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Occupy Till I Come

Philip C. Bennett

Some pertinent questions about the title of this message would be: Who said these words? To whom were they spoken? What were they to occupy?

¹²"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. ¹³And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." (St. Luke 19:12-13)

We know that this statement was from a parable that Jesus spoke to His disciples. In this parable, Jesus refers to Himself as the nobleman going away on a far journey.

After establishing His Church, we know that Jesus was crucified. After His resurrection, He returned to heaven. So this command was to the members of the Church to occupy till His return.

We are not the owners of the house (the Church). Jesus said in St. Matthew 16:18: "... upon this rock I will build my church" which He purchased with His own blood. We are mere occupiers in His absence.

This word "occupy" has a number of definitions:

- 1. To live or be established in (a house, flat, office etc.)
- 2. To keep (a person) busy or engrossed; engage the attention of.
- 3. To take up (a certain amount of time or space).
- 4. To take and hold possession of e.g. (students occupied the college building).
- 5. To fill or hold (a position or rank).

In this account, the servants were not only to reside in the house passively, i.e. take up time. They were to be active and carry out all the duties that would be required to keep the house functioning and in good order. Those of us who own houses know that if we just live in the house and fail to maintain it, it will deteriorate with time.

The servants would also need to purchase things that were needed for the house and to sell the excess of what was produced. The nobleman knew the capabilities of all of his servants. Likewise, Jesus knows us and what we are capable of. In the account in St. Mark's gospel, Jesus said: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

(St. Mark 13:34)

St. Matthew's account is again slightly different: ¹⁴ "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ¹⁵And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." (St. Matthew 25:14-15)

Jesus has given each one of us different and distinct gifts and abilities. He wants us to use them to advance His kingdom. What you are called to do, no one else can do it as well as you can.

Jesus has gone away and left us to occupy His house in His absence. We are responsible to make sure that the house and its contents are kept safe. We need to ensure that the doors and windows are secure.

With a literal house, some occupiers go as far as getting an alarm fitted. This is to prevent unwanted intruders, who will cause damage to the house and its contents. If we are not on the alert spiritually, the enemy will come in, break up the house and destroy its content: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." (St. Matthew 24:43)

Although He is not with us in the physical sense, Jesus has not left us on our own. He knew that we would not be able to occupy and do the work on our own. Jesus promised us divine assistance before He went away. Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus gave the disciples a command with a promise: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (St. Luke 24:49)

We know that this promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost: ^{1"}And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)

On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved after Peter's sermon to the people. Was it Peter's eloquence that saved all of these people? I think not. Following the day of Pentecost, the Church did great signs and wonders and many more were added to its number: 42" And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. ⁴⁶And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

- They continued in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship.
- They had all things common
- They had singleness of heart they were consistent
- The Lord did the adding.

What did they have that we are lacking today? They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Brethren, without the Holy Ghost we can do nothing. Without the Holy Ghost we have no power. So many of our members do not possess the Holy Ghost and are quite contented to carry on without Him. We need the Holy Ghost working amongst us as the early Church to confirm the word with signs following.

And the fact that we were filled so many years ago does not mean we are still filled today. It's not once filled, always filled. We can lose the Holy Ghost, as He will not dwell in an unclean vessel. In fact, the evidence I see around me leads me to believe that some who profess to be filled do not possess the Holy Ghost. Why are we so tired sometimes? Could it be that we are trying to do spiritual work in the flesh?

We need to start tarrying again as Jesus instructed the disciples. The Holy Ghost did not come to the early Church straight away, they had to wait. There were 50 days between Jesus' ascension and the disciples receiving the promise, even though they were in the temple daily.

We tarry at the National Convention in July, then again at the National Ministers' Convention in October/November. We tarry again at the National Youth Convention in April and then we stop and start the cycle again. If we are not filled with the Holy Ghost we need to be tarrying in our Sunday services, tarrying in our midweek services, tarrying in our prayer meetings and even tarrying in our homes when there are no services. Even after receiving the Holy Ghost, the early Church did not sit back and say "I've got Him, praise the Lord." The Holy Ghost was given to them as power for service. They were to occupy actively, not passively until the Lord returned. If the Holy Ghost was necessary for the early Church, then He is just as necessary today.

Sometimes, we are asked to do something but we are not given the instructions or the formula. On the day of Pentecost, Peter gave them the formula that they needed to follow to receive the Holy Ghost: ³⁸ "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38-39)

Repentance is not only for the unsaved and those who never professed salvation. If we have lost the Holy Ghost along the way, we will also need to repent, possibly do our first work (water baptism) and seek Him again. We need the Holy Ghost to complete the work. Jesus gave us a stern warning about neglecting His work: 45"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; 49And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(St. Matthew 24:45-50)

Some of our members spend more time in the gym each week and on social media than they spend doing the work of God. These things will pass away, only what we do for God will last. The time we spend on these activities could be better spent getting some tracts and going to knock on some doors. We can go and tell someone on their way to hell that Jesus came and died for them.

Those gone on before us and some who are still alive have left us good examples. People like: Pastor Harrison, Sister Taylor-Harrison and Pastor Prince who would go out and knock doors after a hard day doing secular work. God honoured their sacrifices and many souls were saved and added to The Church of God.

A song by Fanny Crosby, a woman who was blind encourages us to:
Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.
Down in the human heart,
Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart,
wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once
more.

Rescue the perishing, Duty demands it; Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide; Back to the narrow way patiently win them; Tell the poor wanderer a Savior has died.

There is so much work to do, yet many of us are sitting idle. We need to be actively working for the Lord. Another song encourages us:

Hark, the voice of Jesus calling, "Who will go and work today? Fields are white, and harvests waiting, Who will bear the sheaves away?"

Let none hear you idly saying,
"There is nothing I can do,"
While the souls of men are dying,
And the Master calls for you;
Take the task He gives you gladly;
Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when He calleth,
"Here am I, send me, send me."

Brethren, God is serious about the work He has called us to do: ¹⁵ "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. ¹⁶Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. ¹⁷And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

¹⁸And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. ¹⁹And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. ²⁰And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: ²¹For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. ²²And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: ²³Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? ²⁴And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. ²⁵(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) ²⁶For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."

(St. Luke 19:15-26)

God is taking account of all that we do and do not do. One day, we will have to give an account to Him.



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From the Overseer's Desk

In these times of uncertainty and as we near the end of another tumultuous year, isn't it comforting to know that we can stand on the words of One who is unchanging and immutable, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" (Hebrews 13:8)

As we draw nearer to the return of our Lord, we can see the end time prophecies rapidly fulfilling before our very eyes. While the world around us continues to build their spiritual houses on the sifting sand of materialism and self-will, let us as children of God make sure we are building on the solid Rock, which is Jesus Christ.

The world and the denominational system may ridicule us and call us old fashioned, but let us remain steadfast in what we have believed. The Apostle Paul encouraged young Timothy: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;" (2 Timothy 3:14).

He went on further to encourage the young man thus:

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

(1 Timothy 4:16)

In closing, I hope we all enjoyed a wonderful Christmas with our family and friends and are looking forward with fortitude to the year that is before us. We are assured that the One who feeds the sparrows is the same One who stands with us.

Upcoming Events:

National Family Camp

National WMB Fasting

National Ladies Retreat

Annual General Meeting

National Men's Retreat

- Monday 21st to Friday 25th February 2022

- Saturday 19th March 2022

- Friday 3rd June to Sunday 5th June 2022

- Friday 24th June 2022

Annual National Convention - Friday 8th July to Sunday 10th July 2022

- Friday 29th July to Sunday 31st July 2022



ABM BOOST

Claudine Brown – National Assembly Band Movement Co-ordinator

The general Assembly Band Movement theme for the assembly year 2021-2022 is:

'Knit Together In Love'

(Colossians 2:2)

Let It Go

Greetings to all our Chronicle readers in the precious name of Jesus.

Commuters: You've been there; you've been waiting in the bus queue, and someone steps out in front of you to get on the bus first. Shoppers: You've been there, where the person in front of you walks through the shop door and leaves it to close in your face, without remorse. Drivers: You've been there. Someone overtakes you just to turn left in front of you; or you wait



patiently for another driver to do a 5-point turn, or you give way to let someone else go first, and the bare palm of thanks or the hazard flash doesn't follow (and it's worse when it's a taxi driver). Spouses: You've been there; when your loved one has said a harsh word and an apology doesn't come. Employees: You've been there; when your boss has taken a liberty, or recognised another employee for work you have done. Brethren: you've been there. When a brother or a sister has offended you, whether unintentionally, recklessly or otherwise and that lump begins to form in your chest...

It's safe to say - we've all been there. Somewhere. A place where we have been wronged. At that very moment, we stand at a fork in the road. If you could slow time right down you would see that the brain, the heart and your body have a variety of options before them. In that moment, your flesh can become inflamed, and ready to arrange your body language accordingly. In those seconds, you can sin in haste before you even have time to try and control it. Why? Because the flesh has a natural propensity towards the carnal reaction. It is not sewn in the fabric of man to instantly forgive.

But to love like Christ? We **must** let it go. We must ask the Lord to sanctify us and to give us a let-it-go spirit, moreover, a let-it-go-quick spirit. Sometimes we mull over the hurt and the hurt doubles, triples, quadruples in size, making letting it go an insurmountable task. So, letting it go quickly is wise. Proverbs 17:9 tells us: "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends".

It does not benefit the believer to busy themselves with work for the Lord, and spiritual exercises like prayer, fasting and reading the Word of God, if they do not have a let-it-go spirit. A grudging Christian, is not a Christian in the truest sense of the word, or the Word.

The Bible is relentless in its reminders about the spirit we ought to have as God's people, but one of the most impactful is this: St. Matthew 6:15: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." There are many today who have served God for decades and continue to fall short in this area. To those, I encourage you to seek the Lord earnestly for a let-it-go spirit and may that hurt be replaced in love, in its purest unconditional form. Forsake worldly sayings like "I'll forgive, but I won't forget". Whilst a healthy brain with a working memory will be able to recall the past, the activity will not come with any ill feeling when forgiveness has taken place.

Another reason to forsake that saying is the fact that Jesus would never say that to a sinner - and He is our blueprint.

Jesus forgave the one spitting at Him when the spit was mid-flight. We may say, but He was God in the flesh. Our brother Stephen forgave when the rocks being thrown at him were mid-flight too and he now sits in Heaven, with the faithful witnesses who have overcome this world.

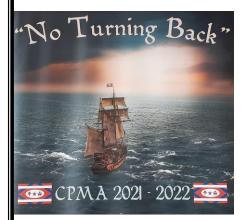
To be knitted together in love, as our inspired ABM theme encourages... Let. It. Go. And do it now, before your sun goes down. God bless you richly.





CPMA/BTI BOOST

Stuart Brown - National CPMA/BTI Co-ordinator



The new general Church of Prophecy Marker Association theme for the assembly year 2021-2022 is:

'No Turning Back'

The new general Bible Training Institute theme for the assembly year 2021-2022 is:

'Pressing Toward the Mark'

(Philippians 3:14)

CPMA quote from Bishop Ray Dupre 2021: "Truth is contained in the Trinity. God speaks the truth, Jesus repeats the truth, the Holy Ghost confirms the truth. There's no sides to truth. Get a hold of truth. Hang on children, we're going to need that strength truth provides."

BTI quote:

"Let us press towards the mark with thankfulness to God by giving Him the true worship He deserves. Worship Him in the beauty of holiness, as we worship Him in spirit and truth."

Greetings to all in the mighty name of Jesus! This article is to encourage us to stand in the truth of God's Word. The Church of God must maintain her integrity with Jesus, the Head, in holding on to the truth that has been given to us.

One of our identifying markers is to be the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). If the rest of the religious world strays from this foundation, we must stand firm - rooted and grounded in it! We must not do the following:

- Compromise on truth for gains in numerical growth and/or popularity
- Engage in debate and murmuring over topics and issues
- Rely on man's best head knowledge and rational
- Become overtaken by doubts, discouragements and divisions.

These are just a few examples of things to avoid as a Church collectively and individually. There are devastating spiritual consequences if we engage in anything that leads to a lack of godly edification. As an alternative, we can follow the instruction given in Galatians 6:8 in sowing into the Spirit. We must do the following:

- Read and study our Bibles more
- Seek the Lord in prayer and fasting more
- Keep gathering and exhorting together more and more (Hebrews 10:25)
- Humble ourselves before God and practice obedience to Him.

We are sailing forward with no turning back. There is nothing worth turning back for when we consider Jesus' return and our eternity in heaven is closer than a year ago! Look up! We must lift up our heads! We should not let them hang down with the weight of this world and the flesh. We cannot allow our eyes to be closed by spiritual blindness! There are deeper depths in God that are yet to be experienced, but only by moving forward. We must ask ourselves if we want to go back to how things were, or do we want a greater glory in God that still awaits us, as we are perfected in Him? We as a Church only need the truth, given by the Spirit of truth and we will not be compromised.



Notices

Thank you for all the CPMA offerings this year as they go to a great work at our General Headquarters. Please continue to boost any offerings for this department and God will continue to bless.

I would also like to remind the local CPMA leaders of each church that you can contact me anytime (stup0p001@gmail.com) should you need any help with resources and material for your services. It's a pleasure to help out and share with each other.

SUNDAY SCHOOL BOOST

Jennifer Thompson – National Sunday School Co-ordinator

The new general Sunday School theme for the assembly year 2021-2022 is:

'Treasuring the Truth'

(St. Matthew 13:52)



Greetings from the Sunday School department, in the precious name of Jesus. The general Sunday School theme for the Assembly year 2021-2022 is "TREASURING THE TRUTH" (St. Matthew 13:52). Let us take great care of the truth, and it will take care of us, as we treasure it and consider truth highly valuable.

In St. John 14:6 Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life." The Word of God is the truth, the undisputed truth that steers our lives.

I would also like to thank all of our Sunday School teachers for their dedication to the work in the department, and for your prayers. God bless you all.

The Church of God (England) National Ministers' Convention Saturday 6th November 2021

Our convention theme was 'Occupy till I come' (St. Luke 19:13). We were blessed to be able to worship together at our National Headquarters. This was the first time in two years.

Throughout the day we heard encouraging sermonettes, as the National auxiliary coordinators boosted the General Headquarters themes for 2021-2022. The main messages of the day were preached by Bishop Philip Bennett and Pastor George Wilson.

Bishop Bennett's annual address was on the convention theme. Bishop Bennett stated that Jesus had left His house in order and we, as His servants should 'occupy' till He returns. St. Matthew 25 and Acts 2 were used to emphasise that Jesus wants us to work for Him until He returns. The Holy Ghost will equip us for the Lord's work. We cannot rely upon our own ability and must trust God to supply all our needs.

Jesus told His disciples before He ascended to heaven to "tarry till I come". He knew that they were willing, but needed to be endued with power from on high first. Acts 2:1-4, 42-47 records the wondrous acts the disciples did in Jesus' name. Bishop Bennett encouraged us all to trust in God and His anointing, so that we can **all** occupy till He comes.

Pastor Wilson's message was entitled 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.' (St. Matthew 24:36-46). Pastor Wilson asked, "what shall the Lord find us doing?" He went on to say that in order to be blessed, our works need to please the Lord. We need to be active in our service to Him. There is a difference between being active and being seen to be active. St. Matthew 24 highlights that even though two may be in the field doing the same thing, both were not taken up! In Genesis 6:8 we learn that Noah found grace in God's eyes. He did God's will, regardless of the environment he was surrounded by. Pastor Wilson said, "when God called time and released the waters, Noah was ready. When Jesus returns will we be ready?" We need to be ready when Jesus comes.

We thank God for His presence during the convention and pray for His continual guidance throughout this year.

Sister Beverley Wilson -National Reporter

What's Happening in Long Lane Church?

Dorcas: "... this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." (Acts 9:36)

In Autumn 2021, Sister Cynthia Opoku and Sister Victoria Bennett stepped down as WMB leaders. Sister Cynthia held the position from 2014 and Sister Victoria was appointed some years later.

Under their tenure as leaders, each Dorcas session tested our biblical knowledge and practical skills. Our Bible quiz sessions were a favourite of Sister Cynthia's. These sessions often turned into Bible studies, and their impact still affects our lives today. Our practical skills included sewing, cooking, selling items of clothing and food to help with World Missions.

On the 21st September 2021, the sisters delivered their last Dorcas session. Sister Cynthia led the session and came prepared with baking utensils and ingredients. The ingredients consisted of plain and self-raising flour, jam, sugar, eggs, salt, milk and water. The brethren were tasked to prepare individual dishes of their own choice, with the ingredients provided. In true Long Lane spirit, we laboured together, swapping recipes and ideas.

We produced both savoury and sweet dishes, ranging from dumplings, and a flan to fairy cakes. These carefully crafted delicacies would be later baked or fried in the comfort of our homes.



Once again, the Dorcas session was without impartiality, as the camaraderie between the brethren and flawless consistency in the delivery of the session was enjoyed by all. This is something that Sister Cynthia is an advocate for. During the session, Sister Cynthia said "I love it when we all get together, and everyone is involved, doing their part."

Our beloved sisters Cynthia and Victoria, let me take this opportunity to thank you both for being humble, consistent and disciplined as WMB leaders. However, all is not ended. The mantle has been handed over to our two newly appointed WMB leaders - Sister Claudine Brown and Sister Antonette Mwila.

Welcome our beloved sisters. We look forward to working with you, under your leadership.

God bless you.

Sister Novlet Nugent -Reporter The Church of God (England)

NATIONAL LADIES RETREAT

FRIDAY 3RD TO SUNDAY 5TH JUNE 2022



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