

Response

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As a minister of the Word of God, I have tried to follow the steps of great people of God, who through their life and faithfulness served the Lord for many years under difficult situations and circumstances in our continent of Africa. We still have the privilege to talk with and to work with some of them in the ministry.

This is one of the reasons that I was a little bit reluctant in responding to the paper of one of those men of God. However, I felt an obligation to respond in order to reinforce the importance of the points which Dr Marais sets out on the theme of the Great Commission – The Excitement of Holiness Evangelism.

I do agree with him that we should not “separate evangelism from holiness”, because the Great Commission is for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour – the disciples. They were not sent before their salvation, but afterwards. As George W Peters says: “The Great Commission does not make Christianity a missionary religion, for no command could ever do this. The missionary nature of Christianity does not originate in a command; the command merely focuses it. The missionary nature itself springs from the God who is the source of Christianity”.¹ From this we can say that the resource of the Great Commission is upon “all authority of Jesus Christ” which is over the earth and heaven. It is so important to see that the Greek word authority used in Mathew 28:18-20 is “exousia”² which means “the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others.”³ This is what is known by the moral authority or influence because it comes from God who is sovereign and righteous and therefore is right and must be obeyed. It is from this perspective that we can understand the words of apostle Paul in II

¹ Peters, George W, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, p.178

² Earle, Ralph, *Word Meaning In The New Testament, Vol. 1*, p.103

³ Vine, W E, *An Exposition Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p.89

Corinthians 5:14 “For Christ’s love compels us.”⁴ And in Galatians 2:20 when he says, “I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me.” When the Holy Spirit dwells in all of us He is the one who will lead us to fulfil His task – the Great Commission. As Dr Wally says, if we preach a “born anew experience” we are still half way to “salvation business” because only the presence of the Holy Spirit will compel us to do the will of God.

What I would call every reader to reflect upon is when Dr Marais quotes as follows concerning baptism, “It was a way into Spiritual reality itself: the early Christians understood baptism as a saving moment. And they understood baptism, taken in its entirety, to be a sanctifying moment as well. It symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believers.” And then he comments, “This meaning of baptism should be re-emphasised preparing the disciple for the fullness of the Spirit. Baptism must be included in the discipling process for that will help to bring the concept of Holiness Evangelism back into the mainstream of the church’s teachings.”⁵

First we need to understand that the background of the new converts of the New Testament times is different with our days and particularly for African people. It is just a matter of reading Acts 8:26-38 where we will find one of the new converts of those days – the Ethiopian eunuch. On his way back home from the temple where he went to worship Jehovah, he was reading the scriptures. The problem of this man was the need of someone who could expose the word of God. He had the “Bible” which he could read, but he could not understand. But our problem in Africa is that in many cases we don’t have the Bible and some don’t even know that the written Word of God does exist. I think that in the African environment we need to find ways which will help us to guide our people to understand holiness evangelism without any “scandal”. I wonder if a preacher in Africa in a rural area could do what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch. If he does that he might find that more than 80% of those who are baptized are not in the body of Christ because of some strong beliefs in Roman Catholic teachings about baptism. On the other hand I am not in favour of

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version* (NIV)

⁵ Marais, Wally Dr. “The Excitement Of Holiness Evangelism”, p.2

those who defend the belief that after conversion a person should be taught for a period of time and that with some people they even take more than two years before they are baptized. I think we should help our people according to their situation, which is where they are at that particular moment of time.

We should reflect on Dr Wally Marais' challenge with a sense that we will not drive away from the real meaning of baptism and to step into the Roman Catholic belief concerning baptism.