

## GOD'S WORK IN THE CHURCH THROUGH THE MINISTRY

As one who is called to minister the Word of God, I find the results are at least

disappointing. While I don't think I am discouraged I am frustrated because I don't see the results that was assumed would result in preaching. 1 COR 1:21] For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, **God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.** Saving people through the message preached is one thing but the movement of the "saved" toward maturity is quite another.

Even though the "saved" and the "unsaved" live side by side in the world they are of totally different creations. 2 COR 5:17] Therefore if any man is in Christ, **he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.** The first creation is from first Adam while the "saved" creation is from God in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The old things of first Adam have passed away and "all" new things have come that reflect the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not just the ideal but the normal for every child of God.

In most all misunderstood doctrines there is an element of truth but to see the greatest benefit to the believer we need the whole truth which is Christ, Himself! This gospel of salvation that is preached assumes that God piles the snow of His righteousness upon the dung heap of fallen humanity and declares them righteous. While God surely does declare us righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. The scriptures assume that the church will advance from that point to live a new life of righteous acts. Somewhere the manure pile must become a new creation and not just trust in the snow of His righteousness to cover over our corruption.

The New Jerusalem reveals that the finished work of God in the perfected church is the masterpiece of all of God's creation. The transition is from dung heap to New Jerusalem. The "dung gate" of Jerusalem suggests that there is a daily transfer of garbage to the outside of the walls. The New Jerusalem is not a giant dung heap covered over by the snow of Christ's righteousness. She has been made experientially righteous. REV 19:6 "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. [7] "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**" [8] And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; **for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.** God declares us to be righteous by faith **in** Christ and His sacrifice at Calvary until He can make us experientially righteous as revealed by our acts. The outward life reflects the inner life of Christ Who is in us. This is by the measure that Christ is formed in us!

GAL 4:19] My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you-**

The scriptures indicate that "the body of Christ on earth" should manifest and exercise the power, dominion and the sovereignty of the Head of the body Who is in heavenly places. The Lord Jesus Christ has been given all authority in both heaven and in earth. If His authority on earth has been assigned to the church which IS His body on earth then it is time the church exercised His authority on earth.

“One body” suggests a community of disciples that are in union and communion with the Head and exercising His authority within society. Whatever “group” that cannot affect the society in which it lives must not be attached to the Head. To speak of “ONE BODY” in some lesser context than being one with the Head and under His total authority and sovereignty is confusing at best. However, those who are under authority also have authority and those who refuse to be under authority have already forfeited their authority.

The point is this; If His authority is absent we should question IF we really are part of that “ONE BODY”. The benefit of being released from our bondage to sin is that now we can be joined to and united with a body of believers who are fulfilling God’s eternal purpose. If one group of believers can chase a thousand and they are joined to another group of believers their combined authority can chase ten thousand.

LUKE 1:70] As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- [71] Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; LUKE 1:72] To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, [73] The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, [74] To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, [75] In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

EPH 3:14 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, [16] that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, **that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.**

Whenever the church is filled up to all the fulness of Christ she will manifest the authority of Christ that resides IN HER!

There seems to be a decaying situation within the church’s sovereignty and influence to affect our society. If the church is supposed to be SALT in our society then the society would be affected by the SALT. If the church is supposed to be the restrainer of evil within our society then society would have to take notice of the church. However, society mocks and ridicules the church and assumes that anyone who is deceived by this hypocrisy is naive or stupid. It is evident the church has “lost” it’s power of witness within society. The result is hostility towards the church. While it may be naive to think that the world will ever rejoice over the church, at least they should respect the church which Is His BODY because it is SALT. Trying to identify THAT church is our problem.

JOHN 17:22] "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; **that they may be one, just as We are one;** [23] I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, **that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them,** even as Thou didst love Me.

The fragmented church with its multiple divisions and conflict of doctrines and diversity of vision can hardly confront the perversion that is in the world or testify against the world effectively. The world sees the visible church as weak, ignorant, hypocritical, divided and at least in some part as a joke.

As leaders our responsibility is to strengthen and build up the believers that have been assigned to us because we have answer for their souls. HEB 13:17] Obey your leaders, and submit to them; **for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account.** Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

This means that the church should take another step into the purpose of God while it is under our watch. In other words the church must be stronger, more righteous and more holy than when we were assigned to her. There is no reward for just maintaining the status quo. Lord here it is just like it was and we have not lost any ground. You assigned us to one group and here it is just like you gave it to us! Maintaining the status quo is no testimony before God but rather receives the rebuke and condemnation of God.

To increase the strength, the stability, the spiritual life and the witness of the church at least five fold during our tenure should be our goal. Leaving this life with the guilt of leaving the church the way we found it is not very exciting for me. While the "Spirit filled church" IS sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise it appears that the goal of all conflict and demonic activity is to BREAK THAT SEAL.

EPH 1:13] In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise**, [14] who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

The battle is for the world to replace the church and become "the apostate church". The Church which is His body is striving for the church to replace the world as the major influence in society. While it may not achieve that, the prevailing prophecies indicate a tremendous harvest approaching.

The concern of the elders in this assembly is if our congregation is really equipped to receive an influx of new souls and to lay down our life for them and to minister to them. If we receive "strangers" with open arms many of the "regulars" will feel abandoned or not loved. If new people receive all the attention the others will feel left out and of no use. They will likely seek for a church where the status quo is the normal for the day.

The sanctification and development of the spiritual life of the church is the first line of defense against deception and fragmentation. When "the world" is still in the church, the world has a foothold and influence in the church. This is the source of many problems. Separating the world from the church and the church from the world is a major ministry in the church. Taking the cowardly approach to the world's influence in the church or to sin in the church has been a common practice.

The gospel of “cheap grace” and “God loves you just like you are” has become a deadly enemy of the progressing church. This gospel says that heaven is the storehouse for infinite grace which God is willing to pour out on us when we sin to cover over our carnality and restore our righteousness. No Godly sorrow, contrition or repentance is necessary because God is anxious to forgive and demonstrate His grace. Sin is no longer a problem for the church because Christ died for sin and it is already covered for those who believe.