

Principles of Prayer and Promises

Advanced Seminar

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1.

PPP: Lesson 15:

Duties of Church Leaders and Teachers

1. What does it mean to be a Pastor, a Minister, an Elder, or a Teacher among God’s commandment keeping people? Jesus made it clear that in His church, those who serve in these ways, are not the same as leaders in other kinds of worldly groups. They are not to be ‘bosses’, dictators, or ‘masters’.

“But be not ye called Rabbi: [master] for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; [lowered] and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Matthew 23:8-12.

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28.

2. What false beliefs made it hard for the disciples to really understand the teachings of Jesus?

For centuries, the Jewish Leaders had been teaching the people that the Messiah would be a great man of war who would come with armies and make their nation to overcome all other nations and rule the World. They got these ideas by mixing in heathen ideas with scriptures and selecting the prophecies that applied to Jesus’ Second Coming, and claiming this was the work of the Messiah. They ignored the many prophecies that spoke of His humble life, and His death as a sacrifice for our sins. They wanted wealth and power; they were not interested in having their sins forgiven.

The disciples believed this too, and so they were often arguing about which one of them was going to be the greatest in Jesus’ kingdom. Jesus tried in many ways to get them to see this was not true. It made Him very sad to see them fighting over this.

“Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.” Luke 9:46-48.

He tried telling them many stories what His Kingdom was like:

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20, 21.

“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” Luke 19:11.

He gave them a special object lesson: **“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:1-5.**

Finally here it was the very evening before He was to suffer and die on the cross and what were the disciples still doing?

“And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.” Mark 9:33, 34.

Now it was the Last Supper. It was the custom at supper gatherings for a servant to wash the feet of the guests, but here there was no servant to do the job. It was up to the disciples to do it, but they all sat frowning, none of them was willing to serve the others. Then Jesus gave them a very special lesson.

“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 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 22:24-27.

“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” John 13:4, 5.

“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” John 13:12-17.

Did this solve the problem? Sadly, no it did not. In fact even Christ's death on the cross did not completely give them the right idea and correct their errors, because when they met with Jesus when He was about to ascend into heaven, notice what they asked.

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this

time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6 .

At least they were no longer fighting with each other about it; but we can see how hard it can be for people to get rid of false teachings, especially if those teachings are what they prefer to believe.

3. What's the difference between worldly organizations and God's true church?

Worldly organizations have one leader, or a small group of leaders; under them are a larger group who obey the top leader and rule over those under them. Then they may be other levels of leaders, all ruling those under them and obey the ones above them. The little people at the bottom have no freedom at all, but live in fear of those above them. This is called a hierarchy. Satan loves this plan, because all he has to do is corrupt the top person or persons, and the entire organization goes into error, like a flock of sheep, blindly following their leader over a cliff!

God's true church is the complete opposite of this. In God's plan all are 'brethren' in His family. Jesus Himself is the true Leader. Those who act as leaders, elders, or teachers are to help and serve the other members. **"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" Ephesians 4:15.**

'Leaders' in the true church of Jesus are called to serve the congregation. God Himself does not use force or intimidation to get people to follow Him. He says, **"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."** Jeremiah 31:3.

Notice these counsels to the church.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." Romans 12:10, 16.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:" 1 Peter 3:8.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Colossians 3:12, 13.

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." James 3:1.

4. So are we to have no leaders? Yes we are. Notice Paul's instruction about elders, overseers and deacons. Notice that 'elders' in this sense, does not mean 'older'.

"For this cause left I thee [Titus] in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop [an overseer] must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able

by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Titus 1:5-9.

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, [new believer] lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, [serious]not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

5. Were there women who served the church? There is much work in the church for godly women! Some served Jesus and the disciples: “**And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:**” Matthew 27:55.

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cencrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:” Romans 16:1-3.

“Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.” Romans 16:6.

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. . . Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.” Acts 9:36, 39. [This lady was raised from the dead]

6. So what is the job of all leaders in God’s true church?

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Peter 5:1-4.

The older people in the church, who have had experience in the Lord’s work, are also to be respected as teachers. “**That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;**” Titus 2:2.