

MARANATHA MESSENGER

Weekly Newsletter of

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

Private Circulation Only

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Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851 Tel: (65) 6545 8627 Fax: (65) 6546 7422

E-mail: maranatha.bpc@pacific.net.sg Website: www.maranatha-bpc.com *

Sunday School: 9.45 am Worship Service: 10.45 am Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Pastor: Rev Jack Sin (HP: 9116 0948)

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: Sometimes, I have a guilty conscience. How do I maintain a pure conscience before God and man?

A: That is a good thought to want to keep a good or pure conscience before God and man. Act 23:1 says, *And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* Paul says in Act 24:16, *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.* Consider the following practical tips summarised from John MacArthur's, *The Vanishing Conscience*, 58-59:

Confess and Forsake Known Sin

Examine your guilt feelings in light of Scripture. Deal with the sin God's Word reveals. Prov 28:13 says, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* The first chapter of 1 John speaks of confession as an ongoing characteristic of the Christian life: 1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* We should certainly confess to those we have wronged. Jas 5:16 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* But above all, we should confess our sins to the One whom sin offends most. As David wrote, Ps 32:5 *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

Ask Forgiveness and be Reconciled to Anyone You Have Wronged

Jesus instructed us in Matt 5:23,24, *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Matt 6:14,15 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Say I am sorry and mean it.

Make Restitution

God told Moses in Num 5:6-7, *Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man*

or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. The principle behind this law is binding on believers living in the New Testament era as well (cf Philem 19; Luke 19:8). So make amends and change for the better.

Do not Procrastinate in Clearing Your Wounded Conscience

Paul said he did his best in Matt 24:16a, *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.* Some people put off dealing with their guilt, thinking their conscience will clear itself in time. It will not. Procrastination allows the guilt feelings to fester. That in turn generates depression, anxiety and other emotional problems. Guilt feelings may persist long after the offence is forgotten, often spilling over to other areas of our lives. That's one reason people often feel guilty and are not sure why. Such confused guilt may be a symptom that something is terribly wrong spiritually. Paul may have had that in mind when he wrote, Tit 1:15 *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.* Dealing with a wounded conscience immediately by heart-searching prayer before God is the only way to keep it clear and sensitive. Putting off dealing with guilt inevitably compounds the problem.

Educate your Conscience

A weak, easily grieved conscience results from a lack of spiritual knowledge (1 Cor 8:7). If your conscience is too easily wounded, do not violate it; to do so is to train yourself to override conviction and that will later lead to overriding true conviction about real sin. Moreover, violating the conscience is a sin in itself (v 12, cf Rom 14:23). Instead, immerse your conscience in God's Word so it can begin to function with reliable data.

An important aspect of educating the conscience is teaching it to focus on the right object; divinely revealed truth. If the conscience looks only to personal feelings, it can accuse us wrongfully. We are certainly not to order our lives according to our feelings. A conscience fixed on feelings becomes unreliable. Individuals subject to depression and melancholy especially should not allow their conscience to be informed by their feelings. Despondent feelings will provoke unnecessary doubts and fears in the soul when not kept in check by a well-advised conscience. The conscience must be persuaded by God's Word, not by our feelings.

Furthermore, conscience errs when the mind focuses wholly on our faltering in sin and ignores the triumphs of God's grace in us. True Christians experience both realities. Conscience must be allowed to weigh the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as well as the remnants of our sinful flesh. It must see our faith as well as our failings. Otherwise the conscience will become overly accusing, prone to unwholesome doubts about our standing before God.

Conclusion

We must subject our conscience to the truth of God in the teaching of Scripture. As we do that, the conscience will be more clearly focused and better able to give us reliable feedback. A trustworthy conscience becomes a powerful aid to spiritual growth and stability.

Hope this helps.

Jack Sin

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Looking Inwards before Looking Outwards

Message to MYF on Sun, 17 Oct 2004 at 1.30 pm

Introduction

So many Christians today are *not* looking for a place to serve, but for a place to *be* served. That's normal for the world to have that attitude, but we are concerned to see this attitude in the church today. Those of us who are willing to serve, even though it may involve great personal cost, will volunteer or come forward because their heart compels them to do something for the work of God in the local church. However, there are others who appear to do all they can to avoid serving. They do not come looking for ways or ministries to serve and when approached they decline citing reasons like they have no time or they are very busy in their secular work or studies or they have no gifts of service or have not yet discovered their gifts. Which of these best describe you? Which of these is more like Jesus? Which brings more glory to God? Which has more love for God? Which demonstrates more knowledge of God? Let's examine some of the reasons you should serve in the local church.

1. Service makes us more like Jesus.

In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." The word 'service' is 'to minister.' On the night before He was crucified Jesus served His disciples by washing their feet and said, "For whether is greater he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:27). Although Jesus is God Himself, He was also the humblest, most servant-hearted man who ever lived. Jesus Christ did not come only to forgive our sins and to die for our sins but also to make us holy i.e. to make us more and more like Him. He did not live and die for us that we would receive forgiveness and yet unchanged. The redemptive plan of God before the foundation of the world is for His people "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29) and the Son characterized Himself as the "One who serves." Does it matter to you how much you are like Jesus? Have you ever wondered how you can become more like Jesus? One thing you can do is serve as Jesus served. The work of the church is the work of God on earth. If Jesus were in our church today, can you imagine that He would do nothing? Would He simply attend the worship service and leave after that? Do you think He would serve or merely observe?

2. Service brings glory to God.

As Christians, God has given at least one spiritual gift to you. In 1 Pet 4:10-11 God's spiritual gifts are divided into two general categories i.e. speaking gifts and serving gifts. Some of us are gifted in areas of preaching or teaching while others are blessed with serving in the choir, as ushers, PA crew, food ministry etc. However, all of us are

called to be witnesses (or ambassadors) of Christ. Whatever your gift may be God gave it to you to use in His service and the result of serving Him you bring glory to God. Notice that Peter who was writing to Christians spoke of serving one another. Taken in context we learn that using our spiritual gifts to serve in and through our church is one of the ways we bring glory to God. Any service for God in His church e.g. teaching, committee work, showing mercy, serving food, music ministry, nursery service, church maintenance, all of these bring glory to God. On the other hand, a professing Christian who does not serve in the church is not giving glory to God. Serving God in His church is, if you like, a statement that you love the Lord and His people and even to the extent that of laying down our lives for Him. This glorifies God before Christians and non-Christians to those inside and outside the church who see you serving. But when you do not serve God it is a testimony that our God is not worthy of serving and that diminishes His glory affects our testimony before others.

3. Service demonstrates the knowledge of God.

Serving God in His church is an indication that you have received His grace. On the other hand do not be mistaken that you are right with God by serving in the church. Just because a person serves in the church does not mean he or she serves God. But the person who has turned to God will demonstrate it by serving Him. Service to God has always shown generally who is right with God and who is not. Four hundred years before Christ, the prophet Malachi wrote, "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." (Mal 3:18). In Eph 2:10 Paul wrote, "For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." How then will a person who genuinely knows God through Christ live a lifetime and not do what God created him to do and not do what God prepared him to do before the foundation of the world? In Phil 2:13 Paul wrote, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." When God has been at work in you, you want to work for God. Once you know Christ in an intimate way, you will want to serve Him and do something for Him.

4. Service expresses love for God.

Serving in the local church is one of the clearest manifestations of loving God Himself. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that God would never forget the love they showed to Him by ministering to His people (Heb 6:10). The people of God show their love for God by serving the church of God. No doubt we also serve outside the church (see Luke 2:37; Col 3:23-24 and Matt 25:40). In Gal 6:10 Paul exhorts us to do good unto all men especially unto them who are of the household of faith. And what better way is there to regularly do good to the household of faith than by serving in church ministries and in so doing we are serving God. Serving God becomes like the labour of the Jewish patriarch Jacob who worked for his future father-in-law for seven years so that he could marry his daughter Rachel (Gen 29:20). Has the love for God ever caused you to feel that way in the service of God?

5. Service brings pleasure to God and His people.

We who serve God with the right motives experience what King David exclaimed "I delight to do thy will O my God" (Ps 40:8). There is delight in doing what we were created to do. The will of God is that His people serve in His church and to do this brings them great delight and pleasure. Consider the following:

a) Service gives pleasure to the one serving. What if God would not allow you to serve Him? How would you feel? Suppose you were told to just sit back and relax and enjoy the ministries of the church. For a child of God who loves the Lord you will feel a growing sense of restlessness.

b) Service gives pleasure to others. When you serve in the church it brings pleasure and happiness to the people of God. In Acts 20:17-38, where Paul says his farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus, he recounts how he served them for three years. We are told that when he finished talking “they all wept freely and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him” Why? Because his ministry had brought so much pleasure to them God had blessed them through the words and works of Paul and they could not bear the thought of not seeing him again.

c) Service gives pleasure to God. The last chapter of the last book of the Bible gives us a glimpse of eternity in heaven where God’s servants will serve Him (Rev 22:3). What service do we render to God in heaven? There will be no need for evangelism, no more needs to meet, no more church buildings to build and maintain. We will just be worshipping God!

You have heard of IQ (intelligence quotient) and EQ (emotional quotient). I would like to suggest to you SQ (service quotient). How is your service quotient today?

a) Is the church stronger because of you? Do you receive more ministry from the church than you give? I would suggest that the goal for each one of us should be to serve the church in such a way that it is stronger because you are serving. Everyone who really wants to, can do something to strengthen the work of the church.

b) Do you do a servant’s work with a servant’s heart? The reason some of us are unwilling to serve or unwilling to serve very long is that we do not have a servant’s heart. Until you realise that every follower of Christ is also called to be a servant, you will have difficulty serving no matter where you try to serve in the church. Every ministry becomes mundane at times and unappreciated. Every ministry receives the sharp sting of criticism at some point in time. Unless in these times we can fall back upon the call of God to be a servant we will become disillusioned.

c) Are you a consistent worker or a convenient worker? Many people adopt the attitude that they will serve in the church only occasionally and when it is convenient to them. The church needs servants; people who will make long term commitments and be dependable. The classic example is a SS teacher. He/she prepares faithfully every week and serves God and His church loyally and steadfastly. Likewise, many other ministries in the church require the same regular commitment and the church will not be effective without such committed Christians. Sad to say there is a lack of commitment in the church today. Fewer people want to commit to an ongoing ministry. More and more people are saying, “I will help out when I can” or “Call on me when you really need me” or worse still, “Do not call me if you have a real need.” The church cannot function well with that level of commitment. The church needs soldiers who enlist and fill the ranks not people who will help only as last minute reinforcements and if the “battle” does not last long. In other words, using military language today, there is no ROD (Run out date) in the church. Charles Spurgeon once said, “We want labourers, not loiterers. We need men (or young people) on fire and I beseech you ask God to send them. The harvest can never be reaped by men who will not labour.” The apostle Paul realised that it was consistent ministry *through* hardship that demonstrated that he was a true servant of God (2 Cor 6:4-5).

Conclusion

Finally, are you serving faithfully in the church today? And will you resolve never to retire from serving in the church? Amen.

Eld Thomas Liaw

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At the Pulpit
Theme for the Quarter:
“Gleanings from the Lives of Faithful Men”
Rev Lim Chee Boon
Faith & Temptation – Samson
(Judg 16:25-31)

*These hyperlinks work with Word 97 and later version.

[End of MM, 26 December, 2004]