

Articles and Sermons :: Simply Stated by Oliver Peng

Simply Stated by Oliver Peng, on: 2010/10/8 17:59

Much like people of the world, Christians also fancy extraordinary phenomenon, give heed to supernatural events and take stock in outstanding accomplishments. The fixation with outward greatness and notoriety - and by association, prosperity - has driven many Christians to seek after experiences that excite the soul but do nothing for the spirit.

There is a whole culture that gears toward nurturing and heightening man's senses for the sensational. Everywhere we look, today's churches are programmed to accommodate this culture and take it to new heights. Churches that are successful in this endeavor are magnets for new converts and are looked upon with envy by their peers. Many such churches even give seminars to fellow-pastors with aspiration for outward greatness and success.

Sad to say, all the fuss about success, programs and greatness has distracted Christians from their one and most central issue - Christ.

A.W. Tozer once told a church congregation that if Jesus walked in today, no one would recognize Him.

The reason we would not recognize Him is because we are preoccupied with all these programs, hypes, promotions and productions instead of focusing on the person of Christ. The familiar story of Elijah at Horeb might illustrate this point. The prophet fled from Jezebel and came to a cave in Horeb where he saw the Lord passing by with a violent rushing wind tearing the mountains and breaking the rocks, but the Lord "was not in the wind." Then there was an earthquake, but the Lord "was not in the earthquake." Then there was a fire, but the Lord "was not in the fire." Then there was the sound of a "gentle blowing" (I Kings 19:9-12).

Too many Christians, ministers and churches are too grossly preoccupied in the outward and sensational "winds," "earthquakes," and "fires" to hear the Lord's still small voice any more. People want quick-fixes to their problems, and churches want instant success for their plethora of programs.

Genuine spirituality is always opposite of and hidden from the flashy and sensational "winds, quakes and fires." Genuine spirituality on the one hand is the result of being dealt with in fleshly lusts, natural ability and religious zeal; on the other hand, it is being brought forth from a closer walk with Christ and fuller apprehension of the person of Christ. Closer walk with Christ requires cultivation through time and the privacy of closed doors before the possibility of fruition.

In today's culture of instant gratification, time has become the neglected element in true spiritual development. Instead of following the foot-steps of the Lamb in taking the time-consuming way of the cross, Christians have taken to the "just add water" culture in their pursuit of spirituality.

Jesus is the one grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died, and as a result of His death, fruitfulness is produced (Jn: 12:24). In the same way, our true spiritual development can only come from surrendering to the slow dealings of the cross to facilitate the laying down of our self life. It is through the dealings of the cross which strike a blow to our lust for the "winds, quakes and fires" that we learn to hear His still small voice and acquire the lowly and sweet character of the Lamb.

However, the dealings upon the natural man, the dying to the self life, and becoming lowly and hidden are not messages Christians want to hear nowadays. To put things in perspective, today's churches almost have to operate under the hypes of "winds," "quakes," and "fires" to some degree. Take the "winds," "quakes," and "fires" away, most churches will suffer immediate membership decline!

It is a classical case of new wine vs. old wineskin syndrome.

On the other hand, enlightened believers want to fix the leaky wineskin by patterning after the "early church" in the New Testament. Ornate religious buildings, pews, liturgical forms and clergy-led programs are now replaced by the simplicity of home fellowship and spontaneity of worship.

But it is not uncommon to find many early church experts doing a sort of reverse engineering and coming up with wonderful discoveries of the missing pieces from the biblical early church.

While the biblical early church blueprint does reveal the Lord's mystical body functioning organically on earth and expose the woeful departure from such pattern in today's churches, reverse engineering is a far cry from the Lord's way of securing His desired church.

Simply stated, it is the increasing and maturing life of Christ that enables us to experience and express the reality of the organic church life. The reverse-engineered church life is only a look-alike, no matter how much it resembles the biblical early church. The true

Bride of Christ does not come into being by "just add water," she is the result of travail.

A few lowly remnants who have been through the rabbit trail of "first-century church" or "organic church" finally discovered that these efforts - failed or not - were also just another patch work in the same old wineskin.

By the Lord's grace and mercy, simple and unpretentious brothers and sisters in many parts of the country and around the world are realizing that the various attempts at biblical early church as mere mechanical processes that leave out the Spirit, and shortcuts that cut out the work of the cross. Saints whom the Lord made simple are learning to discover that the way to genuine spirituality is through the cross, the gateway to spiritual fullness and maturity is through a closed door of intimate relationship with the Lord.

Today, many of the non-traditional churches that gather outside of the institutional environment claim a return to simplicity, which is a hallmark of the early church, but simplicity is not merely the doing away with clergy-laity system, glamorous church buildings and the programs. It is first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit through the cross to diminish the self life and increase the character and likeness of the Lamb within. Being made Lamb-like in character is what confirms the claim of simplicity, all other claims pale in comparison.

May we learn to look to Him and holdfast Him who is our All to make us simple from the inside out. Quietly, the Lord is working inwardly to "drive out the nations" (decrease of self) and "enlarge our borders" (increase of Christ) as in Ex 34: 24.

Little by little, as we learn to surrender to His merciful dealings, the Lord then has a chance to gain some ground in us; and quite unexpectedly, a sweet and real church life emerges without anyone working up a sweat trying to copy or mimic the so-called "Early Church" pattern (not to say we haven't tried before).

Whenever the "self" is in charge, the most first-century-like church is merely an empty structure, whether it gathers in a house or an ornate building.

On the other hand, when our focus is shifted from the church to Him, a wealth of treasure is opened to us not the least of which is a genuine church life that many saints elsewhere devote themselves to but have difficulty laying hold of. When the focus is the church, we lose sight of Christ; when the focus is Christ, we gain both the new wine and the wineskin. It's not about us, dear saints, it's all about Him.

Oliver Peng

Re: Simply Stated - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2010/10/8 21:55

If more of today's churches would learn from the example of the early New Testament church of preaching Christ and HIM crucified, making and training disciples, and sending them forth into the community to reach out with the message of truth and salvation found in the cross of Christ. The Church is a growing, living Body that exists to exalt

and magnify Christ and to honor
and serve HIS purpose!!

Re: Simply Stated - posted by Koheleth, on: 2010/10/8 21:55

Great post, brother. Something must have grabbed my attention, because I rarely read posts that long, but the focus is right--it is all about Him!!

Re: Simply Stated - posted by bakary (), on: 2010/10/9 5:08

wonderful message brother, may the LORD keep us in HIS love as we desire HIS Light to reveal and destroy the hidden works
of darkness within us which we sometimes hardly notice.

Re: Simply Stated - posted by terrybob (), on: 2010/10/9 9:57

Thank you for your post it sums up my thoughts wonderfully well. On reading it my thoughts turned to this:

When different winds of doctrine blow,
Then set their sails who will,
But as for me, content I go
To Calvary's only hill.

Let others cry for greater power
And marvellous gifts declare,
But all I ask is every hour
My Christ to know, my Christ to share.

Let others tell of mighty signs
And miracles they've seen,
But keep me Lord, in light that shines
And shows where I'm unclean.

May grace be given to bring the sin,
Contrite to Calvary,
My only goal be Christ to win,
My only good be He.

From Calvary there flows God's love,
The love of Christ to me;
No wind of doctrine shall remove
Me from that fruitful tree.

I need not fear, I have within
The friendly Paraclete,
He shows me Christ, He shows me sin,
He shows me the Mercy Seat.

So, worthy Lamb, I join the song
That the redeemed will sing,
A member of that blood-washed throng
Who gather round their King.

Dr Kenneth Moynagh.

God bless you all, yours in Him

Terry

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/10/9 10:16

Good thoughts. I don't agree with every jot and tittle, but good Just the same.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/10/9 10:17

Good thoughts. I don't agree with every jot and tittle, but good Just the same.

Re: , on: 2010/10/9 10:22

Quote:

-----A.W. Tozer once told a church congregation that if Jesus walked in today, no one would recognize Him.

Nice post pilgrim!

I don't think anyone would, we never seen Him. However, the Lord has come in many different ways and one of those ways is the poor, the naked, the hungry and thirsty and we truly have turned a blind eye as if we were too embarrassed to be associated with them.

The Salvation Army has ads that show a building with a silhouette of a person embedded in the building. It shows how easily these people become apart of their surroundings that we miss them entirely, but they are there and they are in need, and they are Christ. Matt 25:40

<http://www.salvationarmy.ca/2006/11/13/the-salvation-army-2006-christmas-ad-campaign/>

Re: Simply Stated - posted by Heydave (), on: 2010/10/9 13:01

Quote:

----- It's not about us, dear saints, it's all about Him.

I'm not sure if Oliver Peng is you Pilgrim777, but I appreciate the post. This is so important for those of us who want to get back to simple church life and fellowship. I have been on this journey over the years and came to the same conclusions. 'It's all about Christ and His life and His way, it's His church.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18)

Oh that HE might have the PREEMINENCE.

Re: Simply Stated, on: 2010/10/9 13:12

wow! Glory to God!

my heart leaps like a stag, when i see a great writer writing in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

pilgrim, you Oliver Peng?, if so, my brother, God has given you a mighty gift with the pen.

if not...Pilgrim, with love love and Christ Love, i thank you for the good eye, generous spirit to turn me onto yet another wise Godly writer....i could always use more examples of a pen led by Messiah, neil

Re: , on: 2010/10/9 13:34

No, like Leonard Ravenhill said regarding Milt Green's book (on the back cover), "I would be happy if I had written this book."

I always buy about 10 of Milt's books at a time to give away.

I would be happy if I had written these articles, but no, they are Oliver's.

He is my friend and brother.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2010/10/9 13:46

Hi Pilgrim,

I just found the website where Oliver's writings are. www.thecloseddoor.com

It looks a very good site, although I have not checked out everything, however it does not give any indication about who they are. On the 'about us' page it basically says 'its not about us, but its about Him' (Jesus). Which is great :), but it would be good to know a bit more. If you can offer some background on Oliver and the ministry I would be grateful.

Re: , on: 2010/10/9 14:26

Read his article called Common Folk and you will learn more about him.

In fact, he is very transparent in all his articles.

He sees himself as just another brother and refuses positions of any kind.

Camp out and be refreshed by the Lord through his writings.

Please keep he and his wife in your prayers.