

HEAVENLY MINDED, EARTHLY RELEVANT

1 John 4:20

Emakpor Jeremiah (*Deacon*)

In the news media few days back, was a story of a married woman who was caught red-handed sleeping with her husband's younger brother. When asked the reason for engaging in such an abominable and shameful act, the adulteress answered that she was sex-starved by her husband for a period of eight months, and she could not control herself any longer. When probed further as to why would her husband avoid her sexually for that long, she responded that her husband who is a "pastor", is always into fasting for 14 days, sometimes 21 days at a stretch and that whenever she complained, he waved it aside as nothing, claiming that he wanted to serve God.

Although the woman's excuse for involving herself in adultery with her brother-in-law is unacceptable before God and man, her husband's conduct that led to it is equally condemnable in the eyes of God.

The word of God has it that either party in a marriage who wishes to engage in fasting and prayer must seek the consent of the other before embarking on it. This is to avoid uncontrollable sexual desire that Satan may capitalize on to tempt them to fall for the sin of adultery. **1 Cor. 7:5** states thus:

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

The question is, does it mean that the so called pastor has not come across the quoted scripture above? Dismissing his wife's protest with a wave of the hand is being insensitive to her feelings. There is a snag in his desire to be close to God due to his failure to heed God's injunction as it pertains to a fellow man- this time, his wife. The scriptures says,

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

There was also this story of a man who could not help an accident victim on a Sunday morning because he reasoned that he would miss worship service or arrive late to it. Many of us, like both men in the two stories above, are building relationships with God but with little or no regard for our relationships with fellow man. We are heavenly minded with no earthly relevance, so to say. We have become so spiritually in tune with God that we neglect good relationship with people as spelt out in the holy writ (**Matt. 5:23-24**).

That was precisely what Jesus Christ felt about some of the religious leaders of His time:

They were great.

They looked pious.

They sounded religious.

They prayed feverishly.

They rushed to the temple any chance they got, but never impacted the way they dealt with people.

They spoke of love, but never got around to being loving.

They were good on paper, but they didn't know how to help and heal and serve and share.

They were so heavenly minded that they were no earthly good (**Matt. 23:23**). Much of this lapse in relating with men is embedded in our character or behaviour. The greatest fraud in life is religion without character. Many people take character for granted, while overzealously tuning in to their spiritual mode.

We have to be sensitive to others' feeling, patient with those with weak faith. There should be no room for envy, jealousy and malice. We must shun selfishness and unforgiving spirit (**Prov. 19:17**).

We must learn to treat people with respect and courtesy. Never to look down on anybody (**Luke 6:31**). Our relationship with our family, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances must be cordial.

There should be show of love within and outside the fold. As we are heavenly minded, let's be earthly relevant at the same time. The latter complements the former. And as we strive to do so, may the Lord help us to achieve it in Jesus' name.