

Discipline:

The accountability factor - (part 2 of 2)

Discipline in the Workplace:

A brother once questioned a fellow believer in the church about a business transaction that seemed a bit “shady” according to the Scriptures. The accused brother quickly replied, “Church is church and business is business.” Needless to say, the brother believed living a double standard was acceptable. He seemed to have forgotten Paul’s profound statement to the believers in Rome; *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* The Holy Spirit is not a cloak we put on or take off as we do our Sunday suits. I am still among those who wish to present myself as well dressed as I can when in worship of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But if on Monday morning I run my business without the Holy Spirit’s influence, I presented myself in church yesterday as a well-dressed hypocrite. Several Scriptures come to mind that create a good checklist for a Christian businessman or worker for others:

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Tim. 6:10) *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”* (Matt. 7:12) *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor than silver or gold.”* (Prov. 22:1) And for the believer working for someone else; *“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”* (Colossians 3:22 & 23)

A personal testimony: In 1902, James Cash Penny founded the J C Penny Company. He was the first businessman to hire “associates”, not employees. The name on his storefronts was “The Golden Rule Store” and was later changed because his managing associates thought his name ought to replace it. Matthew 7:12 was his total employee and customer service policy for many years. My first recollection of being in a Penny’s store was about the age of five, (in 1937) when my mother took me to the boy’s department for a suit. My last recollection of a visit to Penny’s store was last Saturday, more than seventy-five years after the first visit I could recall. Enough said about God’s blessings on a godly businessman’s efforts.

Discipline in the church:

The major contributors to the Reformation of the sixteenth century rejected many indulgences of the Church of Rome, but failed to resurrect the true church of the first century. They did not embrace repentance from dead works that would result in a new creature in Christ. The lives of their followers were indeed reformed, not transformed. It was the Anabaptists who revived the first century Church, and with it, a baptism of faith, Holy Communion for their born again believers and a *disciplined* Body of Christ. Discipline was based on the Anabaptist’s enlightened understanding of Christ’s words recorded in Matthew 16:19, misunderstood and abused by the Church of Rome. Christ asked the disciples, *“But whom say ye that I am?”* Peter quickly answered, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* After telling Peter this revelation came directly from Christ’s Father in heaven, (we infer He meant He would build His church on the faith that prompted the statement), He continued with verse nineteen by stating, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*

The Church of Rome taught that whatever the Pope or his priests decided to forgive or not, the sinner in question suffered some resulting eternal consequences. This twisting of Matthew 16:19 filled the church’s coffers with gold for centuries. Anabaptists understood that God and God only could forgive sin, and that Christ’s words in Matthew 16:19 revealed that the Body of Christ would be a *disciplined* entity on the earth. The power to become the children of God became available to all who would truly repent and believe the Gospel. (John 1:12)

The key(s) Christ would give to Peter, and every faithful servant after him, was the Holy Spirit as prophesied in Joel 2:28. It was demonstrated to all present as Peter spoke at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God and

his plan of salvation for all to understand, personally embrace, and to be empowered to live godly lives in an ungodly world.

The maintenance of a disciplined body of believers is demonstrated throughout the scriptures. History is replete with accounts of amazed evangelicals who marveled at the dedication, devotion to God and willingness of believers to suffer and die for their faith. They were accountable to each other, even as Christ commanded. (Matthew 18:15-17) In verses 18 to 20, Jesus connects again with Matthew 16:19; "*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" These words of the Lord refute the fraud perpetrated on the masses by the Church of Rome that whatever the Pope or priests decided, God gave his stamp of approval in courts of Heaven. The Amplified Bible, which compares Christ's words in Matthew 16:19 in the King James with the Greek and Hebrew scriptures says, "*I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven: and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven.*"

Examining the two scripture passages together clearly infers that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christ's followers agrees with the Father and the Son as recorded in 1 John 5:7 and 8, "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: these three agree in one.*" The Amplified version provides the following rendition of these verses: "*So there are three witnesses in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One; and there are three witnesses on the earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree -- are in unison, their testimony coincides.*" Thus the church is governed by spiritual principles determined by Christ in heaven, and administered through the Holy Spirit by under shepherds of the Church. The composite collective church members are Christ's functioning body on earth. Evidence of a disciplined church is documented by many Scriptures. Examples of this are: Peter's experience with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), with Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:14-24), Paul's exhortation to be of the same mind and judgment (1 Cor. 1:10), his exhortation that "*all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Cor. 14:40), his challenge to the church in Corinth in 2 Cor. 13:1-5 that if the leadership doesn't deal with sin "*if I come again. I will not spare.*", and Paul's challenge to the Jewish believers in Galatia, (Gal. chapter 3) "*Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth,...?*"

James admonishes believers in chapters three, four and five not to revert back to deeds and attitudes of the old nature. John the revelator spoke to the churches in Asia, challenging some to repent and return to the "first fruits" they displayed in the beginning of their walks of faith. (Revelations, chapters 2 and 3) AD 190, Clement of Alexandria, a converted Roman philosopher, visited all the churches, conferred with all the oldest overseers, and wrote at the conclusion of his journey; "*The church spoke as if it had one heart and one voice.*"

1 Peter 3: 15 exhorts true believers; "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that lieth in you with meekness and fear.*" Obviously without the disciplined life of a believer, the observer would have no reason to ask the question. Jesus said, "*And I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.*" (John 12:32). Even though He was speaking of His crucifixion, the application for post resurrection times means men and women are attracted to Christ's teachings as they seek answers to life's perplexing problems. We are His ambassadors, reflecting His light and dispensing His salt among the lost as we journey through life. We need to pray for grace to live as the Apostle Paul declared; "***For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.***" Phil. 1:21

This article appeared in the "Truth for our Time" column in the "Christian Friendship Messenger", and is prepared by the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) Communications Committee. Comments or questions can be directed to: ACCNcommunications@gmail.com