
Mission 119 Ministries

WE CANNOT BE SILENT

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“Millions of Africans, patiently knocking on the door of the Christian church where they seek the bread of social justice, have either been altogether ignored or told to wait until later, which almost always means never. Millions of American Negroes, starving for the want of the bread of freedom, have knocked again and again on the door of so-called white churches, but they have usually been greeted by a cold indifference or a blatant hypocrisy. Even the white religious leaders, who have a heartfelt desire to open the door and provide the bread, are often more cautious than courageous and more prone to follow the expedient than the ethical path. One of the shameful tragedies of history is that the very institution which should remove man from the midnight of racial segregation participates in creating and perpetuating the midnight.” — MLK 6.5.63 sermon *A Knock At Midnight*

THE PROMISED LAND?

Joshua 17:13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

It has been rightly observed that America's "original sin" is slavery, and we cannot escape the conclusion that when we were strong we did not utterly drive it out.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

Zechariah 7:8 And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, **9** Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: **10** And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. **11** But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. **12** Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

- **History shows us that**
 - **The evangelical church, especially in the South, failed to lead on the issues of slavery, segregation and racism**
 - **People rarely live above their culture — but Christians are called to live above their culture**
 - **Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**
 - **Romans 13 — God ordained government to provide an environment where righteousness can flourish, but where our Constitution and laws are only form over substance on basic human rights issues, the government has exceeded its authority**
 - **Both individually and corporately Christians must lead with clarity and urgency and fill the current leadership vacuum**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

➤ **1776 – Declaration of Independence**

➤ **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it...”**

➤ **Slavery existed in all of the original 13 British colonies and the Constitution of the United States was silent on slavery until 1865**

LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **1807 – President Thomas Jefferson signed law banning importation of slaves from Africa**
 - **Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention at its Seventh Biennial Session held in the First Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, May 6-10, 1859**
 - **Under “Colored Population” states: “They are also numerous—some three and a half millions. So many brought from the lowest depths of heathenism to our own land, placed within our reach, on our own farms and plantations, in our own families, under our own supervision and control, impose upon us weighty religious responsibilities.”**
 - **“Our slaves, too, demand our attention. They form part of our families, speak our language, are easy of access, and are impressible beyond any other people. They number more than three and a half millions...What a multitude of heathens in our family circles!”**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention at its Eighth Biennial Session held in the First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, May 10-13, 1861**
 - **Discussing the work of the Domestic and Indian Mission Board, under the heading “The Colored People”: “In the providence of God, a large number of the descendants of Africa are found in our midst; and such is their relation to us, that they are almost entirely dependant on the white man for the breach they eat, and specially for the instruction that shall make them wise unto eternal life. Our obligations, then, in this regard, are weighty, and address themselves to our most serious consideration. Have we been as solicitous for their spiritual welfare as duty requires?...They [missionaries] are encouraged in this work by the masters of the slaves, and now that we are (as it is to be hoped) removed from those political exciting causes that have had, for years, a tendency to embarrass our evangelical efforts for the good of the black man, we look forward to a brighter day, when no suspicions can be thrown upon devoted, honest labor for the religious instruction of members of our families. There is no class of people among us that more sincerely appreciate the efforts of our missionaries than the slaves that work our soil. Let us, then, give them the pure Word of Life that has elevated them so far above the condition of their race in the mother land.”**
 - **“Though the Cherokee Mission was much hindered in its work the past year, through the efforts of designing men, who wished to destroy the influence of the slaveholding churches, God has wonderfully blessed the labors of our brethren.”**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

➤ **1861 - 1865 — Civil War**

➤ **January 1, 1863 (Emancipation Proclamation)**

➤ **“all persons held as slaves...shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom... I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States...do, on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three...do order and declare that all persons held as slaves...shall be free...”**

➤ **“And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”**

LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **1865 – The 13th Amendment to the Constitution Ratified:**
“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” (section 1)
 - ***Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), the Supreme Court upheld as constitutional racial segregation laws for public facilities as long as the segregated facilities were equal in quality. This became known as “separate but equal” and legitimized the many state laws establishing racial segregation, especially in the South, after the end of the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877).**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **July 8, 1944: Private Booker T. Spicely in the United States Army and stationed in North Carolina was on a pass and went to Durham, where he boarded a bus with a black woman he was talking to and sat on the second to last seat in the back of the bus. The driver told them to move the very last seat to make room for some white soldiers who boarded and Spicely refused. When Private Spicely departed the bus, the bus driver followed him off the bus and shot Spicely twice, killing him. The driver was tried for second-degree murder and acquitted by the all-white jury on the grounds of self defense.**
 - ***Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)*, the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously held that state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools were unconstitutional *even if the segregated schools are otherwise equal in quality*. This led to the Massive Resistance movement created by Virginia Senator Harry Byrd to frustrate efforts to desegregate the schools.**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **August 27, 1956, Martin Luther King writes President Dwight Eisenhower that “Continued threats, violence which has included bombings of homes...and mass arrests authorized by city and state officials against Negroes, have tended to deprive Negroes of their civil rights and left them without protection of the law here in Alabama. Public officials are members of White Citizens Councils whose purpose is to preserve segregation by economic reprisals against Negroes. These officials are doing nothing to prevent the violence....We, therefore, urge you to use the power of your office to see that the proper investigation is made in Montgomery and Alabama to the end that justice and law will prevail.”**
 - **September 2, 1957 -- The *Little Rock Crisis* begins as Governor Orval Eugene Faubus of Arkansas announces he will use the Arkansas National Guard to prevent desegregation of the Little Rock Central High School.**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **September 9, 1957 – Martin Luther King sends telegram to President Eisenhower: “I urgently request you to take a strong forthright stand in the Little Rock situation, if the federal government fail to take a strong positive stand at this time it will set the process of integration back fifty years, this is a great opportunity for you and the federal government to back up the longings and aspirations of millions of peoples of good will and make law and order a reality.”**
 - **September 23, 1957 – Mayor Woodrow Wilson Mann of Little Rock sends a telegram to President Dwight Eisenhower asking for federal troops to enforce integration and protect the students.**
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LOOKING AT HISTORY

- **September 24, 1957 – President Dwight Eisenhower federalizes the Arkansas National Guard and sends the 101st airborne division to Little Rock to protect the students.**
 - **September 25, 1957 – Martin Luther King telegram to Eisenhower: “You should know that the overwhelming majority of southerners, negro and white stand firmly behind your resolute action. The pen of history will record that even the small and confused minority that oppose integration with violence will live to see that your action has been of great benefit to our nation and to the christian traditions of fair play and brotherhood.”**
 - **1960s — finally a real effort at protecting voting rights**
 - **This is not distant history.**
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AND NOW...

- **On May 25, 2020, George Perry Floyd Jr., an African American man, died during a police arrest in Minneapolis. The arrest was based on allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a grocery store.**
 - **The arrest and conviction of the officers involved will not provide justice in the fullest sense.**
 - **One cannot but still hear the people knocking at the door of the American church seeking the bread of social justice.**
 - **It is an embarrassment and a reproach to Christ that “good men” with their Bibles in their hands allowed slavery to proliferate, followed by over a century of segregation and social abuses.**
 - **And even now, too few white evangelicals will answer the call.**
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AND NOW...

- **Where have all the evangelicals gone?**
 - **Jesus Christ or politics?**
 - **All or nothing, unwilling to exercise discernment and call balls and strikes**
 - **A desperation every time there is a policy brutality incident to excuse it or malign the victim.**
 - **What about Candace Owens? (and others)**
 - **Because if we can find a reason not to genuinely address what has happened, we do not feel obligated to act .**
 - **But doing nothing is exactly what has plagued us for so long.**
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“This brings us to the question, how can evil be cast out? There are two ideas that men have usually held about the way evil is to be eliminated and the world saved. One idea is that man must remove evil with his own power. It is the strange conviction that if man goes on thinking inventing and governing he will be able to conquer by his own strength and ingenuity the nagging forces of evil. Just give people a fair chance, and a decent education, and they will save themselves. This idea has swept across the modern world like a plague ushering God out and escorting man in, substituting human ingenuity for inner guidance....But wherever it got started, the idea of the adequacy of man to solve the evils of history captured the minds of millions of people....With this glowing faith in the power of reason and science, modern man went out to change the world. Instead of thinking about God and the human soul, he turned his attention to the outer world and its possibilities...But in spite of these astounding new scientific developments, the old evils continue to exist. Modern man has had to witness his age of reason being transformed into an age of terror....The answer to this question is rather simple. Man by his own power can never cast evil out of the world.”

MLK sermon *The Answer to a Perplexing Question*

“The other idea concerning the way evil is to be removed from the world says that man must wait on God to do everything....This lopsided Reformation theology has often led to a purely other-worldly religion. It has caused many churches to ignore the ‘here’ and emphasize only the ‘yonder.’ But stressing the utter hopelessness of this world and emphasizing the need for the individual to concentrate his efforts on getting his soul prepared for the world to come, it has ignored the need for social reform, and divorced religion from life.” MLK sermon *The Answer to a Perplexing Question*

MOVING FORWARD

- **It is time to learn from the past failures of the American church to step up in unity and lead.**
 - **It is time to really, genuinely listen and abandon the desperate attempt to find a reason not to feel obligated.**
 - **James 1:19 — Wherefore, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.**
 - **It is time to lead, to be courageous, to step forward for such a time as this (Esther 4:14) looking to God prayerfully, looking for His wisdom and power through us.**
 - **We must ensure that the Constitution is not just words but reality, preserving God-given rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to all American.**
 - **We must finally remove lingering product of America's original sin.**
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“Here then is the Christian weapon against social evil. We are to go out with the spirit of forgiveness, heal the hurts, right the wrongs and change society with forgiveness. ... This is the solution of the race problem.” — MLK sermon *The Meaning of Forgiveness*
