

Ministers Of God

Happy Sabbath. This week, we will be going over another study from *Lessons On Faith*, this one by A.T. Jones. It is called “Ministers of God,” and I think you will agree that this week, with two of our ministers imprisoned in the “land of the free” for their faith, the topic, and the first Bible passage in particular, is appropriate.

The study begins by referencing 2 Corinthians 6:1-10, but it does not quote it, so we will begin, even before starting the notes, with that passage. It reads:

“We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for He saith, ‘I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation), giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

“By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true, as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (2Cor 6:1-10)

This is a portrait, in words, of a Minister of Yah. With these concepts in mind, let us turn to the notes from Jones’ study.

We begin:

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From the list that the Lord has drawn in 2 Cor. 6:1-10, it is plain that there is nothing that can ever come into the life of the believer in Christ but that the grace of God will take it and turn it to the good of the believer and make it serve only to his advancement toward perfection in Christ Jesus. This the grace of God will do always and nothing but this if only the believer will allow the Lord to have His own way in his life; if only he will allow grace to reign. Thus it is that “all things are for your sakes” and this is how “all things work together for good to them that love God.” This is grand. It is indeed glorious. It is salvation itself. This is how the believer is enabled “always” to “triumph in Christ.”

This however is but half the story. The Lord proposes not only to save him who now believes, but he will use him in ministering to all others the knowledge of God, that they also may believe. We are not to think that the Lord’s grace and gifts to us are only for us. They are for us first, that is true. But they are for us first in order that not only we ourselves shall be saved but that we may be enabled to benefit all others in communicating to them the knowledge of God. We ourselves must be partakers of salvation before we can lead others to it. Therefore it is written, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” And “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

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These “two halves” of the study are aptly summarized by verses that we ourselves have put to good use in our studies and writings. We may read, for example, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48b) Those who have been given little are only responsible for little. Those who have been given much are responsible for much. But what of us? What of the members of Yahweh’s own Covenant with humanity? We have been given “ALL things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” (2Pet 1:3) For how much, then, are we responsible?

We continue:

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Thus every man who receives the grace of God at the same time receives with it the ministry of that grace to all others. Every one who finds himself reconciled to God receives with that reconciliation the ministry of reconciliation to all others. Here also the exhortation applies, “We . . . beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” Are you a partaker of grace? Then “minister the same” to others; do not receive it in vain. Are you reconciled to God? Then know that He has given to you also the ministry of reconciliation. Have you received this ministry in vain?

If we do not receive the grace of God in vain, if only we will allow grace to reign, the Lord will cause it to be that “in all things” we shall approve “ourselves as the ministers of God.” This is the truth. The Lord says it, and it is so. “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.” That is, in all things we shall be conveying to others the knowledge of God. And thus the Lord proposes not only to cause us always “to triumph in Christ” on our own part, but also to make “manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.” That is, he proposes to make known to others by us and in every place the knowledge of himself.

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I remember, as a new Adventist of the mainstream Church, reading the book *Evangelism* by Ellen G. White. One line really stood out to me, and it was the statement that every baptized member of the Church was to be an evangelist, and a minister. This was a very new idea to me, you understand, because – coming from the Catholic Church – the idea of “evangelists” was a strange one in general. Of course there were missionaries, and people who felt inspired by God to go to distant, exotic lands, to build hospitals and churches, and to convert natives to the faith...

But the idea that everyone was to be an evangelist was quite a striking idea. It is certainly true that, having found this new faith, I was eager to share it with others. But as the Scriptures state, indirectly at least, we can only share what we have first received. From my own experience, I was able to speak about the Biblical superiority of keeping the seventh day Sabbath over Sundays. That I could do. I was able to speak pretty convincingly (I thought, anyway) about the need for diet reform, avoiding unclean meats, and not drinking or smoking. I had learned better “works,” and I was able to explain to others why these works were better than the works I had been doing before.

But none of these things, I now know, will save a soul from death. It was not until I accepted the Gospel, the message taught by the CSDA Church, that I truly became a minister of God, and not merely an advocate of the works that God approves. That's an important distinction, and one that we must always keep in mind when sharing "the faith of Yahshua" with others.

We continue:

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We cannot do this of ourselves. He is to do it by us. We are to cooperate with Him. We are to be workers together with Him. And when we do thus cooperate with Him, then as certainly as we do so, so certainly will He cause us always to triumph in Christ and will also make manifest the knowledge of Himself by us in every place. He can do it; thank the Lord. Do not say, do not even think, that He cannot do this by you. He can do it by you. He will, too, if only you will not receive His grace in vain. If you will only let grace reign; if you will be a worker together with Him.

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This is a marvelous thing, what Jones is describing here. The world is "dry" of the knowledge of Yahweh. The world is "starving" due to the lack of the knowledge of Yahshua's character. The richest people in the world are often among the very miserable, and the poor, of course, have no end to troubles. Who, then, can be happy? Those who come to know the Father and Son have true joy, and it is through us, through the ministers of Yah, that this knowledge is made manifest, or becomes apparent. The Scriptures say, with regard to our responsibility to others, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14)

The line is made, directly and straight, between the calling upon Yahweh (which is the foundation of salvation) and the work of the preachers. The world, even the supposedly "spiritual" world, is developing a deeper and deeper contempt for organized religion and its associated institutions and personnel. Home Churches, often espoused by independent ministries, and which ought to be used only out of necessity, are becoming a preferred mode of worship, and people become so easily offended if one arises and says, "God has sent me with something to teach you."

Of course, we ourselves hear this fairly often; just this last week I sent out an email explaining that we have been receiving a slow but steady stream of "fringe" believers and self-sent ministers attempting to correct the course of the CSDA Church following the arrests of our two evangelists. And yet, for all these things we cannot be offended – for we go to others with a similar approach. The question is, "Is the message from God?" We can examine any new light that comes to us with an open mind, and no fear of deception, to see if it is indeed the illumination of the Holy Spirit, or merely the sparks of some human's own kindling.

But the calling of "preacher" is not to be seen with contempt. We are all preachers – we are all called to proclaim the truth to those whom we are able, for we have received the Gospel from just such a one as this.

We continue:

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It is true that there is a mystery about how this can be. It is a mystery how God can make manifest the knowledge of Himself by such persons as you and I are, in any place, much less in every place. Yet mystery though it be, it is the very truth. But do we not believe the mystery of God? Assuredly we do believe it. Then never forget that the mystery of God is God manifest in the flesh. And you and I are flesh. Then the mystery of God is God manifest in you and me who believe. Believe it.

Do not forget, either, that the mystery of God is not God manifest in sinless flesh, but God manifest in sinful flesh. There could never be any mystery about God's manifesting Himself in sinless flesh--in one who had no connection whatever with sin. That would be plain enough. But that He can manifest Himself in flesh laden with sin and with all the tendencies to sin, such as ours is--that is a mystery. Yea, it is the mystery of God. And it is a glorious fact, thank the Lord! Believe it. And before all the world, and for the joy of every person in the world, in Jesus Christ He has demonstrated that this great mystery is indeed a fact in human experience. For "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." And therefore God "made him to be sin for us." "He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Thus, in our flesh, having our nature laden with iniquity and Himself made to be sin, Christ Jesus lived in this world, tempted in all points like as we are and yet God always caused Him to triumph in Him and made manifest the savor of His knowledge by Him in every place. Thus God was manifest in the flesh--in our flesh, in human flesh laden with sin--and made to be sin in itself, weak and tempted as ours is. And thus the mystery of God was made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith. O, believe it!

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This seems to be one of Jones' favorite topics, the matter of Yah's own perfection being manifest in our imperfect, sinful flesh. It is, to be sure, something worthy of infinite contemplation, because it is exactly here that nominal Christians fall short of Gospel truth.

They do NOT believe that Yah's perfection can be made manifest in sinful flesh. They say, "Because my flesh is sinful, God cannot be manifest in me." At least, they say, "cannot be manifest in me all the time," and so they experience these evolutionary-type spiritual journeys that they mis-label as sanctification, or "progress." Some days they are holy, and other days they are not-so-holy. Some days God is with them, and manifests in them mightily. Other days, He is distant from them. And how do they know this? Because their feelings tell them so.

Feelings, a function of their flesh, is made the "truth" about how much Yah is working through them, if they are in this state.. This is a mechanism doomed to failure from the very beginning. Yahweh manifests in our sinful flesh, not because we feel it, but because He declares it to be so, despite our feelings on the matter. All that is necessary is our agreement, our faithful, willing assent. This is based on principle, based on His might and promises, and it is so indeed, and that forever.

The CSDA Church teaches victory over sin in the life of the born-again believer, not sometimes, not most of the time... but always, and consistently, without gaps, breaks or periods of "down time." The manifestation of the glory, and righteousness, and presence of the Creator in the flawed flesh of the creation is something that takes place because of Yah's infinite pity, and in order to reach down and

scoop humanity up from the fires in which we have found ourselves. It is a difficult thing for the carnal mind to truly believe, and this is why Jones stresses it so strongly, and in so many different studies. If we can get people to believe this, truly believe it, then all the barriers keeping them from the Victory message will vanish away.

Concluding...

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And this is the mystery of God today and forever--God manifest in the flesh, in human flesh, in flesh, laden with sin, tempted and tried. In this flesh God will make manifest the knowledge of Himself in every place where the believer is found. Believe it and praise His holy name!

This is the mystery which today in the third angel's message is again to be made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith. This is the mystery of God, which in this time is to be "finished,"--not only finished in the sense of being ended to the world, but finished in the sense of being brought to completion in its grand work in the believer. This is the time when the mystery of God is to be finished in the sense that God is to be manifest in the flesh in every true believer, in every place where that believer shall be found. This is, in deed and in truth, the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," I have revealed God in the flesh. Our faith is the victory that has overcome the world. Therefore, and now, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

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Now, this is important, right here. Jones ties this mystery, this manifestation of the perfect within the imperfect, to "the third angel's message." Why? Why tie it to the third angel's message, which talks about avoiding the mark of the beast?

It is because in order to even recognize the mark, in order to avoid it, and to receive the complementary symbol – the Seal of Yah – we must be living lives entirely free from transgression. And how do we do this? We cannot... not by our own power, not in this sinful flesh. It is only possible when Yah, and all His infinite righteousness, is dwelling within us that we can resist Satan's final, most ferocious attacks. It is only if Yah, with all His purity as revealed through the matchless character of Yahshua, comes to reside in us, to abide in us, that we have the courage and strength to survive the time of trouble, and to reject the Mark of The Beast, uniting with the 144,000 and all those sealed.

The Ministers of Yah must abide in Christ, and have Him abide in them, by believing and accepting the mystery of this indwelling, this operation of the Holy Spirit. And in so doing they fulfill, as perfectly as they follow the Lamb, the characteristics of ministry that Jones quotes from 2Corinthians 6.