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

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

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 christstheway.com.

Dragon Man

Wayne Fancher, Jr. | Searcy, Arkansas, USA

The latest news in the world of Anthropology is the discovery of a massive human skull in China that has been named, Dragon Man, because it was found close to the Dragon River. After reading articles about the Dragon Man skull in "The Guardian," "The New York Times," "Forbes Magazine," "Smithsonian Magazine," and "National Geographic," I can firmly say, they have found a giant skull in China.

The reason I put my conclusion so bluntly and simply, is because in every source I read, after they give the fact about the find of the skull and the size of the skull, then the articles immediately go into the interpretation of the fact about the skulls existence. I am talking about the discussion of human evolution where Dragon Man fits into their evolutionary human tree. That is where they all lose me.

I will now give you Fancher's interpretation of the Dragon Man skull. The massive giant skull of the Dragon man belonged to a massive giant man. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Forget all the arguments that are and will be made about how this skull affects our understanding of human evolution. The simple fact is that giants lived at one time on the earth.

Genesis 6:4 There were giants on the earth in those days,

1 Samuel 17:4 And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. (over nine feet tall)

There are several hoaxes about giants on the internet. Do not fall for them or use them as evidence. However, there are other evidences that giants did exist. So when they find a skull of a giant person in China, I just smile to myself and think well yes of course they would find things like this. The Bible says they existed and I believe it.

To Whom The Stroke Was Due

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Isaiah 53:8b says in the ASV, "...he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due..." This reading is a little different than some of the other standard translations of this verse, and the words "was due" are in italics, but assuming the translation is correct, it sure sounds like Jesus got what was due us, what we deserved. See the proof for the Vicarious Atonement Of Christ here?

So the text teaches Jesus got what we deserved instead of us getting what we deserved. That's Substitution. I'll let the reader make up his own mind about whether the translation is justified. But if the translation is accurate, it proves Jesus Substituted for us.

Questions from Nigeria

Question

Is it right for the church to flash the photographs of members whose birthday took place within the week on the projector just before the closing hymn?

Answer

Members of the local church should have a deep interest in one another as an expression of the mutual love we must have (John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 12:26). The apostle Paul's letter to the churches characteristically concluded with personal greetings, sometimes including personal information (Romans 16:3-15, 21-23; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 4:21-22; Colossians 4:12-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). These letters were intended to be read aloud in the churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). It is good to share news about each other with the church, so we can "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Question

Also, a member of the church sponsoring the provision of cake after worship service. Is it wrong?

Answer

We should not come together for the purpose of eating a common meal (1 Corinthians 11:18, 22, 34). Parties are not the work of the church, which is a spiritual relationship (Romans 14:17; Ephesians 1:3). So as not to place a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 8:13), in my judgment it is best to keep this completely separate from the worship assembly of the church.

Question

Should a brother with one child be appointed an elder if he meets other qualifications?

Answer

To be qualified to be an elder, among other things, a brother must have faithful children (Titus 1:5-6). This is a plural of class. A man with one child has children. When Sarah bore Isaac, she exclaimed, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age"

(Genesis 21:7). Sarah had one child, but she was the mother of children. To be taken into the number as a “widow indeed,” an aged widow must have “brought up children” (1 Timothy 5:10). What if she had only had one child? An otherwise qualified man who has one faithful child may scripturally serve as an elder.

Facing the Challenges of What to Become in Life

Sunday Ayandare | Ibandan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Someone was trying to point out to his friend how he had behaved in a manner that was not expected of a Christian. But the other fellow retorted: “Don’t preach to me. If I wanted to hear a sermon, I’ll go to church. Now, we are doing business!”

This clearly illustrates the mind set, albeit erroneous, of some brethren that the practice of Christianity is limited only to when Christians are in the gathering of the saints. But Christianity, according to the teaching of the New Testament, is a way of life. It embraces every relationship in the life of a disciple of Christ. Just as we glorify God in the church (Ephesians 3:21), just so must we relate with members of our community according to the teaching of Christ and His apostles (1 Corinthians 10:31-33). Peter put it this way:

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

In our civil relationships, we must obey the governing authorities and pay our taxes and rates (Romans 13:1-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17). In our family relationships, we must be guided by the teaching of Christ and His chosen apostles as husbands, wives, and children (Ephesians 5:21 - 6:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

Just as we try to bring the principles of righteousness to bear in our spiritual relationship in the church, in the community, in the home and in our civil relationships, just so we must do when we come to our economic relationships. In short, to be a faithful Christian is to imbibe the teaching of Christ and His apostles in all aspects of our lives. To fail to care for our families, for example, is to deny the faith and end up being worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

How Do We Face the Challenges Of What To Become In Life?

Let us begin by highlighting the fact that as Christians we must work. At the dawn of creation, “God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). This was evidently before the fall. It should be noted that cultivating and keeping the garden was not meant to provide means of livelihood for man. But after the fall, man was cursed, God said:

“in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life ... By the sweat of your face you will eat bread till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken. For you are dust and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:17-19).

To the Ephesians, Paul wrote:

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hand what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

The Thessalonians are enjoined upon

“to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your own hands, just as we commanded you so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12).

It is to this end that “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Why Should We Work?

The Word of God is clear as to why man must work. One, we are to work to support ourselves (2 Thessalonians 3:12; Acts 20:34). Two, we are to work so as to provide for our families (1 Timothy 5:8). Three, we must work so as to support our dependents (Acts 20:34). Four, we are to work so as to be able to support the needy (Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35; Galatians 6:2). Finally, we are to work to support the

church (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). Let us keep it in minds that the local church grows by that which every member supplies (Ephesians 4:16).

What Type of Work Should Christians Engage In?

The New Testament is plain as to which type of work we should engage in as Christians. Specifically, Ephesians 4:28 states “that which is good.” So as we think of what to become in life, we should settle our minds on that which is good. That does not necessarily mean a job with robust salary. Essentially, a good work should be that which is not contrary to godly principles and righteousness. A good work must not violate the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-8).

Smuggling and drug peddling, for instance, are contrary to the laws of God and the laws of the land. A good work must not “box” a Christian into in tight corner as he defends the truth (Galatians 2:18). Moreover, a good work must not expose a Christian into tempting situations (1 Corinthians 10:12-13). A good work must not bring a Christian into having fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). A good work is that which could be done in quietness, rest of mind.

“And to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands just as we commanded you; so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

How Should We Conduct Ourselves In Our Business?

First of all, in whatever we lay our hands upon; we must put a high premium on the “golden rule.” “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Besides, honesty, the old adage says, is the best policy. Romans 12:17b says, “Respect what is right in the sight of all men.” Consider also 2 Corinthians 8:21 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. Honesty demands just weight (Proverbs 11:1; 20:10, 23). It also demands 8-hours work for 8-hours pay. Other passages to put into consideration are 1 Peter 2:18-20; Colossians 3:22 - 4:1; Ephesians 6:5-9 and 1 Timothy 6:1, 2.

Conclusion

Christianity is a way of life and whatever challenges we face in life and wherever we find ourselves, we must acquit ourselves as is becoming the followers of Christ.

So You Want to Be a Preacher (1)

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

There is no more noble aspiration than to be a servant of the Most High God in seeking the lost and encouraging the saved. After more than 65 years of engaging in this labor of love, please allow me to share some perspectives from my viewpoint. With my father and grandfather having been preachers (beginning in 1881), perhaps I can offer some worthwhile thoughts.

Preaching is not a way to get rich

If you are looking to preaching as a way to line your pockets with silver, you have made a poor choice. While it is certain that in general preachers are supported better than they were in times past, preaching is not a path to wealth. I suppose there have always been those who looked upon it as a way of gain, as Paul had to deal with such attitudes in his day. “And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingers not, and their destruction slumbers not” (2 Peter 2:3). In Romans 16:18 he wrote of those who “serve their own belly,” and then in 1 Timothy 6:5 he warned about those “who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”

We are encouraged to trust in the Lord. “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). One said preachers are to be humble and poor, and that we should depend on the Lord to make us

humble, and the brethren to keep us poor. Paul said he had learned to be content with much or with little (Philippians 4:11-13). It would do well for every young man wanting to preach to read **J. D. Tant, Texas Preacher** and see how it was 100 years ago when most preachers had to farm and do hard labor in order to feed their families while they preached.

In my first work among the Choctaw Indians in Pushmataha County, OK, I believe I was paid \$25 a week (1959). We lived in a little unfinished 4-room house in this community of 600. We drove about 25 miles to Talihina to do our laundry, and 37 miles to Antlers for doctor visits when we were expecting our first child. Gasoline was eating us up. The Castleberry church down in Ft. Worth increased my wages by another \$25. It was still tight, but we were making it. After being there a year with increasing attendance and contributions, I approached the congregation for a slight raise. "What are you doing with the \$25 we are already giving you?" (I had previously told them of the \$25 from Ft. Worth, but I guess they had forgotten it.) After their question I dropped the subject and never brought it up again. In fact, in 53 years of preaching, I think I asked for a raise only one other time, and I believe that was for \$5 a week.

At times I have supplemented my income with part-time work when we had high medical bills, but we never went hungry. I can remember when my father had to sell our car to pay the bills when the church could have easily increased his income, but a power struggle among the elders prevented a raise. But I never heard my father complain or contemplate giving up preaching. I certainly believe the Scriptures teach a preacher should be supported, and adequately, but "money-seekers" should seek elsewhere.

Preachers should be prudent in preparing for old age. Not many churches provide any sort of retirement package, and too many preachers become the object of charity because they have not been wise in preparing for the future. Solomon urges us to "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest" (Proverbs 6:6-8).

"Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The above statement is found in Numbers 32:23, where Moses is warning the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Israel had been made to wander in the wilderness for forty years because of their lack of faith and trust in God, listening to the evil report given by ten of the twelve spies. They are now preparing to cross the Jordan and to take the land the Lord had promised them. Yet before they cross over, these two tribes, who have much livestock, see the land of Jazer and Gilead on the east side of the river was a good place for their animals. They ask for this territory for their inheritance. At first Moses was against this idea, thinking they just did not want to go and fight, not willing to do what was required of them by the Lord. They came to this great leader and explained they would build sheepfolds for their livestock, go over and fight against the enemy with their brethren, and then once the land was taken, return home to the territory given them on the east side of the Jordan. Moses agreed, yet he also warned them if they failed to do as they promised their sin would find them out (Read Numbers 32:1-27).

The principle of one's sin finding him out is alive and well today just as it was when Moses stated it hundreds of years ago. If we sin God knows it! Notice the words of the inspired writer of the book of Hebrews, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). This great truth was often illustrated by Jesus with those whom He met daily. In speaking with the woman at the well look at part of the conversation He had with her, "The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (John 4:17-19). Jesus knew all about this woman's life even before she told Him about her marital situation. He even knew Judas would betray Him before they came to the

garden to arrest Him (Mark 14). Sin cannot be hidden from God!

It is amazing to me the length some will go to conceal their sin. Some will lie saying, "I'm not guilty," knowing all the time they have committed the transgression for which they are charged. Then you have those who shift the blame to others; it is their fault. King Saul tried this but was still rejected by God and was no longer permitted to serve as king of Israel (1 Samuel 15). There are those who try to redefine sin. Many in society today say homosexuality is not a transgression of God's law; it is just an alternate lifestyle. Yet the Bible clearly teaches such is sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Others think ignorance is bliss. If one does not know something is sinful, then somehow at least in their eyes it is not a sin. Paul's statement to those in the city of Athens says differently, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

The Psalmist said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1). Then in the book of Proverbs we read, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (28:13). Do these verses contradict each other? Certainly not! If the Bible is true, and it is, then it does not teach one thing in one place and something else on the same subject in another location. The sin mentioned in Psalm 32:1 is one which is forgiven and covered by God. The one we read about in Proverbs 28:13 is a sin which a person tries to conceal or hide from God. The wise man explains what one should do with sin, confess, forsake, and receive the mercy of the Lord.

To the sinners Peter was addressing on Pentecost, who had not received the mercy of the Father, they were told to, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). If one sins after becoming a Christian, he is instructed to repent and pray (Acts 8:22). If you have sinned make sure the Lord covers those transgressions through forgiveness by application of the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7).

Always remember your sins will find you out. You may conceal them from others in this life, but when standing before the Lord in judgment they are known to Him (Psalm 90:8). Neither time nor space heals iniquity; just godly sorrow which produces repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Do not try to hide sin. Why not simply do what the Lord tells you so they can be remitted. This is the only way to receive the blessing of eternal life in heaven with the Father.

A Blank Piece of Paper

Mike Thomas | Bowling Greek, Kentucky, USA

The story is told of an old man in a nursing home who kept a blank piece of paper on a stand near his front door for people to sign. He placed it there because he wanted to send a note of appreciation for everyone who visited him in his confinement. He knew how important it was to feel appreciated as a servant, having done that most of his life. Visiting the sick. Giving rides to those in need. Listening to a grieving friend. He had spent many hours and days doing for others, so he knew there was a possibility some might do it for him. He would be fine either way, especially since a true servant of Christ is always looking for ways to serve instead of being served. But he wanted to let others know how much he appreciated them should they come by to see him. Unfortunately, no one came by.

When the man died, people came out in numbers to pay their respect to his family. They sent flowers, made meals, and did all they could to show they cared. But amidst all the generosity was the blank piece of paper. The flowers smelled great and the people's presence made a difference, but the one thing the man needed most from his friends and brethren they failed to provide: an opportunity for him to write them a card of appreciation for coming to visit.

The Lord tells us to remember the orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27) and to care for brethren in need (Matthew 25:35-39). Jesus says we are to look at people in these conditions as if He Himself were the one in need. Would we let Jesus go unnoticed if He lay sick in the hospital, or was at

home as a lonely widow, or in need as a falsely imprisoned Christian, or in distress while trying to provide for his family? Would we be too busy for Him? Yet Jesus says of those who serve others, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (verse 40).

Do the widows, elderly, and indigent in your life know you care? How about the Christians you see working hard and sacrificing for others? Do they know you appreciate their dedication to God? The Lord wants us to remember one another in encouragement. Paul did this with Epaphroditus in writing the Christians at Philippi. He said, “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me” (Philippians 2:29-30). It is good to make note of those who need support and to hold such people “in esteem.” Give them a call. Send them a note. Go by to visit. Tell them you love them and appreciate them (including your family!). Do all you can to lift a soul, bear a burden, and show you care. Strive with all your might to leave no blank papers in the lives of those who know you.

Raising Godly Children (3)

Julius C. Nwankwo | Aba, Abia State, Nigeria

7. Devoted to His Word:

Psalm 1:1-3:

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.”

2 Timothy 3:15: “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”.

We fool ourselves if we think that we can raise our children to become godly men and women without having a passion for God and His Word ourselves. His words must be on our heart. We can judge our commitment by discerning how much time we spend keeping God’s Word fresh on our hearts and minds. When we do spend time in His Word, is it because we desire His Word or because we are obligated to? We do go through ups and downs in our spiritual life, but the real test is how much we really love God through all those times.

8. Committed to teaching our children.

God told the children of Israel:

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children’” (Deuteronomy 4: 9-10).

The wise man said “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

“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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6: 7-9).

The father is responsible for diligently teaching his sons. Interestingly, we do not see God charging preachers, elders, deacons or teachers in the church to do this. We must, therefore, refuse any tendency to pass off our responsibility as fathers to formally teach our children. Instead, we are to embrace our responsibility as a charge from God. What are we to do as parents?

We need to teach God's Words diligently to our sons. The content of our instruction is God's words or commands. We need to teach them both the positive and negative commands. Since many of the commands are set within the contexts of interesting historical situations, we are also to recite those narratives. The Lord brings that 'God-conscious' perspective to our children through us as parents. This in turn brings great blessing to our lives.

With a little observation of the typical Christian parents, we can see why many children of Christian families go wayward. The parents simply don't teach their children. Some children have heard their parents teach others but not themselves.

(a). Walking somewhere (today driving or riding). Often times the father listens to music or some radio programs that distracts them from having conversation with their children. The children love to talk and ask about things. Do you ask them about their day? Do you like to talk to them? They really like to talk to you.

(b). Lying down (getting ready for bed). In the old days, houses were smaller. Sometimes boys would sleep in one room while the girls in another. This provided a lot of opportunities to share experiences of fathers with their sons and mothers with their daughters. I remember some of my good conversations with my father happened when we were together in his room. Just before going to sleep we talked a bit. If children have their own bedrooms, then the parent should pause and talk with each child before they go asleep. Recount the day a bit. Give them a hug and or kiss.

(c). Getting up (early in the morning). The morning sets the pace and attitude of the day. The father should share some reflections from his morning devotions or say some statements that help the children properly look at each day. The father should be an early riser so that he can help encourage the family when they get up. Everyday we face many situations through which the Lord wishes to teach us and then pass those lessons on to our children. Mealtimes are another great opportunity to share about what one is learning.

We surround ourselves with what we love. If we love God's Word then it will be all around us. We can put scripture on our computer screens, walls, plaques, etc. We should throw away some of those old items that show our old treasures and replace them with our growing love of God's Word. Take down those pictures of movie and sports idols. More than this memorize these verses with your children and learn to treasure them. The best place to store God's Word is in our heart. What is on our walls should only reflect what is in our hearts. We put scripture about our home not because it is mandatory but because that is what we like.

What do you decorate your walls with? Would anyone know that you have a great love for God from walking in or around your home? God expects the fathers to take charge of spiritual instruction in the home.

The whole family is commanded to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. The father's love, obedience, and zeal for the Lord will greatly impact the family.

The wife assists the husband in carrying out his responsibilities.

There are two ways a father must instruct his children about the Lord: formally and informally. Family devotions are important and necessary to train the children and inspire them in their worship of the Lord.

Parents should point out to their children their need and the way of salvation but wait for God to stir their hearts unto repentance.

The parents should pray about each child's future and pray that as a godly child they would grow to fulfill God's purpose.

Conclusion: Without proper teaching of God's word and consistent discipline, the child will persist in his foolish ways. He will assume that he deserves the very best treatment from others. He becomes proud. In order to get what he thinks he should receive, he will fight and argue. He disregards authorities and is only

focused on himself. Because of this, he will be a threat to the society and will face grievous consequences, and without change he faces jail and even early death, and this is exactly what Nigeria is today. So sad!

Church Cooperation in Financing Evangelism

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

Proposition: It Is Unscriptural For A Church To Send Funds From Her Treasury Unto Another Church For The Purpose Of Supporting The Recipient's Evangelism Work.

A local church is an assembly of Christians that meets regularly for the purpose of worship and work of the Lord, under the supervision of its own elders (Acts 13:1 – “Now in the church that was at Antioch...”) The proposition that I shall be affirming is this; it is unscriptural (i.e. having no scriptural authority – either by command, example or inference) for one (or more) church(es) to send funds from their treasuries unto another church for the purpose of supporting the recipient’s evangelism work.

I am not opposing church cooperation, neither am I denying the right of churches to work together (cooperate) in preaching the gospel or establishing congregations. The issue is on how should churches cooperate in preaching. Should it be done jointly or concurrently? In other words, should funds be joined together by two or more churches in order to preach OR should each church plan its work within its ability and jurisdiction of its elders and directly support gospel preachers to preach? I oppose the former believing it has no scriptural justification. Scriptural church cooperation was always of concurrent and never joint action.

The New Testament teaches that each church is to plan its own work within its ability and then finance it by itself with full oversight of the “elders among them” (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28; 14:23).

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

“So when they had appointed elders in every church...”

These passages show that elders are only to take oversight of their own members. For the elders of one church to take oversight of the members, money, and work of another church apart from the church they oversee is going beyond what is written, and the moment a church gives her money to another church to preach for her, she has lost oversight and control of such funds. There is not a single example in the New Testament where a church financially shared in the responsibility of another church (either partly or fully) when it comes to evangelism and edification. There is not a single New Testament command or precedent where a church planned her program and then solicited for financial support from another church. The onus is on anyone who denies this to show such command or precedent in the New Testament.

The New Testament Pattern of Church Cooperation In Evangelism and Edification

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the gospel had reached Samaria, they sent Peter and John to them (Acts 8:14, 25). They did not send money to the church in Samaria to assist her in the work; rather, the preachers were the ones supported to go out.

When the gospel was preached in Antioch and a congregation was established, the Jerusalem church cooperated with the church in Antioch by sending Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22). Again, the preacher was the one supported to go out.

Different churches worked together in supporting an evangelist to preach the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16). We need to understand that in the preaching of the gospel, God has designed

that the preachers be supported to preach and not transfer funds from one church to another (1 Corinthians 9:14 – “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel”).

Let us notice that this support was sent directly to the evangelist (Philippians 4:18; 2 Corinthians 11:9). “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”

“And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything, I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I keep myself.”

This shows a number of churches may cooperate in supporting the same preacher, but each church must send directly to the preacher and not to a church and without centralization of pooled funds. No church in the New Testament ever sent money through or to another church for preaching/evangelism.

In Benevolence

The church in Antioch made up its own funds for benevolent work by contributing to needs of “brethren in Judea” in time of famine (Acts 11:27-30). They sent it through their messengers, Barnabas and Saul.

“And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

The churches of Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia cooperated in meeting the needs of the Jerusalem church when the need was so great that the Jerusalem congregation could not meet it. (Romans 15:25-27,31). This benevolence was sent to Jerusalem by the messenger (individual) elected or chosen by each church (1 Corinthians 16:3-4; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24). There was no pooling of funds in this case and no combining of funds under centralized control existed in New Testament days. The funds were administered where they were sent by the elders of the church (cf. Acts 11:30). Paul commanded them to send and approved their sending, thus authorizing what they did for the same purpose they did it.

These are the only two instances in the New Testament where a church or churches sent money to another church or churches. And in both instances, the churches receiving the money were destitute churches. The practice of a church promoting a “good work” beyond its ability and soliciting funds from other churches to pay for it is unknown to the New Testament. Where is the passage?

Is Acts 11:27-30 Authority For Sending Funds For Evangelism?

Obviously, Acts 11:27-30 has nothing to do with evangelism and cannot serve as authority for sending funds from one church to another in evangelism. Being destitute is not the same as undertaking a task beyond one’s ability. In Acts 11, it was a problem of famine, an uncreated need that necessitated the sending of relief from Antioch to Jerusalem. The need was temporary and there was no record of solicitation of funds. Besides, it was a local church responsibility and the work was not assumed. On the other hand, what is being done today is a man-made emergency (TV evangelism program) which is permanent and continuous solicitation of funds is being made regularly for the execution of the work. This is a work that should be the responsibility of each church to be done according to the ability of each congregation. There is no parallel between such arrangement and what was done in Acts 11. Would you consider a sick brother with leukemia who needs N10M and a healthy brother who plans (beyond his ability) to buy a private jet so he can fly to South Africa to preach the gospel as same thing? Who would you give your money if called upon?

Is I Corinthians 16:1-4 Authority For Sending Funds For Evangelism?

Also, this passage has nothing to do with evangelism and cannot serve as authority for sending funds from one church to another in evangelism. In I Corinthians 16:1-4, the funds were sent for benevolence (Romans 15:25-26) and not for evangelism. The need was not created and not an assumed scheme like a TV program. The need was temporary and not permanent. To use this text as authority for evangelism, one

would have to show its relationship to the work of evangelism. If two or more brethren or even a church plans an evangelism program, opens an account for it (like it is being done in Lagos currently) and begs for funds (say N10B to plant a church in Banana Island of Lagos and another in Asokoro, Abuja and request the recipients to send 5% of their income monthly), is that the same with a situation where crises or a disaster hits a church? No!

Are These Examples Binding?

Yes. These examples are binding because we find that the same pattern was used in all similar situations without variation. Churches always send out or directly support preachers to preach in evangelism while in benevolence, funds are usually sent directly from church with ability to a church that is destitute.

How the Church Did its work of Evangelism

The church in Antioch sent out preachers (Acts 13:3 – “Then having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away”). The church in Thessalonica sounded out the word (1 Thessalonians 1:8 – “For from you the word of the Lord sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.”). The Jerusalem church sent out men (Acts 8:14,25; 11:22 –

“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent Peter and John to them...So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

“Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch”). The church in Philippi supported gospel preachers (Philippians 1:5 – “For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”). The church in Ephesus was commanded to preach the word (Ephesians 6:15 – “And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”)

What Is Wrong With Churches Combining Funds For Evangelism?

It is injurious to church autonomy: Autonomy is surrendered when a church takes oversight of the money sent from another church. If the sending church says to the receiving church, “Use this money to preach,” they are telling the church what to do. And if the receiving church says; “this is what we want to do with the money,” they are having control over that money and the sending church has forfeited her autonomy.

It ties many churches together and have them guilty of one sin: The seven churches in Asia were judged independently of the other. It suggests each has and does its own work.

It is a bad example: Imagine if all churches start begging to do evangelism; that would be shameful. How would you feel if you have a son that keeps begging all the time to carry out a project he chose to do? Is it even expedient to obligate oneself beyond one’s ability? COC Lagos Youth, Lagos Preachers Forum and various church planting teams in Nigeria are all perpetual beggars. The only way to sustain their work is to keep begging. Some are currently begging for N1.6M to plant a church in Ajah, Lagos and they think they are doing a good job.

God recognizes the strength of each congregation and would not expect a church to do beyond her ability. The church in Philadelphia had little strength but worked according to her ability (Revelation 3:8 – “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, for no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”).

What About the Churches Established Through This Unscriptural Means?

One quibble often posed is this: “Are the persons converted or the congregations planted by this unscriptural means unacceptable to God?” The answer is simple: just like a child born through or by means of fornication is not guilty of the sin of the parents, the churches established through pooled funds are also not guilty of the sin of the “parent” or “sponsoring” churches provided they are taught and realize that the means through which they came to existence was wrong and are unwilling to tow that path. Some may think they are getting results while engaging in these unscriptural schemes; well, Moses also got the desired result when he hit the rock instead of speaking to it as God instructed, but he lost the opportunity

to enter the promise land (Numbers 20:8-11).

Conclusion

In evangelism, the local church sent out men to preach, raised its funds, selected its messenger and sent directly to the work being done (support of gospel preachers).

In benevolence, the local church raised its funds, selected its messenger and sent directly to the work being done (destitute church in need).

Where is the passage setting forth either by precept, example, or inference that any New Testament church ever sent a contribution through another church to be forwarded to the work being done?

Matthew 24 (Part 8)

Patrick Andrews | Conway, Arkansas, USA

"Parousia"

Imagine what you would think if you were to see someone putting a jigsaw puzzle together with a nine pound hammer, i.e. just beating the wrong pieces into places they weren't meant to go. You would think this person to be lacking common sense. And yet, people will do the same thing with God's Word. They will bang and beat passages together that have nothing to do with one another.

Many people will tie scriptures together that are not related to one another and they will shove one definition of a word into places where it does not fit. They do these things in order to enhance the flavor of some particular false doctrine they are attempting to swallow. It's like putting sugar into a glass of poison. It might make the poison taste better going down, but it will still kill you.

When we are studying the scriptures, we need to make sure that the things we believe and teach, harmonize with all other scriptures. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus prayed to the Father that all of his disciples would be set apart from the world and be united in truth, and by truth (John 17:17). Paul echoed this same admonishment to the church at Corinth, when he wrote:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

One subject that the religious world is divided on is the return of the Lord. When the apostles asked Christ in Matthew 24:3 about His coming and the end of the world, they used the Greek word, "Parousia". The word, "Parousia" is a word that has more than one definition. To decide which definition to use depends on two things, i.e. how the word is used in the immediate context of scripture and whether or not that definition agrees with the rest of God's Word.

I'm not a Greek scholar, but I'm able to look up a word in a Greek lexicon just as easy as I can look up a word in Webster's dictionary. Below, the word "coming" is defined in "Strong's Greek English Lexicon as:

"from the present participle of Strong's #3918; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; specially, of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by implication) physically, aspect:--coming, presence" (Strong's number #952. "Parousia", [par-oo-see'-ah]).

You can see that the word "Parousia" has more than one definition. The way we decide on which definition to use depends upon the context of the thought being considered and whether or not that definition agrees with the rest of God's Word. We can either slide that definition smoothly into its rightful place or we can take a hammer and beat it into a place where it does not belong.

To dogmatically insist that a particular definition of a word has to be used, because it bolsters some false doctrine you are trying to defend, is the same as pouring sugar in a glass of poison before you drink it.

This forced definition might put a smile on your face as you vainly attempt to confirm your false doctrine, but in the end, it's going to kill you. So let's look at this word, "Parousia", in light of its context and in light of how its various definitions harmonize with the rest of scripture.

Look at the scripture below and decide which definition of "Parousia" best fits.

"I am glad of the coming (Parousia) of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied" (1 Corinthians 16:17).

Is this verse speaking of the coming of the Lord in judgment on Jerusalem, His final return to judge the entire world, or simply the arrival and presence of these three men in Corinth? You decide.

Now look at another passage in the same book and decide how the word, "Parousia" is used there. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (Parousia)" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

Taking into consideration the subject of the entire 15th chapter of First Corinthians (I'm not going to tell you what that is), you decide which definition best suits the word, "coming", in this context. Is it referring to Christ's return in judgment on Jerusalem? Is it speaking of His physical presence like the three men mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:27 above, or is it referring to the resurrection when Christ returns to judge the entire world?

As I stated earlier, there is a lot of confusion in the religious world on this topic. You have to make your own decisions on what you believe. Is it true to God's Word, or have you simply beat the definition that suits you best into a place where it does not fit?

In Matthew 24:3, when the Apostles asked about His coming (Parousia) and the end of the world, which definition of "Parousia" do you think they were referring to?

I'll tell you what I believe, but you must decide for yourself whether or not what I believe is true or contradictory to the rest of the scriptures. You have to decide for yourself because your faith has to be your faith.

Figuratively speaking, I believe that Christ returned in some way in judgment on Jerusalem in or about 70 A.D. He didn't have to leave heaven to do this anymore than when He brought judgment on other nations that are mentioned throughout the Old Testament. He was perfectly able to be sitting beside God on His throne and bring judgment on Jerusalem just as He prophesied forty years earlier.

Literally speaking, I believe that Christ is speaking of His return on the last day, at the sound of the last trumpet when He will gather and separate those who will be saved in heaven from those who will spend eternity in hell. I believe that this definition of "Parousia" best suits the context and harmonizes with other scriptures on the same topic. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:8-12; and John 5:28-29. However; you have to decide for yourself what Jesus is really teaching in Matthew 24 and 25.

Next month I want to talk on the "Abomination of Desolation."

The Voice You Hear ... It's Not Jesus

DO YOU REALLY KNOW JESUS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

From time to time, I've had conversations with folks who insist that the Lord speaks directly to them. Some borrow language from an encounter Elijah had with God in 1 Kings 19:12 ("a still small voice"). One described the Lord's voice as being loud and authoritative. Another said that she hears multiple voices, and must discern which of them is God speaking to her.

Those familiar with the Bible realize there are several occasions recorded where God spoke audibly to individuals. Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Isaiah, Peter, James; we could amass an extensive list of people. And yet what many do not realize or consider is this: if we compare the number of people of whom it is said they heard God's voice with the number of people who are not so designated, those who had such an experience are an enormous minority. God speaking audibly to an individual is not commonplace. It is the exception, not the rule.

There are a few questions that cross my mind when I hear someone claim that the Lord speaks to them.

1. **What makes you so special?** All of God's people are special (1 Peter 2:9-10), but when someone claims to receive something that is rare among God's people, what is it that has set them apart from the rest? As we look in the Bible, those whom God spoke to audibly did huge things. Noah built an ark by the direction of God for the saving of his family from an impending judgment (Genesis 6-8). Moses was called to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian captivity (Exodus 3-4). Joshua led the people on a military campaign into the land of Canaan (Joshua 5-19).
2. **How often does the Lord speak to you?** Some seem to believe that God speaks in an audible fashion to them on a daily basis. However, as we look at those who heard the voice of the Lord in the Bible, it was far from a daily experience. In fact, we often find time stamps in the text (the age of the hearer, a date, etc.), which reveal how seldom these events occurred.
3. **What message did God give you?** We do not find God speaking to anyone directly about frivolous things. He spoke of national concerns, provided supernatural promises, and revealed spiritual direction. He does not tell people about open parking spots or sales at a grocery store!
4. **How do you know it was God?** One woman told me that she hears the voice of the Lord often. She went on to tell me that she also hears Satan's voice, and a few other voices. She acknowledged that hearing voices is often associated with some form of mental illness, but claimed certainty that it was God and other spiritual beings who spoke to her. How can she be sure? A young man I know has a video on the web intended to help people know the voice of God. Basically he says to carefully think on what is said, and if you believe it is consistent with your perspective of God, then it is the voice of God. Such a subjective approach makes any message on the hearer's mind a message from God.

Does the Lord speak to His people today? Absolutely (Hebrews 1:1-3). What we must determine is how. The Bible reveals that God has given His will and it has been written down (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 17:17; Romans 15:4). The Lord spoke to a small number of people, but in them, He revealed His will for all. Paul did not tell the church at Ephesus that Jesus would speak directly to them. If they wanted to know His will, they would have to read what he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17). Again, Paul didn't tell Timothy that the Lord would speak to him. He told him to give attention to reading (1 Timothy 4:13) and to be a diligent student of the word (2 Timothy 2:15). We must do the same if we are to hear God's word.

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