

ESCAPING BONDAGE TO PRESENT-DAY PHARISAISM
"Part II: Liberated Christian Service Program Development"
(James 3:1, 13-18; Zech. 4:6, 7, 10; John 5:17, 19-20; Rev. 3:17, 18b)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The October 21, 1997 issue of USA Today ran a story out of Arvada, Colorado on a church-sponsored "haunted house" for the Halloween season. It is a "Hell House" with scenes of a bloody abortion, a satanic cult murder, a date rape, a teen suicide and the funeral of a homosexual with AIDS. These "Hell House" events are programs you can get for your own church as a "witnessing" tool to scare unsaved people to turn to Christ! You can order a kit for \$150 from Arvada's Abundant Life Center.

Question: Should Nepaug Church get one of these kits from Arvada, Colorado in order to put on a "haunted house" ministry to scare people out of hell and into heaven? Why, or why not?!

(2) A number of years ago, Youth For Christ decided to get many unsaved kids out to a stadium in San Diego in order to deliver the Gospel to them. To pull in the crowds, they advertised having a camel race. It worked very well -- pulling out the kids for the race, but there was such bedlam from the event that when the evangelist gave the Gospel, hardly anyone paid attention!

Is there a limit as to how one is supposed to minister for the Lord, or can you feel free to dream up your own ideas?!

(3) Over the last year, I have talked to any number of attendees at Nepaug Church about ministry dreams. Some have seen what other churches do and wonder why we couldn't import those ministries here. "Why don't we have a more extensive children's ministry, bus ministry or bookstore of our own?" goes the question. Another question can be: "Why doesn't our membership overflow so we have to expand by a building program like a church in Avon does, or why doesn't our giving blossom and double every decade?!" On the other hand, I have also talked at length with others who are frustrated at seeing what new ministries have developed consistently fade for one reason or another!

Should we try to copy the "effective" ministries of other churches because these works appear to be working in terms of numbers?! What about the Nepaug ministries that have already been tried and "fizzled" over time?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "When I or others I know apply tangible measurements to evaluate what I or our Church produces, especially in comparison to others or other churches, we seem to come up SHORT! Is the PASTOR concerned about this, or not, and WHY?!"

- I. **There exists a FALSE, "Pharisaic" ministry program to shun and a TRUE, RIGHTEOUS ministry program to be performed:**
 - A. In writing to Christians, James addressed the ministry **quality** of those who serve as church teachers in James chapter 3, cf. James 3:1ff.
 - B. That chapter's summary section of James 3:14-18 contrasts the spiritually **false** and **true** teaching ministries as **GOD** views them:
 1. James defined **false** spiritual ministries as follows:
 - a. False ministries yield **envy, selfish ambition and pride**, 3:14f.
 - b. False ministries appeal to **earthly** resources of man's ability and strength to get responses rather than seek divine help, 3:15a.
 - c. False ministries focus on **natural** benchmarks for evaluations, use **natural** forces and appeal to **natural** lusts, James 3:15b.
 - d. False ministries tend to produce **disorder** and evil practices, 16a.
 - e. False ministries allow demonic oppressiveness to arise, 16b.
 - f. Such works were typical of Pharisaism, Mtt. 23:1-7, 13-15.
 2. Conversely, James describes **genuine** spiritual ministries as follows:
 - a. True ministries are led by those whose **lives** are right, 13a, 17a.
 - b. True ministries arise from **humble** people, James 3:13b.
 - c. True ministries come from **peacemakers**, James 3:17b.
 - d. True ministries are led by those who are **considerate** and **cooperative** in relating to others, James 3:17c.
 - e. True ministries are done by those who display **unmerited favor** and **impartiality** toward others, James 3:17d.
 - f. True ministries come from **sincere** people, James 3:17e.
 - g. True ministries use a **peaceful** teaching/preaching delivery, 18a.
 - h. True ministries produce **righteousness** in others, James 3:18b.
- II. **The CAUSE for this contrast is the SOURCE of one's POWER:**
 - A. God told the **struggling**, post-captivity Jewish exiles that their effort to rebuild the temple would be blessed not by human ability or strength, but by the power of God's Holy Spirit, Zech. 4:6-7.
 - B. As a result, their **humanly-viewed** "little" effort would achieve God's great work of preparing for the coming Messiah, Zech. 4:10; 9:9.

- C. Conversely, operating by **human** wisdom, values and ability yields only spiritually futile results, cf. John 15:5b; Romans 8:3a.

III. **Thus, Scripture lays out the following format for a true ministry:**

- A. One must have the indwelling Holy Spirit before trying to serve God, and that comes by accepting Christ as Savior, Acts 1:8; Jn. 7:39a.
- B. Then, he must be **controlled** by the Holy Spirit via (1) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (2) reliance on His power (Gal. 5:16-23) to (3) obey Scripture for God's ministry blessings, 1 John 2:3-6.
- C. Now, **obeying Scripture** under the **Spirit's** leading breeds just the **opposite** of what **many** view is effective service: **one "dies" to ego and man's expectations as he follows GOD**, Jn. 5:17, 19-20; 15:16:
1. Effective service results from one's **limiting** himself to use **JUST** his *spiritual gift* that was **sovereignly assigned** to him by **GOD**, 1 Cor. 12:4, 11. Trying to serve God by **not** heeding this truth leads one into sure ministry **failure**, 2 Tim. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 4:14-16!
 2. Effective service results from one's **confining** himself to work **under** God's "chain-of-command" authority of his church leaders, home leaders, business leaders, etc., Acts 13:1-3; James 3:17c.
 3. Effective service results from one's **binding** himself to have **God** define what is his ministry assignment *instead of* relying on his **own creativity**, Rev. 3:17, 18b with Rev. 19:8 (see John 21:18-22).
 4. Effective service results from one's **restricting** himself to serve God with **God's methods**, for using man-made **methods**, whatever the intent, leads to a loss of effectiveness and reward, 2 Tim. 2:5.
 5. Effective service results from one's **inhibiting** himself from getting side-tracked so he can perform God's *primary* calling, 2 Tim. 2:4.
 6. Effective service results from one's **binding** himself to suffer *whatever* it takes to complete his *assignment* from God, 2 Tim. 2:3
 7. Effective service results from one's relying on **God's spontaneously causing compliments** or **gifts** to come from those disciplined to **signal** that he is effective; it does **not** come from using his or others' evaluations to measure his work, 2 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 4:3-5.

Application: In seeking God's blessing in ministry efforts, we must **AVOID** an **EARTHLY** based ministry by using **SCRIPTURE** as our only guide, Isa. 8:19-20. That leads to (1) salvation by faith in Christ (Jn. 3:16), (2) fellowship with Him (see III, B above) (3) and "dying" to promoting one's ego as he **FOLLOWS** the Bible's God!

Lesson: Applying an earthly view of Christian ministry causes one to think he is successful when he desperately fails in God's eyes! Effective service is by God's Spirit, **NOT** by human expertise, a calling that **THRIVES** on our "dying" to our egos and the expectations of others!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon . . .)

Tony Campolo related in the Oct.-Nov. 1988 issue of World Vision, p. 6 how much better are **God's** ways rather than that of man's ideas of ministry. He illustrated through an event that occurred in a Christian junior-high camp where he once served.

In an effort to get the kids interested in Christ, the camp counselors imported superstar baseball players who testified that their batting averages had gone up since they began praying. However, the kids were tough to lead, and they enjoyed picking on one another.

One of the boys named Billy had cerebral palsy, and the others were merciless with him. As he walked across the camp grounds they would line up and mimic his awkward movements. One day Billy asked for directions, saying in a slow stammer, "Which . . . way is . . . the . . . craft . . . shop?" The boys around him mimicked his same stammer, saying, "It's . . . over . . . there . . . Billy," and roared with laughter.

The issue came to a head when it was time for evening cabin devotions. The boys in Billy's cabin had selected him to give the devotions for the night so they could ridicule him. As Billy dragged his way to the front of the cabin to give his devotions, you could hear giggles all over the place.

Billy took about five minutes to say seven words: "Jesus . . . loves . . . me . . . and . . . I . . . love . . . Jesus."

When he finished, there was dead silence in the cabin. Tony Campolo reports that as he looked over his shoulder, he could see junior-high boys bawling all over the room under deep spiritual conviction. A revival broke out that led to many of those troublesome boys going to the mission field and pastorates around the world!

Instead of the superstars, God chose to use a junior-high boy named Billy with cerebral palsy to reach the difficult campers. That fits the theme of 1 Cor. 1:27-29: "**But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.**"

We must **follow** the *Lord* for true, effective ministry development, for true Christian ministry glorifies **Him** -- **not US!**"