

28.09.2019 A COMMUNITY OF SERVANTS

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Hebrews 10:23, 24

The church which is the Body of Christ is called to follow its Head, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the supreme example of the suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). His followers must have the mind and spirit of Christ.

Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28

'The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love,—love that "vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil" (1 Cor. 13:4, 5),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labour and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, "For to me to live is Christ;" for his life revealed Christ to men; "and to die is gain,"—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. "Christ shall be magnified in my body," he said, "whether it be by life or by death." Phil. 1:21, 20. *Desire of Ages: The Law of the New Kingdom. p. 549.*

Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. 1 Corinthians 9:19

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 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 2:5-8

Agents of Change

The spirit of Christ is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the world. Christians who are conscious of their witness to the world will daily surrender to the Holy Spirit so that they can be a positive influence in the society they live in.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 12:1

"You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world" Matthew 5:13, 14

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ...2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 2 Corinthians 2:14, 15

It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Corinthians 4:6, 7

Be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:15

A Servant Remnant / the Ministry of Intercession

God's faithful people in all generations have had the ministry of intercession. Two outstanding examples in the Bible are Moses and Daniel.

We are all familiar with Moses' intercession after the children of Israel sinned. We are less familiar with the fact that he interceded for the children of Israel many times (recorded once in Exodus and 4 times in Numbers). He asked God to have his name removed from the book of Life and save the Israelites – see Exodus 32:32. When the Israelites rebelled again and God threatened to destroy them and make a great nation out of Moses' descendants, he interceded again for them -Numbers 14: 11-21.

Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." Exodus 32:31, 32

"Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Numbers 14:19

One of the greatest intercessory prayers offered in the Bible is found in Daniel 9. Daniel prays for his people; he includes himself as one of the sinners on whom God must show mercy.

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face...Daniel 9:3-7

The Characteristics of the Servant Remnant

Here is the patience (steadfast endurance) of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12

In the last days, God will have a remnant people who believe and demonstrate the true gospel in their lives. Before the Day of Christ, the eternal gospel will be perverted. The threefold message of the church in the end-time to a world that is under condemnation is the restoration of the true gospel – the good news that Christ has paid the penalty for sin, He has removed the guilt and condemnation of sin and He provides His righteousness as a gift both imputed and imparted. We are called to draw men to Jesus, by lifting Him up. We are called to demonstrate the power of the gospel by denying self and trusting God to reveal His righteousness through us (Romans 1:16, 17). We are called to intercede for a world that is perishing and a church that is Laodicean.

Reaching Souls

"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

Christ's mission statement is the mission statement of His church. The gospel of the kingdom is the story of how God so loved mankind that He reached out to His enemies and redeemed them. Everyone who genuinely understands the gospel will be keenly interested in his fellow-men, seeking ways to draw them to Christ.

When Jesus sent His disciples out on mission, He asked them to do what He had already done Himself – preach the good news of the gospel and bring men and women healing spiritually, mentally and physically. As He depended on His Father

to meet all His needs, Jesus sent them out with seemingly no resources, but in fact, they had access to the greatest resources of all – the storehouse of heaven.

Throughout the New Testament we find that the local church played an important part in evangelism of the local community. Above all, the members must have a true understanding of God, that He is Friend, Saviour, our Righteousness, our High Priest and our Vindicator. Then we will be able to share with others the truth about God. If we ourselves are not convinced of any of the above about Christ, our gospel will be a partial gospel. Does that mean we do not witness? Not at all - we tell what we know. And we must spend time with Jesus asking Him to reveal more of Himself to us.

Secondly, the church must recognise that it is placed in the world for the salvation of the world. It is not a club for cultural Christians or Adventists. It is a place where sinners find a home where they are accepted as children of God and loved and welcomed as such. The opposite extreme which is popular but wrong, is to believe that the church itself must reflect worldliness to a certain extent to attract the people of the world. This was not true of Christ and it must not be true of the church. We are to be in the world as salt and light, but not of the world.

Next, it is not enough to have the desire for evangelism. The church must organise for evangelism. The church leaders must take particular responsibility for this. Below are some issues, not in any particular order of priority:

Firstly, it must be aware of the needs of the community it serves; it must have a message that addresses the concerns of the community, the worldly and idolatrous ideologies and practices that are practised in the community. We do not have the excuse that our world is more wicked than that of the apostolic church. If you read the list of the former practices of converted Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, you realise that the world of the apostolic church was very similar. Do we have members skilled in the Word, who can take the principles found in the Bible and give men and women and answer to seemingly difficult questions e.g. evolution, homosexuality, marriage and divorce, the problem of pain, social issues such as poverty and injustice?

Secondly, the church must examine itself. Will people coming to the church for the first time find a genuine welcome from the members? Is the physical building bright and warm, with a cheerful atmosphere? Will the message, whether it be teaching, preaching or music, convey the gospel of Christ in ways that are easy to understand? Will people be drawn to us merely for the social fellowship, the community programmes we offer or because they have found fellow believers in Christ and seek to follow Him and serve Him in the church?

Thirdly, the Spirit gives gifts. All members are called to ministry (service) by the Spirit. (By ministry is meant service, not the common meaning it has today of the work of pastors/ministers). But everyone cannot do everything. Different members are given different ministries. Acts 6:1-6 lays down these principles for us. All who are in ministry must devote themselves to holiness and prayer and be filled with the Spirit.

'All may find something to do. None need feel that there is no place where they can labour for Christ. The Saviour identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity, and heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints.' *Ministry of Healing. p 104*

Grace within the Church

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" John 13:34, 35

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Ephesians 2:19

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren... By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John 3:14, 16

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

'Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein.' *Desire of Ages. P. 462*

Encourage each other to Love and Good Works

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:23-25

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:9, 10

Encourage one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Hebrews 3:13, 14

"All have not the same experience in their religious life. But those of diverse exercises come together and with simplicity and humbleness of mind talk out their experience. All who are pursuing the onward Christian course should have, and will have, an experience that is living, that is new and interesting. A living experience is made up of daily trials, conflicts, and temptations, strong efforts and victories, and great peace and joy gained through Jesus. A simple relation of such experiences gives light, strength, and knowledge that will aid others in their advancement in the divine life."-Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* , Vol. 2, p. 579.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20, 21
