

LOWER STILL

WILLIS 4/18/10

1Cor6:19-20

We can't go too far in our focus on burning for God and not look at the subject of Eternal Purpose and how God has positioned man to fit into that purpose. **To answer the questions beginning with "what" we must know the reasons beginning with "why."**

- Why were we created? Why were we redeemed? Why does the Church exist? Why was man positioned as co laborer in that Church? Why does man often usurp that position and redefine God's purpose for his life?
- Knowing the "why" of God's interaction with man is how we determine what we are to involve ourselves in. The "why" determines how we are to involve ourselves in the day to day unfolding of God's Eternal Purpose.
- The "why" is what determines our alignment and frames our centering. If the "why" is off everything to follow will be in wrong alignment. **To the degree Church is by man, for man, through man everything to follow will be off.**
- Leadership becomes about empire building, fellowship becomes about self interest, salvation becomes about benefits with no mention of responsibility. **Religion gives man enough of Jesus to save him but blinds him from the Kingdom that re-centers him.**
- Consequently our greatest need is the need of being recentered in the reality that our lives are not our own we have been bought with a price.

I have entitled what I want to share with us today "Lower Still." Lower Still is a phrase Heidi Baker kept using as she shared with us Tuesday evening and it has been working in my spirit ever since. Lower still is a phrase that centers. Lower still is a phrase that aligns.

- **To elevate man as co laborer God positioned us low. The lower we go the higher God is able to take us.**
- John the Baptist said it best when he said, "I must decrease that He might increase." The decrease of self is not considered as a loss in the Kingdom of God. Anytime man decreases that God might increase...it is great gain. To go up we must first go low.
- **The lower we go in self promotion, the higher God takes us in Kingdom influence. Go lower still and influence will be elevated to a place of godly distinction.**

Ex33:16 From the beginning it has been in the heart of God to have a people of distinction. Not just a people but a people distinguished, a people set apart in way and practice, a people uniquely distinct for they live as if they are not their own for they were bought with a price.

- Unfortunately much of the present day Church has become man centered. Building on the foundation of enticements and entitlement, eternal purpose has been replaced with felt need. It is no longer the Presence that draws for now we have enticements.
- It used to be Jn3:16 that brought the families in now it is Nintendo3:60. **The only problem with enticements is they produce entitlements. If I had to be enticed to come it will be nearly impossible to transition into “my life is not my own.”**

So Paul goes right for the root of the issue saying, “Don’t you know...you are not your own you were bought with a price...” **Bought with a price...sounds like a statement of redundancy but is in fact a declaration of double value.**

- No price has even been paid like the price Jesus paid. So Paul makes a profession of double emphasis, “bought with a price.”
- “Bought” indicates not only the price of purchase but also the right of possession. **In paying the price for our redemption Jesus also purchased the rights to our possession.** Therefore we are not our own.
- Consequently, **though we take ownership of His purpose for our lives, we relinquish possession for the rights to our lives.** It’s ownership without possession. In relinquishing rights to the possession of our lives Jesus becomes the sole proprietor to our daily decisions.
- Not just the big decisions but every decision. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Jesus Christ bids us come and die.” Dead people make no decisions. Every right becomes a right yielded.
- The thought of being owned by anyone doesn’t fare too well with the independence of our culture. However the truth is as Paul says in Romans 6...we are either owned by God or we remain owned by or slaves to sin.

This is where much of the Church has become man centered. Though dead bought with a price therefore not our own, many try to retain the rights to their own lives. Offenses, broken relationships, missed destinies all come because of retained rights.

- **To the degree we retain the rights to our own lives is to the degree the Church loses its ability to influence and lead.** The lower we go the more influence we carry. Go lower still our influence is elevated to distinction.
- This is why it is called an immersion of fire. An immersion takes us under. You can’t get any lower than under. As we go under in fire He exalts us in favor.

As you know our theme for the year focuses on the intent of Jesus to immerse us in Holy Spirit Fire. But what happens when the prevailing mindset of the Church turns Holy Spirit Fire into “strange fire?”

- Lev10:1-3 What made Nadab and Abihu’s fire strange? The only thing mentioned was it was fire the Lord had not commanded. **“Strange” comes from the Hebrew word meaning deviated, adulterous, unrelated...**

- In other words it was not original fire but the fire of self effort. The strange fire of Nadab and Abihu was not God ordained nor was it God initiated. **Being it was by man, for man, through man...God labeled it strange, deviated, adulterous and unrelated.**
- In today's focus on user friendly, user focused, user entitled and user enticed it is very easy for us to fall into the pull of strange fire...Church for self, by self, through self.

Paul's answer to it all is remembering our Eternal Purpose. He said, "Do you not know," have you forgotten, did you get saved but not re-centered, "your life is not your own, you were bought with a price."

- **In other words, in all your doing don't forget to go low. Forgetfulness will be our greatest enemy.**
- We see this illustrated clearly in what I call the young professional/young married phenomena. Growing up as youth it is constantly reinforced you are not your own. Parental authority, school authority, spiritual authority...they are all there to remind you
- "You are not your own. You were bought with a price." Then you move out, start your career, get married...you become your own line of authority. If not careful it is easy to forget you are still not your own.
- It's easy to think you have something to prove so you retain possession, take your life to yourself, retain the right to make your own decisions...you get re-centered, out of alignment...your fire begins to wane, your intimacy becomes nominal, pursuit dwindles
- **Your only answer is to remember, "You are not your own, you were bought with a price." You must go low to restore your life, go lower still and you will restore your influence.**

Whether it is Rm14 telling us "No one lives for himself and no one dies for himself" or Gal 2 telling us "We have been crucified with Christ, the life we now live is Christ who lives in me..." Laid down lovers is the authorized posture in life.

- Go low and it will go well with you. Go lower still and you will be elevated to that place of distinction.