

Rom. 14:19 So
then let us
follow after
things which
make for
peace, and
things whereby
we may edify
one another.



John 8:32 and ye
shall know the
truth, and the
truth shall make
you free.

DECEMBER

31

2017

CHRIST DESIGNED THE WORK OF THE CHURCH (1)

Jim Stauffer

In our discussion of Christ's church, the one He died to purchase with His own blood, we have so far covered His love for it, His ownership of it and the fact that He designed it according to His purpose.

In the discussion of His purpose, we last spoke of His design for the worship of the church.

This week we will take a look at the work Christ designed for the church. There has long since been a misunderstanding about just what Jesus desired for His church to be busy with. Not too long ago we had an article on the church, the pillar and ground of the truth (**1 Tim. 3:15**). So let us begin by acknowledging the work of the church is bound by the truth as are all things to the church. We know God's word is our source of truth according to **John 17:17**.

So, as we always do, we turn to the Scriptures to learn what the work of the church is.

The single most important thing about Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection is the redemption it provides. The salvation of man from his sin is accomplished through the blood of Jesus. It, therefore is necessary that message be carried to a lost and dying world. The gospel is the very message of that act on the part of Christ and its effectual salvation to man (**Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4**). The term evangelist comes from a Greek word meaning good news and Christ placed evangelists in the church for the very purpose of spreading that good news (**Eph. 4:11,12**).

How did Christ plan for the spreading of that news to be accomplished? First through the conduct and speech of those who had been saved (**Acts 8:4**). Secondly, He planned for evangelists to go about

preaching and teaching that word (**Mark 16:15,16**). These men would be supported if necessary by the funds collected on the first day of the week by local congregations (**1 Cor. 16:1,2**). The only organization involved in spreading the gospel was the church itself. The support for those evangelists preaching the word was sent directly to them by local churches (**Philippians 4:15,16**).

The purpose of this writing is to directly challenge the idea that mankind has the right to alter and expand on the plans of God, whether it be in worship or work of the church. Today, we find churches doing almost everything but what Jesus ordained in an effort to "spread the gospel".

The problem is they are spending money in support of human organizations in ways God never authorized. They often have large churches arrange a "world wide" evangelism program and then solicit funds from other churches around the world to pay for this plan that exceeds their ability to fund. This is referred to as a "sponsoring church" arrangement. Please be reminded Christ taught the church to be autonomous. That means each local church does what it can afford and the world wide effort comes from one locality at a time.

There are far too many arrangements by men where churches support human institutions such as colleges who are essentially hired to produce preachers and convert our children. There are other organizations who receive money from churches and then arrange preachers to go here and there to preach. All of these are in violation of the autonomy Christ delegated to each local congregation.

Let me suggest to each of us to forget any plan we may have to avoid personal involvement in evangelism. We cannot please God by doing two things He is displeased with. The first thing is to delegate the responsibility of the local church to a human organization about which nothing is spoken in Scripture. And second to avoid our personal responsibility to carry the gospel to the lost by our words and deeds here on earth.

Jesus asks us to trust Him. He asks us to follow Him. We must understand that means we will do as He did by telling others the good news personally and by the authorized efforts of the local church.

FISHERS OF MEN

“And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him” (Mark 1:16-20).

Jesus has been baptized. He has been tempted. Now His Galilean ministry begins. Initially, in Mark’s gospel, Jesus makes contact with three groups of people. The teaching He did and the power He demonstrated before the Jews, His disciples, and the religious leaders, set the tone early for much success and popularity and for much opposition. Jesus’ initial call for disciples was heard by those close to John the Baptist (**cf. John 1:19ff**). Those first called were professional fishermen; they made their living plying the waters of the Sea of Galilee, a deep lake 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. Nets, fish, boats, and storms become common themes in the Synoptics. One wonders if Peter and others thought back to that initial meeting with Jesus. Little did the 12 know about the “cups” they would have to drink.

Is there a lesson about “personal work” as Jesus calls these fishermen? Interestingly, the Lord didn’t tell them to go home, get cleaned up, and come back when presentable. Would these Jewish fishermen share the same prejudices as other Jews in the 1st c? What about fasting and praying? Did they harbor Messianic misconceptions about a supposed deliverer to come? The work of John the Baptist, cousin to Jesus, surely helped paved the way for these men to answer Jesus’ call. *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29; 3:23-36).* But join they did. The gospel will overcome any obstacle, real or perceived.

“Discipleship” is a wonderful word; it is full of meaning, but probably defies true explanation and understanding. But Jesus called disciples to Him. The initial motley crew of fisherman and tax collectors and those who carried knives were soon sent into the entire world. They were called to be active participants in fishing for men. Jesus’ call and their reception were radical. The priority of Jesus in their lives and in ours, applies to every aspect of life—career, family, resources. The kingdom Jesus told them was “at hand.” Jesus’ teaching, yea, all kingdom teaching must speak about spiritual realities. Sacrifice, denial, persecution, and rejection are not topics that make sermons popular; still, that is what the disciples/apostles soon-to-be, were all about. That might not be good news to most. Light-hearted discipleship is out of the question.

Mark 1:29 says: *“Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.”* And so, rather quickly, did these men rally around Jesus, their Master, and their Savior. He said: Follow Me. And they did! Who will follow Jesus?

Randy Harshbarger

Speaking Up for Tamar by Shane Scott

Yesterday yet another celebrity was fired for inappropriate sexual behavior. The Today show’s host, Matt Lauer, was terminated after the investigation of a detailed complaint against him by a co-worker. Undoubtedly more details will emerge over the next few days.

On one level, the recent flood of stories like this is not surprising. We live in a sex-obsessed culture that prizes individual autonomy above all. Given the pervasive corruption characteristic of Hollywood and Washington DC in general, it is predictable that the worlds of entertainment and politics would be filled with gross misconduct – particularly for those (like Matt Lauer) who operate in the nexus of those worlds.

But what has surprised me is the way some Christians have responded to stories of sexual harassment or abuse, particularly when those stories involve political figures whose ideology they share. In the last few weeks, I have read (or heard) fellow believers say things like, “Why didn’t these women speak up sooner?” or “Why did these women only have the courage to speak up after someone else did?” I’ve also seen Christians brush aside accusations of inappropriate behavior by rationalizing that there probably isn’t a man in politics who hasn’t said or done something they shouldn’t have toward a woman. I even saw one person on Facebook say that unless a woman is actually raped, she should just “let it go.”

It is stunning to me that fellow Christians would show far more sympathy to the perpetrators of exploitation than to its victims.

I recognize that not all accusations are true. Those who are committed to truth and justice should be eager to carefully consider the credibility of any allegations, especially those with such a potential to destroy the lives of the accused. But that is a far cry from dismissing out of hand the report of abuse simply because it came many years after the event, or because it did not rise to the level of a statutory crime. Such calloused indifference toward those who have suffered harassment or molestation reveals a heartless lack of understanding of the shame and loathing the victims of sexual misconduct feel about themselves. Often, the degrading behavior of the perpetrator is internalized by the victim, who assumes that if something this horrible happened to them, they must somehow be dirty. This is one of the most cruel consequences of sexual misconduct.

The Bible describes just such a dynamic at work in its account of Amnon's rape of his half-sister, Tamar. As Amnon assaulted her, Tamar cried out, *No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. As for me, where could I carry my shame?* (2 Samuel 13:12-13).

And after she was violated, the text says that Tamar spent the rest of her life "a desolate woman" (2 Samuel 13:20).

So there is a simple reason why many victims of sexual assault do not speak up until years afterward – it may take them a lifetime to process what has happened. Several years ago, my house was robbed. Many of you have experienced break-ins as well. And anyone who has gone through this knows the psychological sense of violation you feel when someone who was uninvited has been in your home. I cannot imagine the sense of violation the victims of uninvited sexual attention/harassment/assault must feel in the most intimate of areas of human psychology. That it may take months, years, or decades to confront it is no surprise – the fact that anyone is able to summon the courage to address such a deep wound is astonishing.

Further, in many instances, the victims of sexual misconduct are exploited by people in positions of power, power which they threaten to wield against the victim should she say anything. This was clearly the tactic chosen by Bill O'Reilly and Harvey Weinstein, men whose personal fortunes and powerful connections made such threats far more than empty warnings. And it reveals just how sinister this kind of sexual abuse is. To use a woman for gratification while at the same time threatening her reveals a deeply depraved heart that has twisted itself into complete self-absorption. It is the heinous attitude of Amnon, who

– after raping his sister – *"hated her with very great hatred"* (2 Samuel 13:15).

What troubles me the most about the unfeeling and unthinking comments of fellow Christians is the impact such dismissiveness may have on those who have been the targets of sexual impropriety. In order for a person who has been mistreated to heal, they must confront the abuse that has taken place, but those who discount the reality or severity of sexual misconduct create an environment in which its victims are discouraged to face their victimhood. This in turn means that the perpetrator will not be confronted, clearing the field for him to prey upon others – as well as shielding the perpetrator from facing the deep strain of evil that has poisoned his heart in the first place.

The tawdry episode of Amnon and Tamar is one of the great blight's in the life of David, who did nothing to make Amnon accountable for his crime. Tamar was left to suffer as a desolate woman in the house of her full-brother, Absalom. One of the most heartbreaking details in the entire saga is the name Absalom gave to his daughter- *Tamar* (2 Samuel 14:27), even as he plotted revenge on Amnon. David's refusal to do anything about the violation of Tamar set in motion a season of misery and despair for his family. We must not make the same mistake for the Tamars of our spiritual family.

In Case of A Tie Al Diestelkamp

Brother Yater Tant once reported that in a Bible class the teacher asked if anyone could explain why Paul was chosen to be an apostle when there were an even dozen men (counting Matthias) filling that office. After thoughtful deliberation, one brother (an older man and longtime member) opined that it was probably so there would be an uneven number, and Paul could break the deadlock "in case of a tie." Brother Tant wondered if such a brother had adequate mental capacity to be accountable before God.

It reminds me of how some brethren are reluctant (and sometimes refuse) to appoint elders in a congregation when there are two men who qualify— unless a third is found "in case of a tie." This attitude is likely an outgrowth of church business meetings patterned after Robert's Rules of Order instead of applying principles found in the Bible. God never intended for a church to function by majority rule.

Qualified elders will come to a consensus and make no decisions strictly on how many favor something. In congregations lacking elders, the same attitude ought to exist—consensus ought to take place. Of course, when referring to congregational decisions, we are referring to those which have not already been made by the Lord as revealed in the New Testament.

~via Think On These Things; Cortland, Illinois.

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

Elders Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer

Deacons:

Bill Miller

Brandon Jimison

Casey Dent

Joe Hurd

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-764-9170

Check out the following websites:

facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist/

lenexachurchofchrist.org

NEWS AND NOTES: REMEMBER THE SICK IN PRAYERS AND VISITS.

JAN PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER,
STEVE WIMP, JOANN MEYER, LINDIA
JACKSON AND THE MOTHER OF ALMA
BAUMGARTNER

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS:
EPHESIANS THRU COLOSSIANS
BILL MILLER TEACHER

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS: BIBLICAL
FINANCIAL ADVICE
RON PECK TEACHER

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON:
OUR LIVES BEFORE GOD



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10