



GRACE & PEACE

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CONCERN FOR THE CHURCHES



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GOSPEL

CONSIDER

GRACE & PEACE

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Perspective:

Concern For The Churches

By Nelson Thomas Mumbai

Apostle Paul's life and service have been a challenge and inspiration to believers down through the centuries. One of his examples that we urgently need to emulate is his concern and selfless contribution for the churches of Christ. Because this is an area of Christian ministry quite often many neglect knowingly or unknowingly.

While narrating his sufferings for Christ as a cross cultural missionary, Paul writes at the end, "Besides the other things what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2Corinthians 11:28). That means, more than the physical and mental troubles he faced from various quarters, his concern for the local churches burdened him constantly. Day and night his mind had been filled with various matters pertaining to the local assemblies in different localities.



“*The Church exists for the sake of those outside it.*

- William Temple

Concern Reflected

We can notice his burden for the churches being reflected in three different ways: -

1
HIS
PREACHING

2
HIS
TEACHING

3
HIS
SELF-
SACRIFICE

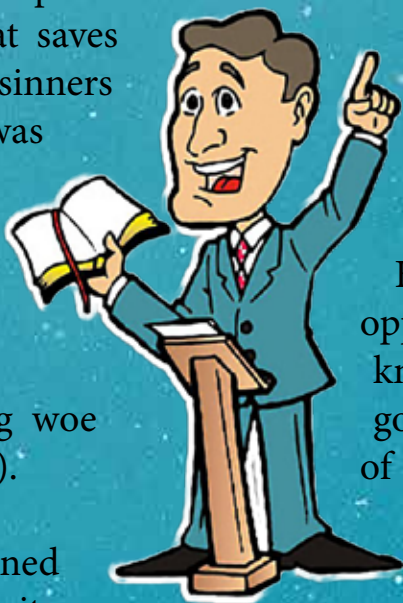
1. HIS PREACHING :

He preached the gospel with all enthusiasm and commitment. For he knew the power of the message of the cross that saves and transforms even wretched sinners (Rom.1:16; 1Timo. 1:15). He was ready to 'become all things to all men', that he might by all means save some (1Cor 9:22). Paul realized that he is 'a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians' and failure to preach will bring woe upon him (Rom. 1:14; 1Cor. 9:16).

That's why even when he was stoned at Lystra and dragged out of the city thinking him dead, he rose up and went

to the next city to preach the gospel (Acts 14: 19 – 21). His ultimate goal in evangelism was to establish new local assemblies where there were none (Rom. 15:19—23).

He was happy even when his opponents preached, because he knew that the preaching of the gospel will lead to the exaltation of Christ and salvation of souls. That will subsequently benefit a local assembly either for its formation or edification (Phil. 1:15—18).



2. HIS TEACHING :

Paul always returned to those newly formed local assemblies to encourage and establish them in the faith. He never abandoned a congregation of saints. Even when he was away, he did



everything possible for their wellbeing. He sent his associates to minister to the needs of the saints. Also, he prayed for them constantly, for their spiritual enlightenment and progress.

The Lord used his letters not only to exhort, warn and encourage the saints of the first century, but even today they remain as believers' treasure house for church doctrine (cf. Acts 14:21—24;

20: 17 – 36; Col. 1:24, 25, 28, 29; 1 Thes. 2:7—12, 17; 3:1,2, 8—10, etc.). Thus, Paul's commitment to the edification and growth of the people of God is inspiring.

3. HIS SELF SACRIFICE :

Paul's efforts to evangelize, establish and equip local churches were not easy. He had to suffer too much, from within and without, which he narrates in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 4: 8 – 12, 15; 10:10; 11:12, 23—26). Yet, forgetting his own welfare, Paul wholeheartedly served the people of God. His words to the Philippian believers are touching,

“I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you..... all for your progress and joy of faith.” (Phil. 1: 23 – 25)

Notice, while in the Roman jail, he longed

to depart and be with Christ which is far better; yet, he wanted to live just for the sake of serving the people of God – their joy and progress. He was even ready to minister to them with his own blood (Phil. 2:7).

Do we have such concern for the churches of Christ? What sacrifice, pain, and role have we taken for the establishment and growth of a local assembly?

Sad, there are people, even so-called leaders and ministers who, not only fail to help, even trouble, hinder and weaken the churches of God. We need men of God like Apostle Paul who truly care for the local assemblies of Christ everywhere.

LOVING SERVICE

In John 21:15—17 the Lord Jesus told Peter, that true love for Him should result in the shepherding of His church. ‘Feed my lambs’, ‘tend my sheep’ are the commandments of Christ to those who claim to have real love for Christ, because the Church belongs to Him. It is the fruit of His labor. The Lord Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her. He is still concerned about the churches everywhere (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5: 25 – 29).

Do we love and care for the Church? What is the goal of our spiritual activities? Is to build up the church of Christ or something else? What is our contribution in the establishing and strengthening of local assemblies? Our loyalty and involvement for the church proves our love and appreciation for Christ. Let us do what the Lord is deeply concerned in, that is the local church.

INSPIRING REVELATION

What made Paul to serve and suffer like this? Was it just to pass the time or make a show to maintain his position and prestige?

Or was it to make a profit out of ministry? Absolutely not. The answer is found in Ep. 3:1—9.

The Lord used his letters not only to exhort, warn and encourage the saints of the first century, but even today they remain as believers' treasure house for church doctrine (cf. Acts 14:21—24; 20: 17 – 36; Col. 1:24, 25, 28, 29; 1 Thes. 2:7—12, 17; 3:1,2, 8—10, etc.). Thus, Paul's commitment to the edification and growth of the people of God is inspiring.

ANECDOTE:

DON'T FORGET YOUR PURPOSE

Source: Charles Paul Conn

A preacher was in Atlanta, several years ago, and noticed in the restaurants section of the Yellow Pages, an entry for a place called Church of God Grill. The peculiar name aroused his curiosity and he dialed the number. A man answered with a cheery, "Hello! Church of God Grill!"

The preacher asked how that restaurant



had been given such an unusual name, and the man said: "Well, we had a little mission down here, and we started selling chicken dinners after church on Sunday to help pay the bills. Well, people liked the chicken, and we did such a good business, that eventually we cut back on the church service. After a while we just closed down the church altogether and kept on serving chicken dinners. We kept the name we started with, and that's Church of God Grill."

TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS

Source: Unknown

B. F. Mills, a preacher from a generation ago told the following story: "I remember going down stairs in a hotel about midnight, with some letters in my hand that I wished to mail. The clerk was not in the office, but a policeman was there, and he said, 'I will take your letters and mail them for you.' I thanked him and handed them to him, and started up the stairs.

As I went, I heard a voice say, 'Why did you not speak to that policeman about Christ?' I said, 'It was because it would not do any good.'

FACTS ABOUT FIRST ASSEMBLY

(ACTS 2)

By Bro. David Manchala, Hyderabad

Genesis chapter 2 is about the beginning of Adam, Exodus chapter 2 is about the Birth of Moses. Luke as a beloved physician gave the birth certificate of Lord Jesus Christ in Luke chapter 2. As an historian in Acts chapter 2 gave birth (beginning) details of FIRST ASSEMBLY.

Therefore, Acts chapter 2 is a very important chapter to understand ASSEMBLY FOUNDATION, FORMATION AND FUNCTIONS. So, every reader must carefully go through this chapter.

1

FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

The First Assembly that was established in Jerusalem was founded on the:

- **GRACE OF GOD,**
- Preaching about the GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST and under the
- **GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**



2

FORMATION OF THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

When they heard the preaching of Peter

- ‘They were cut to the heart’ (v. 37) i.e., SOUND CONVERSION,
- They were baptised (v. 41) i.e., SYMBOLIC CONFESSION and
- They were added (v. 41) i.e., SINCERE COMMENDATION

3

FUNCTIONS OF THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

They continued steadfastly in the:

- APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE i.e., SAINTLY CONDUCT
- FELLOWSHIP i.e., SWEET COMPANIONSHIP
- BREAKING OF BREAD i.e., SOLEMN COMMEMORATION
- PRAYER i.e., SACRED COMMUNION

So, whenever and wherever an assembly is established whether in Kerala, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi, New York, Durban and London etc., it must be founded on these three principles.

THE CHURCH LOCALLY

1. Composed of Believers, 1Cor 1:2; 1Thess 1:9
2. Gathered unto the Name, Matt 18:20; 1Cori 5:4
3. Governed by the Lord, 1Cori 12: 3 – 5; Eph 4: 11 – 13
4. Guided by the Spirit, 1Cori 12: 7, 8; Phil 3:3
5. Ordered by the Word, 1Cori 11: 23; 12: 36, 37.

Exhortation:

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

By Nelson Thomas

One of the sad realities of the present-day Christendom is the gross neglect of Christ's ownership and authority in His church. Many are ignorant of the basic church truths; at the same time, those who are aware of it neglect it for one reason or another. And the result is the utter misrepresentation of the church of Christ in this world. The world views church in different ways. Even in certain cases, we may have to doubt the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ among certain congregations as in Laodicea - Rev 3:20.

We must always remember the Lord Jesus who said, "I will build my church" is definitely doing it, Matthew 16: 18. The inauguration of this building up of the church began on the day of Pentecost and will continue till the day of rapture, when the Lord Himself will descend from heaven and take away His people to be with Him (Cf. Acts 2:15, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

According to Mark, even after His ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ continued to work with the apostles, Mark 16:20. Further, through the book of Revelation, the risen Lord Jesus unveils not only the facts of the future programmes but also of what He is doing for the church in this present age, Rev 1:11, 19. The Lord specifically instructs John

the apostle to write what he sees and send to the seven local churches in Asia. Those messages are very much relevant even today. Let us consider four general principles found in those letters.

FOUR GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1

Churches should know of the present glory of Christ.

2

We need to know of Christ's role in the local churches today.

3

We also need to know of Christ's hold on the leadership.

4

Each Christian should understand their individual role in the local church.

1 Churches should know of the present glory of Christ. Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18, etc.

The major theme of chapter 1 is the revelation of Christ's glory. It was not accidental but well-intended. Apart from the words of Christ about Himself, John saw His greatness with his own eyes, Rev 1: 5, 8, 12–16. It was so magnificent that he fell at His feet as dead, Rev. 1:17. While introducing Himself to each local church, the Lord picks up one or two unique glories already presented in chapter 1. For example:

- To the church at Smyrna: “These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.”
- To the church at Pergamos: “These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword.”
- To the church at Thyatira: “These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass,” etc

When we study these letters carefully, we can observe, according to the condition of each church He introduces Himself.

- The suffering church should remember that He has already gone through it and there is nothing out His control.
- The compromising church should know the power of His word.
- The corrupt church should know of His penetrating insight and judgment.

Look at any weak or failed local church, one of the distinguishing marks is their poor understanding or appreciation of the Lord of the Church. That's why repeatedly the writers call upon the saints to 'be rooted and built up in Him'; 'hold on to the Head'; and 'look to the Author and Finisher of our faith' (Cf. Colo. 2:7, 19; Heb. 12:2, 3. etc.).

2

We need to know of Christ's role in the local churches today.
(Rev. 1: 12, 13, 20; 2:1)

The Lord reveals Himself to John, and then tells the Ephesians also of how He walks among the local assemblies. That shows His concern and care for the congregations. He can never neglect or abandon the church that He bought by His precious blood. The Lord is carefully watching the activities of every church. That's why to each of them He says, "I know". He appreciates them for their good work, accuses them for the failure, and admonishes them even with a warning.

How important it is for us to notice that a local church gathering is not just some people coming together. We are constantly watched and evaluated by the Lord of the church. That realization should control our behaviour and activities in the congregation of the Lord. Yes, He walks among us, knows the secrets and rewards us accordingly.

3

We also need to know of Christ's hold on the leadership. (Rev. 1:16, 20)

Each letter is addressed to the messenger/angel of the church, 2:1, 8 etc. This messenger is the representative of the church. In the vision John saw, the Lord is holding these messengers, ch. 1. Here, we can learn two things in connection with the leadership.

a. Christ controls the leadership.

It is He who appoints the leadership and uses them. And they are accountable too, Heb. 13:17. He is the chief Shepherd; leaders are only under-shepherds, 1 Peter 5: 2-4.

b. Christ protects the leadership.

Another reason why He holds them in His hands could be the vulnerability of the elders. Evil forces always focus on those who are in the front. Knowing this, the Lord guards them in a special manner. There is an urgent need for the churches to be aware of the Lord's plan for church leadership and follow it. Sad to notice that in many places a right understanding and practice of 'biblical eldership' is missing.

4

Each Christian should understand their individual role in the local church.
(Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, etc.)

Each letter concludes with a catchphrase, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Even though the messages were addressed to the leadership, the Lord expects the application from individual members. So, the Lord is calling upon every member of the church to respond to His words.

No individual can ever think that he/she has no role in the church. The Lord Jesus wants each member to be aware of their respective role and fulfil it. No one should consider themselves as spectators as we come together.

Church is made of individual believers. The quality of the church depends upon each one of them. The poor spiritual life of one believer affects the whole church. In other words, even one faithful and obedient believer can bring a great difference to a local church. No wonder, throughout history, the Lord sought for one person! (Cf. 2 Chron. 16:9; Jer. 5:1; Ezek. 22:3; etc.)

POINTS TO PONDER

- As a member of a local church, how do you view these truths?
- Are you aware of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is deeply concerned about His church and is carefully watching its affairs?
- Do we give Him pre-eminence in all things?
- As a leader of the church, are you aware that you are accountable to the Lord of the church?
- How do we view those who minister for us?
- What’s your contribution to the church as a member?

There is nothing else precious to the Lord Jesus as His church. Let us view and value the church as He does. Let us spend our time and energy to prepare the saints for the soon coming of Christ, John 21: 15–17.

GOSPEL:

CONSIDER

By Aby Kuruvilla, Mumbai

Consider the universe, its vastness, its majesty, and the wonders of it. Consider the precise position and movement of our planet within the solar system. Consider the preservation of our insignificant planet in the universe.

The psalmist says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3).

Great Universe

This great universe points to a God who is apart from and greater than all the visible and invisible things in it. Consider the glory of this God. The psalmist says, “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” (Ps. 8:1). He is Absolute and Almighty.

But this God does also look upon the insignificant things of our earth. “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them... Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Luke 12:24,27). Consider this God and his interest in everything that he created.

Great Fall

This God created us. Of all the things that he created, he gave a special place to us, for we were created in his own likeness (Gen. 1:26,27). He desired to have communion with us. But with man sinning against God, we read that there arose a great chasm between God and man. No works of man could set right that broken relationship with God (Rom. 5:6). Mankind got set on a path towards eternal destruction.

But God intervened to save our helpless race. Christ Jesus, “who being in the form of God... made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:6-8)

Great Love

Consider the humility of this God, for he whose glory is above the heavens, condescended to such a lowly estate for wicked sinners like us. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Consider the supremacy of his love, far excelling anything that man has ever witnessed or known. Consider the efficacy of his work, for in his death and resurrection, he has paved a way to restore us back to God eternally.

What must we do then to be restored back to God? Our works, or our religious life cannot save us. We need to repent of our sins and come to the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can save us. “By grace are ye saved, through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

Have you considered this free gift of God? “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Ps 34:8)

“*The life, power and glory of the Church is prayer.*”

- E. M. Bounds

“*Whenever the Church acts in the name of the Lord and really does His will, the stamp of God is upon their deeds.*”

- William Kelly

Study: Notes on Tabernacle – 21: THE GOLDEN TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD

By Charles E. Wigg, Australia

The instructions regarding the construction and use of the golden table are given to us in Exo 25: 23-30. Its size was fairly small, only a metre long, half a metre wide, and .750 MM high. The smallness emphasizes the intrinsic worth and glory of the One of whom it speaks, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Purpose

Its purpose was to bear the loaves and the vessels that were placed upon it. Just as it states in Zech. 6; 13, “He shall bear the glory”. It was made of acacia wood, showing that the present service of our glorified Lord, is all dependent upon His sinless manhood, and the gold reminding us again of the glory of his deity, the One upon whom we rest, and who upholds us in the presence of God, is both perfectly human, and absolutely divine.

It had a rim, or surround like a crown, and this kept what was placed upon it from falling down. This rim was

of a handbreadth, and would remind us of the lovely doxology found in Jude 24, “Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present y o u



faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen”

These verses set out for us beautifully, the typical meaning of the Golden Table of Shew-bread. It was on that table that the twelve fresh loaves of shew-bread were placed each Sabbath, and remained there through the seven days of each week that followed. Those loaves were “faultless”, as were the vessels that were also placed upon the table, vessels that had been used in the making of the loaves of shew-bread.

Presence of Glory

The Table bore the loaves and vessels constantly in the presence of God, and the Lord Jesus presents His saints faultless in the presence of His glory. Just as Isaiah tells us in chapter 63: 9, of his prophecy, “He bore them and carried them all the days of old”. The hand breadth, brings to mind the lovely words of the Lord Jesus in John,10;28-29, where He tells us that none, (neither men, angels, or demons,) can pluck us out of His mighty hand, nor out of the mighty hand of His Father, whom He says is “greater than all.”

Psa 73:23, tells us that with His hand He grasps our right hand, to hold us and to keep us from falling. Psa 116:8, tells us of the things from which He keeps us, and Nehemiah continually refers to the “Good hand of my God upon me”.

The Lord Jesus was able to say to His Father about those whom the Father had given Him, “I have kept them in thy name”, “those....have I kept, not one of them is lost”.

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For further details contact:- gracepeaceu@gmail.com

Prepared, and posted by Nelson Thomas Kumaramparampil (NTK) for the Glory of God & the Joy of the saints.

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Design & Layout : Jiju Mathew

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