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**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION AND
GROWTH IN SOME SELECTED CHURCHES IN OGBOMOSO**

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BY

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary church has is trying by all means to carry out the Great Commission given it, by the master yet it seen as if her efforts is not yielding any fruit. It has tried by all mans to make disciples of all nations.

However, there is still some disparities between the Christian faith and practices which are being exhibited by those who claim to have been converted, there are accommodations of worldliness in the church of God, high percentage of inactive members apathy of the congregation, impotence of ministries and lack of interest in spiritual matters.

Most of the churches these days have dealt with issue of conversion on the peripheral aspects and has forgotten the secondary aspect which will yield fruits fo rthe ministries. Since this is absent then one will not be surprise to find people of different characters which may contradict their profession of faith even when they have claim to be converted.

church, are found in the world, while those who are suppose to be worldly persons are found in key positions in the church as Christians. It is a pity that this could be the picture of the church today.

Conclusion

The thesis may not be well concluded without mentioning the need to exhaust more about discipleship as the only tool that can correct our error of the past and now, where churches are more concerned about quantity than quality as against the master's command to make disciples and teach them. The followings are the basic conclusions drawn from this title studies:

First, conversion is a general phenomenon that happens in all spheres of life and it entails a turning from one direction to the other. It means a change totally from the form, ways, or ideas. Christian conversion then is a complex issue that should not be trivialized. It has various dimensions that should be taken with high magnitude of seriousness. It is upon this that the writer would want the Christian preachers, missionaries, evangelists and churches to stand up to their God given task of making genuine conversion, to restore or redeem the fast diminishing integrity of the church as a result of the stigma left on the contemporary church by the so-called Christians who might have exhibited questionable characters.

Thus, the church has to emphasize the biblical truth, and methods adopted by Jesus, Paul and the first century Christians in converting the people. Their methods were so superb that at a glance, the heathen world could identified the followers of Christ as little Jesus. **The contemporary church in her method of Christian conversion and Christian maturity should also adopt these methods of discipleship used by the**

church in the book of Acts where the apostles devoted their time and lives to the teaching and preaching the gospel truth.

While this emphasis is being made or needed, observations have to be taken seriously as measures to curb the weakness that have already permeated the church and has eaten deep into the churches' system. This weakness is that of the offering of fire insurance and cheap grace where members are promised, come and it shall be well with you for our God is a God of mercy. Utilitarian attractions are also being offered to members that it is only those who have been giving abundantly to God through the church that will prosper.

This could be seen on stickers pasted on vehicles with the caption "Givers Never Lack." Therefore, if any one lacks he does not give. The aspect of investing in God's business is elevated above the salvation of the soul. No matter your spiritual status, you may be blessed abundantly if you invest well in God's business. Sanders, is of a different opinion as regards prosperity in the Lord. He opined that:

Anyone who come to Christ and is spiritually prosperous, exhibit four characters in testing circumstances.

- Strength with weakness at its mercy
- Purity in contact with defeating company
- Love which sees others at variance
- Rectitude, suffering at the hands of torments.⁴

The writer agrees with Sanders here because those who have been converted and disciplined, ought to show a kind of living testimonies of their faith rather than exhibiting different character. New converts should rather be disciplined, so that they can practice what they have learnt in the lives of others and in their relationship with God their creator.

⁴ Sanders, 102.

The first observation here is the fact of that, of abandoning the ideal method of conversion by some churches. To some modern day preachers, it does not matter who comes to the church as long as he/she makes the church financially buoyant. It is always "just come it will be well with you." In such situations, those who are accommodated fight hard to hide their pretence, they tend to come so that they will get what they want and when it is not forthcoming they exhibit their old nature e.g. by being thieves, sexual perverts, fraudsters, resorting to the use of their diabolic means, etc.

There is this play on this cassette: "The Enemy of My Soul," the son of the hero is an armed robber but claims he has been giving tithes to Pastors for the spiritual blessing which they always do. It was only one of the Pastors, who seeks to know the mind of God as regards the source of such person that, the Holy Spirit restrained him from collecting the blood money. In fact, contemporary churches are giving room for casual Christianity among their members. Some of them are after quantity membership and not qualitative membership as a result; these churches are filled up with people whose life styles are not consistent with their faith practices and confession. This kind of method and opinion, does more harm to the integrity of the church and the faith. It also hinder on lookers or unconverted persons to become interested in the Christian faith.⁵

The second observation may in the area of proliferation of denomination in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, just as it could be found in major cities in Nigeria. Genuine converts are now difficult to be recognized with the modern day method of conversion the study proves that Christians are being converted from one church to the other. The purpose of the gospel then is defeated. "It is discovered that six out of

⁵ "Enemy of the My Soul," V.C.D. Cassette, Mount Zion Faith Ministry Inc. (Ibadan, Oyo), 2003.

every ten new members of any given church in Ogbomoso, are converted that way." This is because most of these members jumped from one church to the other seeking for solution to their various crisis of life.

It was also discovered that with the modern way of establishing churches, Christianity has been commercialized. As prosperity, health and wealth gospel have become the major emphasis of the present day churches. Some of these founders of churches might have begun the church because of some administrative differences or it may be because of financial reason. When such attitudes were the motive of starting any church the quickest way of getting members these days will be to offer cheap grace. Such leaders and founders of these churches as was discovered uses marketing strategies to attract their audience rather than the salvific methods.

It will be under these marketing strategies that the preaching and teachings would continue. While they will be using other means or method of evangelism to gather their members. Some members may be hypnotized by the uses of hypnotism, which will keep them, under the control of those metaphysicists. When members, later on discover that, what they wanted, could not be found in this kind of place, they fall back and becomes source of shame to the household of God.⁶

Suggestions

Having been through with the various kinds of conversion methods and the stages taken to grow into maturity, what the Bible meant by conversion based on the teaching of Jesus, Paul and other church fathers, we need to rethink and revamps our efforts in getting people for the Lord.

⁶ Interview with Senior Pastor, Winners Chapel, Isale General, Ogbomoso. February, 2004.

