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Godliness. Reverence. Obedience. Worship.



a quarterly e-magazine designed to promote
growth in faith and service to God



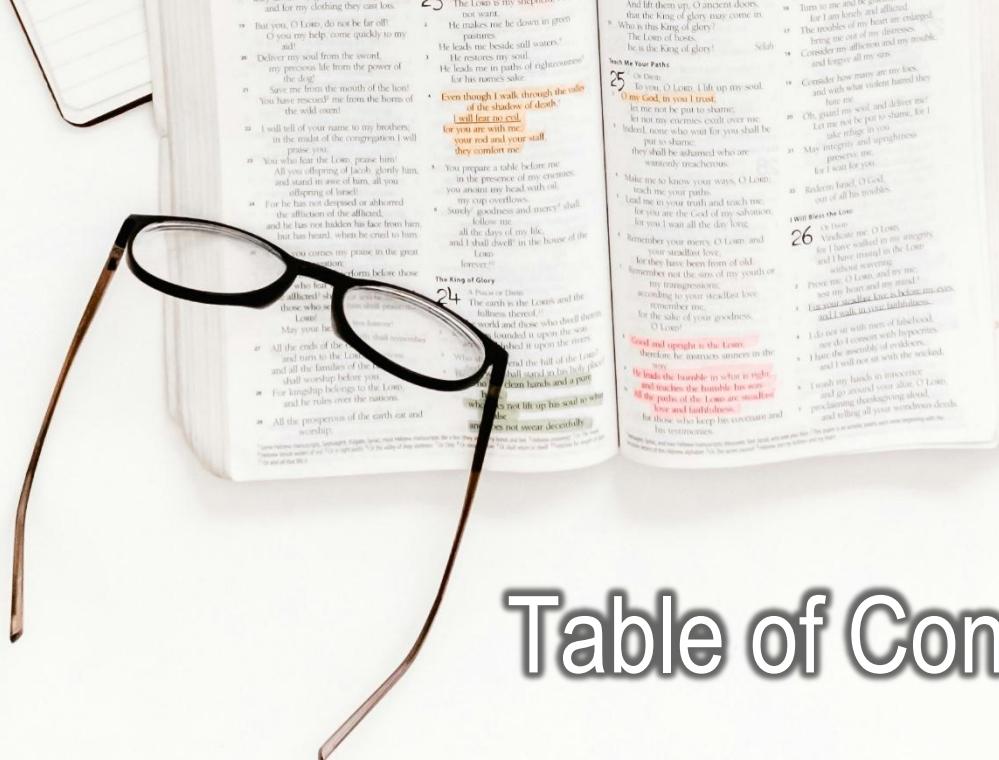


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From the Editor...

Greetings friends, and thank you for your interest in GROW magazine.

Earlier this month, I had a health scare. My BP was exceptionally high and I was experiencing severe chest pain (left side). I thought I was having a heart attack. At the ER various tests (bloodwork, ECG, and chest x-ray) led to the conclusion that my heart was fine. What caused the issue? Stress. A combination of ongoing stresses coupled with an acute incident which devolved into catastrophic thinking and resulted in a panic attack.

I'm sure others are dealing with stress, anxiety, and uncertainties as well. Here are a few lessons I'm learning from this episode which may be helpful to others also.

1. Physical health is important. It's time for a change of diet and increased physical exercise (1 Timothy 4:8).
2. Seek help from others. Keeping things bottled up and not discussing hardships, trials, and stress with others is unhealthy (Proverbs 17:17; 27:9-10).

3. Take it to the Lord. God knows our struggles and difficulties and He is a ready help to comfort and calm us if we will come to Him (Philippians 4:6; Psalm 55:22).

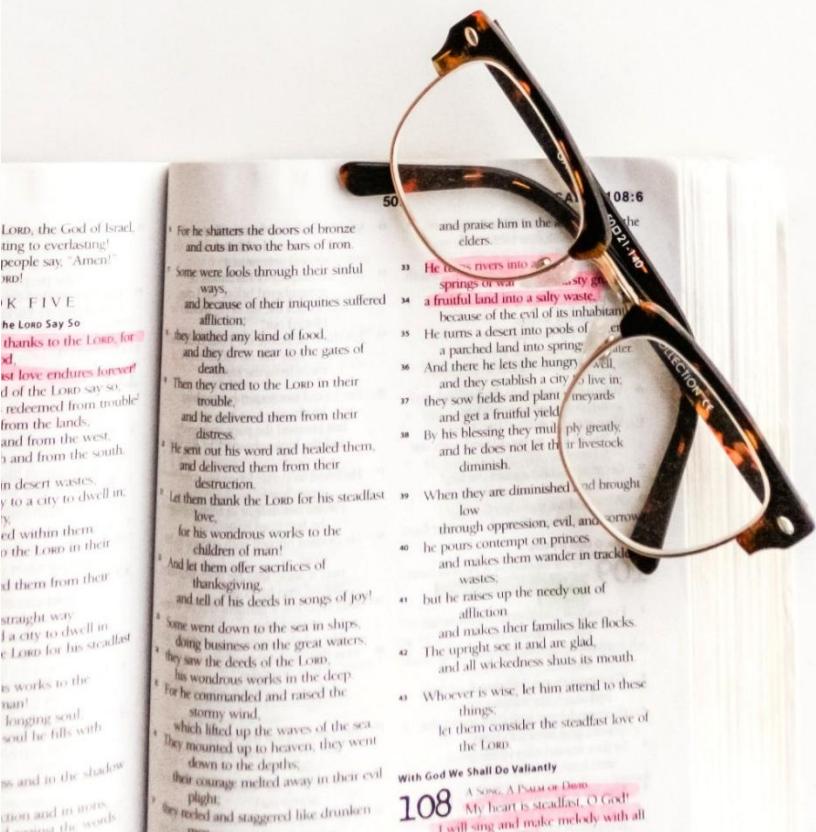
A text that has been helpful to me over the past week: *"When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, thy consolations delight my soul"* (Psalm 94:19, NASB).

Friends, I hope you will benefit greatly from the material in this issue of GROW magazine. If you find it helpful and profitable, please feel free to share with others. You can forward this email on, you can share links to specific articles on social media, you can use the print feature at the bottom of each article on the web site to share a physical copy with others.

I am thankful for the thoughtful and diligent work of the authors in this issue. We are blessed with a good group of men who love the Lord, who are attentive Bible students, and who seek to help others grow in faith. Thank you, gentlemen!

Now, let's GROW together!

William Stewart
editor & designer



The Hall of Faith: By Faith Moses...

JESSE FLOWERS | COOKEVILLE, TENNESSEE

Without question or debate, one of the greatest men to ever walk this earth was Moses. How great was this man of God? Consider the following:

1. The first covenant that God made with Israel is most commonly known as “the Law of Moses” (Joshua 8:31, 32; 23:6; Luke 2:22; 24:44).
2. He foretold one of the great Messianic prophecies when he declared: *“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him”* (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). The apostle Peter declared that his prophecy found its fulfillment in Christ (Acts 3:22-26).
3. The word of God testifies of him saying: *“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12:3).
4. The LORD defended His servant after Aaron and Miriam criticized him, with a sharp rebuke saying: *“Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”* (Numbers 12:6-8).
5. Consider how the book of Deuteronomy ends following the death of Moses. *“But since then there has not arisen in Israel a*

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prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel” (34:10-12).

6. When Jesus was gloriously transfigured on the mountain, Moses (along with Elijah) was sent by God to appear alongside His Son to discuss the Lord’s coming decease (Luke 9:28-36).
7. Finally, consider that those who have victory over the beast *“sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested”* (Revelation 15:3-4).

It should come as no surprise then, when we find his name mentioned multiple times in the “hall of

faith" in Hebrews 11. Here is the main text for our consideration in this article:

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Three times in these five verses, the inspired author of Hebrews, emphasizes to the reader what Moses did "by faith." Let us take a closer examination of this text together and be both informed and inspired by the faith of this great man of God.

"By faith Moses, when he became of age..." (vss. 24-26).

The *ESV* reads: "when he was grown up" and the *NASB* reads: "when he had grown up." In other words, when he had attained the years of manhood and responsibility. At this pivotal point in his life, Moses made a mature choice to align himself with God and the people of God – renouncing his privileges.

So, how old exactly was Moses "when he became of age" or "was grown up"? Stephen tells us: "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel" (Acts 7:23; cf. Exodus 2:11). When Moses was grown up, he acted by faith when he identified with the humbled people of God and rejected the easy life guaranteed a prince in the royal house of Egypt.

He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Moses is given this designation

because Exodus 2:10 says that "he became her son." Stephen stated: "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son" (Acts 7:21). Moses was raised in Pharaoh's courts, and he received an education in all the wisdom, knowledge, culture, and religion of Egypt. As a result, he "was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).

I don't believe that this was a decision intended to be hateful to Pharaoh's daughter or even to Egyptian people. But the princess of Egypt had drawn him as a baby from the Nile River, having compassion on him, and then adopting him as her own (Exodus 2:5-6, 10). She had saved his life and the Egyptian people had provided his daily nourishment, education, and upbringing. However, Moses does provide us with a powerful example of decisive renunciation of power and privilege in an impressive determination to identify himself with his own people who were then enslaved in Egypt. Moses could not be both an Egyptian and an Israelite (cf. Matthew 6:24). Thus, his was a simple but profound act of faith.

In his commentary on Hebrews, Pace asks: "Exactly what was Moses refusing by making this choice? Some writers think that Moses was the adopted son of Hatshepsut, the only daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I, and that she had no child herself though she had long been married. It is possible that the very crown of Egypt would have been offered to Moses if he had remained in Pharaoh's household. This is according to the listing of Egyptian kings by Manetho (Egypt's greatest historian). The list is disputed; but if it is correct, then Moses was born about 1525 B.C., and the exodus occurred in 1446-1447 B.C. Hatshepsut was apparently the power behind the throne of two pharaohs, Thutmose II and Thutmose III" (465).

Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." The *ESV* reads that he chose

to be mistreated, while the *NASB* reads of his choice to endure ill-treatment. The choice to turn away from Egypt was not made without serious consideration, but it was an irrevocable decision (Acts 7:23-24). When he chose to tie his future with God's people, he was clearly walking by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). His choice was made when Israel's fortunes were at their lowest. Moses made a choice to align himself with his persecuted people rather than ignore their tragic circumstances and enjoy the luxury and the ease of Egypt. He also learned quickly that doing the right thing or making the right choice often carries a price. The very people he was attempting to aid failed to appreciate his first effort (as well as subsequent ones).

It is vital that young and old alike continually take heed that the pleasures of sin are always fleeting. They are here today and gone tomorrow. Those who are deceived by them and indulge in them are left empty and unfulfilled. There is no lasting satisfaction that attends sinfulness, only misery and sorrow (1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 3:13).

Further, because of his faith, Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." The reproach of Christ may mean the same kind of reproach that Christ had to bear in His own person (cf. Hebrews 13:13). To some degree, every saint must bear it (2 Timothy 3:12). These saints had suffered for their allegiance to Christ (Hebrews 10:32-36); the example of Moses would have had great significance to them.

Moses considered the things of God to be of far greater worth than the treasures of Egypt. On this point, Pace wrote: "The wealth of Egypt was already legendary. Some of this great wealth was discovered in 1922 in the tomb of King Tutankhamen by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon after six years of digging. The tomb had been sealed for nearly 3,500 years. Finally, this rare find was opened to reveal the golden

splendor of the young king's burial sarcophagus and other items almost too numerous to mention. A golden mask taken from the tomb is one of the most beautiful treasures of the world. The body of the boy king was found inside two large sarcophagi, one inside the other, both made of solid gold! King Tut, as he is popularly known, was himself rather insignificant, dying at age eighteen or nineteen; but his tomb illustrated the wealth of ancient Egypt in a powerful way. Moses and King Tut lived only one hundred years apart. Tut lives in the memory of his wealth; Moses lives in the memory of God and the faithful for all time. The latter chose the side of the lowly Israelites because it was God's side. King Tut's life declares that fame and wealth last only for a season. The wealth and power of Egypt were broken, but the wealth and power of God endure. The lust for earthly wealth can be addictive and destructive. Moses chose to share the lot of a downtrodden people and became fully one of them in their suffering" (p. 466-467).

The text reads that Moses "looked to the reward." The verb for "he looked" means "to look away from all other objects to look only at one." Moses fixed his eye on one goal, and the force of the imperfect tense here suggests that he kept on looking to the heavenly reward. When he looked at his options, Moses saw the future reward as far greater than earthly riches. And we must do the same by laying up our treasures in heaven and not on this earth (Matthew 6:19-21), never losing sight of the true, eternal reward (Revelation 2:10).

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (v. 27).

Not fearing the wrath of the king seems to contradict Exodus 2:11-15, which suggests that Moses fled in fear after killing the Egyptian (Thus, some commentators suggest that this refers to the time of the exodus instead of when Moses fled to Midian. Yet, that would not follow the order of chronology in the text of Hebrews). He may

have feared for his own personal safety, even though he had no fear concerning his choice to serve God rather than Egypt. He was afraid, admittedly, but that was not why he left Egypt; his leaving Egypt was an act of faith. It took great courage to flee from the wrath of an evil and powerful ruler who could track him anywhere and kill him.

The word here “forsook” means more than just “to leave” it also suggests “to forsake” or “abandon.” Jesus tells us: “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33). Are we willing to forsake all to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11)? Are we willing to boldly forsake this world and the things of this world for Christ?

Moses abandoned Egypt rejecting its visible king to honor the will and word of the invisible God. Moses overcame his fear by seeing Him who is invisible, that is, he kept the One who is invisible continually before His eyes. By the eye of faith, he saw the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, standing by him, ready to fulfill all the promises to Israel. How do you see that which is invisible? Is it not with and by the eyes of faith? “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Or, as this chapter begins, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

“By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (v. 28).

Moses acted according to the will of God (cf. Romans 10:17) when he led the Hebrews in observing the Passover. He was much like Noah after he was warned of the coming flood (Heb. 11:7); each fully responded to God’s command even though he could see no physical evidence of what was coming.

The Passover offering did not come from human reasoning. Slaying a lamb, sprinkling its blood (lit. “the spreading of the blood”), and eating its

meat (cf. Exodus 12) would have no apparent connection with sparing the firstborn of Israel.

Moses simply took God at His word regarding His commands. Moses told the people what to do, and the firstborn were saved b/c of obedient faith. Like the Lord’s Supper, this ordinance was instituted in anticipation of the event which it was designed to commemorate. The Passover typified the sacrifice of Christ, who is called “our Passover” (1 Corinthians 5:7). John declared of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

Conclusion

By faith Moses... (Hebrews 11:24-28). In him, we find a powerful faith to imitate of one who exemplifies Hebrews 11:6. By faith...insert your name. What about you? Will you by faith choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin? Will you by faith esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the riches this world offers you, as you fix your eyes continually on the reward of heaven? Will you by faith forsake this world (and the things of this world), not fearing men and what they may do to you, but enduring as seeing Him who is invisible? Will you by faith take seriously your worship and service to God with reverence and godly fear?

May God help each one of us to ever look to this great cloud of witnesses (such as Moses) that we may “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

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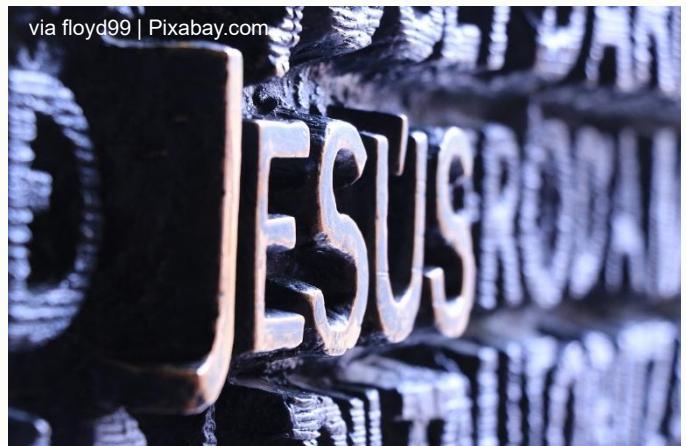
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How Christ Relates to the Church: The Chief Cornerstone

OSAMAGBE LESLEY EGHAREVBA | LAGOS, NIGERIA

“Now, therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22, NKJV)

As seen in our text above, the Bible describes Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone of His Church. This is the church that He promised to build (Matthew 16:18), the church that He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the church that He is the head of (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), and the church that He is the Chief Shephard (I Peter 5:4). This is not some denominational church with a human founder, head or creed, whose origin cannot be traced to the Bible. The Bible reveals that there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4) and this body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Paul says that all faithful Christians are baptized into this one body by one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). This is not speaking of a denomination for division is condemned in the Bible (I Corinthians 1:10), and there was no record of a denominational church as at the time Paul wrote the letter. So, when we speak of Christ as the Chief Cornerstone of His church, we are simply speaking of the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) that began on the first Pentecost following Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:1, 47). Thus, this writing



aims to examine how our Lord Jesus Christ relates to the church, with particular emphasis on His role as the Chief Cornerstone.

Defining the Cornerstone

One very good way to begin a discussion of this nature is to first define the concept or keywords used in the topic of discussion. In this case, it is important to understand what we mean by cornerstone before talking about Christ as the Cornerstone of the church. The English dictionary defines a cornerstone as a stone that forms the base of a corner of a building, joining two walls. Basically, the cornerstone is the first and most important rock in a building. It is traditionally the first stone laid for a structure, with all other stones laid in reference. It occupies a conspicuous and honourable place in a building. The same dictionary also defines a cornerstone as an important quality or feature on which a particular thing depends or is based. Since a building mainly rests on the cornerstone, the cornerstone must be stable, fit, and aligned perfectly. Otherwise, if the cornerstone is unstable, then the whole building is insecure. Without the

cornerstone, a building would not be sustained for a moment. More than once in the Bible, Jesus is described as the Chief Cornerstone. In I Peter 2:6, Peter referred to Isaiah 28:16 concerning Christ as the Chief Cornerstone: *“Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”* In Acts 4:11, Peter said that Christ is *“the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.”* And in our text (Ephesians 2:20), He is described as the chief cornerstone upon which the church is built.

Jesus’ Role as the Chief Cornerstone

Having defined a cornerstone, let us now look at how Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of His church. In the first place, we see that a cornerstone sets the foundation and direction of a building. Similarly, Christ sets the direction for the church as He alone has all authority, and He is the only lawgiver (Matthew 28:18; James 4:12). Ephesians 1:22 teaches that Christ is the head over all things to the church. Once the cornerstone is set, it becomes the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything is aligned with it. As the Chief Cornerstone of the church, Jesus Christ is our standard of measurement and alignment. We are to look unto Him, who is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Lord Jesus is the supreme monarch of the church. No man on earth has any authority to make any “church laws,” innovate any acts of worship, or change the doctrine (II John 9). The Lord can never be “voted out of office” or lose His position of authority for He never changes and never dies. Apart from being head of the church, our Lord is also its Saviour (Ephesians 5:23), its merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17), its blessed and only Potentate and mighty King (I Timothy 6:15), its foundation (I Corinthians 3:11), and its Chief

Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

Another important feature of a cornerstone is that it joins structure together. Similarly, Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone of the church brought together the Jews and the Gentiles into one body. I Corinthians 12:13 reads: *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”* Christ, as the chief cornerstone of the body, has united both the Jews and the Gentiles and has broken down the middle wall of partition that existed between them, so that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross (Ephesians 2:14-15). In the glorious church of our Lord Jesus Christ, people from all walks of life, cultures, colours, and classes have heard of the accounts of the cross of Christ. They have believed His great victory over the grave and rejoiced in His exaltation to the right hand of His Father. In loving obedience, they have changed their lives to be reconciled through the cross to God in the one body, the church (Ephesians 2:16).

Furthermore, the cornerstone in a physical building ensures proper alignment and stabilizes the whole structure. In like manner, Christ as the chief cornerstone of the church ensures an aligned life and provides stability for us. We are to be imitators of Christ (I Corinthians 11:1) and we must let our lights shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify God in heaven (Matthew 5:16). When we do this, our life will be in alignment with the will of God. When we abide by the doctrine of Christ, we have both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

A building mainly rests on the cornerstone and the cornerstone provides support to it. Similarly, the church rests upon Jesus Christ and depends on Him in all things. We are to cast our cares upon the Lord for He cares for us (I Peter 5:7). We must not think of men beyond what is written (I Corinthians 4:6).

Conclusion

The church of Christ is a glorious church – “*Christ ... loved the church, and gave himself for it ... that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25, 27). This is a description of the Lord’s church. God describes it as a “glorious church” because He is its Divine Architect. It is ruled by the glorified Christ who is with God in Heaven. Though Jesus Christ was

the stone which the builders rejected – yet He is the Chief Cornerstone of God’s entire plan of redemption. In Him alone can we find salvation (Acts 4:12). He is the Way to the Father and no one can get to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone supports the building by His strength, and unites the several parts of it including the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus Christ is also the Saviour of the church. It is therefore only those who are in this glorious church that can hope for salvation.

Instrumental Music in Church History

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We have in previous articles looked at instrumental music in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and specifically the book of Revelation. In Revelation, we found instances of the instrumental music to deal with the heavenly realm and not with the worship of the Lord's church upon the earth. In the Old Testament, we discovered musical instruments were commanded and used in worship in Israel, but acknowledged this was not authority for us, since we are noted that none of the occurrences of instrumental music therein address worship. Rather, every example or command with regard to our worship in song calls for vocal music, not instrumental.

Now, we turn our attention to uninspired writings. In doing so, we acknowledge such things are not authoritative, but quotes about the attitudes and practices throughout history serve to reveal the role or lack thereof which instrumental music has had among believers. Primarily we will focus on two specific groups of religious writers. First, those who came within the next few centuries after the time of the apostles, and second, those who were present in the days of the protestant reformation and shortly thereafter.

EARLY RELIGIOUS WRITERS (100-450 AD)

Instrumental music was used in the time of David (1 Chronicles 15:16, 28), in Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 5:11-14), and in the temple after the return from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 3:10). Musical instruments were certainly available in the first century and beyond (Matthew 9:23; 11:17; Luke 7:32; 15:25; 1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:7-8). Despite their availability, quotes from the early centuries indicate Christians did not use



instrumental music in worship.

Clement of Alexandria (approx. 150-216 AD)

The Lord fashioned man a beautiful, breathing instrument, after His own image and assuredly He Himself is an all-harmonious instrument of God, melodious and holy, the wisdom that is above this world, the heavenly Word ... and on this many-voiced instruments of the universe He makes music to God, and sings to the human instrument. 'For thou art my harp and my pipe and my temple.'

Leave the pipe to the shepherd, the flute to the men who are in fear of gods and intent on their idol worshipping. Such musical instruments must be excluded from our wineless feasts, for they are more suited for beasts and for the class of men that is least capable of reason than for men.

Tertullian of Carthage (155-230 AD)

What trumpet of God is now heard – unless it is in the entertainment of the heretics?

Novatian of Trinitate (died 258 AD)

Why should I speak of strings set vibrating to noise? Even if these things were not dedicated to idols, they should not be approached and gazed upon by faithful Christians.

Eusebius of Caesarea (275-330 AD)

We render our hymn with a living psalterion and a living cithara with spiritual sings. The unison of voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one mind and in agreement of faith and piety we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms.

Niceta of Remesian (335-414 AD)

Only the corporal institutions have been rejected, like circumcision, the Sabbath, sacrifices, discriminations of foods. So, too, the trumpets, harps, cymbals, and timbrels. For the sound of these we now have a better substitute in the music from the mouths of men.

John Chrysostom (347-407 AD)

David formerly sang songs, also today we sing hymns. He had a lyre with lifeless strings, the church has a lyre with living strings. Our tongues are the strings of the lyre with a different tone indeed but much more in accordance with piety.

Aurelius Augustine (354-430 AD)

...musical instruments were not used. The pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults, as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theater and circus, it is easy to understand the prejudices against their use in the worship.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393-457 AD)

It is not simple singing that belongs to the childish state, but singing with lifeless instruments, with dancing, with clappers. Hence the use of such instruments and the other that belong to the childish state is excluded from the singing in the churches, and simple singing is left.

CATHOLIC, REFORMERS, AND DENOMINATIONAL LEADERS (1225-1850 AD)

It would be great to follow-up these second through fifth century quotes with more from the Dark Ages. Unfortunately, all I have come across is a single statement from the 1200s. However, there are a host of quotes from the reformation age which verify the ongoing comprehension that instrumental music violates God's instruction in the New Testament.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD)

But the Church (Roman Catholic) does not make use of musical instruments, such as harps and psalteries, in the divine praises, for fear of seeming to imitate the Jews. Therefore in like manner neither should song be use in the divine praises.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

The organ in the worship is an insignia of Baal.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps and the restoration of other shadows of the Law. The Papists therefore have foolishly borrowed this as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outright pomp may delight in the noise, but the simplicity which God commands to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to Him.

Joseph Bingham (1668-1723)

Music in churches is as ancient as the apostles, but instrumental music is not so.

John Wesley (1703-1791)

I have no objection to the organs in our chapels, as long as they are neither seen nor heard.

Adam Clarke (1762-1832)

Away with such portentous baubles from the worship of that infinite Spirit who requires His followers to worship Him in spirit and truth, for to no such worship are these instruments friendly.

Adam Clarke (1762-1832)

I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God, I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.

Presbyterian Board of Publication, Philadelphia, PA (1842)

Question 6. Is there any authority for instrumental music in the worship of God under the present dispensation? Answer. Not the least, only the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs was appointed by the apostles; not a syllable is said in the New Testament in favor of instrumental music nor was it ever introduced into the Church until after the eighth century, after the Catholics had corrupted the simplicity of the gospel by their carnal inventions. It was not allowed in the Synagogues, the parish churches of the Jews, but was confined to the Temple service and was abolished with the rites of that dispensation.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

The great congregation which is blessed with the privilege of listening to His instruction has no organ 'to assist; them in singing their praises to their God and Savior. They find their vocal

organs sufficient. Their tongues and voices express the gratitude of their hearts ... I would just as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days when Jesus gives us spiritual food, one can make melody without strings and pipes... We do not need them. That would hinder rather than help our praise. Sing unto him. This is the sweetest and best music. No instrument is like the human voice.

None of these quotes are authoritative, but they do stand as consistent testimony from history that instrumental music was not used from the days of the early church through the time of the reformation churches. Many today believe that instrumental music has always been used in the churches, and they look with curiosity and contempt at those who oppose their use. Musical instruments in worship are an innovation, a relatively new practice, and certainly not from the apostolic age. May we not add to God's will or way, but simply be faithful servants seeking to "...do all in the name of the Lord."

Sources:

Instrumental Music in Worship to God, Wayne Wells.

www.bible.ca/H-music.htm

Becoming Like Jesus: Forgiveness and Christ

TIM McPHERSON | MARION, INDIANA

Jesus' words:

Jesus' words from the cross in Luke 23:34, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" cry out the mission and heart of our Savior. Barnes commentary stated that this was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 in that, "*He made intercession for the transgressors.*" I love that expression "*He made intercession.*" In other words, Christ was offering forgiveness through his intercession. I want the same spirit as my Lord and Savior. Can I intercede in offering forgiveness like my Savior? I am not perfect like Christ, but I can be of His likeness in that I want to offer forgiveness to all. I want others to be forgiven. I don't believe it is just a coincidence or inadvertent that Christ's disciple, the first Christian martyr, Stephen, uttered these exact words when the crowd gnashed at him with their teeth and were stoning him. **Act 7:60 (NKJV)** "*Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*" Instead of anger or a heart that would seek their wrath, he offered forgiveness.

Jesus' Spirit:

Truly then forgiveness is an attribute of Christ. Forgiveness is godliness. Forgiveness is most definitely a fruit of the Spirit. Although not specifically mentioned, we see forgiveness through the actions of love, longsuffering, and kindness.

Galatians 5:22 (NKJV) "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.*" How can we effectively have the fruit of the Spirit without forgiveness? It is a part of the divine nature. **2 Peter 1:7** "...*to godliness brotherly kindness*



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and to brotherly kindness." How can we effectively have brotherly love without forgiveness?

Jesus' Love:

Think about God and Christ and their love for us. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. Would this not be the greater love, "...*as I have loved you*"? (John 13:34). Based on His love, we have sacrificial forgiveness: an olive branch extended for all to be forgiven in Christ. That love must be exhibited in all Christians.

1Timothy 1:14 (NKJV) "*and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*" My aim is to follow in that love. Ephesians 4:32 states, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Then let us read the discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

1Corinthians 13:4 "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up...*"

1Corinthians 13:5 "...*does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.*"

1 Corinthians 13:6 "...does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth."

1 Corinthians 13:7 "...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Who can say, "**I love God or live in love**" without the spirit of forgiveness? It is all tied up in the definition of love: suffers long, is kind and is not puffed up. Who am I not to forgive? To be unforgiving is a display of rudeness, and to be unforgiving is also a display of seeking our own. To be unforgiving is allowing oneself to be provoked and think evil. Unforgiving rejoices in the "trapping" of iniquity, not the release from iniquity. Sometimes I wonder if the unforgiving heart rejoices or relishes in the bondage or iniquity of the other person.

Remember the words of John, a disciple of love:

1 John 3:17 (NKJV) "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, **how does the love of God abide in him?**"

Isn't this a perfect picture of someone needing forgiveness but "shuts up his heart"? John states, "How does the love of God abide in him?" Good question. It doesn't.

Jesus Forgives Much:

I'm mindful of our love for Christ and why we love Him so much. As the Bible states, we love Him because He first loved us. He has forgiven us so much!

Luke 7:47 (NKJV) "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Luke 7:48 (NKJV) "Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Luke 7:49 (NKJV) "And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, **Who is this who even forgives sins?**"

Implied is the understanding that we all have many sins to be forgiven. We have truly done many things contrary to the law of God. **But Jesus forgives them all.** Can you imagine the mindset of some people today that think this person has done so many things against me that I will not forgive? But this woman knew how much Jesus was willing to forgive, and she showed her appreciation. She washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **Oh, the joy of forgiveness for her, but also it brings joy to the forgiver!** I'm not going to write much about the joy of forgiving others because I want us to realize that even if there was no joy in forgiveness I would still forgive. The spirit of forgiveness is an act of God and is done with the spirit of love. God forgives because it is right, just, and good. It is an act of love and mercy. **It is to be a selfless act.** But I will state that it is also good for the soul of the one forgiving. Think about those who live in malice, bitterness, and are all wrought up and stirred up because of something they will not forgive. Note this quote: "Holding a grudge doesn't make you strong, it makes you bitter. Forgiving doesn't make you weak, it sets you free." Someone stated, "It's one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, to forgive." Again, I believe in forgiveness more as a gift to others and not so much to bless myself. Here is another good quote: "Let your hands be so busy catching blessings that there's no room to hold on to grudges."

Now, back to Jesus' statement on the cross in Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Jesus Awareness and Wisdom:

Ignorance can play a large part of offending someone or being offended.

Jesus took the high road and sought their forgiveness, as it was based on ignorance. Call it immaturity, lacking wisdom, stupidity, foolishness, or whatever. I think it would be good to give someone the benefit of the doubt that "they did so

in ignorance" and not outright maliciousness, but through an act based on immaturity. This could also include spiritual immaturity, and we should offer forgiveness. 1 Corinthians 2:8 state "*...which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" Jesus understood that we all make mistakes, regrettable mistakes, and our misjudgments are due to ignorance. Don't we all make mistakes of ignorance? Our lack of wisdom, judgement, and maturity displays itself and we need forgiveness, not the harsh treatment of an unforgiving individual. Like those who would have picked up stones to cast at the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, "*He that is without sin cast the first stone.*" Forgiveness should be given by the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12).

Who has not offended someone inadvertently or unintentionally? I once remember a member of the church who came to me and accused me of laughing at him. I would never do such a thing and as absurd as it sounded, I did not argue back. (In his mind, I had laughed at him.) I calmly and gently explained that I would never laugh at or mock him, but if he thought I had done this, then

I apologized. I sought his forgiveness. He could not but forgive me. In his mind I had offended him, and to bring peace and happiness, I was not defensive back to him but drawn to say, "Forgive me if you think I did that. It was not intended, my dear and loved brother." That's the spirit. However, often high mindedness and sensitivities get in the way of the right spirit. To this I say, STOP. Stop being caught up in your own "account holding" or your own "he/she offended me" and offer the spirit of forgiveness! Humility is needed, not self-defensiveness. Remember, our own request for forgiveness is based on whether we will forgive others. **Matthew 6:14-15** "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"

Let us end this article with two beautiful verses.

Psalm 86:5 (NKJV) "*For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.*"

Psalm 130:4 (NKJV) "*But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.*"

The Sustainability and Repeatability of Western Evangelism

CHADWICK BREWER | SOUTH CHESTERFIELD, VIRGINIA

It was a hot and sunny Tuesday morning when we climbed into the back of the bakkie (pickup truck) to finish our trip to Chikuku. My traveling companion and I had been traveling since Sunday afternoon to get to this rural village in Zimbabwe, and we were excited to meet brethren that we had never met before. We had a day of lectures arranged for Chikuku and four days of lectures planned for Mashindi. While we had been to South Africa several times, and we were traveling with our good friends from South Africa, this was our first time in Zim, and we were looking forward to the work.

We had a good turn out of about 85 people at Chikuku, at the end of the day, but we noticed that there was some discussions were happening after the day's lectures. Upon inquiring, we learned that of the large number of men who had committed to coming to the preacher training classes at Mashindi the next day, about half of them had backed out. We asked why, concerned that we had done something to turn men off from the classes. We were informed that when the men found out that we were not providing transportation money, they decided not to come to the classes. We didn't know that transportation money was expected, so we asked if we had made a blunder. We were told that the men have been accustomed to Americans paying for their transportation, food, and sometimes lodging. But they also told us that the practice was not really a good thing from their perspective. They pointed out that if the preachers needed to travel the same distance for something they wanted, they would make that happen. It would take some effort and maybe a sacrifice, but they



could make it happen. They didn't make it happen because they were used to the Americans doing it for them, they didn't really value the classes we were presenting, or a combination of both.

As we discussed it further with our African brethren over the next several days, they made several more points to us. They pointed out that we had made many sacrifices to come to Zimbabwe and teach them, and it was

reasonable to allow the brethren there to make the effort to come and learn. They pointed out that with our budgets being limited, it was unsustainable for us to pay for everything for everyone. We discussed the problems that are created when brethren are not encouraged to save and give to do their own work, where people wait for westerners to do it for them or not do it at all. Throughout the week we heard African preachers instruct the other preachers to stop relying on westerners for money and to encourage the local Christians to do their own work. All of this adds to many other conversations and events that have happened in many places the gospel is being taught, and it should cause us to pause and consider the wisdom of our methods.

In Tanzania, I learned about how some westerners had chosen to take some preachers to training classes out of town and pay for their transport, food, and lodging, while other preachers were left out. This created rifts between some preachers and caused some to think more highly concerning themselves than was right, or less about themselves. I also told stories about westerners who would take selected people to western styled resorts for classes, leading the locals to believe that the westerners did not want to be around them or experience their culture but only wanted to spread their western culture. While these effects are undoubtedly unintended, they are nevertheless a reality.

There are other unintended side effects that commonly occur in many places because of how the work is patterned by westerners. What I mean by that is we have a tendency to do things on a large scale. The intentions are good, and the reasoning seems sound. It takes a lot of money and effort to travel partway around the world. We have limited time, and traveling is taxing on our bodies and chips away at our valuable time. It is convenient to have many

brethren travel from many locations to meet at a central point. Once there they will need food, lodging, and possibly materials. While we are there, it might be a convenient time to distribute benevolence, relief, and/or some other goods. When this pattern is established, it is often what they want to replicate. On our part, working in this way makes sense. On their side, it was uplifting, encouraging, and rejuvenating, and replicating that would be wonderful. However, works on this scale are often outside of their means. This leaves them with just a few options. They may still plan similar works and expect westerners to fund it. Or they may just wait for westerners to show up, run it, and fund it. Or they may become discouraged that they cannot replicate it, feeling like they cannot effectively do the work that is expected of saints.

I want to be perfectly clear: we are not discussing matters of sin, issues of fellowship, or areas of doctrine. Rather, we are looking at areas of wisdom, and we should conduct a close examination of how the gospel was spread in the first century through a diverse economic, social, political, and cultural world.

As Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark when out to spread the gospel, the manner in which they worked is worth considering. Later in the New Testament, we also see Timothy, Titus, Luke, Peter, and others do their own work in evangelism, and their examples are also worth examining.

One of the key elements that we see in their evangelism is sustainability. While the evangelist were sent out to the work by established congregations, wherever the new congregation was established, it was expected to be self sufficient and self supporting. We see this on the isle of Crete, the rich merchant city of Corinth, and also in the extremely poor area of Macedonia. It would not have been sustainable for Antioch or Jerusalem to be financially responsible to prop up the work in all the places

that Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Titus, etc., traveled and worked. Even if it were sustainable for a time, it was needful for the brethren to be invested in their local work, supporting their local workers, and being generous to their own needy (Acts 20:35, 1 Cor. 9:11, 2 Cor. 8:1-5, James 1:27, Galatians 6:6). Would we not be robbing our fellow brethren of the blessings (Philippians 4:17; Acts 20:35) that come along with them learning to give and make their own work thrive?

In Galatians 2:10, Paul says that when he was sent out, he was asked to remember the poor, a thing that he was eager to do. We also see that when there was times of disaster or urgent need (1 Corinthians 16:1-4) churches send relief to the church in need. By these examples, we see the example of helping the poor and the needy and for our local congregations to help congregations in times of disaster and urgent need. However, we should once again point out that this does not give us the example of one congregation propping up and doing the financial work for another congregation in normal circumstances. It is not sustainable for western congregations to be responsible for paying for so many preachers' salaries, church buildings, evangelistic efforts, etc.. Even if it were sustainable, would it be the wise or right thing?

This leads us to our next point: repeatability. The simple and critical fact is, we as foreigners will never be as effective in the work as the locals will be. They live there full-time, giving them more opportunities. More than that, they know the language intimately, understand the culture as only a native can, and have built relationships that would take us years or decades to establish, if we could ever establish them in the same way. While we can offer help, encouragement, instruction, and correction, we must recognize that we will never be as effective as they will be in their own fields. For the gospel to work and spread as it should, we should want

them to do their own work there, and then take the gospel further in their own right.

Paul, for instance, seemed to move on rather quickly from most places. He expected them to step up, do their work, contribute to their own needs, and then in turn take the gospel further. The church at Colossae seems to be a great example of this. It was the natural product of the churches in Asia Minor repeating what was modeled for them. Should we not want this and work towards this in our efforts as well?

To that end, it might serve us well to model evangelism in a way that is repeatable by those to whom we minister. Let me be clear: this is not a matter of right or wrong. This is not a matter of sin or not sin. Rather, this is an area for us to pause and consider the wisdom of our ways. Would it serve them best to model the work of the church with methods that would be repeatable and sustainable for them? What would it be like if we taught them to fish, and not just provided fish for them? Could we spend more time and effort helping them to see how they can do the work for themselves and empower them to do it sustainably?

There is a good and faithful brother who has written a book warning Christians about the dangers of marrying a Muslim (a major problem in his area), and he wants to print 200 copies of this book to distribute. This mass publication of materials is something he has seen modeled for him but is not repeatable in his budget. While this want might be easily handled by a couple of saints from the West, would it be prudent to help him come up with alternative ways of getting his material into people's hands? Could we suggest that he ask some parents to purchase the books for their children? Or perhaps suggest that some Christians in the area commit to purchasing a couple of books for the youth in their congregations? Could he print small leaflets or bookmarks, outlining his seven main points, to generate local interest, so that they would be

motivated to buy a printing for their child? It is true that helping them come up with alternative methods takes more work than writing a check, but what a blessing for them to seek and find ways to do their work sustainably!

I am not discrediting the good work that has been done by so many, in reverence and awe, nor am I saying that I have it all figured out or that I have not made many blunders in these regards. God knows that I so often fall short! My

hope, my aim, and prayer is that we will do our work with the utmost wisdom, with the ultimate good of the brethren in mind, and in a way that is sustainable and repeatable. We need to go into all the world to preach the gospel. We as westerners cannot do that. We need to bring the gospel as far as we can and allow and expect the saints in that area to take it further. We need to empower them to do that work, allowing them to work through the growing pains to get there.

The Grace of Giving

MIKE STEPHENS | WELANDPORT, ONTARIO

2 Corinthians 8:5-7, *So we urged Titus that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. But as you abound in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us – see that you abound in this grace also.*

What is a “Christian Grace?” We might use this term when talking about the positive characteristics, virtues, actions, or attitudes that a faithful Christian should possess. The list Peter gives in 2 Peter 1 are often labelled as the “Christian Graces” and rightly so, even though this specific term is not used in that passage.

2 Peter 1:5-7 *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, the Apostle Paul actually does describe giving a one of many “graces” and it is far more than just a mechanical act of putting something in the plate. Giving is a positive characteristic. A virtue. And an attitude that comes from God.

2 Corinthians 8:1 says, “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:

This “grace of God bestowed on the churches” was the grace of giving. The church at Corinth seemed to need a little stimulating in order to finish what they had previously promised. By way of comparison with the poorer churches in Macedonia, Paul tries to teach Corinth the



difference between “doing” and “talking about doing.”

2 Corinthians 8:2-4 NKJV 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

The churches in Macedonia were giving, even in their poverty. They were first giving as individuals. Willingly, imploring Paul, and with urgency. Paul says they recognized the gift and fellowship were more than something given to a vague cause. This was personal, “To the saints.”

2 Corinthians 8:5 says, “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

Would the Christians in Corinth also want to be a congregation with personal commitment and personal giving? Paul wants them to be a giving “grace of God” church like those in Macedonia.

Giving has always been a proper attitude or disposition for God’s people. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses taught Israel to give with

gathered to crucify Jesus had no idea what God's plan was. It seems silly to think that Jesus was going to use two swords to show someone that God would not be stopped.

"(3) Jesus may simply have been saying that two swords were adequate for the 12 of them." This point is likely true in any event and doesn't really address the question.

"(4) Others see the clause in conjunction with the quotation from Isaiah and understand Jesus to mean that by possessing two swords they would be classified by others as transgressors or criminals. This fourth view seems preferable."

This prophecy is found in Isaiah 53:12 "And He was numbered with the transgressors." Note that Jesus specifically says that the prophecy must be accomplished "in Him." He does not include the apostles. In addition, Mark, in 15:28, applies Isaiah's prophecy to Jesus' crucifixion between two thieves, not being with apostles who had swords. So much for this choice's being preferable.

Any of these, though, are marginally preferable to the thought of Elwell in his commentary, "Jesus' words on acquiring a sword (v. 36) **should not be interpreted literally** [emphasis mine, sl]; they are a sign of the conflict and opposition which the disciples will face."

This view and related ideas result from the view that Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:39, "*But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also*", means that Christians have no authority to defend themselves or others. Jesus could not possibly mean literal swords then. What would the disciples of Jesus do with literal swords?

Should we, then, take as figurative the need for a money bag and a knapsack? Jesus was not

telling them to have money, a knapsack, and a sword but merely that they would have needs and conflicts when He was gone? This thought is disingenuous.

Even if I cannot agree with everything he says here, Butler, at least, acknowledges the straightforwardness of the passage, "The present situation was quite different. Take whatever supplies and resources you have, Jesus told them. You will especially need a weapon for self-defense. Go sell whatever is necessary to get one. Satan had come after Jesus and his followers in full force. The persecution and arrests were about to begin. They must be ready to protect themselves."

I do not believe, though, any of these attempted explanations really answers the question: Why did Jesus tell the Apostles to buy swords? Though some believe the question was answered in the upper room with Jesus saying in essence, "never use swords," I disagree. His lesson is yet to be taught, as we shall see.

Jesus, we have seen, already said that what was written had to be accomplished. He had predicted they would find a donkey and room for the supper. He identified his betrayer. He gave detail as to His impending death in Luke 18:31-3. In Matthew 26:31 "*Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."*" He predicted Peter's denial in Luke 22:34, "*Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'*" John 18:4 speaks of Jesus' "*knowing all things that would come upon Him.*"

Here we have a bit of a quandary. Either Jesus carelessly and ignorantly allowed the most impetuous apostle, Peter, to keep a sword in the face of the upcoming betrayal or Jesus knowingly allowed Peter to cause injury to another person with that sword.

an open heart and open hand.

"If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your poor brother: (8) But you shall open your hand wide unto him, and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. (9) Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing; and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. (10) Thou shall surely give him, and you heart shall not be grieved when you give to him: because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works, and in all to which you put your hand. (11) For the poor will never cease from the land: therefore I command you, saying, You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and your needy, in your land." (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

Christians are to continue with this grace toward one another. Peter said this is how God's love is shown. "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:8-10)

The church in Corinth is asked to follow through with this grace of giving to the needy saints. "So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also." (2 Corinthians 8:6-7)

Paul reminds us that the grace of giving is, most of all, Christ-like. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet

for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

The grace of giving is the description of Christ in Philippians 2 and selfish ambition and conceit are the opposite of giving. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:3-8)

Jesus recognized the selfless giving of the "Widows Mites" and drew attention to her instead of those wanting to blow their own horn. "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;" (Luke 21:1-3)

Likewise, Paul said to those in Corinth, it's not about the amount. "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12)

Jesus states the giving is minor compared with the reward

"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42)

God's grace, and this grace are to transform us. It is no accident that Ephesians 4, verses 28 and 29 are together. They both speak to the transformed attitude of a Christian, and the

following results. V28 moves from taking to giving. V29 moves from corrupt words to edification. BOTH contain the grace of giving.

Ephesians 4:28-29 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Finally, in 2 Corinthians 9, Paul reminds the brethren that this grace of giving may be fruitful beyond what they may ever know. There were walls and cultural barriers that others were still struggling to overcome. There were brethren they had never seen who would be reminded that “like precious faith” was bigger than their local group. There were fellow Christians who might be encouraged to “pay it forward” to the

praise and glory of God. As this was a challenge for the church in Corinth, may we rise to the challenge in our lives today. Who can we encourage? Who can this grace encourage, and how far will it go? Can we motivate others, even generations from now, to “thank God for His indescribable gift.”

For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:12-15).

JUNE 2024 PREVIEW

EXPOSITORY ARTICLE

Marshall McDaniel will write our next article in the Hall of Faith series from Hebrews 11, focused on the faith of Israel (v 28-30).

CHURCH ARTICLE

Wayne Goff will write our next article looking at How Christ Relates to the Church, looking at Jesus as our Great High Priest.

WORSHIP ARTICLE

Sean Sullivan will emphasize the importance of edification from Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 14 (and related texts).

APPLICATION ARTICLE

John Maddocks will pen our next article in our "Becoming Like Jesus" series will focus on humility.

EVANGELISM ARTICLE

Josh Welch will provide us lessons about evangelism from the 70 sent out by Jesus.

BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE

Jeremy Diestelkamp will deal with Israel's role in God's plan using Romans 9-11.

PSALM 22:14

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