**PASTORING WITH HEAVEN AS A FOCUS**

1 Cor. 9:24-27, Col. 3:1-4

**INTRODUCTION**

Pastoring work must be done for a unique purpose. However, there is no other purpose more unique than having heaven as a focus when doing the work of pastoring. Having this in mind will straighten and strengthen the approach and attention being given to all that is needed to be learned and practiced in fulfilling this noble work called pastoring.

Paul the Apostle said he didn’t want to be a castaway after preaching to others – stating that his focus is not only on pointing people to heaven, while he will be disqualified from entering. He admonished the believers in Colosse that their affection should be on things in heaven rather “than being pre-occupied with earthly affections.” As he had heaven as a focus, he wanted his followers to do the same. It is high time we set our priority right and start giving our attention to making heaven together with members of our family and that of our congregation.

In the same vein, this message is a calling of our attention to the Vision/Mission statement of RCCG. The first on the list is “To make heaven.” Making this a focus in pastoring, especially in this Mission is as relevant as the need for oxygen for breath in order to sustain survival of life, thus confirming that we are on course, and we should pay raft attention to what God wants to unveil for us through this message.

**Pastor and Pastoring**

A pastor is a shepherd of sheeps’ fold. He is a minister of God having a specific ministry office. A pastor is serving a congregation in the church of God. (Eph. 4:11, Jer. 10:21, 24)

Pastoring is doing the work of a shepherd and must not allow the sheeps’ to scatter. (Jer. 23:1-2)

**To Focus** – It means having a single eye towards a targeted object or place e.g. heaven (Matt. 6:22-24, Acts 7:55-56)

**Heaven**

The dwelling place of God and His hosts, where God sits on His throne. (Ps 11:14, Isaiah 66:1)

**PASTOR’S SALIENT POSITION AS HEAVEN-BOUND MINISTER OF GOD**

1. **An ambassador**

As a believer in Christ, every pastor is an accredited representative of the heavenly country. He is a heavenly citizen. He could not afford to focus on another place because that is where he belongs to. (2 Cor. 5:19-20, Eph. 6:20).

He therefore, must be busy here reconciling the world unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ in order to make more citizens for his own country.

1. **A steward**

The church of God under him is not his property, it belongs to God. He is a steward who must give account of the assignment given to him especially in shepherding the church and in preparing the members and himself to make heaven. He must do this work of stewardship faithfully. (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

1. **A privileged co-labourer/builder**

A pastor is a co-labour, a co-builder with God by the grace of God. This is a privileged position that must be handled with care, as a junior partner in God’s work.

In the process of co-building, he must ensure of what he puts on the foundation, Jesus Christ. His work will be tested with fire. (1 Cor. 3:9-15)

1. **An assignee with time attached**

Our life-time generally is short and brief (Job 14:1). The work given to every pastor has a time attached to it (John 4:35, 9:4, 11:9a). What he could do now to prepare himself or his congregation for heaven should not be delayed till later time. Death could come un-noticed, and also the coming of the Lord to gather the saints for the rapture will happen suddenly (Mk. 13:35-37)

1. **A model – a trainer, a mentor**

Every pastor has a responsibility to be a role model, good example, mentor, trainer to his congregational members. If he chooses to preach and live to show the way to heaven for his people to follow, so they would. If he does otherwise, the result is clear already. His life and messages must certify him and his members as candidates of heaven. (Phil. 3:17, 2 Thes. 3:7-9, 1 Pet. 5:2-3)

**CHARACTERISTICS OF HEAVEN BOUND PASTORS AND HIS CONGREGATION**

1. **Holiness in life and ministry**

Every bit of pastor’s life either in words or deeds must preach holiness. No matter the message he preaches/teaches, holiness and its meaning must be a common feature of it. However, the message of holiness requires sincerity and practicality without which there would no effectiveness or its impact in the lives of the congregation. (1 Pet. 1:15-16, Heb. 12:14, Rev. 21:8 & 27) Like shepherd, like sheep

1. **Affections set on things in heaven**

The heart of a heaven bound person (pastor) must be set on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and not on things on the earth. It is a good way of saying that pursuing mundane things and worldliness should be totally discouraged from the lives of the pastor and his members. In-ordinate affections and every form of defilement must be rightly judged in messages and practices. (Col. 3:1-4, 1 John 2:15-17)

1. **Balanced Church Growth**

The growth of the church must not lopsided. Spiritual, Numerical, Financial and Structural growth of the church needs equal attention. This must reflect in the departmental set up and the kind of teachings that dominate the spiritual food the flock is being fed with.

In assessing the growth of the church, it must be wholistic, covering these four areas so as to maintain a balanced growth of the church. Every church programme, indoor or outdoor must be targeted towards soul winning and discipleship, and gaining things of eternal value.

Evangelism, discipleship, and fulfilling of ministries by members need adequate attention from pastors going to heaven with his people (Eph. 4:10-14, John 15:16)

Junior church (Children & Teens), and the Youths development need serious attention in this balanced church growth, so as to secure the future of the church.

1. **Discipline/Moderation in all things**

Self-control and moderation in all things by the pastor would preach volume for transforming lives, of both the pastor and the church members. Liberty must be put to check as not all things that are lawful are expedient. Self-discipline by pastor is needed to avoid being a mere sign-post to heaven and needed also to the church members to attest to the love the father has for his children. The use of the modern Information Technology and social media platforms, to help the growth of the church and to make the church a global, one is very good, and must be put to use in all parishes. But, moderation and discipline must be ensured. (Phil. 14:5, 1 Cor. 9:24-27, 1 Cor. 6:12, Heb. 12:5-11)

1. **Practical love among brethren**

The true symbol of a church in holiness and steady church growth is in practical love among brethren. As it happened in the early church, dwelling together in love and oneness helped the steady growth of the church and made members have a sense of belonging. Spending for the work of God and giving became their pattern of life. No wonder iniquity was being judged immediately because hypocrisy and lies could not gain ground, and the fear of God dominated the church. This portrays the kind of life the heaven-bound believers should live (Acts 2:42-47, Acts 5:1-11, 2 Cor. 12:15).

Remember to make use of our CSR activities to grow the church and to make you qualify for heaven (Matt. 25:34-46)

1. **Consecration**

Total separation unto the Lord and from the world should be a way of life for individuals and the church as a whole. Offering sacrificial services to God will promote revival and fast-track the growth of the church. Total yieldedness to life of righteousness and readiness to pay the price would allow the Spirit of God to move in the lives of individuals and the entire church. Having unconditional love in serving God would prevent serving God from murmuring and unbelief that could hinder people from entering their heavenly rest with God. (2 Cor. 6:17-18, Rom. 12:1-2, Heb. 3:18-19)

1. **Mighty move of the Holy Ghost power**

All believers within our congregation should be baptized and be filled with the Holy Ghost power to become instruments in God’s hands. There must be practical demonstration of God’s power for signs and wonders as this would promote church growth and propel a great revival. This will also help in quickening the mortal bodies of believers to enable them live a victorious and righteous life. (Acts 1:8, 4:32, Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 2:4-5)

1. **Living by the word of God**

Prominence should be given to the preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God. Pastors and members should imbibe the habit of hearing, reading, studying, meditating and obeying the word of God. The practices in the church should be bible-based, not on philosophy, traditions of men and things learnt on social media. (Joshua 1:8, Col. 2:6-8, John 15:3, Ps. 119:105)

For a glorious church, having no spot or wrinkle (prepared as a bride of Christ) to emerge, it must be by the “washing of the water by the word” (Eph. 5:26-27)

1. **Constant fire on the altar of prayer**

RCCG is known to be a praying church at the root. This should not be replaced with making of noises, faithless confession or lukewarmness in prayers. Every member of the church should be made a prayer warrior. Prayers should be taken as the bedrock for the success of any programme the church is running. The fire on the altar of prayer for individual and the entire church must not go down. Praying in the Spirit and understanding should go together. (Lk. 18:1-8, Rom. 8:26-27, 2 Thes. 5:17, Jude vs 18)

**Note:** This should be coupled with Spirit filled and worshipping in holiness and purity. (Ps. 29:1-2, Jn. 4:23-24)

**CONCLUSION**

For heaven bound pastors, the church on which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers should be made a heaven on the earth that will be prepared as a bride for Christ when He comes. Nothing must take the vision of heaven from the heart and focus of every pastor who would not want to labour in vain.