him who does not **depend on** works." It says, "to him who does not work." If the word "work" means any work, even obedience to the gospel, it means if we do any work at all we will be lost.

Now what does God put down to the account of His people? Their faith. And this is not faith alone, it is obedient faith (James 2:21-23).

There is not one word in Scripture about Adam's sin being imputed to us, our sins being imputed to Christ, or the righteous life of Christ being imputed to Christians. All three legs of Calvinistic imputation are myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4; **NASB, ESV**).

Conclusion

The Lord is fair (Ezekiel 18:20,25). He doesn't juggle the books. He sets down to each person's account what actually belongs to him. When we sin, he charges us with our own sins, not that of another. God didn't charge Jesus with the guilt of our sins; Christ Jesus was the sin offering for us. When we believe in Christ, as demonstrated by the obedience of faith, He sets that down to our account, forgives our sins, and declares us righteous. And this is not a play like righteousness. We really are righteous, because all our sins are forgiven. I am so thankful that God is fair.

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