

BEING THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED



NOT THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE WANT

By Dan Gordon, Pastor , Home Missionary Baptist Church

BEING THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED

NOT THE CHURCH
THAT PEOPLE WANT

by

Danial Gordon

Copyright © 2012
All Rights Reserved

INTRODUCTION

Being the church that people need is quite different than being the church that people want.

In this day of compromise when churches turn from following God's word and turn to wanting to be loved and accepted by the world, God's people need to realize how important it is for any of the Lord's churches, large or small, to stay focused on the truth of God's word and the objective He has given us. It does matter HOW that objective is accomplished. God DOES care how we worship Him. We MUST maintain the things that God's word tells us.

In this series, you will learn how important it is for God's churches to maintain their focus upon God, to be distinct and separated from the world, as well as how important it is for God's people to maintain God's ways and not employ worldly tactics in the Lord's churches, if we are to be the church that people need rather than the church that people want.

BEING THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED

NOT THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE WANT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. MAINTAINING A PROPER PERSPECTIVE.....	1
2. A GOD ADDED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.....	12
3. A GOD PLACED PASTORATE.....	21
4. MAINTAINING A PROPER DISTINCTION.....	33
5. MAINTAINING A PROPER OBJECTIVE.....	48
6. MAINTAINING OF BIBLICAL CONSISTENCY.....	54
7. MAINTAINING OF EVANGELISM.....	59
8. MAINTAINING OF PRAYER.....	64
9. MAINTAINING OF WORSHIP.....	70
10. A SEEKING OF SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE.....	78
11. A MAINTAINING OF UNITY AND SHARED PURPOSE.....	84
12. A MAINTAINING OF A SENSE OF NECESSITY.....	100

This is a series of messages preached by Pastor Dan Gordon to the Home Missionary Baptist Church, Mount Morris, Michigan. These messages were preached in the Sunday evening services from February 27 through June 19, 2011.

1. MAINTAINING A PROPER PERSPECTIVE

JEREMIAH 2:33, 36

In these two verses there are two questions asked;

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?"

These two verses are a portion of Jeremiah's first sermon to the people of Judah (**Jeremiah 2:2-3:5**). In (**2:2-3**), God reminded Jeremiah of what Judah was in her younger days;

"the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me ... Israel was holiness unto the LORD"

From this we see that SHE LOVED THE LORD AND WAS ANXIOUS TO PLEASE HIM! Jeremiah, following the instruction from the Lord, proceeds to declare the sins of Judah! Concerning their sins, Jeremiah declares (**verse 5**), that;

"they are gone far from Me"

And as a result;

"have walked after vanity And are, become vain"

THIS HAD BECOME THEIR STATE OF BEING! So much so that **they lost their desire for the Lord (verse 6)**. They **defiled the land (verse 7)**. And were **pursuing that which was unprofitable (verses 8, 11)**. And **forsaking the Lord, and seeking to replace Him** with that which could bring no satisfaction (**verse 13**). They had become **identified with the enemies of the Lord (verse 18)**, and **guilty of spiritual harlotry (verse 20)**. As a result of all this, **they had become debased and corrupt (verse 21)**. And **unaware of their sinfulness (verse 23)**. And **absolutely consumed with sin (verse 24)**. They were a people **in love with and in pursuit of the ways of the enemies of God (verse 25)**, and therefore an **idolatrous people (verse 27)**, and a people **hardened to the working of God (verse 30)**. They had become a people who **saw no need for God (verse 31)**, and a people who had **forgotten the Lord (verse 32)**. And it was their sins that led to these two questions;

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?"

I. THE TWO QUESTIONS

The question of (verse 33);

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

This is a summation of, and the root cause of Judah's sin!

1. The First Question:

In this question there is **an act**;

"trimmest thou thy way"

The word *"trimmest"* can convey the idea of **taking away**, and it also can convey the idea of **adding to**, (*such as a decorative accessory or additional item*). And here in (verse 33) it conveys the idea of both, **taking away** and **adding to**. Also in this question there **is a reason** stated for the act;

"to seek love"

They **took away** and they **added to** God's ways, (*both of which are sin*), and they did this because **they were seeking the approval, the acceptance and the love of people!** BEING LOVED AND ACCEPTED BECAME THEIR FOCUS, AND THEY ADJUSTED THEIR WAYS ACCORDINGLY! As you read **Jeremiah 2**, it becomes painfully obvious that it was a time of **sin and wickedness**, a time of **open rebellion against God**, a time of **defilement, and shame**, a time of **great trouble and confusion!** AND THEY SOUGHT THE LOVE AND APPROVAL OF THE PEOPLE! And this put them on a certain path of destruction! The desire that consumed them was to be loved and accepted, and with this as their desire, they began to **take away** and **add to** the ways of God in order to be loved and accepted by the enemies of God! Thus the question;

"Why trimmest thy way?"

2. The Second Question:

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?"

In this there also is **an act**;

"gaddest thou about"

And a **reason** stated for the act;

"to change thy way"

It is suggestive that **they were in a state of frenzy**, seeking to adjust their ways, all with the desire to be approved, accepted, and loved by the enemies of God! JUDAH'S PERSPECTIVE BECAME SKEWED, and as a result, JUDAH CEASED TO BE USEFUL IN THE LORD'S SERVICE!

And there is a danger today, that the Lord's churches LOSE THEIR PERSPECTIVE, (lose sight of what it is all about), and as a result **cease to be what the people need, by becoming what the people want!** When a church of the Lord Jesus Christ shifts their focus to being loved and accepted by the world, they are traveling down a road that leads to **ceasing to be what people need, and becoming what people want!** And such is a very dire situation! And this is a present and extremely great and prevalent danger to the churches of the Lord! When a church of the Lord Jesus Christ loses sight of their God-given distinction and purpose, and becomes what people want rather than what people need, THEY LOSE THEIR VERY PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE! These two questions;

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?"

are very relevant to the Lord's churches today!

II. CONSIDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES TODAY

1. The Times In Which The Lord's Churches Exist Today:

We live in what the Bible (II Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; I Peter 1:20; I John 2:18) terms;

"the last days"

"the last times"

"the last time"

They all refer to the same time period that actually began with Christ, (Hebrews 1:1-2). In writing about this period of time Paul begins by saying (II Timothy 3:1);

"This know"

Paul says;

"You need to know"

And, WE DO NEED TO KNOW THE TIME IN WHICH WE LIVE! We read in **(I Chronicles 12:32)**, concerning the tribe of Issachar that they;

"had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do"

and we, like they, need to have an awareness, a comprehension, an understanding of the time in which we live! Paul says;

"This know also"

That is;

"This know in addition to"

and refers back to the immediate context of **(II Timothy 2:25-26)**, where we read of those who;

"oppose (are against) themselves"

And those;

"who are taken captive"

We are in a time when people, as a result of being in rebellion against God, are without knowing it, against themselves and are their own worst enemy, and are in the very chains and snare of the devil! NEVER FORGET THIS; we are ministering to people who are against themselves! THE CHURCHES OF THE LORD NEED TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT! **Those who unknowingly "oppose themselves" certainly do not know what they need, and what they think they need is in opposition to their own good!** Paul goes on to describe these; *"last days"* as, *"perilous"* meaning;

"difficult, trying, hard, violent, threatening, dangerous, and hazardous"

This speaks of times of;"

"great stress"

And times that are;

"hard to deal with and hard to bear"

The word, *"perilous"* is the same word translated;

"exceeding fierce"

to describe the demonic of Gadara; the word, *"fierce"* meaning;

"violent, hostile, aggressive, and unrestrained"

And **this is demonic in origin!** As you read on in **(II Timothy 3)**, you see that it is **sin** and **self life** that makes for *"perilous times"*. And as the *"last days"* progress the things mentioned in these verses become more and more dominant, common, ordinary, and universal! **IN SUCH TIMES THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT!**

We read in **(II Peter 3:3-4)**;

"that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts"

And in **(Jude 18-19)**, that;

"there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts"

And Paul said in **(II Timothy 3:13)**;

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived"

THESE ARE THE DAYS IN WHICH WE LIVE, and in such times, **THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT!** These are days when people are deceived, and people who are deceived do not know what they need! **UNSAVED MAN DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HE NEEDS FROM OR IN A CHURCH!** Oh, they may have some ideas, but their ideas proceed from their sinful nature, and are wrong! Their ideas of what they need are not going to help them, and are not going to fix their lives, but only bring them into further opposition against their spiritual well-being! With their ideas;

"they oppose themselves"

Their ideas may make them feel better about themselves, **BUT THIS IS NOT WHAT THEY NEED!**

2. The Influence That Surrounds The Lord's Churches Today:

We are surrounded by **Satanic influence!** It is everywhere! There is a constant onslaught by Satan to confuse, and **IN SUCH TIMES THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT THEY WANT!**

- There Is Everywhere The Influence Of Satan:

Satan has not decreased one iota in his hatred for God, for His Word, for His church, or for His people! He is no less of an enemy, and he has not toned down his purpose, which is a purpose of

destruction! He has not toned down his efforts to get an advantage over us! He has not thrown aside any of his devices! He has not lost any of his wiles, and he has not decreased in his attacks! BE SURE OF THIS, Satan and the enemies of God will not decrease in their enmity toward God, and the things of God, but their enmity will only intensify as we get further along in the last days, which ought to make the Lord's churches more aware than they have ever been, and cause them to be more on guard than they have ever been! Again, IN SUCH TIMES, **THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT!**

- There Is Everywhere The Corrupt Influence Of The World:

Paul stated in (**Ephesians 2:2**) that the influence of the world is according and in line with the influence of Satan! The world as a system is under the dominion of, and is the embodiment of Satan, bearing his image! As a system the world is synonymous with;

"the kingdom of Satan"

The sphere of rebellion against God! The world is a system of evil that is Satanically informed and ruled! It is under the dominion of Satan, and is the embodiment of his image! The world as a system is under the direction of the spirit of Antichrist (**I John 4:3**), and is being prepared for the reign of Antichrist! Everywhere we turn there is the spirit of Antichrist with its deceptions, and perversions, seeking to ambush, entrap, cut off, hem in, and hold the child of God! The world as a system is the sum total of the thinking, the ideas, the philosophies, the values, the attitudes, the ambitions, the goals, the pursuits, and the behavior of those who are alienated from God! The world is at enmity with God, and hates God, is offended by God, and the things of God, and is the sphere of rebellion against God! When God became incarnate, we read in (**John 1:10**), "*the world knew Him not*". And it is still so! Jesus declared in (**John 7:7**), of the world; "*Me it hateth*". And it is still so! Jesus said (**Matthew 18:7**), "*Woe unto the world because of offenses*" (*that which is disrespectful, disagreeable, displeasing, and provocative to God*). And the world overflows with such! Jesus spoke in (**Matthew 13:22**) of the strangling power of the world saying that the world's "*cares*" and the "*deceitfulness*" of its "*riches choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful*". THE WORLD SEEKS TO SUFFOCATE THAT WHICH IS OF GOD! Paul speaking of the world as a system of life (**Galatians 4:4**), referred to it as "*this present evil (foul, vile, and depraved) world*". Peter mentions (**II Peter 2:20**), the "*pollutions (contaminations and poison) of the world*". John informs us (**I John 4:3**), that the "*spirit of antichrist ... even now is it already in the world*". The world is antichrist! The world as a system is set against Christ, and views Him as an annoyance, an inconvenience, an irritation, a problem, and an aggravation! John declares (**I John 5:19**), "*the whole world lieth in wickedness*" (*baseness, degeneracy, devilry*). THIS IS THE RESIDENCE OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES! And the world has not taken down any of its barriers to truth, but has, and will continue to set up more barriers! The world is not becoming more tolerant and accepting of the ways of God, and the world is not pulling back its opposition! **To give those who are under the influence of the world what they want in the house of God, or what makes them feel comfortable, you must bring in the influence of the world, and WHEN YOU DO THAT YOU CEASE TO BE THE CHURCH THAT THEY NEED! YOU NOW HAVE BECOME THE CHURCH THAT THEY WANT!** No matter how long a church has been in existence, and no matter how much truth they have been taught, **if they give into the world's ways, and begin to**

embrace the world, SUCH IS A PATH TO RUIN! And to continue on that path THE CHURCH WILL CEASE TO BE THE WHAT AN UNGODLY WORLD NEEDS, AND BECOME WHAT AN UNHOLY WORLD WANTS! Again, IN SUCH TIMES, THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT!

There Is Everywhere The Influence Of Evil:

This is a time when those who have adopted the devil's programs, and agenda are becoming more and more bold in promoting such, and are becoming more and more determined that we too accept, and embrace such! These are times when those who have a hatred, and opposition to everything that Jesus Christ represents are more and more relentless and determined! These are times when those who see no shame in the vileness of sin are becoming more and more brazen! This is a time when people are proud of their sinful and ungodly ways, and dare anyone to oppose them! This is a time when those who consider good evil, and evil good are increasingly more brazen, and when those who take a stand along Biblical lines are more and more ridiculed, mocked and hated! We are living in a society under the wrath of God! The devil, the enemies, and haters and despisers of God and His Word are on a rampage, and a mission of destruction! They are bold, and they have resolve and determination, and they want the Lord's churches to embrace and accept their sinful lifestyles! They want the Lord's churches to be tolerant of their sinful ways, while they have no tolerance whatsoever of the church's stand for truth! They live as they please, and dare the church to do or say anything about it! **For the Lord's churches to give such people what they want, is sure destruction!** IN SUCH TIMES THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANT! A church of the Lord Jesus Christ should not even concern themselves with what those, who are at enmity with God, and are offended by God, want or think they need in the house of God! To concern ourselves with what people want in a church who find God to be a nuisance, and who give Him mere lip service is a very very dangerous thing! It is extremely foolish to pattern and adjust our church services to accommodate the sinful desires and lifestyles of the world! SUCH WILL DESTROY A CHURCH!

- There Is Everywhere The Influence Of Our Culture:

We live in a culture that **wants nothing to do with the God of the Bible!** We live in a culture that is thoroughly humanistic, and as a result is filled with evolutional thinking, individualism, and immorality! We live in a culture that is a cesspool of ungodliness! We live in a culture that does **not tolerate absolutes**, and most certainly does **not tolerate Biblical convictions!** The influence of an ungodly, vile, and abominable world and culture is everywhere around us, and we are surrounded by filthiness, vileness, wickedness, ungodliness, abomination, blasphemy, heresy, and by that which is offensive and repulsive to God! We live in a day of secularization;

"the process of separating from, and removing the influence of the Lord and His Word. The process of removing Biblical faith, morals, and values from the public arena. The process of de-christianization. The process of moving from absolutes to relativism, from morality to immorality and amorality from spiritual to material. The process of moving toward acceptance, tolerance, and non-judgmentalism of what is condemned by God"

The process of secularization continues with the systematic, pervasive, incessant bombardment of the perverted narration, and the pervasive lies, and the control and manipulation of atheistic humanism, which desires and attempts to function with the exclusion of God and His principles! It's everyday, everywhere, and very well calculated by the God-haters! It is the religion of self, and results in **increased understanding and sympathy for sinful and abominable behaviors**, and with this increased understanding and sympathy, comes **increased hostility toward God and those who hold to a Bible worldview!** And now it is the norm to praise, to revere, to idolize, to elevate, to celebrate the abominable, the offensive, and the repulsive! IT IS ABSOLUTE INSANITY, to allow those caught in this cycle of secularization to have any say or to determine what a church should be! IN SUCH TIMES THE CHURCH NEEDS TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, NOT WHAT THEY WANT! To give those who are under the influence of a Godless culture what they want you must compromise and bring a Godless culture into the church! IN DOING SO, YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM WHAT THEY WANT, BUT YOU HAVE CEASED TO BE WHAT THEY NEED!

Most churches today, and when I use the word "*churches*", I am referring merely to

"religious institutions"

THEY ARE NOT WHAT PEOPLE NEED. THEY ARE NOT EVEN CLOSE TO WHAT PEOPLE NEED, BUT ARE FAR MORE IN LINE WITH WHAT PEOPLE WANT, RATHER THAN WHAT THEY NEED!

III. THE LORD'S CHURCHES MUST MAINTAIN A PROPER PERSPECTIVE

1. There Is The Danger Of Losing Proper Focus And Perspective:

Again, we read in **Jeremiah 2:33**;

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

They had lost a right focus and perspective, and they began to seek the love and acceptance of the ungodly! THEY BECAME OCCUPIED WITH BEING LOVED AND ACCEPTED! There was a preoccupation with being popular! **This preoccupation for love, acceptance, and popularity resulted in them taking away from, and adding to the ways of God!** Many individuals and churches are doing, and have done the very thing that they were guilty of in Jeremiah's day! REMEMBER WHO AND WHAT WE ARE DEALING WITH! The desire to be loved and accepted is part of our nature, we would rather be loved than unloved, accepted rather than rejected! Again, this is part of our nature, but **such should never be our focus and perspective!** Such a focus is contrary to the Word of God, as Jesus reminded that first church (**John 15:18-20**). Notice those words;

"If the world hates you, ye know that if hated me before it hated you"

The world is filled with haters of Christ!

"Is that whose approval and acceptance we are looking for?"

Jesus went on to say;

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own"

We need to understand this; THE WORLD LOVES ITS OWN! Therefore, to be loved and accepted by the world, YOU MUST BECOME LIKE THE WORLD! When this happens, THE CHURCH CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED! The truth is; we ought to be more concerned if the world feels comfortable and at ease in our church services, than we are when they are uncomfortable and offended! A CHURCH WILL NEVER BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, WHEN THE FOCUS IS UPON BEING LOVED AND ACCEPTED!

2. The Result Of An Improper Focus And Perspective:

In Jeremiah's day, because they sought to be loved, accepted, and embraced, they began to **take away** and **add to** God's Word. Anytime one takes away from God's Word, they will replace it with something else, AND IT IS NEVER AN IMPROVEMENT! IT IS ALWAYS GOING BACKWARDS! Even if you double your church attendance by taking away from and adding to God's Word, IT IS NOT AN IMPROVEMENT! IT IS GOING BACKWARDS! Again, in Jeremiah's day, the nation was guilty of losing their focus for the honor of God, and they began to seek the love and acceptance of the wicked, and this is what led to the question;

"Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?"

Today, as a result of focusing upon being loved and accepted, so called "*Christendom*" has become less offensive, and more accommodating and acceptable to the ungodly! As a result of focusing upon popularity, **there is the attempt to make the sinful feel at ease, comfortable, happy, and entertained!** THIS HAS RESULTED IN WORLDLY MUSIC PROGRAMS, AND A COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF THE TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE! And THE CHURCH CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED!

- As A Result Of Focusing Upon Being Loved, Accepted, And Popular There Is An Attempt To Stay Away From Anything That Would Threaten The Lifestyle Of The Ungodly:

We do not want to see the unsaved and the backslidden leave the church, but THE EMPHASIS SHOULD NEVER BE ON KEEPING THEM OR PREVENTING THEM FROM LEAVING! All across the land God's people are trying to win the approval of the world and as a result, **instead of being the light that reveals sin, there is an attempt to be just dark enough that people will not feel uncomfortable in their sin!** IF WE ARE GOING TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, it cannot be our concern that the **unsaved and the backslidden are comfortable and happy in our church services!** We are not to set out to make them unhappy,

but it must not be our goal to make them happy and satisfied! The concern of many, when the unsaved and backslidden are in our services is,

"Are they going to be happy with the message?"

The concern ought to be;

"I pray that the Lord really gets hold of them and transforms their life"

Oh, may it never be our focus, that we have to keep them happy, so that they will come back! When that happens, you are ensnared in the same trap that they were in in Jeremiah's day!

- As A Result Of Focusing Upon Being Loved, Accepted, And Popular There Is An Attempt To Secularize The Things Of God And To Have A Diversity Of Programs So That Everybody Can Be Entertained:

To keep everyone comfortable, satisfied, and happy is what has led to the mega church madness, and user-friendly "worship". This desire and goal to keep everyone comfortable, satisfied, and happy has led to a remaking of Biblical traditions so that they are more appealing and in tune to the modern person! The false premises being;

"If they like us, they will be more accepting of the message of the Word of God"

But the truth is, that as a result of wanting to be loved and accepted, THE MESSAGE OF GOD IS ALTERED, and once the message of God is altered, IT IS NO LONGER WHAT PEOPLE NEED! **We are not here to give the ungodly world what they want, THAT IS NOT OUR GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE!** And if we are going to continue to be the church that people need, IT MUST NEVER BECOME OUR PURPOSE TO GIVE THE UNGODLY WORLD WHAT THEY WANT! **Beware of wanting to be loved and accented by those who are turned off by the message of the Word of God!** To attempt to keep satisfied and happy those who are turned off and offended by the message of the Word of God is **a dangerous slope that will lead to sure destruction!** What a sad commentary when a church attempts to reach the ungodly by saying;

"We especially invite those to our services, who are turned off by the traditional Bible message"

Or when they say;

"We especially invite those who do not like church to come and be with us"

The religious institutions that push this philosophy, will say;

"we are ministering to them, and their needs "

But the truth is; THEY CANNOT MINISTER TO THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE THEM! THEY ARE WHAT THEY WANT NOT WHAT THEY NEED!

- As A Result Of Focusing Upon Being Loved, Accepted, And Popular Churches Will Begin To Make Deals To Keep People:

They will say;

"Brother, we do not want you to leave, what can we do to cause you to stay?"

If you want to continue to **be the church that people need**, YOU DO NOT MAKE DEALS TO GET PEOPLE IN, AND YOU DO NOT MAKE DEALS TO KEEP THEM IN! If the Lord's churches are going to continue **to be what people need**, they must remember this, **THEY ARE JOINING US, WE ARE NOT JOINING THEM! The truths that we believe are not open for debate!** WE ARE NOT MAKING ANY DEALS! Some one says;

"This is a family often people, we have got to have them"

No you don't! DON'T EVER THINK THAT YOU HAVE TO HAVE A PARTICULAR PERSON OR FAMILY! Because if you begin that line of thinking, you are going to take away from, or add to the Word of God!

3. In Order To eep A Proper Focus And Perspective We Must Realize Our Responsibility:

To be the church that people need, we must realize this truth; IT IS NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE GOD ACCEPTABLE! IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY TO DECLARE HIM! And when you honestly declare God, there will be people who are going to become offended, upset, and angry, and people are going to leave and not come back! But, it is not for us to shape God in a way that He is acceptable to the masses! IT IS NOT OUR DUTY TO MAKE THE WORD OF GOD ACCEPTABLE! IT IS OUR DUTY TO DECLARE IT AS WRITTEN! And when the Word of God is preached as is, there will be people who are going to be offended, upset, and angry, and people will leave, and not come back! But, it is not for us to rewrite the Word of God, so that it is acceptable to the masses! IT IS NOT OUR DUTY TO MAKE THE WAYS OF GOD APPEALING AND ATTRACTIVE! IT IS OUR DUTY TO DECLARE AND LIVE SUCH! And when you do this, there will be people who are going to be offended, upset, and angry, and people are going to leave, and not come back! But, it is not for us to change the ways of God to make them more acceptable! IT IS NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THIS CHURCH MORE APPEALING! IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DO THE BUSINESS OF GOD! God's business, God's glory must be our focus! If the focus shifts to being loved, accepted, and becoming popular, and wanting the unsaved, the ungodly, the wicked, and the vile to feel warm and fuzzy in our church services, WE WILL CEASE TO BE THE CHURCH THAT THEY NEED, AND BECOME THE CHURCH THAT THEY WANT!

2. A GOD ADDED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

ACTS 2:47

As already seen, if a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to continue to be THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, it is absolutely imperative that they **do not become "success" oriented**, for such will produce a desire to be loved by the world, and when that happens, a church will adjust their ways accordingly, **adding to, and subtracting from the plain ways of God**, with the result being, **they become the world, and the church that people want, AND CEASE TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED!** Jesus reiterated this point to His church in (**John 15:18-20**). Notice in particular;

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own"

If a church seeks to be loved and accepted by the world, THE WORLD WILL LOVE ITS OWN, so in order to be loved and accepted by the world, a church would have to become the world! And when that happens, THEY NO LONGER HAVE A GOD PURPOSE AND FUNCTION! And though a church of the Lord Jesus may become what the world wants, THEY LOSE THEIR DISTINCTION AND IDENTITY AS THE LORD'S CHURCH, and **they cease to be what people need!**

Being THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED requires that the church stay separate and distinct from the philosophies, reasonings, ways, and the pursuits of the world! **Therefore those whom the church receives into its membership is a matter of extreme importance and consequence!** WHAT MAKES UP THE MEMBERSHIP IS THE CHURCH! In (**Acts 2:41-47**) we read of church membership with regard to the Jerusalem church (*the one Jesus started during His earthly ministry*). And in (**verse 41**), it is stated;

"there were added unto them about three thousand souls"

At the time of the addition, this church consisted of 120 members (**Acts 1:15**). And 3000 were saved, baptized, and added to the Jerusalem church! And in (**verse 47**) we read;

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"

THE LORD ADDED! From these two verses, we learn that the membership of the church (*a local body of Christ*) should consist of the saved, baptized, and the God-added! THIS IS ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE IF A CHURCH IS GOING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED! The fundamental principles of membership in a local body of Christ are, saved, baptized, and God-added! IF A CHURCH IS GOING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, saved, baptized, and God-added must be maintained at all costs!

I. TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED A PROPER MEMBERSHIP IS CRUCIAL

1. The Church Must Maintain A Proper Perspective Concerning Its Membership:

Again, the focus must never (and I mean never) be upon being loved and accepted by the world, or being popular or even desirable to the world! **For the world to love and accept us, and to find us desirable, we must become them** and when that happens, WE BECOME WHAT THEY WANT AND CEASE TO BE WHAT THEY NEED! The focus must never be upon being loved and accepted by the world, and a church should not enter panic mode when the world does not love them, or accept them! Regardless of the times or the circumstances, **the focus must always remain the same; DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY! That is to be the focus!** The mission, the focus, and the concern of the Lord's church is not about being "*successful*" by the world's standards of size and numbers! May, I say A CHURCH IS SUCCESSFUL IF THEY DO GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Lord commissioned His churches to **preach the Gospel**, not to seek attendance records! THE CHURCH IS TO BE COMMISSION-ORIENTED! Numbers must never become the focus and the goal, because if they ever become the focus and the goal, **you will adopt improper methods to reach your goal!** To say;

"by such and such a date we want x amount of people in church"

is a wrong focus, and a very dangerous practice, and puts a church on a path of ruin! **An improper focus or an improper goal will lead to a lowering of Biblical standards!** Mere numbers, and success by the world's standards, **is not what we are here for!** WE ARE HERE TO UPHOLD GOD'S STANDARDS! WE ARE HERE TO DO GOD'S BUSINESS IN GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY! If the focus becomes, a larger church membership, **the church will have to make it easier for people to become members!** THIS IS NOT THE TIME, NOR HAS IT EVER BEEN THE TIME TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO BE A MEMBER OF ONE OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES! Putting the emphasis on mere numbers, has led to a so-called

"decision-based salvation " or "easy believism"

in the place of a **heart and life changing salvation experience!** This emphasis upon

"decisions for Christ"

has allowed countless numbers of unsaved people to become members of churches! But, the Lord's churches must be content to sow and to water, and **depend upon God to give the increase!** In (I Corinthians 3:6-8) Paul said;

"I have planted, Apollos watered"

That is;

*"I preached, and Apollos came behind me and preached some more;"
"but God gave the increase"*

It is not membership drives that give true increase, IT IS GOD THAT GIVES THE INCREASE!
We read;

*"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth
the increase"*

In other words;

*"it is not Paul that is to get the glory, it is not Apollos, or any other preacher or individual, it is
God"*

Again, the Lord's churches are not here to set attendance records, or to elevate men, or elevate some pastor! WE ARE HERE TO DO GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY! We are to be content to sow and water the seed, and to depend upon God to give the increase! THAT IS OUR BUSINESS! If we ever get side-tracked from this, WE WILL CEASE TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, AND WE WILL BECOME WHAT THEY WANT! For the Lord's churches to continue TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, they must be diligent in the work that God has given them to do, and leave it to God to do the work that He has promised to do!

It is God's work, not ours to add and to set members into His churches (**Acts 2:47; I Corinthians 12:18, 28**). And since it is God's business to add to, and set into His churches, we **do not have to do anything outside of what God has commissioned us to do!** It is not our business to appease and pacify people so that they will join the church, nor do we need to appease and pacify people so that they stay! THE LORD ADDS AND HE ALWAYS DOES SO WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF SCRIPTURE! And THE LORD ALSO TAKES AWAY! **We must never ever get away from that wonderful truth!** IT IS GOD THAT DOES THE ADDING! We must get a grip upon that truth, or more importantly, that, it would get a grip upon our hearts and minds!

2. The Blessing Of A God-Added Church Membership:

It is special, and it is a blessing when God adds to, and sets into His churches! He does so for His own pleasure and purpose and for the good of His churches! It is important that we do not enter into the mindset of,

"that person would really make a good church member here"

THAT IS ONLY SO IF GOD ADDS THEM! It does not matter how faithful they are somewhere else, **the only way that they will be a good church member here, is if God adds them!** Again, GOD DOES THE ADDING! We must never lose sight of this blessed truth! The realization of this truth will keep individuals and pastors from proselytizing from other churches! God does not need for any member of this church to suggest to a member of another body that they move here and become a member here! YOU JUST WAIT FOR GOD TO DO THE ADDING! And that will prevent a lot of trouble down the road! Again, notice (Acts 2:41),

"added unto"

And again in (Acts 2:47),

"the Lord added to the church"

To add is to combine, in other words,

"what is added becomes a part of what it is added to"

Notice (I Corinthians 12:18),

"But now hath God (a deliberate and purposeful act by Him) set the members every one of them in the body"

Notice (I Corinthians 12:28),

"God hath (a deliberate and purposeful act by Him) set some (indicative of a choice by God) in the church, first (indicative of order) apostles"

From all of this we learn that God **adds** to His churches, and He does so **deliberately** and with **purpose**, and He does so, according to His own **order!** THESE ARE WONDERFUL TRUTHS THAT MUST BE FIRMLY GRASPED! It may not be God's will for a certain individual to be a member of a particular body of Christ right now, but six months from now, it might be! **God has His time**, and **God has His order!** BELIEVE THIS! PRACTICE THIS! In order to continue to BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, **depend upon God's time and order** when it comes to God adding to His churches! GOD DOES NOT NEED OUR HELP IN ADDING TO HIS CHURCHES!

When God **adds** to and **sets** in His churches, **whoever is added becomes a part of that particular church!** GOD DOES NOT ADD ONE TO, OR SET ONE IN FOR THEM TO BE SEPARATE FROM THE CHURCH! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! When God **adds**, He is making a person **a part of!** When an individual states a desire to become a member of a local body of Christ, and yet they want to be apart from it in doctrine and practice, **that is not the Lord adding!** Hear me, **that is not the Lord adding!** Someone says,

"But they would make such good church members, they have so much to over our church"

Hear me again! **That is not the Lord adding!** When people want to be members of a particular church of the Lord, and yet they want to be separate from what the church believes and practices, **that is not being a member of!** And sadly this is becoming common and acceptable today! And these same people who want to be a member but separate from the church, they want the church to keep them on the membership rolls, even though they have made it clear either by word or practice, or both, that they want to be separate from the church! Separate from the church IS NOT GOD-ADDED MEMBERSHIP!

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is like a tree; if you want to **add** to a tree you do not take a dead branch and tie it on, that is not adding to it, but encumbering it! To add to a tree there must be a grafting done, which requires skill, and the living branch must be knit to the living trunk! A true church is a living organism, and only living men and women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it, and the grafting must be made by the Lord Himself, otherwise it is no true addition to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ! **Some are only tied on to the church**, as a dead branch unto a tree, as a result, they add no beauty, and bring and are no benefit to it! Reading (**Acts 2**), it is plainly seen that those added did not encumber or hinder the church, but they were truly an addition in a positive way!

When one knows that they have been **added** to and **set in** by the Lord, it makes a difference in the way that they view their church membership (*it is an act of grace, a privilege, an opportunity, a blessing, an obligation, and responsibility*). And it makes a difference in the way that they view the church of which they are part of! That church becomes home, and an object of love, appreciation, commitment, sharing, serving, relationship, and accountability! And yet today, people want to join a church that they have no real appreciation for, and they are not willing to make any type of commitment to, and they do not want to feel any no responsibility to, or have any accountability to. THAT IS NOT GOD ADDING! When God **adds**, that church becomes special, oh, it is far from perfect, but it is a very special place! Never forget, GOD'S WAY WORKS! And because that is so, **we do not have to make the church desirable to those on the outside!** THAT IS NOT OUR BUSINESS! We are to preach the truth and pray that God will show them the truth, and when that happens, **the Lord's church becomes desirable to that individual!** Leave it to God to **add to** and **set in whom** He sees fit, when He sees fit!

II. A GOD-ADDED MEMBERSHIP ACTS AS A BODY

1. The Analogy Of A Human Body:

In (**I Corinthians 12**), Paul uses the analogy of a human body when speaking of the Lord's church! A body is **prepared**, a creation by design! A body implies;

"an organization, a framework, a systematic grouping of parts into a functional entity"

A body is not an accident, thrown together in some haphazard way! A body has been put together by the Lord in a suitable **order** and for a definite **purpose!** THIS IS NOT ONLY

TRUE OF THE HUMAN BODY, BUT OF EACH AND EVERY CHURCH OF THE LORD!
A church (a body of Christ) is a **creation miracle and wonder of the Lord!** A body of Christ like the human body is **hand embroidered by God!** BE SATISFIED WITH GOD PUTTING TOGETHER A BODY OF CHRIST! When a church loses sight of the fact that **the Lord does the adding**, what follows next is **an overstepping of scriptural boundaries, and they begin to add to themselves**, and THEY BECOME A MESS, AND ARE NO LONGER WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS! God only **adds** by following the rules, His rules that He has already established! **Mark it down; IF YOU HAVE TO BREAK AND OVERSTEP HIS RULES, AND BOUNDARIES, GOD IS NOT DOING THE ADDING!** The Lord **adds to**, and **sets in** His churches, and when this truth is lost sight of, what follows is a neglect of **church discipline**, a neglect of the **authority of churches of like faith**, and a neglect of **scriptural baptism**, and all **standards are lowered!**

Those who seek to add themselves, and church members, and pastors who seek to add members are acting as enemies to the Lord's churches!

In order for the church to be what people need, WE MUST NOT DO THE ADDING! You cannot improve upon God's method of adding to His assemblies! And anything outside of God adding, never improves a church! Never! Never! Never!

2. Each And Every Member Must Be Content With Its Place And Office In The Body:

Though each member is different, each can do extraordinary things in their proper place and office! If a church is going to be what people need, it is **imperative that each member be content where God has placed them in the body, and desire to function to the glory of God where God has placed them in the body!** You may be the foot, you may be the toe, you may be the leg, you may be the hand or the fingers, the eye or the arm, but if the Lord has added you, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE A DEFINITE POSITION AND PURPOSE WITHIN THE BODY TO WHICH HE HAS ADDED YOU! If the members of one of the Lord's churches are not in and functioning in their God-ordained place, **they are in great danger of ceasing to be what people need!**

3. Each And Every Member Must Be Willing To Be In Unison With The Other Parts, Contributing To The Health Of The Body:

Notice (Ephesians 4:16),

"the whole (entire) body fitly (tightly, securely) joined (united, vitally connected, and linked), together (with each other; in joint cooperation), and compacted (closely packed, pressed firmly), by (primary preposition stating the ground or reason that something is done, 'for this cause'), that (in order), which every joint supplieth (makes available and provides), according to ('in accord with'), the effectual (effective), working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"

The reason that every part of the body must be tightly, securely **united, connected, linked**, and knit **together** is so that **each and every part can function properly in the body, to the good and benefit of the body!** When the Lord adds there is a uniting, a binding, a link, a tie, a connection, and an interrelationship! When the Lord adds THERE IS A FIT! When the Lord adds, IT WORKS! When the Lord adds, THERE IS A BOND THAT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN! A **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, and God-situated church membership** is A GOD-UNIFIED MEMBERSHIP! This unity does not mean that there will be no disagreements, but in a **God-added membership**, people will lay aside their opinions, and they will put aside their hurt feelings for the good of the church of which they are a member! SCRIPTURAL UNITY IS VITAL TO THE CHURCH BEING WHAT PEOPLE NEED! And a **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, and God-situated church membership is vital to real unity of spirit!** It is truly an amazing and miraculous matter how, that God takes different personalities, and blends them all together, and it works! A GOD ADDED MEMBERSHIP WORKS!

4. Each And Every Member Must Have A Proper Relationship To The Head:

Jesus Christ is the **head** of His church (**Colossians 1:15-18**). The **head** is the **highest, the most exalted, and the most honorable part of the body** AND THIS MUST BE SO IF THE CHURCH IS GOING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED! The church is never about any particular member, **it is all about Him!** The **head** is **indispensable** to life! Separate from the **head**, the body dies and is nothing, and can do nothing! Jesus said to His first church

"Without me, ye can do nothing"

NEVER FORGET THESE WORDS! You can cut off one of my limbs, or all of my limbs, and I can continue to live, but if you cut off my head, I will cease to live! And so it is with the Lord's churches. Any member can leave, members pass away, pastors leave and can pass away, but the church continues on, because **NO ONE IS BIGGER THAN THE CHURCH! NO ONE!** Apart from the **head, the church ceases to be!** No matter how gifted the members, apart from the **head**, all the members of the body die! **NO MEMBER CAN REPLACE THE HEAD!** No amount of gifts and talent, and no amount of money can replace the **head!** **IN ORDER FOR THE CHURCH TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, THERE MUST BE ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON CHRIST!**

The **head** is the telegraph room of the body. Signals are sent from my head to my arms, legs, feet, hands, fingers, etc., **my head controls my body!** **IN ORDER TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, WE MUST RECEIVE DIRECTION FROM OUR HEAD!** If communication is stopped between the **head** and the **members** of the body, that member becomes **paralyzed!** That member can become **useless** to the body! That member can become **cumbersome** to the body! **It is the responsibility of each member to stay in communication with the head, so that you do not become paralyzed spiritually!** If a member of my body becomes paralyzed it does not react, it does not respond! In order for the church to be what people need **it is imperative that each member stay in communication with the head!** The sure way of **BEING THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED** is for all the membership to stay in communication with Jesus Christ!

Again, WE DON'T WANT TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE WANT, because **what people want is contrary to the Word of God!** We want to be here when Jesus comes, and we want to BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED when Jesus comes!

"Will our membership grow?"

It might!

"Will our membership be less?"

It might be! But our **business is to do what God has told us to do, and leave all the rest with God!** Many times people look at a church that is declining in attendance and assume or say,

"it is a dying church"

But that may not be so at all! But I will tell you this, **if a church is growing in number because man is doing the adding rather than God, THAT IS A DYING CHURCH!** For those who are self-added, or added by any other means than God, it does not matter how much they have to offer, or how much money they give, **it will not make up for all the ways they get in the way of the Lord's work!** We do not ask people to join themselves, nor do we try to get them to join, but we ought to pray that **God would add as He sees fit!** A GOD-ADDED, GOD-PLACED, GOD-POSITIONED, GOD-SITUATED MEMBERSHIP IS CRUCIAL! So it is not about "church shopping". IT IS ABOUT BEING ADDED AND SET BY THE LORD! It is not about our plans and our devisings, IT IS ABOUT BEING ADDED AND SET BY THE LORD! It is not about where the work is, or where the money is, or where the opportunity is, or school, or about where the job transfer is, IT IS ABOUT BEING ADDED AND SET BY THE LORD! It is not about climate or family, IT IS ABOUT BEING ADDED AND SET BY THE LORD! A **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, and God-situated church membership, THERE ARE NOT MANY WHO BELIEVE AND PRACTICE THIS TODAY IN THE LORD'S CHURCHES!** Those whom the Lord adds are truly additions and not subtractions! Those who add themselves or added by others are not additions but subtractions! The Lord's churches ought to be places of worship, and they ought to be evangelistic, and holy, loving, and praying, and those who are **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, and God-situated** will be an addition to these matters and not an encumbrance!

Oh, how thankful and appreciative we ought to be for the Lord's churches and how thankful we ought to be **that the Lord saw fit in His grace to add us to one of His churches!** In doing so, He has given us a proper church that is home! A place of warmth, tenderness, love, commitment, and a place where I belong! The church that the Lord has added you to, IS A SPECIAL PLACE! So special THAT THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE IT! So special, **that there is no better place for you!** No better place for you to serve the Lord! No better place for you to raise your family! If you are in the place where the Lord has added you, **determine in your heart and mind that nothing is going to move you from that place except the Lord!** How wonderful it is to know that you have been added to one of the Lord's churches! Oh, what a difference it makes just to know,

"This is where I belong because this is where God placed me"

THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE THAN WHERE YOU BELONG! **And if God added you to church that is where you belong!** I am glad that the Lord still adds to His churches, may we always be mindful of such, and leave the Lord's business with Him! Again, we don't want to be **the church that people want**, because what they want is contrary to the Word of God! We want to be **the church that people need!** And A GOD-ADDED, GOD-PLACED, GOD-POSITIONED, AND GOD-SITUATED MEMBERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCH!

3. A GOD PLACED PASTORATE

ACTS 20:28; EPHISIANS 4:11-16

We have seen thus far that if the Lord's churches are going to continue to be what people need, it is **imperative that they maintain a proper focus!** THE FOCUS MUST NEVER BE UPON BEING LOVED AND ACCEPTED BY THE WORLD! When such becomes the focus, churches will attempt to appease the world, and in their attempt to appease the world, **they will adjust their ways accordingly!** This means an adding to and subtracting from the Word of God! The result being, THE CHURCH BECOMES THE WORLD! THE CHURCH BECOMES WHAT PEOPLE WANT AND **CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED!** The focus must always remain the same; DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY! **That must always be the focus!** Again, our focus is foundational! If the focus is upon being loved, accepted, and desired by the world, everything changes, and everything about the church changes!

We have also seen that in order to be THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, we must not lose sight of a **God-added church membership!** And again this is vitally connected with being focused upon the right things! We lose sight of a **God-added membership** when the focus becomes being loved, accepted, and desired by the world. When that happens, the goal concerning church membership changes, and now it becomes a matter of quantity or perceived need! THIS IS DISASTRUS! **When the focus is not right, improper methods are practiced, and there is a lowering of Biblical standards,** and all of this brings about **the church becoming the world, becoming what people want, and CEASING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED!**

And now we want to consider another matter that is absolutely necessary to being THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, and it concerns **the pastorate and pulpit ministry** of the church. The **pastorate** of course is an integral part of being THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED! When the focus shifts from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY, to being loved, accepted, and desired by the world, **everything becomes skewed!** The mission of the church, the approach toward church membership, and the office of pastor, and the pulpit ministry of the church all become distorted, when we lose sight of what it is all about! **When God's people lose sight of what it is all about, you have a mess, and you have something that cannot provide what people truly need!**

I. A GOD-CALLED AND PLACED PASTORATE

A GOD-ADDED, GOD-PLACED, GOD-POSITIONED, GOD-SITUATED MEMBERSHIP AND PASTORATE for that particular membership, this is a wonderful and encouraging truth! The who, when, and where of a **God-placed membership and pastorate** are according to God's purpose, direction, and wisdom, and are a branch of His love, care, and protection of His

churches! A God-placed **membership** and **pastorate** should result in a very special relationship, a special alliance and bond between church and pastor! THIS IS NOT A EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP! The **church** and the **pastor** are meant to love one another, to pray for one another and together, and they are to work and serve the Lord together! This relationship is likened to a **nursing mother with child** in (I Thessalonians 2:7-8), and as a **loving father with his children** in (I John 2:1; 3:18). This God-added **membership** and **pastorate** provide a God-given privilege and opportunity for both church and pastor!

1. God Calls And Enables Men To Preach His Word:

From both the Old and New Testament it is clearly seen that God calls and enables men to preach His Word! In the Old Testament when God wanted to deliver a message to a king or nation, He would call and summon a man (Amos 7:14-15), and give him the message and the ability to declare and make known the message (Jeremiah 1:4-10; Ezekiel 2:1-3:14), and would send them to a particular people at a particular time (II Chronicles 24:19; 36:15-16; Jeremiah 7:25; 35:15; 44:4). These **sent ones from God** are quite different from those not sent (Jeremiah 23:21). From this we see that, the Old Testament prophets were called and summoned by God to preach, were given the message to preach, were gifted and enabled by God to do so, and were sent to a people! WE SEE THIS PATTERN REPEATED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT! God told Ananias in (Acts 9:15), that Paul was;

"a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"

Later, Paul would testify before Agrippa of both his **salvation experience**, and his **call and summons to the ministry** (Acts 26:14-16). Paul would later state to the Colossians that he was made a minister (Colossians 1:23), and in (I Timothy 1:12) that **God put him** (*with purpose and intent*), **into the ministry**! In (I Timothy 1:1), Paul stated that this was; *"by the commandment (authority), of God"*. PAUL WAS MADE A MINISTER BY THE AUTHORITY OF GOD! What the writer of Hebrews said in (5:4) of the office of the Old Testament priest applies to the **God-called preacher**;

"And no man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God"

Not only was Paul made a minister, and put into the ministry by the authority of God, but **God made him able or capable** for the ministry (II Corinthians 3:6), and this (Ephesians 3:7), was;

"according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual (effective) working of His power"

The one who is called and summoned by God to preach is GOD-GIFTED TO DO SO! This capability is never independent of God (II Corinthians 3:5). This one who is called and summoned by God to preach, and gifted to do so has a necessity laid upon him (I Corinthians 9:16), which is indicative of a heavy burden! Notice (Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Malachi

1:1).

"The burden of Nineveh"

"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see"

"The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi"

The one who is **called**, and **summoned** by God to preach, and who has been **gifted** of God to do so is AN **ANOINTED ONE OF GOD!** Being **called**, **summoned**, and **gifted** of God, and with a feeling of **necessity** pressing upon him, he is **willing to let go** of all future **plans**, leave **jobs**, **careers**, **opportunities**, **family**, **houses**, and **lands** to **do what God has summoned him to do**, and to **go wherever God calls him to go!** PREACHING AND OR PASTORING IS NOT A PROFESSION BUT A CALLING! FROM GDD!

2. God Gives Pastors:

A pastor is,

"a man who has been called and summoned by God to preach the Word of God a man who has been gifted with the ability to preach and teach the Word of God, and also gifted and enabled to pastor in the particular body of Christ in which he has been placed by God"

A PASTOR IS **GIVEN BY GOD** TO HIS CHURCHES, **FOR THE PURPOSE OF PASTORING!** And this is for the **benefit** and **good** of His churches! A PASTOR IS **GIVEN BY GOD** TO HIS CHURCHES for the **equipping**, the **edifying**, the **strengthening**, for the **learning**, for the **conforming**, and for the **unity** of the **God-added membership of a body of Christ!** So, God not only calls men to preach, but from those, **He sets some in the office of pastor in His churches!** The **who**, **when**, and **where is as God sees fit!** AND IT IS NEVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE TO BE ANY OTHER WAY! Notice, Paul speaking to the pastors of the church at Ephesus in (**Acts 20:28**) said:

"to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"

And in (**Ephesians 4:11**),

"And he gave some ... pastors"

When the Lord gives a pastor to His churches, HE HAS THE WELL-BEING OF THE CHURCH IN MIND! Such is an act of love on God's part (**Jeremiah 3:15**), and is **done on purpose**, **with a purpose**, and **for a purpose!** NOT ONLY IS THERE A GOD-PLACED MEMBERSHIP, **THERE IS A GOD-PLACED PASTORATE!** The relationship between **Christ** and His **church**, and between **Christ** and the **pastors**, and between the **pastors** and **church** is illustrated in (**Revelation 1-3**). CHRIST STANDS IN THE MIDST OF HIS CHURCHES (**Revelation 1:12-13**), and **He knows each of His churches** (**2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15**). He

knows their current and future weakness, strengths, problems, trials, enemies, battles, and needs! **He looks after the well-being of His churches, and He protects them!** HE KNOWS THE PASTORS THAT THEY NEED, AND HE GIVES THEM WHAT THEY NEED! And **He holds these pastors in His right hand (1:16).** And He does so for the good of His churches, and **He speaks to His churches through these messengers!** When God had a message for these churches of Asia, the message in each case was delivered to the messenger of each respective church, and it was the messenger's responsibility to deliver the message as it was delivered to him (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). From all of this we see **a definite connection between Christ and His churches, between Christ and the pastors, and between the church and the pastor!**

Again, THE LORD GIVES HIS CHURCHES THE PASTORS THAT THEY NEED! And **the pastor that a church needs ought to be the one that they want!** If a church calls the pastor that God would have them to have, that will be the best pastor that that church can possibly have at that time! GOD KNOWS WHAT A CHURCH NEEDS MORE THAN A CHURCH KNOWS WHAT THEY NEED! So the only concern ought to be, and I realize that there are doctrinal concerns, **but all this works together,** the only concern is;

"Who does God want us to have?"

A GOD-**CALLED**, GOD-**PLACED** PASTOR IS ESSENTIAL TO THE CHURCH BEING WHAT PEOPLE NEED! But when a church becomes focused upon being loved, accepted, and desired by the world, and begins to think;

"we want the world to want to come to our church"

It not only has an adverse affect upon how members are received, but it has an adverse affect upon how a church goes about calling a pastor, and also upon how the office of pastor is viewed! We must never lose sight of the truth of a God-placed pastorate! When the Lord's churches lose sight of this wonderful and comforting truth, then when they are seeking a pastor, they will ask others;

"Do you know of someone who is not pastoring that would be interested in coming to our church?"

Churches that get into such a mindset, have **set a limitation,** and **have put themselves in a box of their own making!** May I ask;

"Why can't they be pastoring?"

The common response to such a question is

"Well, we do not want to steal another church's pastor"

IF GOD IS PLACING THEM YOU ARE NOT STEALING THEM !!!

A **God-placed** **pastorate**, what a wonderful truth, but when this is lost sight of, churches will say things like;

"We want someone who is young"

But **what if, God wants you to have somebody that is old?** The response;

"Well they are not going to be around much longer, probably only another two or three years"

Maybe, **that is all God wants you to have them for!** God may want one of His churches to have a certain man for only two months, or He may want them to have a man for 40 years, **BUT THAT IS GOD'S BUSINESS!** When churches lose sight of this blessed truth of a **God-placed** **pastorate**, they begin to say things like;

"We need someone with children"

or

"we need someone who does not have children, because we can't afford to support such"

In light of this wonderful truth of a **God-placed** **pastorate**, the only thing that matters, is **WHO DOES GOD WANT US TO HAVE? WHO DOES GOD HAVE FOR US AT THIS POINT IN TIME?** And **NOTHING ELSE MATTERS!** NOTHING ELSE IS TO COME INTO THE EQUATION! Someone will say, *"well they have to be doctrinally sound and biblically qualified"*. And such is true, and all that is included in A GOD-PLACED PASTORATE! Just as God adds members within the bounds of Scripture, so He places pastors within the bounds of His Word! If you have to go beyond the God-set bounds, then God is not doing the placing!

It is not the responsibility of one church to place a pastor in another church, and it is not the responsibility of one pastor to place a pastor in another church! THIS IS GOD'S BUSINESS, just as it is God's business to place the members in His churches! But when a church begins to lose their focus, it has an adverse affect upon how they go about calling a pastor, causing them to put limitations in place! If a church of the Lord is going to continue to be **THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED**, they must look to and depend upon God to place the man that He has for that particular church! **WHEN A CHURCH FOLLOWS GOD'S WILL IN CALLING A PASTOR, THAT CHURCH WILL HAVE THE BEST PASTOR FOR THEM AT THAT TIME!**

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE PASTORATE TO THE CHURCH

1. The Importance And Seriousness Of The Pastorate Is Seen By The Qualifications For The Office:

The Biblical qualifications are given in **(I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)**. NOWHERE ARE THERE MORE STRICT QUALIFICATIONS, THAN FOR THE MINISTRY! We don't have these kind of qualifications for the presidency of the United States! **These qualifications for the office of pastor are set by the Lord both to protect His church and the ministry!** THE WORD OF GOD ESTABLISHES THE CHARACTER STANDARD FOR THE PREACHER AND PASTOR FOR EVERY ASPECT OF HIS MINISTRY! It is not the business of the church or anyone else to add or subtract from the qualifications that God has set! When a church loses its focus of DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY, **the God set qualifications** begin to be minimized or perhaps added to! And then you begin to hear things like;

"He has such a wonderful personality and he can really bring people in"

But, **is he God qualified? Does he meet the God-set qualifications?** WHEN A CHURCH MINIMIZES OR IGNORES, OR ADDS TO, OR SUBTRACTS FROM THE GOD SET QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY, THEY ARE WELL ON THE ROAD TO BEING RUINED! And CEASING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED! Again, the God-given qualifications are given, AND IT DOES MATTER!

"Blamelessness" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7). The word *"blameless"* comes from the Greek word which means *"not open to censure, above serious reproach"*. BLAMELESSNESS IS NOT SINLESSNESS! A preacher or pastor is not expected to be perfect and without sin, but he should be above reproach in his personal life, his family life, and his public life.

"Not self-willed" (Titus 1:7). He is not to be self-centered or self-involved, or arrogant and domineering.

"The husband of one wife" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). This does not mean that a preacher or pastor must be married, nor is it a prohibition against a second marriage when the first wife is physically dead. The clear meaning is that a pastor is to have one wife, not a succession of wives as the result of divorce. Notice that it does not merely say, *"one wife"* but, *"the husband of one wife"*. HE MUST BE A PROPER HUSBAND, meeting the criteria of **(Ephesians 5:23, 25-29)**.

"Vigilance" (I Timothy 3:2). This has reference to *"self discipline and self control and abstinence from that which is destructive"* and has the same meaning as *"temperance"* in **(Titus 1:8)**.

"Sober" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). This has reference to a *"sound mind"*. One who follows sound reason.

"Good behavior" (I Timothy 3:2). Soundness of mind must be accompanied with a well-ordered life. The phrase **"good behavior"** means that he *is to be "modest" and "mannerly"*. It has reference to outward conduct, speech, and appearance.

"Hospitality" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). The word *"hospitality"* means *"to be generous and cordial, to be receptive to people"*. In (I Timothy 3:2), it is said that he is to be **"given to hospitality"**. He is to be generous, cordial and willing to receive people. In (Titus 1:8) he is to be a **"lover of hospitality"**. He is to appreciate *"hospitality"* in others.

"Apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9). This includes both a love for teaching the Word of God, and the ability to teach the Word of God. This requires knowledge and the ability to impart that knowledge.

"Abstinence from alcohol" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 127).

"Not violent" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). He should be a man of a gentle and forbearing spirit. One who is not easily provoked to anger (II Timothy 2:24-25).

"Not greedy of filthy lucre" (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). A preacher or pastor should not enter or stay in the ministry for gain. He is not to be desirous of any gain gotten through means that are contrary to scripture.

"Patient" (I Timothy 3:3). He must be able to bear insults and injuries.

"Not covetous" (I Timothy 3:3). He is not to be a lover of money or material gain.

"House in order" (I Timothy 3:4-5). This does not mean that his family is perfect, but it does mean that he takes the oversight and responsibility for his family.

"Lover of good men" (Titus 1:8). He must love *"good men"* no matter what their complexion, or rank in life. He is to be appreciative and hold in high esteem those who love and practice the truth.

"Just" (Titus 1:8). He must be honest and righteous in his dealings with others. He must pay his debts and meet his obligations. He must treat all fairly and justly.

"Holy" (Titus 1:8). The word *"holy"* means *"pious, devout, faithful and separated to God"*. Holiness is the habit of being one mind with God.

"Not a novice" (I Timothy 3:6). The word *"novice"* means *"one who is newly planted"*. It does not have reference to one who is young in years, but one who is young in faith. A pastor must be one who is firmly rooted in the truth. He must be thoroughly convinced of the truth. He must be able to rightly divide the Word of God, defending the truth and exposing error.

2. The Importance And Seriousness Of The Pastorate Is Seen By The Purpose For The Office:

The pastorate is an integral part of being THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED! But when the focus and goal is shifted from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS

HONOR AND GLORY, to anything else, sadly, the pastorate becomes an integral part of whatever the focus and goal have become! When the focus and goal is upon being loved, accepted, and desired by the world, and being the church that people want rather than need, sadly, and tragically, **the pastorate then becomes an integral part of being the church that people want!** When the focus and goal is shifted from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY to being loved, accepted, and desired by the world, the view then becomes that it is the pastor's responsibility to make the church and the worship services desirable to an ungodly world, and to appease and entertain the people! **When proper focus is not maintained, the office of pastor ceases to be for the purpose that God intended!** In (Ephesians 4:12) a **threefold purpose** is stated for the office of pastor;

"For the perfecting of the saints"

"for the work of the ministry"

"for the editing of the body of Christ"

These are all **spiritual in nature and center around Christ and the truth!** As you read on in these verses, you will see that this **purpose** is **centered around Christ!** So the pastor is to present **Christ!** This **purpose** is **centered around truth!** Reading through (verses 11-16), you see that part of the purpose of the ministry is **to combat error**, and that we would be

"no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine"

People are to be **established in the truth!** CHRIST AND TRUTH! And THE WORLD WANTS NEITHER! When the focus and goal is shifted from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY, to anything else, CHRIST AND TRUTH ARE COMPROMISED, and **the church becomes the world, AND CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED!**

3. The Importance And Seriousness Of The Pastorate Is Seen In The Duties Of The Office:

Again, the purpose of the office is **spiritual** and the **duties** correspond to such! Many people have their own ideas of what constitutes the duties of the pastor, but the duties are clearly seen by the various titles given to this man in the Word of God. He is referred to as a;

"pastor"

"bishop"

"elder"

"steward"

"minister"

And all of these titles help illustrate the **nature, purpose, and duties** of the office. The one title that sums up the responsibilities of the office more than all the rest is that term "**pastor**" which conveys the idea of a "**shepherd**". The duties of a "**shepherd**" are to **lead**, to **feed**, and to **protect**, and all the duties of the "**pastor**" can be summarized under these three headings.

For the church to be what people need, the "**pastor**" must be allowed, and he must **carry out the duties of the office for the spiritual well-being of the church!** For the church to be what people need, the "**pastor**" is to **lead in paths of righteousness**, and in the **ways of God!** He must **not give the wolves opportunity to harm the flock!** He must be determined not to give the church over to the devil and his crowd! He must be determined not to give the church over to the flesh-pleasers, and the spiritually-dysfunctional! **HE MUST PROTECT THE CHURCH BY GUARDING THE PULPIT!** He does not invite anyone to preach that is going to **harm** or **undermine** in any way the truth! **HE MUST FIGHT MANY BATTLES!** Most of those battles are fought behind the scenes, so that they never have to come into the church! A church usually quickly realizes this when they are without a pastor, how many battles that the pastor was fighting, and how many battles that he kept from ever coming into the church! This **God-called, God-placed** man **must preach the Word of God!** Notice, (I Timothy 4:6-7, 10-13, 15, 16),

"put the brethren in remembrance of these things"

He is to **remind them by preaching and teaching** the Word of God! The devil and the world work hard to get these things out of the minds of people. This **God-called, God-placed** pastor is there to **remind** people! He is also there to provide a foundation of truth!

"nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine"

This **God-called, God-placed** pastor is there to;

"be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"

And he is there to;

"give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"

He is to be grounded in the Word that he is to preach, and he is to;

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them ... Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them"

In doing this, he saves his own life, and he saves the lives of those in the church;

"thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"

In (II Timothy 2:15), this **God-called, God-placed** pastor is to;

"Study ... rightly dividing the word of truth"

And in (II Timothy 4:2-5), this **God-called, God-placed** pastor is to;

"Preach the word"

The pastors that churches need have been **God-called, God-placed** and HE IS DUTY BOUND to *"preach the word"* every Sunday, every Wednesday, and every time the church assembles! He is to do this;

"in season, out of season"

He is to *"preach the word"* when the people want it, and when they don't want it! He is to *"preach the word"* when it is popular and when it is unpopular! He is to;

"reprove, rebuke, exhort with all lord suffering and doctrine"

And someone will say;

"We need a pastor that is going to encourage us and to make us and our visitors feel good about themselves"

But do you not see, **if you will submit to the reproof, the rebuke, and the exhortation** you will be encouraged! The reason that a lot of people are not encouraged is because they do not receive what God has for them! But this **God-called, God-placed** pastor is to **keep on preaching and leading by the word of God**, because it is what the Holy Spirit uses to humble, to guide, to direct, enlighten His people in the will and ways of God! It is what He uses to correct error, and to give warning! It is what He uses to give hope, comfort, and assurance! It is what He uses to exhort people to move forward, and to mark and measure where we are! IT IS WHAT PEOPLE NEED! The Word of God is to be preached plainly, exactly, and directly, with seriousness, and sincerity, with order and consistency, with fervor and enthusiasm, with conviction and boldness, and responsively, and with compassion, and a burden for souls! When focus is shifted from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS, GOD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY, to being **loved, accented, and desired by the world**, then there is a felt need, that the pastor not come on too strong, and that he stay away from that which may be controversial! When this focus is shifted then people begin to be fearful that the pastor might preach something that is going to drive people away, when they ought to be praying;

"Lord give him the message that everybody here needs, and give him the ability and courage to preach that message"

It is a terribly sad commentary when a pastor is asked;

"What are you going to preach next Sunday because I plan on inviting someone"

Such reveals that the focus is all wrong! In order for the church to **be what people need**, the pastor must carry on with **holiness** and **purity** of life, with spiritual **maturity**, **wisdom**, **knowledge**, **discretion**, **compassion**, **love**, **care**, and with much **prayer**! In order for the church to **be what people need**, the pastor must be a man of **firmness**, **courage**, **steadfastness**, **diligence**, **resolve**, **consistency**, **strength**, **desire**, and **perseverance**! HE MUST NOT BE SWAYED by the enemies of God! HE MUST NOT BE DETERRED by the problems, by the trials, and difficulties, and frustrations along the way, by the mood swings of the people, by the criticism, by the accusations, by the suggestions, and opinions, by the treatment from others (favorable or unfavorable), by the doubts, by the murmuring, and by the constant scrutinization. THE MINISTRY MUST BE HIS LIFE! In and through it all he **must stay close to the Lord**, and **keep his heart in a proper condition**, and **be constrained by the Holy Spirit**! This is an **integral part of being THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED!**

4. The Importance Of The Pastorate Is To Be Recognized By The Church:

A **GOD-PLACED PASTORATE IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO HIS CHURCH!** It must be realized that the pastor is the special object of Satan's hatred, malice, and attacks! Satan seeks to discourage, to depress, and to distract the pastor more than any other member of the church! Be sure of this, **SATAN IS AFTER YOUR PASTOR!** He is out to deter him in any way that he can from his God-given duties! All the members of a body of Christ have hurts, and wounds, and frustrations, and sorrows, and loneliness, and disappointments, and trials, and burdens, and heartaches, and though these are common among the membership of the Lord's churches, these are characteristics of the pastoral ministry! These things are always there, and the pastor, who ever he is, no matter how strong he is, and no matter how close to God he is, he is flesh! As a man he has fleshly weakness, he has shortcomings, he has flaws, he has limitations in ability, he has frustrations, he has discouragements, he has physical and emotional needs, he has fears, he has feelings, and inward battles and struggles! Seeing these things in the **God-called, God-placed** pastor should not be viewed as opportunities to attack, scrutinize, and criticize, but as **an opportunity to pray!** YOUR PASTOR STANDS IN SPECIAL NEED OF HELP AND PRAYER! Your pastor is in a position that attracts the critics, and those who scrutinize for the purpose of criticizing! In the church, no one is more criticized and second-guessed than the pastor! No one has more false accusations cast their way, and no one has more hurtful things said to him or done to him than the pastor! THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH SHOULD BE **A TEAM OF INTERCESSORS FOR THEIR PASTOR!** He is in a position that requires that he always be prepared, and that he have extraordinary wisdom, patience, forbearance, faithfulness, strength, persistence, conviction, steadfastness, courage, boldness, tenderness, sternness, compassion, desire, resolve, earnestness, and passion, and THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH SHOULD BE **A TEAM OF INTERCESSORS FOR THEIR PASTOR!** He is in a position where he is expected to be all things to all people at all times! He is expected to say and to have the answers for what people need at all times! He holds a position that requires that which is beyond human strength, capabilities, and wisdom, and THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH SHOULD BE **A TEAM OF INTERCESSORS FOR THEIR PASTOR!** Whatever happens on a given day, the pastor must rise above it! He is in a position that requires a close and intimate walk with the Lord at all times! Pray for his **spiritual health!** Pray for **spiritual refreshing** in his life! Pray for his **study and preparation!** Pray that **God would enlighten**

him! Pray that he will know **the will of God!** Pray for his **protection!** Pray for his **rest!** Pray concerning his **burdens!** Pray concerning his **preaching!** Again, THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH SHOULD BE A **TEAM OF INTERCESSORS FOR THEIR PASTOR!** Fervent **prayer** for, and diligent **protection** of the pastoral ministry **is an integral part of being A CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED!** A **God-called, God-placed** pastorate cannot be neglected by pastor or church if A CHURCH IS GOING TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED! **It is imperative that both pastor and church realize the importance, and be faithfully committed to a God-called, God-placed pastorate!**

4. MAINTAINING A PROPER DISTINCTION

I TIMOTHY 3:15

In this day of "*seeker friendly*" and "*seeker sensitive churches*"; when the emphasis is upon **giving people what they want, and what is pleasing to their flesh, and in line with their perceived needs, and in line with their twisted notions of God**; there is an ever-present and ever-increasing danger of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ falling prey to such thinking! This thinking to some degree has already made its way into most of the Lord's churches! But we need to realize that the entire

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive church movement"

is **built upon the foundation of a false premise**:

"Making church more attractive to unbelievers, thereby becoming popular and desired by the world, in order to get people to come to Christ"

POPULARITY IS NOT WHAT GETS PEOPLE TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY SAVINGLY BELIEVE!

The entire "*seeker friendly*" and "*seeker sensitive church movement*" is **built upon a wrong motive**:

"attract and lure a crowd"

The entire "*seeker friendly*" and "*seeker sensitive church movement*" is **built upon a wrong focus**:

"the focus being upon the "seeker " rather than God"

As a result of a **false premise**, a **wrong motive**, and a **wrong focus**, the

"seekers friendly, seeker sensitive church movement"

has resulted in the establishment of so called "*churches*" which are nothing more than places of entertainment, and social gatherings! These so-called "*churches*" are merely entertainment and social replacements for real worship! These so-called "*churches*" are **built upon the sand of demographic studies and marketing research rather than the sure foundation of God's Word!** They are founded upon **corporation marketing strategies** and **pop psychology concepts** that are known to be successful in attracting and luring large numbers of people! In fact, the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive church movement"

has many parallels to that of major corporations in their attempt to appeal to potential consumers! The

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive church movement"

seeks to attract and lure the

"unchurched and those who have been turned off by truth and traditional worship services"

This is done by incorporating the proven consumer oriented concepts and methods of the world in order to make the church more attractive and appealing to the ungodly, thus creating an environment where the so-called "seeker" has their emotional and felt needs met, and is comfortable, and where nothing threatens to rock their present belief system!

Think about it;

*"the **unchurched** and those who have been turned off by truth and traditional worship services"*

Appealing to these, and being accepted of these, and making these feel comfortable is the goal of the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive church movement"

How do you do this? You incorporate the proven consumer oriented concepts and methods of an **ungodly world!** You incorporate these things in order to make worship more appealing and acceptable to **people who do not want to worship!** This is the concept of the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive movement"

THIS IS ABSOLUTE INSANITY, to rearrange church to be more appealing and attractive to those who have been turned off by church and truth! Why would you want to make the church more attractive and appealing to the **ungodly** and those who **are turned off by truth?** However the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive movement"

is not what threatens the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ! The threat is, that the **faulty premise**, the **wrong motive**, and the **wrong focus** upon which such a movement is built, that it **MAKES INROADS INTO THE LORD'S CHURCHES!** The danger to the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ is that they adopt and fall prey to the same mindset of the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive movement"

shifting their focus from DOING GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY to being loved, accepted, and desired by the world! The danger is that the faulty, compromising, unbiblical, God-displeasing mindset of the

"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive movement"

The danger is that such a mindset **makes inroads into the Lord's churches**, resulting in an adding to and a taking away from the Word of God, and **the church becoming the world**, and **ceasing to be what people need!** There was a time when worldliness was viewed as a sin, but the *"seeker friendly, seeker sensitive movement"* views it as a means of reaching people! But, WHEN A CHURCH BECOMES THE WORLD, THEY BECOME WHAT THE WORLD WANTS, AND CEASE TO BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS! The result is *"Cultural Christianity"*, **the pursuit of the God that people want rather than the God who is!** In order to continue to be THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, **we must not lose sight of its distinction!**

I. THE CHURCHES OF THE LORD ARE DISTINCT

1. What Is Meant By The Church Being Distinct:

The Lord established His church to be separate (*fenced off*), independent, different, and detached from the ways of the world. The Lord's churches are SET APART BY THE LORD HIMSELF from the policies, the philosophies, the reasonings, the manners, the values, the loyalties, the goals, the pursuits, and the ways of both the religious and secular world! Christ speaking to the apostles (*the first church*) said in **(John 15:19)**,

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"

This distinction even included the so-called *"religious world"*. Reading through the Gospels, it is very apparent that Jesus Christ was at odds with the *"religious establishment, the mainstream"* of His day. Speaking to them in **(Matthew 23:33)**, He said;

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

CHRIST HAD A CONFLICT WITH THE MAINSTREAM RELIGION OF HIS DAY! There was A MARKED DISTINCTION! The mainstream religion of our day bears the same wicked characteristics that Jesus so vigorously condemned in His day! All through the New Testament it is plainly taught and illustrated that there is to be a clear, well-defined, unmistakable, and recognizable difference between the Lord's churches and the religious world! IN ORDER TO BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED, THIS DISTINCTION MUST BE REALIZED AND MAINTAINED! All through the Word of God there is a distinction to be maintained **(Leviticus 10:10; 11:47; Jeremiah 15:19; Malachi 3:18)**. Wherever the Lord sows wheat, Satan sows tares. Wherever the Lord gathers sheep, Satan herds his goats, and wherever there is

grain in the field, there will be some chaff, and wherever God plants truth, Satan will seek to sow the seeds of error! God in His wisdom has ordained it to be so, but GOD-ORDAINED DISTINCTIONS **MUST NOT BE BLURRED!** Because there are some tares, and some goats, and some chaff, the GOD-ORDAINED DISTINCTIONS CAN BECOME BLURRED! And **the Lord's churches must maintain distinction!**

2. The Description Of The Church Manifests A Clear-Cut Distinction

In (I Timothy 3:15), the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as;

"the house of God"

This immediately implies a **distinction!** The distinction is that it is God's, and that it is a spiritual house (I Peter 2:5), not a materialistic house. As such it is referred to in (Galatians 6:10) as the;

"household of faith"

and in (Ephesians 2:19) as;

"the household of God"

In all of this we see that IT IS HIS HOUSE! It is the house that He **builds**, and that He **bought**, and for which He **provides**, and **protects**, and in which He **dwells!** THAT MAKES IT DISTINCT FROM ALL OTHERS!

"Why would we want to blur that distinction?"

The *"household"* is made up of a family, within that family is the Master of the *"household"* there are spiritual adults, children, and babes, and there are the stewards! The *"house of God"* is NEVER TO BECOME THE WORLD, BUT A DISTINCTION IS TO BE MAINTAINED! Again, IT IS GOD'S HOUSE, and **it is never to be turned into the world! It is never to be anything but "the house of God"**. When the Lord's church becomes the world, THEY LOSE THEIR GOD-GIVEN DISTINCTION AND CEASE TO BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS!

Also in (I Timothy 3:15), the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as;

"the church (called out assembly), of the living God"

An assembly must assemble, a congregation must congregate, and this is

"the church (assembly, or congregation), of the living God"

And such is NOT TO BECOME THE WORLD, BUT A DISTINCTION IS TO BE MAINTAINED! In these two descriptions;

"the house of God"

"the church of the living God"

it is plainly declared that **such is God's!** IT IS HIS! IT BELONGS TO HIM! HE IS THE OWNER! In (**Matthew 16:18**), Jesus referred to it as;

"my church"

It is not **mine!** It is not **yours!** It is not **ours!** IT IS THE **LORD'S CHURCH!** He chose it! He bought it! He owns it! IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL OTHERS! And **if the church is to be what people need**, THAT DISTINCTION MUST BE MAINTAINED! When we get to thinking that it's ours, then we begin to think we have some liberties! But if we keep focused that it is not **mine, yours, or ours**, but **HIS**, WE ARE NOT AT LIBERTY TO DO JUST AS WE PLEASE! Again, IT IS HIS, IT BELONGS TO HIM! It is distinguished from all others, and if we are going to be what the world needs, **that distinction must be maintained!**

Also in (**I Timothy 3:15**), the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as;

"the pillar and ground of truth"

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one He established during His earthly ministry, the one He called *"my church"* and what is called, *"the house of God"* and *"the church of the living God"* is;

"the pillar and ground of truth"

The *"pillar"* is that which upholds, maintains, and sets forth the *"truth"*. The *"ground"* is the source, the bulwark of *"truth"*. GOD HAS DEPOSITED TRUTH IN HIS CHURCHES! This *"truth"* is a mark of distinction, a mark of separation, and difference, a mark of contrast, a dividing line, and **if the church is to be what people need**, THAT DISTINCTION MUST BE MAINTAINED! Don't ever apologize for believing or holding to the truth! IT IS A MARK OF CONTRAST! IT IS A DIVIDING LINE!

Someone may ask,

"Where do we draw the line?"

TRUTH IS THE LINE! You don't have to draw a line, the line is already drawn! And TRUTH IS THE LINE! And if a church is to be what people need, that distinction of truth must be maintained! So these descriptions of the Lord's churches reveal the purpose and the responsibility of the church! In these verses we see *"God"* we see, *"church"* and we see *"truth"*; and there is a relationship and connection between them! This reveals that the Lord's churches are very specific, distinct, peculiar, noteworthy, useful, and remarkable! In these references to the Lord's church, we see that it is defined, it is recognizable, it is identifiable, it is

visible, it is functional, and it is of extreme importance! **"God"** and **"truth"**. THAT IS OUR PURPOSE!

II. TRUTH IS A MARK OF DISTINCTION

In this day of *"seeker sensitive churches"* innovation and programs are viewed to be more important than truth! But **innovation and programs are never more important than truth!** THE WORLD DOES NOT NEED INNOVATION OR PROGRAMS, THE WORLD NEEDS TRUTH! And if we are going to be the church that people need, **truth must be maintained!** Truth is the same in every place, in every time, in every circumstance, and for all people! It is unwavering, unshakable, guaranteed and absolutely reliable! Though many today have bought into the lie of Satan that truth is relative and subjective (*truth depends upon situations, people, and cultures*), and that truth is ambiguous (*doubtful and uncertain*). The Word of God boldly declares and teaches that **truth is not relative, it is not subjective, and it is not ambiguous, BUT IT IS ABSOLUTE!** It is distinctly black and white with no shades of gray! THERE MUST NOT BE A FADE TO GRAY!

And eventually NO LINE AT ALL! It is THIS FADE TO GRAY that will result in **the Lord's churches ceasing to be what people need, becoming what they want!** It is THIS FADE TO GRAY that causes the ungodly, and those who are turned off by truth, and traditional worship to feel comfortable! It is THE FADING TO GRAY, that results in THE CHURCH BECOMING THE WORLD! And when that happens **they lose their God-given distinction, AND CEASE TO BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS!** Truth is a definite and certain line!

DO NOT BLUR THE LINES! Truth must have a standard, something has to determine what is true and what is not!

"So what is the standard for truth?"

GOD IS TRUTH! We read in (**Psalm 31:5**),

"O LORD God of truth"

JESUS CHRIST IS TRUTH! Hear Him say in (**John 14:6; 18:37**),

"I am the way, the truth and the life"

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hearth My voice"

The HOLY SPIRIT IS TRUTH! In (John 14:17), He is the

"Spirit of truth"

And as as such **He guides into truth** (John 16:13).

THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUTH! In (Psalm 119:142; John 17:17),

"Thy word is truth"

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS ARE TRUTH! In (Psalm 119:151),

"all Thy commandments are truth"

From all of this we see that whatever is contrary to **God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit** is not truth! Whatever is contrary to the **Word of God, the law of God, and the commandments of God** is not truth! AND IF IT IS NOT TRUTH THEN IT IS ERROR! From all of this we learn that the **standard** for truth is not man's opinion! The **standard** for truth is not man's reasonings! The **standard** for truth is not man's traditions! The **standard** for truth is not man's philosophies! Institutions of learning do not determine truth! Politicians do not determine truth! Preachers and religious institutions do not determine truth! Hollywood and the entertainment industry do not determine truth! Institutions of learning do not determine truth! Academia does not determine truth! Religious institutions do not determine truth! Culture does not determine truth! **GOD IS THE DECLARATION OF TRUTH!** And **He has drawn very distinct and unmistakable lines between truth and error, between right and wrong!**

And it is **NEVER** our responsibility to make truth acceptable! Our responsibility is to sound out the truth, to declare and proclaim it, and to live it! **THIS IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TRUTH!** **To be loved and accepted is not the goal!** The truth of God is absolute, fixed, immovable, unchangeable, unaffected, and inflexible! It is certain, constant, and firm! **THE LORD'S CHURCHES ARE TO STAND FOR TRUTH AND PROCLAIM TRUTH!** The main avenue through which this is done is **the preaching of the Word of God!** The **importance and significance of preaching** is seen by the place given to it throughout the Scripture. John the Baptist preached (Mark 1:7), and Christ preached (Mark 1:38-39; 2:2), and when Christ organized His church, He gave them this mandate (Mark 16:15),

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"

He told them in (Matthew 10:7),

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand"

And in **(Matthew 10:27)**,

"What I (Jesus) tell thee in darkness (secret) that speak ye in the light (open) and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (boldly and unashamedly).

Following Christ's command to His church to preach; we read in **(Mark 16:20)**,

"They went forth and preached"

All through the book of **Acts** which is called ***"The Acts (the steps, the measures, and the conduct) Of The Apostles" (church)***, we find them preaching! When the **church at Antioch** sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, **they preached everywhere they went (Acts 13:5; 14:6-7, 20, 21, 25)**. Paul preached to the educated ones at Mars Hill **(Acts 17:18)**, and would later instruct young Timothy **(II Timothy 4:2)**;

"Preach the word"

PREACHING WAS AND IS THE CENTRAL TASK, AND THE CORE AND NUCLEUS OF BIBLICAL MINISTRY, AND MUST NEVER BECOME SECONDARY! Preaching is not *"give and take dialogue"* nor is it *"the forming of and leading a discussion group"*. Preaching is,

"a God-called, God-appointed God-gifted, God-sent herald, declaring the message of God to a people"

The church is to ***"preach the Word"*** because it is **God's method of making known His mind! God expresses, reveals, and makes known Himself in His Word!** The church is to ***"Preach the word"*** because **God expresses, reveals, and makes known His will, and what pleases Him, and what is right, and what is best and most advantageous to us in His Word!** The church is to ***"Preach the word"*** because it is **authoritative, infallible, inerrant, sufficient, and effective!** The church is to ***"Preach the word"*** because it is **a source of assurance, happiness, victory, and hope!** The church is to ***"Preach the word"*** because the **answer, the solution, the remedy, and the cure** for that which is futile, useless, hollow, and hopeless is in the message of His **Word!** The church is to ***"Preach the word"*** because **it is the preaching of the Word that God uses to save sinners!** It is what God uses to encourage His people in His service! The preaching of the word is what God uses to strengthen the faith, the resolve, and the inner man of His people! The preaching of the word is what God uses to comfort hearts that are hurting, and to heal the spiritually diseased! The preaching of the word is what God uses to revive sluggish hearts, and to impart zeal in God's service! The preaching of the word is what God uses to convict hearts of that which is contrary to the Lord! He uses the preached word to humble the hearts of the proud, to guide, direct, and enlighten His people of His will and ways! He uses the preached word to correct error, and to protect and to warn His people of dangers and pitfalls along the way! He uses the preached word to give hope and assurance, and to help His people to move forward spiritually, and to mark and measure where they are! The preaching of the word is

what God uses not only to save souls, but to save lives! The preaching of God's Word should be done plainly, exactly and directly, with seriousness and sincerity, with fervor and enthusiasm, with conviction and boldness, and with compassion and a burden for souls! THE PREACHING OF GOD'S WORD MUST NEVER BECOME SECNDARY, OR ADIUSTED FOR THE SAKE OF PEOPLE! But when the mindset is,

"we want the world to love, accept, and desire us, and to come"

When that becomes the mindset, truth will be viewed differently! As soon as the mindset is,

"we want those that are turned off by truth to love us"

As soon as you adopt that mindset, you have begun to view truth differently than you did before! AND THAT IS A DANGEROUS ROAD! Once you begin to view truth differently, the fearlessness, the courage, the steadfastness, the determination for truth begins to waver! And then the thought process becomes,

"well this person was offended by this truth, so how can we word and phrase it differently so they won't get so angry"

Truth is not to be preached in an offensive or crude way, and it is not to be preached with the purpose of offending, BUT TRUTH MUST NOT BE ALTERED!

Now, if you are working on a contract concerning something and you want to make some alterations and adjustments, do a little tweaking, a little modifying, go right ahead! But when it comes to God's Word, we are not to modify, tweak, alter, or adjust! Someone may say, "Well, If we don't make some adjustments, people are not going to come". THAT'S NOT OUR BUSINESS! THAT IS GOD'S BUSINESS! And we need to keep our businesses straight!

Again, TRUTH IS A DISTINCTIVE MARK OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES! It is what the Lord's churches are to contend for (**Jude 3**),

"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"

THIS IS OUR OBLIGATION! The words, "*earnestly contend*" are indicative of intensity and conviction! It also implies that there is a battle going on! The responsibility and the distinctive mark of the Lord's churches is truth, and such must be maintained and held on to! Someone says, "well, we just want to get along with everybody". TRUTH AND ERROR CAN'T GET ALONG! The very fact that we are to;

"earnestly contend"

implies that there is an enemy, an opposing force! Not everybody is going to love the truth, or even want to hear the truth, and many are going to oppose it! "*What do we do in those times?*"

"Do we make adjustments?" "Do we issue an apology?" NO! We are to **"earnestly contend"**. Enemies to truth are relentless, and THE LORD'S CHURCHES CAN NOT AFFORD NOT TO BE DETERMINED IN THEIR CONTENTION FOR THE TRUTH! So in the midst of all the filth, the vileness, the wickedness, the ungodliness, the abomination, the blasphemy, and the heresy, we must;

"earnestly contend for the faith"

"How do we do that?"

We do that by standing for the truth, by cleaving to the truth, by proclaiming the truth, and by living the truth! But when the goal is to make the ungodly feel comfortable, satisfied, and happy, **truth is no longer contended for**, but rather adjusted and tweaked, and when that happens **the church loses its distinction**, and CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED, AND BECOMES WHAT PEOPLE WANT!

In this day when so many are hoping that the pastor's message does not offend the visitors, they ought to be praying that the Lord would take the truth to their souls! And that is how we continue to **be the church that people need!** But when the concern is, their comfort, their satisfaction, their happiness, we begin to some degree to set truth to the side! And when that happens,

"Where does it stop?"

Again, it is not the *"seeker sensitive churches"* that threatens our existence! What threatens our existence is that we develop the mindset of *"the seeker sensitive movement"*. THE LORD'S CHURCHES MUST MAINTAIN THEIR DISTINCTION! We have to protect our hearts, our minds from falling prey to an ungodly, compromising, unbiblical mindset!

III. CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

In this day of giving people what they want, what is pleasing to their flesh, what is in line with their perceived needs, what is in line with their notions of God, and presenting a message that is non-threatening to their present belief system, in other words, making everybody feel comfortable! OUR DUTY IS NOT TO MAKE TRUTH ACCEPTABLE, BUT TO DECLARE IT! That is our responsibility! And if we are going to maintain our God-given distinction, **we must at all times PROCLAIM THE TRUTH**, making no alterations whatsoever! Again, if the focus is upon pleasing man, the message will have to be altered! And when you begin to do that, you are on the way to **ceasing to be what people need!** If **the message of the church ceases to be what people need**, then THE CHURCH CEASES TO BE WHAT PEOPLE NEED!

In **(John 6)**, we see **Christ as our example in these things!** Notice **(verses 60-69)**. Leading up to these verses, there was the miraculous feeding of well over 5000 people with five loaves and two small fishes. We read in **(verse 14)**, that those who had witnessed and experienced the miracle were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. And from **(verse 15)**, that it was their desire

to make Him their king! This vast multitude is seeking Christ! And the mindset of the whole "seeker sensitive movement" is that we have to appeal to the seeker! And here we have a multitude seeking Christ! And,

"what did Christ do?"

Beginning with (verse 26), Jesus begins to preach a message unto them! The question must be asked,

"Did Jesus alter the message since these were seekers, or did Jesus just simply preach the truth?"

The fact that they are called "**disciples**" does not mean that they were saved individuals, but that they were seeking Christ. When they came to Christ they heard something that they were not accustomed to hearing, and they heard something that they did not expect to hear!

1. The Reaction Of The People To Christ's Message:

In (verse 60), we see their reaction to the message of Christ;

"This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

The message that Christ declared was difficult, and quite puzzling, and exhausting to their flesh! They thought it to be very harsh, stem, demanding, unpleasant, uncomfortable, and distressing! They found the message of Christ to be intolerable! Jesus could see how that the people were receiving the message! He could see the distress that they were in in hearing the message!

"Did Jesus at any time alter the message to make it acceptable to them?"

No! HE JUST CONTINUED TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH! We see from (verse 61), that the reaction of the people was one of murmuring and grumbling!

"murmured at it"

Jesus preached, and they began to complain about what He preached! THEY WERE NOT HAPPY! It seems that Jesus has not gotten with the program of the "seeker sensitive movement". These people were not happy, they were not comfortable, and they were not satisfied! THE MESSAGE WAS NOT TO THEIR LIKING! It was unappealing and distasteful to them! But *again*,

"Did Jesus at any time alter the message in an attempt to make it more appealing?"

Also in (verse 61), Jesus asked them,

"Doth this offend you?"

They were insulted by the message of Christ! They felt that they had been wronged by the truth that Jesus presented!

"Did Jesus say I am sorry I did not mean to offend you, or make you feel uncomfortable?"

"Did Jesus try to alter His message to make it more appealing to the multitude?"

In (verse 66), THE PEOPLE WITHDREW! Notice they;

"went back, and walked no more with Him"

THEY DID NOT JUST GO AWAY, THEY STAYED AWAY! They were offended, and being offended they withdrew! They found the message so difficult, so unbearable, so distasteful, so unappealing, so insulting that THEY LEFT!

2. To What Did They React This Way:

Their reaction was to the message that Jesus delivered! It was simply what Jesus said! Now if a preacher today had thousands of people that he was preaching to, and no doubt there were thousands here, and by the time he got done preaching there were only twelve left, more than likely that preacher would be dismissed from the church where he pastors! He would be an utter failure in the minds of most! And that is why, again, it is not the *"seeker sensitive movement"* that places the Lord's church in danger, it is the thought process of *the "seeker sensitive movement"*.

"What did Jesus preach that caused such a strong reaction?"

- **He Spoke Of Their Ulterior Motives (verse 26).**
- **He Stressed The Spiritual Over The Material (verse 27).**
- **He Preached And Taught Concerning Himself:**

He said in (verse 27), *"the Son of man shall give unto you, for Him hath God the Father sealed"*. And in (verse 29), He proclaims that **He was sent of God!** In (verse 32), He stresses **God the Father superior to Moses**, and in (verse 35), He declares that **He is the bread that the manna typified!** In (verse 48), He declares, *"I am the bread of life"*. And in (verse 51), *"I am the living bread which came down from Heaven"* IT WAS A MESSAGE ABOUT CHRIST! It was a message that CHRIST WAS WHAT THEY NEEDED!

- **He Preached The Sovereignty Of God And The Inability Of Sinful Man:**

Notice (verses 37-44, 63, 65). He preached not only that man needs to be saved, but He preached that man is spiritually dead and corrupt, in the gutter of His depravity, and cannot save

Himself! He put God on the throne in His preaching, and He took the crown off of sinful man and put it upon the head of God! And they found such to be unbearable, painful, distasteful, and unappealing! They were insulted, and outraged, they felt resentment, and THEY LEFT!

- **He Left No Room For Their Own Beliefs:**

He preached in very certain terms, leaving no room for personal opinion!

- **He Preached That Salvation Was Only In And Through Christ:**

Notice (verses 47, 49, 51, 53). HE LEFT NO ROOM OUTSIDE OF CHRIST!

- **He Preached And Taught Total Commitment Of Those Who Knew Christ:**

Notice (verse 57). HE PREACHED COMMITMENT! This is not what people want to hear today! It is a very unappealing message!

3. Why Did They React The Way That They Did:

They deserted Christ! They relinquished all attendance upon His ministry! They disowned all attachment to His Person! They threw off all His authority! They not only disregarded His teaching, they disregarded Him!

"Why did they react this way?"

- **They Had A Wrong Perception Of Christ:**

In (verse 15), they desired to take Him by force and make Him a king to their liking! In other words, **they had the idea that they could do with Jesus as they pleased!** They thought that **they could fit Him into their own little box and into their plans!** And as Jesus preached, they saw that He did not fit into their twisted perception, He was not somebody that they could control, shape and mold, and THEY LEFT!

- **They Had A Wrong Motive For Seeking:**

Notice (verse 26). THEY WERE BLIND TO THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST! The only thing that they saw was, *"this man fed us"*. The only thing they saw was temporal! In other words, **they were there to get something to satisfy their flesh!** And when Jesus did not satisfy their flesh, THEY WERE OFFENDED! The whole *"seeker movement"* is to **satisfy the people, satisfy the seekers!**

But these people were looking for something that would make them feel good about themselves, and they basically saw Jesus as a free meal ticket for their physical needs! And when they found out that was not the case THEY WERE OFFENDED!

- **They Wanted The Sensational:**

Their attitude was, "*Feed us again*". They wanted something that would impress them! They wanted some excitement! The message that Jesus preached did not give them any of that, so **THEY WERE OFFENDED AND LEFT!** They were only interested in what they could get without any concern for His glory or will! They wanted something from Him, and they wanted to set the terms! And when they found out that it did not work that way, **THEY WERE OFFENDED AND LEFT!**

- **They Were Opposed To The Truth:**

THEY WERE OPPOSED TO THE CLAIMS OF JESUS CHRIST! They were disciples in name only! They had no personal relationship or close association or contact or friendship with Jesus Christ! **YOU CANNOT BUILD A CHURCH UPON THE FOUNDATION OF A PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST!** It does not matter how satisfied and comfortable they may feel, **IF THERE IS NO RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST, YOU HAVE NOTHING!** And yet building upon the foundation of a people who have no relationship with Christ that is exactly what so-called "*churches*" are doing today, and sadly some of the Lord's churches as well!

Again, at the beginning of the chapter there are well over 5000 people, and by the end of the chapter there are twelve! In the eyes of the religious world, **John chapter six** is perhaps the most unsuccessful sermon preached in the history of man! Today if a preacher were given such an opportunity, people would say to them,

"Oh, what an opportunity pastor; take advantage of this opportunity"

JESUS DID! He preached the truth, and everybody left with the exception of twelve!

"Oh, what a failure"

is how the religious world would see this! But the Lord never failed in anything, nor was He ever unsuccessful in anything! I say to you, **THIS WAS A SUCCESSFUL MESSAGE! It did exactly what it was intended to do!** What we have to realize is that **sometimes the Lord uses preaching to weed out!** He does not just use preaching to bring in, but many times to weed out!

Again, Jesus could see that the people were upset as He was preaching, and when they left, but **HE DID NOT CHANGE THE MESSAGE! HE DID NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE IT MORE DESIRABLE, OR TONE IT DOWN,** nor should we! **He preached the truth!** He did not seek to cater to those who found the message offensive! This **sixth chapter of John** is a sharp rebuke to the whole "*seeker friendly seeker, sensitive movement*". **JESUS DID NOT ATTEMPT TO BUILD UPON POPULARITY!** If you want a crowd, the "*seeker sensitive model*" will work! If a church merely wants a crowd, the "*seeker sensitive model*" will do that! **But remember, THAT IS ALL THAT YOU WILL HAVE!** But if you want solid, sincere followers of Christ, and if you want to be **the church that people need,** then **KEEP HOLDING TO AND PROCLAIMING TRUTH FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY!** And no matter how many people

become offended and leave, PREACH, INSIST UPON, AND PRACTICE THE TRUTH!

When people find the message of truth to be intolerable, and unbearable, and when they are offended by the truth, and they murmur at the truth of God, **don't cater to them, don't apologize to them, or pamper them**, but keep on loving them, praying for them, and KEEP ON STANDING, FOR AND PREACHING THE TRUTH!

"So what did Jesus do when the masses left?"

He turned to the twelve and He said;

"Will ye also go away?"

This was a **call to examination!** And we see the answer that Peter gave;

"to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"

Outside of Christ is sure destruction! WE MUST MAINTAIN OUR GOD-GIVEN DISTINCTION! And that is absolutely necessary in order to be THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED! People will come, and many of them will hear things that they have never heard before, and many will be offended, we must never think,

"we must do something to keep them"

If you do that, you will **cease to be what they need**, and you become **what they want!** Oh, how every church of the Lord ought to desire to be **what people need, not what people want!** And how we need to realize **the danger of becoming what people want!** OH, GOD HELP US **to be what unsaved sinners need, and what God's people need**, that we never adopt in any way the mindset of "*the seeker sensitive*" movement! We read in **Proverbs 23:23** "**Buy the truth and sell it not**". Under no circumstances are we to part with it! NEVER SURRENDER IT! NEVER SUPPRESS IT! NEVER DISGUISE IT! When churches sell the truth, they rarely get it back! THEY LOSE THEIR GOD-GIVEN DISTINCTION, and **they cease to be what the world needs!** In order for the Lord's churches to **be what the world needs**, rather than what they want, IT IS OUR DUTY TO SOUND OUT, TO DECLARE, TO PROCLAIM, AND TO LIVE THE TRUTH WITHOUT HESITATION OR APOLOGY!

5. MAINTAINING A PROPER OBJECTIVE

EPHESIANS 3:21

Again, the Lord's churches are distinct, they are separate, different, and in sharp contrast to the philosophies, reasonings, and pursuits, not only of the world, but also of what is considered the "*religious mainstream*" There is not only a difference, but THE LORD'S CHURCH IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT WHICH IS MAN MADE! Jesus said in (**Matthew 16:18**) "*I will build my church*". Those two words "*my church*" reveal that IT IS DISTINCT BY DESIGN! Paul, in (**I Timothy 3:15**) referred to the Lord's church as;

"the house of God"

"the church of the living God"

"the pillar and ground of truth"

Indicating that IT IS DISTINCT BY DESIGN, IN PURPOSE, AND IN FUNCTION! The Lord's church is so distinct, so separate, so different that IT IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION UPON THE EARTH! As we have already seen, **this God ordained distinction must be maintained, therefore** THE CHURCH MUST NOT FOLLOW THE ALLUREMENT OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE, AND MUST NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO BECOME JUST ANOTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION! If a church of the Lord Jesus Christ mingles, merges, harmonizes, and becomes compatible with the world, and modern "*Christendom*" and "*cultural Christianity*" **it loses its distinction, and ceases to be the church that people need!** THIS GOD ORDAINED, AND GOD DESIGNED DISTINCTION MUST BE MAINTAINED!

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN OBJECTIVE AND THE DANGER OF AN IMPROPER OBJECTIVE

An **objective** is,

"something to aim for, something to achieve, it is the end in view"

An **objective** becomes,

"ambition and aspiration, and the object of quest"

Where there is an **objective**

"there is a means or method adopted in order to reach the objective"

So an **objective** is

"a determining factor of the means and methods that one uses"

An **objective** is

"the focal point"

And a **focal point** determines **the nature** and **manner** of our life! A **focal point** is,

"our purpose, the supreme thing, that which controls and dominates, and gives meaning"

Our **focal point** defines **motives, reasons, and viewpoint!** From all of this we see that our **objective** or **focal point** is of extreme importance! We have already seen from (**Jeremiah 2:33**) that in a time of wickedness and rebellion against God, that Israel's objective was to be loved by the people, which resulted in the means and method of **adding and subtracting from the ways of God!** When it is the objective of a church to be loved and accepted, THEY WILL ADOPT UNBIBLICAL MEANS AND METHODS TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE! When it is the objective of a church to lure and attract a crowd, THEY WILL ADOPT MEANS AND METHODS TO DO SO! When it is the objective of a church to simply see souls saved, THEY WILL ADOPT MEANS AND METHODS TO ACHIEVE WHAT APPEARS TO BE SUCH! This is what has led to the reducing of salvation to a decision, or a repeated form prayer, and to the mentality of "*salvation is as simple as ABC*" (*Accept, Believe, and Confess*) and has resulted in so-called "*churches*" being filled with the unsaved, who live no differently than the world, or who live their lives in accord with a work-based righteousness. When the objective becomes the salvation of souls, then means and methods are adopted to get them in, and means and methods are adopted to get them to make a profession, and as a result the church is made up of the unsaved, and **they cease to be What people need!** THE MEANS AND METHODS THAT A CHURCH USES, DECLARES THEIR OBJECTIVE, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY SAY THEIR OBJECTIVE IS!

II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE OBJECTIVE

In (**Ephesians 3:21**), Paul said;

"unto Him be glory in the church"

Two key words are;

"unto Him"

That is the **foundation** of our objective! He is the center! He is the purpose! He is the foundation! The preposition "*unto*" indicates direction and movement! Those two words;

"unto Him"

ARE EXPRESSIVE OF WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT! It is expressive of THE DIRECTION OF THE CHURCH! This is what Paul spoke of in (**II Corinthians 4:5**), "*for we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord*". NOT OURSELVES, BUT CHRIST! In (**Galatians 2:20**), it is, "*not I, but Christ*". In (**Psalm 100:3**), notice the three words, "*it is He*" and then notice the words; "*and not we*". And in (**Psalm 115:1**), we read twice, "*not unto us*" and then we read, "*but unto Thy name*". IT IS ABOUT HIM! This is the foundation of our objective! IT IS ABOUT HIM! It is not about how many professions of faith are made! It is not about how many are baptized! **It is not about us!** It is not about our ways, thoughts, feelings, desires, and methods! IT IS ABOUT HIM! And IT IS ALL FOR HIM! This is the solid foundation of the objective! THIS IS WHAT KEEPS THE OBJECTIVE IN PERSPECTIVE! THIS IS WHAT KEEPS THE OBJECTIVE THE OBJECTIVE! It is not about our pleasures, it is not about our own personal fulfillment, it is not about our happiness, it is not about our successes, it is not about our notoriety, and popularity, it is not about our ambitions and plans! IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM! He is the passion, the goal, and the aim! This is what Paul was talking about in **Acts 20:24** when he said, "*neither count I my life dear unto myself*". It is to be;

"Unto Him"

If this breaks down, **everything falls!** If this breaks down, then the church begins to pursue their own ends, and their own means and methods to achieve those ends! And the church ceases to be what people need!

III. THE OBJECTIVE

Again, Paul said,

"unto Him be glory in the church"

The word "*glory*" here refers to an act done by us toward "*Him*". The word "*glory*" means,

"to praise, to give joyful tribute, gratitude and homage"

This is to be the aim, the ambition, the aspiration, the quest of the church in everything that they do! The word "*glory*" means,

"to honor; and to exalt"

The Lord (*not man, or his so-called achievements*) is to be elevated, and promoted! Again, this is to be the aim, the ambition, the aspiration, the quest of the church in everything that they do! The word "*glory*" means,

"to show forth one's greatness, to draw attention to"

The **objective** of the church in everything she does is **to show forth the greatness of God, and to draw attention to Him!** THE DESIGN OF THE CHURCH IS TO SHOWCASE THE BREATHTAKING BEAUTY OF THE LORD! To **praise** Him, to **honor**, and **exalt** Him, to **show forth** Him, and to **draw attention** to Him should be the concentration of all efforts and energies! This is to be the **purpose** and **motivation** behind everything that the church does! IT IS OUR DUTY TO ELEVATE AND PROMOTE GOD! **You are not going to get a crowd today by promoting the God of the Bible!** The world does not want to hear about **the God of the Bible!** The world does not want to hear about **a God that threatens their current belief system, or way of living!** But IT IS OUR DUTY TO **UPLIFT**, TO **EXALT**, AND TO **HONOR** GOD! When people walk in the door **it is not about activities!** IT IS ABOUT GOD! Paul said,

"unto Him be glory"

THAT MUST ALWAYS BE OUR **OBJECTIVE**, OUR **AIM**, OUR **AMBITION**, OUR **QUEST!** It is our responsibility as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ to **show forth the greatness of God!** EXALT GOD, and man is brought down to nothing, and people don't like that today! WE ARE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO GOD! The messages are to DRAW ATTENTION TO GOD! Everything about the worship service is to DRAW ATTENTION TO GOD! It is not filling the time with a variety of programs, and a bunch of nonsense, leaving only enough time for a short message! It is not about entertainment! The design of the church is to SHOWCASE THE BREATH-TAKING BEAUTY OF GOD! Somebody may say,

"well so and so might get angry and they might leave and not come back"

And that may be true! But our **objective** is not to keep them here, OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO PROMOTE GOD! If they leave and never come back, as long as we have done what God has left us here to do, we have nothing to apologize for! WE ARE TO CONCENTRATE ALL OUR ENERGIES ON GLORIFYING GOD! That is to be the reason behind everything that we do! **This is not what the world wants, but IT IS WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS!** Now they may think they need something else, but **we are not here to meet their perceived needs!** WE ARE HERE TO POINT THEM TO THEIR NEED WHICH IS THE LORD! In **(Romans 11:36; Galatians 1:5; Philippians 4:20; I Timothy 1:17; 6:16; Hebrews 13:21; I Peter 4:11; 5:11; Revelation 1:6)**, we read the words,

"unto Him be glory"

And every one of those verses ends with the word;

"Amen"

This is a word that expresses **desire of heart**, and **belief**, and **joy**, and **resolution!**

"unto Him be glory ... Amen"

Such should at all times, and under all circumstance be the **desire**, the **belief**, the **joy**, and the **resolution** of a church of the Lord! That should not only be our desire, but WE MUST

MAINTAIN THAT DESIRE! Churches, like people, have trials, obstacles, temptations, battles, and struggles, and they go through various cycles, and through it all **"unto Him be glory in the church"** must be maintained! No matter what any other church or so-called "church" does;

"unto Him be glory in the church"

must not be lost sight of! No matter what is popular, accepted, and approved today or tomorrow by the "religious" world, this objective,

"unto Him be glory in the church"

must be insisted upon! No matter the pressure from within or without;

"unto Him be glory in the church"

must be the ambition, and the quest of the church in every aspect of worship, preaching, teaching, evangelism, and in appointing people to office, in appointing teachers, and in calling a pastor IT MUST ALWAYS BE ABOUT HIM! **This is to be the reason behind everything that is done!** It is **never losing sight of;**

"unto Him be glory in the church"

that will **keep the church from becoming the world, and ceasing to be the church that people need!** There will always be people who will bring up what other churches are doing to increase attendance, but no matter what others are doing, and no matter what may be popular today or tomorrow, and no matter what is accepted today or tomorrow by the "religious" world, OUR OBJECTIVE MUST REMAIN THE SAME;

"unto Him be glory"

There will always be people who will point to other pastors who think that unbiblical methods are okay as evidence that we ought to do the same, but our objective must remain the same! We must never adopt or embrace a new objective, and get away from,

"unto Him be glory in the church"

This is the individual responsibility of every member of one of the Lord's churches! NEVER GET AWAY FROM THIS OBJECTIVE! NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THIS OBJECTIVE! This must be our ambition, our continual quest,

"unto Him be glory in the church"

THIS IS THE BLUEPRINT! And if we keep this objective in mind, such will keep our means and methods within the framework of Biblical standards! And such enables us to be the church that people need! As churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, our interest should not be in keeping up with the times, but our interest ought to be in remaining and maintaining our God-given

distinction and separation! And if a church is going to continue to **be the church that people need**, THIS OBJECTIVE MUST BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES! Turmoil and problems can come upon one of the Lord's churches at any time, and without warning, but the objective,

"unto Him be glory in the church"

must remain the same! That is,

"we are going to exalt God, and do it God's way"

KEEP DOING IT GOD'S WAY! GOD'S WAY WORKS! This is true individually, and this is true collectively as a body of Christ! GOD'S WAY WILL WORK!

"unto Him be glory in the church"

Again, THIS IS TO BE THE REASON BEHIND EVERYTHING THAT IS DONE! Everything is to point to Him, THE ONE THAT THE WORLD NEEDS, NOT THE ONE THEY WANT!

6. MAINTAINING OF BIBLICAL CONSISTENCY

ACTS 5:25, 42

Again, if the Lord's churches are going to continue to be the churches that people so desperately need, there must be a **maintaining a proper perspective, a God-added church membership, a God-placed pastorate, a maintaining of distinction, a maintaining of a proper objective,** and there must be A MAINTAINING OF BIBLICAL CONSISTENCY!

By "*consistency*" we mean,

"constancy regularity, steadiness, dependability and reliability"

The Lord's churches are put here to do God's business God's way, and such ought to be with constancy, regularity, steadiness, dependability, and reliability! **If the church is going to be the church that people need,** then through the process of time, and through the various circumstances of life, they **must with regularity and steadiness be found doing the Lord's business, the Lord's way!** God's people, and the unsaved world ought to be able to depend and rely upon the Lord's church to be doing business as usual no matter what! **THERE OUGHT NEVER BE WAVERING DOING THE BUSINESS OF THE LORD!**

I. THE BACKGROUND TO THE TEXT

The Jerusalem church in the book of Acts serves as an example of this consistency! Leading up to our text verses, back in **(Acts 3)** there is record of Peter and John healing a lame man at the Temple. In **(Acts 3:11)** we see them in the Temple at Solomon's Porch. Then in **(Acts 4:1-4)** Peter is seen speaking to the people, who were curious about the miracle of the lame man being healed. In **(Acts 4:5-22)** Peter and John are arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin and demanded that they no longer preach in the name of Jesus! They were ordered to stop doing the Lord's business the Lord's way! In **(Acts 4:23-31)** we read of them being set free and returning to their own company! In **(Acts 5:12)** we see them back in Solomon's Porch healing the sick. In **(Acts 5:17-19)** the religious leaders are infuriated and arrest them. In **(Acts 5:20)** the Lord sets them free and sends them back into the Temple to preach! In **(Acts 5:22-25)** it is discovered that they are gone from the prison and **are back in the temple (verse 25), preaching Jesus;**

"Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple, and teaching the people"

In other words,

"You know those men you warned not to preach Christ, those men that you arrested and punished, well, they have escaped and those very same men are right back in the same place, doing the same things, and preaching the same message"

So they arrested them again (**Acts 5:27-29**). And in (**Acts 5:40**) they are beaten and commanded to stop doing what they were doing. But notice (**Acts 5:41-42**). There they are THE SAME PEOPLE DOING THE SAME THING, PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE! And **this must be us!** Over and over again, under very trying and difficult circumstances, and in the face of fierce hostility and opposition we see **the same people were back in the same place, doing the same things, and preaching the same message!** THEY WOULD NOT BE DETERRED! THEY WERE CONSISTENTLY DOING WHAT GOD HAD TOLD THEM TO DO! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, then we, like these apostles need to be **the same people in the same place, doing the same things, and preaching the same message!** These apostles that we have read of, continued doing what the Lord would have them to do in spite of the warnings, the opposition, the threatenings, the beatings, and the inconveniences! THEY WERE CONSISTENT IN DOING WHAT THE LORD HAD COMMANDED THEM! If we were to consider our church history, we would find that THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE WHO CONTINUED IN THE SAME PLACE, DOING THE SAME THINGS, AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE, NO MATTER WHAT! **This must continue, if we are going to continue to be the church that people need!** Consider some characteristics of these apostles who would not be moved from **doing God's business God's way!**

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTLES

Consider these apostles who would not be moved from doing things God's way! There are many things that we can gather from these individuals, but we will only consider the most obvious.

1. They Were A People Of Conviction:

What they held to was more than an opinion, more than a preference, more than a conceived idea, what they had was a **deep-seated belief!** THEY FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT WHAT THEY KNEW, WAS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH, AND WHAT PEOPLE SO DESPERATELY NEEDED! What they believed had **a firm grip upon their hearts, minds, and lives!** They had **a conviction of heart** that THEY HAD SOMETHING WORTH LIVING FOR, WORTH SUFFERING FOR, AND WORTH DYING FOR! If we are going to continue to **be the church that people need**, THE TRUTH THAT WE HAVE LEARNED MUST HAVE A GRIP UPON OUR LIVES! What these apostles **knew, believed, and practiced** had a firm hold upon their **lives**, and therefore, no matter what happened, no matter what changes took place all around them, no matter what others thought and practiced, and no matter what the authorities said, THEY WERE THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE DOING THE SAME THING, AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE! If we are going to continue to **be the church that people need**, then WE MUST BE **ROOTED** AND **GROUND**ED IN TRUTH, AND HAVE A FIRM CONVICTION OF WHAT WE BELIEVE! Many will say,

"Oh, I would die for such and such"

But the problem is, **they are not even willing to live for what they say they are willing to die**

for! We must be willing to **live, suffer, and die for the truth!** Again, these apostles continued to be the same people, doing the same things, preaching the same message regardless of what changes took place! THERE WAS CONSISTENCY! And anybody who watched them, after a while they knew what they were going to do, because THEY WERE CONSISTENT! And the world that knows anything about us ought to know and say,

"I guarantee you on Sundays and Wednesdays there they are the same people in one same place doing the same thing and preaching the same message"

THAT IS CONSISTENCY! **This must be us!**

2. They Were A People Of Great Love:

They no doubt loved their country, their homes, their family, their friends, BUT THEY LOVED THEIR LORD AND THE TRUTH EVEN MORE (Acts 4:20; 5:29). The Lord, and the Lord's business was their number one priority! **They were willing to risk all to be in the will of the Lord!** IF WE ARE GOING TO BE THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE, DOING THE SAME THINGS, AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE, then we must have a love for the Lord and the truth that is greater than **self-interest**, greater than all **opposition**, greater than all **obstacles**, and **challenges** in the way! The more we love Him the more **committed** we will be to Him! The more we love Him the more **surrendered** we will be to Him! The more we love Him the more **willing** we will be to **follow** Him! The more we love Him the more we will want to **obey** Him and to **put Him first!** The more that we love Him the more we will want to glorify Him! The more we love Him the **nearer we will want to be to Him!** The more we love Him the more we will want to **worship** Him, **praise** Him, and **thank** Him! The more we love Him the more that we will **love His Word, His Day, His Law, and His people!** The more that we love Him the more that we will **want to be** what he wants us to be! The more that we love Him the more that we will **desire to please Him in all things!** The more that we love Him the greater the desire to **be in the center of His will, to be doing exactly what He would have you to do!** The more that we love Him the greater the desire **to know Him more fully!** The more that we love Him the greater the desire **to make Him known to others!** The more that we love Him the greater the desire **to be filled with His ways!** The more that we love Him the greater the desire **to use what we have for His service!** The more that we love Him the more that we **want to be identified with Him!** The more that we love Him the more that **we want Him to have all**, and the more willing we are to **give up and let go** of our stature, our rank, our importance, our honors, our self-reliance, and our plans and ways! The more that we love Him the more willing we will be to **stoop, and forget about self, and think nothing of it, other than you wish you had more to give!** The more that we love Him the more that the **things of Christ will be a priority to us!** The more that we love Him the more that **He becomes our purpose for living!** The more that we love Him **the more meaningful our lives become!** The more that we love Him the **more that He controls and dominates what we do!** The more that we love Him the more **He is the center of our interests!** The more that we love Him the **more that we seek Him**, the more **He becomes our goal and aim, our law and our pattern!** The more that we love Him the **more zealous we will be for His cause!** The more that we love Him **the easier and more joyful it is to serve Him!** The more that we love Him the more **enabled**

we are to endure difficulties and trials! The more that we love Him **the better our outlook and attitude upon life!** The more that we love Him **the further we are willing to go for Him!** **Love to God** feeds desire for **God**, and delight in **God!** If we are going to be the church that people truly need, **WE MUST BE A CHURCH IN LOVE WITH THE LORD!**

3. They Were A People Who Were Not Governed By The World's Principles And Standards, But By God's Precepts:

They did not allow the secular nor the religious world to determine what they **believed** and **practiced!** They refused to be controlled by their circumstances! No matter what direction the world took, they continued to be **THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE DOING THE SAME THING AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE!** If we are going to continue to be **the church that people need,** **WE MUST BE GOVERNED BY WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE!**

4. They Were A People To Whom God Was Very Real:

The **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** were very real to them! These were not things that they could just take or leave! What they had was more than religion, more than opinion, more than theology, and creed, and more than a spiritual formality! These had something more than religious procedures, steps, and formulas, and something more than a passed down or mere surface religion! The **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** were reality, they were relevant to their everyday life! The **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** had a grip, an influence and impact upon their hearts and lives! The **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** were not inconsequential to their lives! The **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** was their life! And therefore they were not diverted and swept away by those who were offering something else other than Christ! They were not taken in by the thinking the ways, the idols, the ambitions, the opinions, the aims, the influences, and the fantasies of what was around them! But rather, no matter what their circumstances, no matter the direction of all around them, they continued to be **THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE DOING THE SAME THING AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE!** Here we are in the midst of paganism and secularism, bombarded with heathen talk, ways, pursuits, philosophies, and worship, and surrounded by the deceptions and perversions that seek to shackle and disable us spiritually! Here we are, bombarded with that which is opposed and hostile to Christ, and unlike Christ, and if we are going to be the church that people need, the **Lord**, the **truth**, and the blessings of **salvation** must be more than a point of theology! **THEY MUST BE REALITY,** having a grip, an influence, and impact upon our everyday life! We live in a world that is contrary and destructive to the life that we are called to live, a world sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of destruction, misery, and hopelessness, a world overrun with spiritual degradation and darkness! And the policies, philosophies, reasonings, manners, fashion, entertainment, and pursuits of the world, society, and culture are directed and used by Satan to lure, to divert, to hold down, and to shackle the child of God in order to keep them from living the life that they **are called to live, and can live!** All around us is that which will spiritually hinder, entangle, weary, and deplete the child of God! And the **Lord**, the **truth**, and the

blessings of **salvation** must be real and relevant in our lives if we are going to be THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE DOING THE SAME THING AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE! Again, THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED RATHER THAN THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE WANT!

5. As A Result Of All This They Were A People Of Constancy:

They were not **on again off again!** They were not **hot then cold!** They were not **up then down!** They did not wait to see what anybody else was going to do! They did not wait to see what anybody else believed! They were **firm**, they were **steadfast**, they were **resolute**, **determined**, **decided**, they were **adamant**, **unwavering**, **unbending**, and **committed** to the Lord, the Lord's work, and the truth! **Threats**, **inconveniences**, and **persecutions** **could not move them** (Acts 20:22-24). All through the Word of God we are exhorted to **continue in the truth**, to remain **firm**, without giving in! Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:22) exhorted those in Antioch;

"to continue (to keep on, to persist, to press on), in the faith"

We must not **get entangled in the world's ways, or adapt to the world's ways, but to cleave unto the Lord** (Joshua 23:7-8; I Thessalonians 5:21; II Thessalonians 2:15; Revelation 3:11). Paul told the Corinthians (I Corinthians 15:58),

*"Be ye **steadfast** (relentless, unchanging, unwavering, uncompromising), **unmoveable** (not affected by opposition and obstacles), **always** (no matter what) **abounding** (plentiful) in the work of the Lord". And to the churches of Galatia in (Galatians 5:1), he said, "**Stand** (be situated and remain) **fast**" (firm, constant, unswerving).*

And to the Philippians (Philippians 1:27), he said,

"Stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel"

The Word of God lays down in no uncertain terms the mission of His churches, and our individual obligations, and we need to be doing these things, **no matter what happens, no matter what the circumstances, and no matter what others are doing!** We that have been taught the truth of God need to be like these apostles, THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE, DOING THE SAME THINGS, AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE! If we are going to continue to be **the church that people need**, THERE MUST BE THIS CONSTANCY! We stand in great need of **Baptist men and women who know the truth, and who live and practice the truth** TO CONTINUE DOING THE SAME THINGS AND DECLARING THE SAME MESSAGE! For those who have gone away, for whatever reason, may they know that if they come back **five years, ten years, twenty years** from now, we **will be doing the same things, preaching the same message!**

For the sake of this **church**, for the sake of **future generations**, for the sake of the **truth**, and for the **Lord's glory** WE MUST BE THE SAME PEOPLE IN THE SAME PLACE, DOING THE SAME THINGS, AND PREACHING THE SAME MESSAGE!

7. MAINTAINING OF EVANGELISM

ACTS 8:1, 4

These verses are the record of a specific activity of the Jerusalem church during a time of what would be considered as unfavorable and hindering circumstances, and a time of fierce persecution. These members of the Jerusalem church were driven from their homes, and in danger of losing their lives, yet **THEY FAITHFULLY DECLARED THE WORD OF GOD EVERYWHERE THEY WENT!** While the members of the Jerusalem church were scattered abroad preaching the Word of God, the apostles remained in Jerusalem doing the same. **THIS IS AN EXAMPLE AND PATTERN OF CHURCH EVANGELISM!** A form of evangelism that is all but forgotten today,

"they ... went every where preaching the word"

What is recorded here is one of the essentials of **being the church that people need**. Again, **if the Lord's churches are going to continue to be the churches that people need**, there must be **a maintaining of a proper perspective, a God-added membership, a God-placed pastorate, a maintaining of distinction, a maintaining of a proper objective, a maintaining of Biblical consistency**, and there must be **A MAINTAINING OF EVANGELISM OR SPREADING THE WORD!**

I. THE CHURCH HAS WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

Paul referred to the Lord's church (**I Timothy 3:15**) as;

"the pillar and ground of truth"

And as such, **IT HAS WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS!** This world is; a mixed up place, filled with a vile and wretched people, who have been duped, and who are pursuing after, and clinging to what will not work, and that which will bring them into further despair! And the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ have the solution, the answer, and the remedy for that which is futile, useless, hollow, empty, and hopeless! **WE HAVE WHAT THIS WORLD SO DESPERATELY NEEDS!** But being in possession of what the people of the world so desperately need, does not mean that we are **being the church that people need!** The masses today at very best have a very vague belief in God! Most who profess a belief in God worship at the altars of false gods! Ours is a society and culture that has been taken captive by that which is Satanic! Ours is a society and culture where that which is vile, filthy, ungodly, shameful and repulsive, is not only prevalent, but accepted! Ours is a society that considers the BIBLE as irrelevant, and makes judgments and decisions based upon the standards of the godless! As a result of these things, ours is a society and culture that is in a state of spiritual degradation and bankruptcy, and therefore a society and culture of misery and gloom! And the masses are frantically trying to fill

the void, the emptiness and the insecurity, with that which only increases these things, and are feverishly following and putting their hope in godless humanism, intellectualism, pragmatism, and materialism! Ours is a society and culture that has rejected the simple, absolute, fixed, immovable, unchangeable, unaffected, and inflexible truth of God as foolishness, and have given heed and regard to the opinions of those who are bent on removing God from every aspect of society! Ours is a society and culture spellbound with modern day sorcery, placing their faith in that which will not work! And the Lord's churches have been placed here as,

"the pillar and ground of truth"

And to be **the church that people need**, WE MUST **SHARE**, WE MUST **CONVEY**, WE MUST **COMMUNICATE** AND **EXPRESS** WHAT THEY NEED! To not do this, to neglect this, is to fail to **be the church that people need!**

II. THE LORD'S CHURCHES HAVE BEEN PLACED HERE WITH A COMMISSION

Before Christ left this earth, He very plainly charged His church concerning what they were to be doing! On that Passover night just prior to the crucifixion, notice what Christ said to His church that was assembled with Him (**John 15:26-27**). They were to *"bear witness"*. They were to give **evidence**, to **declare**, to **attest** of Christ! They were to **show forth**, and to **demonstrate** Christ! Following the resurrection of Christ, there was a meeting with His church on a particular mountain in Galilee, and He said to them (**Matthew 28:18**),

*"Go ye therefore, and **teach** (instruct, show, explain, and demonstrate) all nations"*

Mark puts it this way in (**Mark 16:15**),

*"Go ye into all the world (no place was to be exempted), and **preach** (proclaim and deliver), the gospel (a specific message), to every creature" (no individual is to be exempt from the message).*

Luke in (**Luke 24:47**) was a little more specific concerning the message that was to be delivered,

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"

And in (**Acts 1:8**), just prior to Christ's ascension He said to His church:

"ye shall be witnesses unto me"

A witness is

"one who testifies on behalf of another; telling what they know, what they have seen, heard and experienced"

And notice the order,

"both in Jerusalem (city),

and in all Judea (state),

and in Samaria (country),

and unto the uttermost part of the earth"

This is the mission, the assignment, and the duty of the Lord's churches, thus revealing one of the purposes and functions of the Lord's churches! We cannot possibly **be the church that people need** if we neglect our mission and purpose! We see from these passages regarding the mission of the church, that it is worldwide in its extent! And that **there is a proper order in which it is to be carried out!** From these passages we see that the mission has no barriers such as race, gender, language, culture, education, or status! We cannot be **the church that people need** if we limit the message to only certain segments of the population! From these passages, we see that the mission involves a **particular message**, not a message that is vague or uncertain, but a message that is explicit, unmistakable, and distinct! It is the message of the gospel, a message of repentance and remission of sins! It is a message of the word, (Acts 8:4). It is a message of Christ (Acts 8:5). And it is a message of the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12). IT IS A MESSAGE IN DIRECT OPPOSITION AND CONFLICT WITH THE THINKING AND LIFESTYLE OF THE WORLD! It is a message about the only way out of the pit of corruption, the only way out from the enslavement and binding and holding power of sin! It is a message about the only way out of the darkness, the ignorance, and the blindness of sin! It is a message about the only way out of the filth and depths of sin! It is a message about the only way out of the devastation and the condemnation of sin, the only way out of a life of emptiness, and from a life of endless wandering, from a life built upon sand, from a life of destruction and ruin! It is a message about the only way unto liberty, light, pardon, cleansing, nearness, reconciliation, fellowship, acceptance, joy, and peace! It is a message concerning a **fountain that cannot be drawn dry!** It is a message of a **solid rock in the midst of shifting sand!** It is a message of **One greater than all!** THE MESSAGE THAT THE CHURCH IS TO CARRY INTO THE WORLD IS NOT A MESSAGE OF CARNAL PHILOSOPHY, NOR A MESSAGE OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS! The message that the Lord's churches have been given is **what people so desperately need**, and IT IS TO BE DECLARED EVERYWHERE AND TO EVERYONE!

III. THE EXAMPLE OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

We read (Acts 8:4),

"they ... went everywhere preaching the word"

We have a commission that is incumbent upon the church collectively, and therefore upon each individual member! The mission, the assignment, and the duty of evangelism is best carried out, when **each individual member of one of the Lord's congregations is faithful in declaring the message of God in their part of the world!** The Word of God is to be declared evangelistically

from the pulpit, but such reaches a very limited group of people. And a church can have a door-to-door visitation program, **but nothing compares to the outreach of every individual member in everyday circumstances amongst their acquaintances declaring the message of God!** I am afraid that many are missing this aspect of the commission! The individual members that make up a body of Christ are placed in various places (*where we live*), in various positions (*our jobs, school, etc.*), in different families, and amongst various people, and in varying circumstances AND EACH IS TO BE A WITNESS! Each individual member of a body of Christ is to give **evidence**, to **declare**, to **attest** of Christ, and to **show forth**, and to **demonstrate** Christ! THIS IS AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OF SPREADING WHAT PEOPLE SO DESPERATELY NEED! This pattern is brought forth in the New Testament! In **(Mark 1:45)** we read of a leper that had been healed by Christ that went and told what he had experienced. In **(Mark 5:19-20)** we read of the demon possessed man of Gadara after he had been miraculously delivered by Christ that he went home and told what he had experienced. In **(John 1:40-41, 43-45)**, we read of the first disciples as individuals telling others! In **(John 4:28-29)**, there is the example of the woman at the well. In **(John 5:15)** there is the example of the impotent man telling the Pharisees what he experienced! And in **(John 9)** there is the example of the blind man who had received sight! The individual members of the Lord's churches have people that the Lord puts in their path that no one else in the church has in their path, and the Lord gives innumerable opportunities to bear witness! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, EACH INDIVIDUAL MEMBER IS TO DECLARE CHRIST!

Paul serves as an example **(Philippians 1:12-18)**. We see that Paul was very much aware that **nothing happens by chance or accident or apart from God's purposes, and knowledge!** He says here that what happened to him simply gave him new and different opportunities to bear witness and testimony! If we are going to **be the church that people need** WE DESPERATELY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THIS TRUTH! Individual church members need to view all happenings in their life **as opportunities to bear witness and testimony!** EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE NEEDS TO BE VIEWED AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MANIFEST CHRIST! Each individual member of the Lord's churches needs to view the people that cross their paths **as an opportunity for the furtherance of the gospel!** The best way for one of the Lord's churches to be faithful in their mission and assignment, and in their duty of evangelism is for EACH AND EVERY MEMBER TO BE DECLARING THE MESSAGE OF GOD! If we are going to **be the church that people need** WE MUST NOT CONFINE THE MESSAGE OF GOD WITHIN THE WALLS OF THIS BUILDING! Each one of the Lord's churches is to be evangelistic, and EACH GOD ADDED MEMBER IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUCH!

Again,

"they ... went everywhere preaching the word"

They did not go seeking to get *"decisions for Christ"*. If the Lord's churches are going to **be the church that people need**, WE MUST NEVER CONFUSE EASY-BELIEVISM WITH EVANGELISM! We read that,

"they ... went everywhere preaching the word"

They simply PREACHED THE WORD AS IS, AND LEFT THE RESULTS WITH GOD! And their motivation for doing so was twofold, **love to God with concern for His glory, and love to man with concern for his eternal welfare!** If the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ are going to **be the churches that people need**, THERE MUST BE A BURDEN, A CARE, AND AN INTEREST CONCERNING THE SOULS OF PEOPLE! Notice (**Acts 17:16; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3**). If we are going to **be the church that people need**, then WE MUST BE straightforward, plain, firm, steadfast, resolute, determined, unwavering, unbending and committed in preaching the message of the BIBLE! Again, if we are going to be **the church that people need**, then THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE MUST SEIZE AND CAPTIVATE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS! And we must preach the message of the BIBLE like we believe it and with earnestness, fervency, passion, and with a sense of urgency! The message of the BIBLE is Christ, and He is the answer to the dysfunction that is all around us! Oh, that we might always be interested and burdened for the **furtherance of the Gospel!** May it be said of the Lord's churches what was said of the church in Thessalonica (**I Thessalonians 1:8**),

"And from you sounded (trumpeted), out the word of the Lord"

May each individual member of the Lord's churches spread the seed of the Gospel!

8. MAINTAINING OF PRAYER

ACTS 4:23, 31

What is recorded here is one of the essentials of **being the church that people need!** Again, **if the Lord's churches are going to continue to be the churches that people need,** there must be **a maintaining a proper perspective, a God-added membership, a God-placed pastorate, a maintaining of distinction, a maintaining of a proper objective, a maintaining of Biblical consistency, a maintaining of Biblical evangelism** and there must be **A MAINTAINING OF PRAYER!** What is recorded here sets forth an example and pattern for the church concerning the matter of prayer!

I. THERE MUST BE A MAINTAINING OF AN IMPULSE TO PRAY

By way of background to this passage, after the lame man had been healed at the gate of the temple (**3:1-8**), the people of Jerusalem were filled with amazement and wonder and gathered at the temple. When Peter saw the people gather he preached unto them (**3:12-26**). This grieved the *"religious elite"* and they arrested Peter and John (**4:2-3**). They held them until the next day, and then brought them before the Sanhedrin, *Peter's* message to them is recorded in (**4:5-12**). The Sanhedrin commanded Peter and John to stop preaching Jesus Christ (**4:13-21**), and let them go. Peter and John, being let go, they went to the church and reported what had happened (**4:23**). The response to this was that the church banded together in prayer (**4:24**),

"And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord"

They did not hire a lawyer;

"they lifted up their voice to God"

They did not picket the council, or organize a protest march against religious discrimination;

"they lifted up their voice to God"

They did not throw up their hands in despair or become discouraged and downtrodden;

"they lifted up their voice to God"

They turned their eyes from man to God, from the wickedness of man to God, from the problems on hand to the God who can solve every problem and is in control of every situation! And is recorded for our encouragement!

In (**verse 24**), we read;

"And when they heard that (the report of Peter and John), they lifted up their voice to God"

IT WAS THEIR IMPULSE TO PRAY! When they heard the report of Peter and John, IT WAS THEIR INSTINCT AND INCLINATION TO PRAY! When they heard the report of Peter and John, THEY DID THAT WHICH WAS NORMAL FOR THEM TO DO! THEY PRAYED! When they heard the report of Peter and John, THEY DID THAT WHICH THEY WERE ACCUSTOMED TO DO! Between the ascension of Christ (**Acts 1:9-11**), and the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:1**), the church is seen praying (**Acts 1:12-14, 24**). And this would continue to be their practice (**Acts 4:24; 6:6; 12:12; 13:1-2**). In each of these situations, the church did not gather together to plan but to pray! THEIR IMPULSE WAS TO PRAY! The normal thing today, is for church members to pick up the phone, or text, or get on Facebook and discuss matters, BUT THE IMPULSE OF THE FIRST CHURCH WAS TO **PRAY!** They spoke to Almighty God, they spoke to Creator God, they spoke to the All-knowing, the never-changing, always the same God! They spoke to the One who cares, and the only One who matters! THIS IS WHERE THEY STARTED! Again;

"And when they heard that (the report of Peter and John), they lifted up their voice to God"

If we are going to be **the church that people need**, THIS MUST BE US! It must be our impulse to pray! Prayer was a priority to them! Prayer was a way of life to them! PRAYING WAS WHAT THEY DID! And if we are going to be **the church that people need**, THIS MUST BE US! The Lord's churches today have many earthly advantages over the early church, more money, more buildings, more liberty, more Bibles, more resources, and more conveniences, but if we are going to **be the churches that people need**, WE MUST BE A PEOPLE OF PRAYER! It must be our impulse to pray! There must be THE REACTION OF PRAYER! A good example of **the impulse to pray** is found in (**Nehemiah 1:4; 2:4**). Nehemiah's reaction, *"I sat down and ... prayed"* and, *"So I prayed"*. MAY THIS BE US! Read it again and again, *"So I prayed"*. OH, MAY THIS BE US! The churches of the Lord find themselves in a very trying, a difficult, threatening, dangerous, challenging, pressing and urgent time! A time of Satanic attack and bombardment! And IT MUST BE OUR IMPULSE AND INCLINATION TO PRAY! The Lord's churches find themselves in a time when those who have adopted the programs and agenda of Satan are becoming more and more bold in their promotion of such and are becoming more and more relentless that we accept and embrace such! And if the Lord's churches are to be **the churches that people need**, WE MUST BE A PRAYING PEOPLE! In this day when so many of God's people and the Lord's churches are being assimilated into the world system, and being stamped with the world's stamp, and floating along with the current of secularism, moving away from the absolutes of God, if we are going to be **the churches that people need**, WE MUST BE A PRAYING PEOPLE! The Lord's churches find themselves in a time when Biblical reason and discernment are all but dead, and when the vast majority are caught in a cycle of insanity and destruction! The Lord's churches are surrounded on all sides by wickedness, abomination, blasphemy, heresy and dysfunction, and if the Lord's churches are going to be **the churches that people need**, IT MUST BE OUR HABIT TO PRAY! In this day when so many who profess salvation are occupied, captivated, and mesmerized by the world, and have grown cold, and have become careless, lax, and indifferent toward the things of God, and have become a part of the problem, rather than part of the solution, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE OF PRAYER! **The Lord's churches have a God-given role**

and responsibility, and if we are going to fulfill such, WE MUST BE A PRAYING PEOPLE! We do not need a new BIBLE, **we need to declare the one that we have!** We do not need to scrap our hymnals in favor of contemporary songs, we need to sing the old songs louder! We do not need to replace preaching with anything else, we need to preach more and more! We do not need to lower God's standards in order to accommodate the world and make them feel good about themselves, but **to hold high the standards that God has given us!** It is not our duty to make God more acceptable, it is our duty **to declare Him as He is!** It is not our duty to make the church more acceptable to the ungodly, but **to continue to do God's work God's way!** And in doing these things, WE NEED TO BE A PRAYING PEOPLE!

II. THERE MUST BE A MAINTAINING OF THE NATURE OF PRAYER

1. A Unity In Prayer:

There are several praying, and we read in (Acts 4:24),

"they (plural), lifted up their (plural of they), voice (singular), to God with one accord"

IT IS A PRAYER OF UNISON! Again, *"voice"* not voices, and this with, *"one accord"*. It could have been written, *"they lifted up their voices in accord"*. But the Holy Spirit is emphasizing their UNISON OF PRAYER! And He uses the singular, *"voice"* and He says, *"one accord"*. THERE WAS HARMONY AND AGREEMENT IN THEIR PRAYING! We read in (Acts 12:5) concerning the prayer meeting that was going on in the house of Mary that *"prayer was made ... of the church" (collectively)*. And in (Acts 12:12) it is said that there were *"many gathered together (jointly in cooperation, in partnership, side by side), praying"*. They were in harmony of felt need! There was harmony of feeling, and there was harmony of desire! THEY WERE COMMITTED TO PRAYING! They were not merely together, but TOGETHER PRAYING! If we are going to be the church that people need, WE MUST NOT ONLY BE A PEOPLE OF PRAYER, BUT A PEOPLE THAT BANDS TOGETHER TO PRAY! Again, (Acts 4:24),

"they lifted up their voice to (in the direction of), God with one accord"

The preposition, *"to"* speaks of the fact that **they are in unison moving in the direction of God!** If we are going to be **the church that people need**, THERE MUST BE A BANDING TOGETHER IN PRAYER AND MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF GOD!

2. There Was An Acknowledgment of God:

In (verse 24), the first recorded words of their prayer are;

"Lord, thou art God"

This is an acknowledgment of God's omnipotence, and His rule with absolute and unrestrained authority! THIS IS WHERE THEY STARTED! They believed that no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the difficulty, no matter what the trouble, *"Lord thou art God"*. Through it all *"Lord thou art God"*. They knew and were absolutely persuaded that no set of circumstances, no people, no opposition, no difficulty, or trouble could change this; *"Lord thou art God"*. For the church and the individual, victory always starts with **the recognition that God is Lord, that He is God!** It will never be our normal reaction to pray without this recognition and conviction! Looking at their prayer, **they recognized Him as Creator God (verse 24)**. They realized that the God who created everything is the God who can take care of everything! Now think of their situation for a moment. Here were a seemingly helpless band of believers against the power, the might, and the influence of the Jewish Sanhedrin who told them **(verse 18), "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"**. From the viewpoint of human reasoning, there is no hope, but; *"they lifted up their voice to God"* believing that with God no problem was too great, no mountain was too big, and no matter was too difficult! It was as if they said, *"Lord you are God, you are the Creator and they are the created and Lord they are at your disposal"*. Sometimes we need to just step back and get the right perspective, *"Lord thou art God"*. Looking at their prayer, **they acknowledged God's governing wisdom (verses 25-28)**.

3. They Realized God's Sufficiency For Their Present Situation:

In **(verse 29)**, notice the words, *"And now Lord, behold their threatenings"*. Realizing the greatness of God, THEY SIMPLY SPREAD THEIR CASE BEFORE THE LORD! Their *"now"* consisted of *"threatenings"*. Their well-being was being threatened, and the work that they were called to do was being threatened, and THEY BROUGHT THE MATTER TO THE LORD! If we are going to be **the church that people need**, WE MUST BE FIRMLY PERSUADED OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD IN ALL MATTERS! The word, *"now"* also has a tone of urgency! They felt that their situation was pressing, and it is in this situation that, *"they lifted up their voice to God"*.

4. In Their Praying They Prayed For God's Intervention:

This is seen in **(verses 29-30)**,

- They Asked God To Give Special Attention To Their Situation:

Notice; *"And now Lord, behold their threatenings"*. THEY SIMPLY SPREAD THEIR CASE BEFORE THE LORD! They left the matter of their enemies in God's hand! They left that which was threatening to their well-being in God's hand! If we are going to be **the church that people need**, WE MUST BE ABLE TO SPREAD MATTERS BEFORE THE LORD!

- They Asked God That He Would By His Grace Give Them Divine Enablement:

This also is seen in **(verse 29)**. They did not pray for deliverance from the hands of the enemy, they did not pray for more favorable circumstances, but they took the position of needy servants realizing their responsibility to Him! And they prayed,

"Lord cause us by thy grace to be what we ought to be, and to do what we ought to do"

They prayed,

"Lord give us grace to go on in the work you have given us to do, and not to be afraid"

They were praying for **God to come upon them in a mighty way!** They were praying for **boldness to continue to preach God's Word!** This is the very thing that Paul requested prayer for **(Ephesians 6:19-20)**. In this day when error abounds, and is being more and more accepted, and when false teachers are becoming more and more tolerable, and false doctrine is becoming more and more appealing **the church needs to band together in prayer for God's grace!** In this day when sin is becoming more and more prevalent, and more and more open, **the church needs to band together in prayer for God's grace!** GRACE TO CONTINUE TO DO GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY! In this day when the haters and despisers of God, and those who are offended by God, and are hostile toward God are on a rampage and mission to bring their anti-God philosophies upon an entire nation, and are bent on eliminating any semblance of God from everyday life, **we need to be a church banded together in prayer for Divine enablement TO DO GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY!**

- They Asked God To Unleash His Power:

This is seen in **(verse 30)**. They were praying for **an open manifestation of God!** They were praying for **God to show Himself!** THIS NEEDS TO BE THE CONSTANT PRAYER OF THE LORD'S CHURCHES!

5. The Results Of Them Praying Together Serves As An Encouragement:

- There Was A Manifestation Of The Spirit Of God **(Acts 4:31)**.

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled"

- There Was Power To Live For The Lord **(Acts 4:31)**.

"and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost"

- They Continued To Do What They Had Been Called To Do **(Acts 4:31)**.

"and they spake the word of God with boldness"

- They Were More And More Unified In Heart And Soul **(Acts 4:32)**.

● The Beauty Of The Lord Was Upon Them (Acts 4:33).

"and great grace was upon them all"

We live in a time when God's Word is being cast aside as foolishness, and when the landmarks that have always identified Baptists are being removed! Ravening wolves have encircled the Lord's churches! This is a time when so many if not most of God's people have had their hearts stolen, and have fallen victim to the traps of the flesh, the world, Satan, and the times in which we live, and have had their spiritual interest, enthusiasm and conviction consumed by such! This is a time when God's people are more dictated by the carnal and temporal than they are the spiritual, and are accustomed to quenching the Spirit of God! But there is **a God in heaven** that can transform that which is filthy into clean, and that which is rebellious into obedience, and that which is offensive into acceptable, and that which is broken into whole, and that which is desperate into delightful! AND WE NEED TO TAKE ALL MATTERS TO HIM IN PRAYER! There is such a thing as spiritual uplifting, recovery, awakening, stirring, energizing, and rejuvenating, and **God is the source of such!** GOD CAN (Isaiah 35), bring strength to the exhausted, steadiness to the feeble, calm to the fearful, and cause the spiritually blind to see, and the spiritually deaf to hear, and the spiritually lame to leap, and for the spiritually silent to sing! Oh, for God to come upon us in a mighty way, and for **waters to break out in the wilderness**, and for **streams to flow in the desert**, and so that **the burning sand become a pool**, and for **waters to gush forth in the midst of the dryness**, and for **green pastures to appear**, and for Him to **set our feet on the highway of holiness!** GOD CAN **bring forth spiritual beauty!** OH, HOW WE NEED TO BE A CHURCH THAT BANDS TOGETHER IN PRAYER! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, we must be a people who in one accord lift up their voice to God! A PEOPLE WHO COMMIT TO PRAYING! We need to be a people who commit to praying that **we would have a more keen awareness of God in our midst**, and that **God would move mightily in our midst**, so much so that **the complacent will be stirred**, that **the unexcited would be excited**, that **pew warmers will become active in the Lord's work**, and that **conviction and repentance would be granted!** We need to commit to praying that **we would be overflowing with love for God**, and delight in God, and praise for God, and thanksgiving and glory to God! We need to commit to praying for **a manifestation of God's power in our lives**, and for **chains to be broken!** We need to commit to praying that **God would grant us the ability, the burden, and the power to be what we ought to be, and to do what we ought to do!** If we are going to **be the church that people need**, WE MUST BE A PEOPLE BANDED TOGETHER IN PRAYER! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, DOING GOD'S BUSINESS GOD'S WAY FOR GOD'S GLORY, we must be humbled before God with warm and tender hearts! We must be a people fascinated, enthralled, and absorbed with God, a people submissive to God! We must be a people a people moving toward God, clinging in to God, seeking to glorify God, a people identifiable with God, forsaking and turning and fleeing from sin, a people aroused and stirred by God, a people who live in the realization that He is worthy of all, a people who cannot love Him enough, a people who cannot do enough in His service, a people with a right attitude toward God's day, God's house, God's book, God's man, and God's people! OH, THAT WE WOULD COMMIT TO PRAYING FOR SUCH (I Thessalonians 5:20; Hebrews 4:14-16). Again, if we are going to **be the church that people need**, THERE MUST BE A MAINTAINING OF PRAYER!

9. MAINTAINING OF WORSHIP

JOHN 4:19-24

These verses record a portion of the conversation between Christ and a Samaritan woman. This woman, after Christ confronted her with her sin, sought refuge in religion, wanting to discuss historical religion and traditions (**verse 20**). Jesus, in response, declared to her that her religion was a sham and that her imaginary "*spiritual knowledge*" was utter ignorance (**verses 21-23**). In (**verses 23-24**), Jesus addresses the subject of true worship! It is a subject of great importance, and it is also one of the most misunderstood subjects! The highest occupation of a child of God is to worship the Lord! Worship is one of the primary functions of the Lord's churches! Every single church of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to **be the church that people need**, but such is not possible when there is not true worship of God!

But sadly, **modern society has witnessed the death of true worship!** The contributing factors have been; the **idolatrous nature of the human heart**, and **secularism** which is,

"the mental framework and value structure of the masses"

And includes **humanism**, which is

"the philosophy of self, resulting in man being the focal point"

And **relativism**, which is

"the belief that there are no absolutes"

And **materialism**,

"the love and pursuit of the material, fame, and pleasure"

And the "*religious*" world has bought into all of these, and have incorporated them into their so-called "*worship services*". As a result, true **worship is almost extinct!** But if the churches of the Lord are going to be **the churches that people need**, AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUE WORSHIP MUST BE MAINTAINED AND TRUE WORSHIP MUST BE MAINTAINED! Due to the **sinfulness of human nature**, and the **atheistic, and narcissistic society and culture** that the majority of professing Christians are immersed in, the one and only **object of true worship has been replaced with the creature (Romans 1:25)**. And THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD IS ALMOST EXTINCT TODAY! And again if the churches of the Lord are going to be **the churches that people need**, AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUE WORSHIP MUST BE MAINTAINED AND TRUE WORSHIP MUST BE MAINTAINED!

I. TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD

The subject of the worship is spoken of and illustrated and demonstrated all through the Word of God! Yet there is great confusion today as to what constitutes true worship, and **most of what is called "worship" today is anything but!** Sadly, worship means different things to different people and all denominations define worship in terms of their own traditions and conditioning! And people in all denominations define worship by that which they have become comfortable! And this combined with a post-modern society and culture of godlessness, and secularism, there is a great deal of ignorance in modern "Christendom" as to what constitutes true worship! And what constitutes true worship in the minds of most is so far removed from the Biblical pattern, that **"worship" has become a counterfeit pretense!** There are plenty of church buildings, and a multiplicity of church services, and there are plenty of instruments of music, and so-called worship services are more convenient and more comfortable than ever before, but without any doubt, **there is far less worship of God!** In fact, **true worship is almost extinct!**

1. What Is Worship:

The principal Old Testament word for **"worship"** is "shachah" and means,

"to bow down"

The Old Testament idea presented is,

"the reverential awe of mind and body"

The principal New Testament word is "proskuneo" meaning.

"to do reverence by prostration"

So the main idea of the word **"worship"** is,

"the feeling and expression of the worth of God"

It is,

"the ascription of worth to God"

And this is what the Psalmist is referring to in (**Psalm 29:2; 96:8**), when he says,

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name"

It is,

"render unto the Lord the glory, honor, and submission which are His due"

So to worship God is,

"a reverential act of submission, and homage before God in response to His revelation of Himself"

It is,

"to respond to God in adoration"

To worship God is,

"the act of paying honor to God, with a feeling of reverence for His Person, His power, His position, and His works"

In all true worship of God there is **a drawing near unto God**, and that on His terms! IF THERE IS NOT A DRAWING NEAR TO GOD, THERE IS NO WORSHIP! In all true worship there is a thinking, meditating, reflecting, and processing what God has revealed of Himself! In all true worship there is,

"an overflow of grateful heart toward God"

In all true worship there is a vivid realization of who God is, and a vivid realization of His presence! **We do not worship to impress, but to express**, and such leaves an impression upon us! True worship is A LIFE RENEWING EVENT! Yet,

"how many experience life renewal in our so-called worship services?"

The truth is that true worship of God is **such an incomparable wonder** that it cannot be adequately defined! This reveals **the super-extraordinary nature of true worship!** Worship is spiritual, therefore one cannot draw or paint a picture of worship! Being spiritual, human words and definitions fail to precisely portray true worship of God! True worship of God is so great, so magnificent, so deep, so all-encompassing that it defies definition!

2. The Framework Of Worship:

In **(John 4:23)**, Christ spoke of;

"the true worshippers"

And the implication is that there are also false worshipers and false worship! If there is true and false then there must be a standard by which worship is measured and determined! That there are; "**true worshippers**" means that they are in accord with God's standard! There is genuine worship and there is counterfeit worship! And in **(John 4:23-24)**, **Christ sets the framework of true worship!**

- God Is The Object Of Worship; "*worship the Father ... worship Him*"
- The Nature And Character Of True Worship; "*in spirit and in truth*"
- It Is A Worship That God Takes Pleasure In; "*the Father seeks such to worship Him*"
- It Is A Worship That Is Imperative; "*they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*"

What is made plain from this statement from Christ concerning worship is that IT DOES MATTER HOW ONE WORSHIPS! What is made plain here is, MAN IS NOT THE STANDARD! The standard of true worship has already been set by the One who is to be worshiped! In this day when the prevalent message in the religious world is "*worship God in your own way*", WE NEED TO HEAR AFRESH the words of Christ;

"they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"

3. There Is A Call To Worship God:

In Christ's discourse with the Samaritan woman, when speaking upon the subject of worship, HE DIRECTED HER ATTENTION TO GOD AND HIS CHARACTER; "*God is a Spirit*". GOD AND HIS CHARACTER ARE THE FOUNDATION TO WORSHIP! In this day when so much of what is called "*worship*" is detached from who God is, **true worship is never detached from God!** In all true worship it is, **first God!** He is the subject, the substance, the essence, and the center of worship! And if not, it is not true worship! He is the power, the rule, and the influence of worship! And if not, it is not true worship! True worship is **God-centered!** And if not, it is not true worship! In all true worship it is God who is the center of attention! It is God who occupies the mind, fills the thoughts, and absorbs the desires! GOD IS THE FOCUS! The word of God makes it quite clear, **God is to be worshiped (Deuteronomy 26:10; II Kings 17:36; I Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 95:6; 96:9; Matthew 4:10; Revelation 14:7; 19:10; 22:9).** The message of these verses is **WORSHIP GOD!** And that worship is **for God, and about God!** In many of the Lord's denunciations against idolatry, there is the reminder that **He is God (Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; Deuteronomy 4:25-28; 11:16-17, 28; 12:31).** **WORSHIP IS FOR GOD ONLY!** Again, God in His word declares loud and clear, **WORSHIP GOD!** This is said in various ways throughout the Word of God!

- God Is To Be Glorified (Joshua 7:19; Psalm 115:1).
- God Is To Be Magnified (Psalm 3423; Luke 1:46).
- God Is To Be Exalted (Psalm 18:46; 34:3).
- God Is To Be Bowed And Kneeled Before (Psalm 95:6).
- God Is To Be Feared (Psalm 96:29).

- God Is To Be Praised (Psalm 106:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 117:1; 135:1, 3; 146:1; 147:1; 148:1; 149:1; 150:1).
- God Is To Be Sung To (I Chronicles 16:23; Psalm 13:6; 30:4; 95:1; 96:1-2; 98:1, 5; 147:7).
- God Is To Be Thanked (Psalm 107:1).

In all of this GOD IS THE OBJECT! **Man is the worshiper, and God is the worshiped!** Man the creature is to **worship God the Creator!** Man the dependent is to **worship God the Source!** Man the receiver is to **worship God the Giver!** Man the servant is to worship **God the Master!** Man the unworthy one is to **worship God the Worthy One!** Man the weak one is to **worship God the Almighty One!** Man the needy one is to **worship God the All-Sufficient One!** Man the blessed one is to **worship the God who Blesses!** The redeemed are to **worship God the Redeemer!** NO ONE WILL TRULY WORSHIP GOD WHO DOES NOT RECOGNIZE BOTH THE PLACE OF GOD, AND THE PLACE OF MAN! In this day when the masses want it to be about them, TRUE WORSHIP IS ABOUT GOD! It is not about me, and it is not about you, IT IS ABOUT GOD!

4. There Is Congregational Worship:

In both the Old and New Testament the people of God assembled to worship! In (**Exodus 24:1**) there is a **call to assemble for worship!** In (**II Chronicles 29:28**) we see that the people congregated to **worship.** In (**II Chronicles 30:1**) Hezekiah sent out a **call for the people to gather to worship.** In (**Ezra 3:1-2**) the people **gathered to worship,** and in (**Nehemiah 8:1-7**) there was a **gathering of the people to worship.** The Psalmist made reference to the "*assembly*" and "*congregation*" (Psalm 89:7; 107:32; 111:1). In (**Jeremiah 26:2**) Jeremiah was instructed to "*stand in the court of the LORD'S house*" and preach to the people who had come to **worship.** In (**Joel 1:14; 2:15-17**) there is instruction to call an assembly to pray. In the **New Testament,** the word "*church*" means "a called-out assembly". Since it is called, there is a **purpose** for the **assembly!** THE PURPOSE IS TO WORSHIP! Jesus promised to be in the midst of such an assembly (**Matthew 18:20**), and is seen in the midst of such an assembly (**Acts 1:3-4**). In (**Acts 2:1**), they were assembled together. In (**Acts 20:7**) they "*came together*" and Paul spoke of the church of Corinth coming together (**I Corinthians 14:23, 26**). When the Lord's churches assemble to worship, it is a **special, noteworthy, and significant time!** WE ASSEMBLE TO WORSHIP! And when we do it is a time of extraordinary importance, a time that ought to be treasured, and looked upon as a tremendous privilege and opportunity! WE ASSEMBLE TO WORSHIP! And it is a time in which the hearts and conscience of man should be affected! WE ASSEMBLE TO WORSHIP! And such is a time in which we are to draw into close communion with God! These times of congregating to worship are times of **singing and praying to the Lord!** They are times of **the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit!** They are times of **God working in the hearts of His people!** They are times of **thanksgiving and praise!** They are times of **bringing the tithes and offerings!** They are times of **preaching the Word of God, and listening, receiving, and responding to the preached Word!** THESE ARE BLESSED TIMES! Again, one of the primary purposes of the Lord's church is to worship God!

And if we are going to be **the church that people need**, THERE MUST BE A MAINTAINING OF TRUE WORSHIP!

II. THE ATMOSPHERE OF TRUE WORSHIP

All true worship is in agreement and conformity with God, and is carried out by the influence of the Holy Spirit, in a spiritual manner, and for the honor and glory of God! True worship of God involves a conscious awareness of God, and a heart overflowing with reverence and godly desires! The worship proceeds from a heart united to God and drawing near to God! True worship involves humility of spirit before God, and love to God, faith in God, praise for God, thanksgiving to God, and commitment and surrender to God! True worship is God centered and focused! It is real and personal contact and interaction between God and the worshiper! And the atmosphere must be conducive to true worship! No one will truly worship who is not in their proper place as a worshiper! THE TRUE WORSHIPER MUST GET BEYOND THEMSELVES! Notice (**Psalm 100:3**), in particular the phrases;

"it is He ... and not we ourselves"

ALL TRUE WORSHIP IS ATTENTIVE AND FOCUSED UPON GOD! And the atmosphere must be conducive to such! Again, Jesus said;

"they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"

By using the imperative, "**must**", He is declaring that there is an unbending standard, and that there are no alternatives or substitutes! TRUE WORSHIP IS NOT TN A SELF-STYLED MANNER! It is to be;

"in spirit"

The opposite of that which is of the flesh and merely external! And true worship is;

"in truth" (according to truth).

And the atmosphere must be conducive to such! But here we are in a day and time when most of what is termed "worship" is fleshly (*centered around the flesh nature*), rather than spiritual, and is external, rather than internal, and is inconsiderate of the Person and character of God, rather than reverential! And the atmosphere in most churches is conducive to such! Ours is a day of vain worship (**Matthew 15:8-9**), ignorant worship (**Acts 17:22-23**), and will worship (**Colossians 2:23**). And the atmosphere and environment in most so-called places of worship is conducive to such! And it is in such a time if we are going to be **the churches that people need**, WE MUST MAINTAIN A PROPER ENVIRONMENT FOR WORSHIP! But when the objective is to draw a crowd, and to keep people coming, and to be loved and accepted, and to be popular, then there is an adding to, and a taking from the ways of God, and the environment for true worship has been removed, and **the church ceases to be what people need!** Outside of God doing a work, if you are going to draw and keep the ungodly, you will have to appeal to

their flesh, and when that happens you **become what they want and cease to be what they need!**

The desire for the love and acceptance of the world has resulted in the secularization, the modernizing, and the revamping of the worship service, in order to give the ungodly what they want! And when a church gives the ungodly what they want, **they cease to be what the ungodly need!** YOU CANNOT GIVE THE ENEMIES OF GOD WHAT THEY WANT AND MAINTAIN A PROPER ENVIRONMENT AND ATMOSPHERE OF WORSHIP! In this day when many are trying to update their "*worship services*" in order to appease the ungodly, and make them feel comfortable WE NEED TO MAINTAIN TRUE WORSHIP, AND THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCH! The house of God is a place of worship, it is not a coffee club! **True worship does not need updating!** We are worshipping God, and God does not change, and true worship is according to truth, and truth does not change! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, WE MUST MAINTAIN TRUE WORSHIP!

The desire for the love and acceptance of the world, and the desire of popularity with the world, and the attempt to appease the ungodly has turned what should be worship of God into entertaining and amusing the ungodly! And spiritual songs are replaced with the music and songs that appeal to the flesh of man! This desire and objective to please the ungodly, and the unchurched has turned what should be the house of worship into social and activity centers! YOU CANNOT AMUSE THE FLESH AND WORSHIP GOD! The two cannot be combined!

The Lord's churches can get in such a way that they no longer have a proper environment and a proper atmosphere to worship God! If we are going to **be the church that people need**, WE MUST MAINTAIN AN ENVIRONMENT AND ATMOSPHERE OF TRUE WORSHIP! It becomes incumbent upon every church member of a local New Testament Church to **worship God in Spirit and in truth!** And every member of this body has entered into covenant agreement to sustain the worship of this body! This is an agreement that we have made with the Spirit of God, and with one another! This means that we will keep our hearts right with God, and in a condition to worship Him! It includes the guarding against all intrusions! **Self-will** is an intrusion to true worship! **Ill-will** is an intrusion to true worship! A **wrong spirit** is an intrusion to true worship! It is absolutely necessary if we are going to **be the church that people need**, WE MUST MAINTAIN TRUE WORSHIP!

Here we are in a day when most of professing Christendom has such a **degrading view of God** and such an **elevated view of man**, that so-called "*worship of God*" has been cheapened into a mere carnal exercise! This erroneous and blasphemous view of both the worshiped and the worshiper has cheapened worship to being **man-centered and focused** rather than **God-centered and focused!** As a result **the majesty, glory, and magnificence of worship** has been removed! If we are going to be **the church that people need**, THE GLORY OF WORSHIP MUST BE MAINTAINED! As a result of worship becoming **man-centered** rather than **God-centered**, what is called "*worship*" today has been **brought down to the level of a performance, something that can be engineered by man!** But if we are going to be **the church that people need**, WORSHIP MUST BE SOMETHING MORE THAN PERFORMANCE AND DO IT YOURSELF RELIGION! Do not mistake "*a religious exercise*" for true worship! As a result of worship becoming **man-centered** rather than **God-centered**,

what is called and accepted as "worship" today has become **mere tradition!** But if we are going to be **the church that people need,** WE MUST HAVE TRUE WORSHIP AND NOT JUST MERE TRADITION! As a result of worship becoming **man-centered** rather than **God-centered,** what is called and accepted as "*worship* " today is merely **an act of hypocrisy and formalism!** As a result, what is supposed to be the "*worship of God*" is composed of words and phrases that do not mean what they say, and are superficial, and shallow, DEVOID OF SPIRITUAL CONTENT AND MEANING! This so-called "*worship of God*" is condemned by **God (Isaiah 1:10-15; 29:13).** But if we are going to be **the church that people need,** WE MUST MAINTAIN TRUE WORSHIP! In all true worship there is **a separating unto God, a coming apart, and a disconnect from the world,** not just in body but in spirit! In this day of connectivity, most do not even know what it means to be disconnected from the world during worship! There are almost as many cell phones in the house of God as people, and people will look at texts and incoming calls; THIS IS NOT DISCONNECT AND COMING APART FROM THE WORLD! All through the Old Testament God rebuked His people for spiritual profanity,

"treating that which is sacred as common, to misuse that which is sacred"

Notice (**Ezekiel 22:8, 26; 23:38; 25:3; 36:20-23; Malachi 1:12; 2:11**). In this day of connectivity, when people feel the absolute need to be constantly connected to the world, I am not even sure if we can truly worship God! Here we are in a day when the topic of conversation in the Lord's house is more about sports and politics than spiritual matters! Again, THIS IS NOT DISCONNECT AND COMING APART FROM THE WORLD! Here we are in a day, one minute after preaching service and the topic of conversation is the world! THIS IS NOT DISCONNECT AND COMING APART FROM THE WORLD! Here we are in a day when as soon as the service is over people make a mad rush to the restaurants and the stores! THIS IS NOT DISCONNECT AND COMING APART FROM THE WORLD! One of the saddest commentaries on the modern day "*worship services*" is that **when church services are over, they are over!** Here we are in a day when many pastors of the Lord's churches are more concerned and interested in providing services that are convenient to accommodate a people absorbed with the world! They will say things like,

"I am not going to keep you very long, I know that you have things to do"

They will shorten church services to accommodate the worldly! In this day of do it yourself religion, and spiritual shallowness, and formality many are shortening what the people need! If we are going to be **the church that people need,** WE MUST BE A PEOPLE WHO TRULY COME APART TO WORSHIP! If we are going to be **the church that people need,** WE MUST BE A PEOPLE TRULY IMPACTED AND TRANSFORMED BY WORSHIP! When we assemble together, everything is to be conducive to true worship! If we are going to **be the church that people need** TRUE WORSHIP IS ESSENTIAL!

10. A SEEKING OF SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

I CORINTHIANS 14:12

Paul is writing here to the local body of Christ located in Corinth. This was a church that had many problems, pressures, struggles, divisions, contentions, and errors and Paul addresses many of these throughout the letter. The letters of **I and II Corinthians** reveal the sad state and condition that the very churches of the Lord can slip into by simply regarding the wisdom, and philosophy of the world rather than the counsel of the Lord!

In these letters Paul addresses the vital relation of every member in these individual bodies of Christ to the Head, and the relation of each member to one another. A church can only be spiritually healthy if there is a proper relationship between the members of the body and Christ, the head! And this is crucial, and absolutely essential if we are going to **be the church that people need!** In other words,

"if a church is going to be what people need, then the members of that church must be spiritually right"

The exhortation of (**I Corinthians 14:12**), is with regards spiritual gifts, but there is a principle here applicable to the members of the Lord's churches! A principle that if practiced would prevent a church from slipping into the carnal condition of the Corinthian church! The condition of the Corinthian church is summed up by the word, "**carnal**" (**I Corinthians 3:1, 3**). The principle that we find in (**I Corinthians 14:12**), must be heeded if a body of Christ is going to continue **to do the Lord's business in the Lord's way, for His honor and glory!** This exhortation must be heeded if the Lord's churches are going to rise above carnality and **be the church that people need!** There are five key words in (**I Corinthians 14:12**),

"zealous"

"spiritual"

"seek"

"excel"

"edifying"

These words speak of spiritual excellence and the responsibility, and duty of each church member **and what ought to be the desire of each church member!** They speak of the fact that **THE LORD'S CHURCHES ARE TO BE SPIRITUALLY PROGRESSING!** This is an absolute necessity if **a church is going to be what people need!**

I. SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Notice the words, "*spiritual*" and "*excel*". Putting them together, you have **spiritual excellence!** The word, "*spiritual*" is,

"the opposite of carnal"

That which is "*carnal*" is fleshly and worldly! The Corinthian church was "*carnal*". They were a **people absorbed with and captivated by the physical and material!** Their way of thinking, their views, their attitudes, their emotions, their lives were more in line with the temporal than the spiritual! When this is so, **a church cannot be what people need!** Their object, and focus, their values and loyalties were in the world, rather than the realm of the spiritual! And when this is so, **a church cannot be what people need!** Their aspirations, their joys, their pleasure, their satisfaction, their security, and their pursuits were in the world, rather than in the realm of the spiritual! And when this is so, **a church cannot be what people need!** Their lives were intertwined and weaved to the physical and material, rather than the spiritual! And they were controlled and dominated by the physical and material, rather than the spiritual! And as a result; their lives, homes, and families were filled with the clutter of the world, and such was brought within the church at Corinth! And when this is so, **a church cannot be what people need!** Don't ever forget, THE RUBBISH OF THE WORLD DOES NOT COME INTO THE CHURCH WITHOUT IT FIRST GETTING INTO THE LIVES, HOMES, AND FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO MAKE UP THE CHURCH! In (**I Corinthians 14:12**) in relation to "*spiritual*" there are the words; "*may*" indicative of a possibility and an opportunity, and the word; "*excel*" indicative of surpassing and exceeding in the realm of the "*spiritual*". THE POSSIBILITY OF SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE! There is more to be had spiritually, there is more to obtain, there is more for us to grasp and lay hold of! Again, notice those words "*that ye may excel*". This is indicative of a possibility, and of an opportunity. There is the possibility and the opportunity for each one of us to exceed where we are spiritually, to surpass where we are spiritually, advance beyond where we are spiritually, to be better than what we are, and to shine forth spiritually! Again, THE POSSIBILITY OF SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE! This means that **the most holy can be more holy! The strongest can be stronger! The most spiritually learned can be more learned! The most believing can believe more! The most loving can be more loving! The closest to the Lord can be closer! The most submitted and yielded can be more submitted and yielded! The most victorious can be more victorious! THERE IS MORE! There is a closer association, a more personal contact, a greater familiarity, and a warmer friendship, a deeper, a stronger, a more meaningful, and relevant relationship with the Lord! THERE IS MORE! There is always a higher plane of spiritual living, a greater experience of the things of God, and the enjoyment of the Lord! THERE ARE MORE SPIRITUAL TREASURES TO ENJOY! Whether it be spiritual knowledge, or faith, or grace, or power, or joy, or assurance, or peace, THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO BE OBTAINED! One of the amazing things about spirituality is THERE IS ALWAYS MORE! There are always **greater spiritual heights, and a higher plane of spiritual living!** The churches of the Lord must be **soaring to greater spiritual heights, and striving for that higher plane of spirituality!** The Lord's churches are not placed in this world to merely survive but to spiritually thrive! THE LORD'S CHURCHES ARE TO BE PROGRESSING IN SPIRITUALITY! **A moving beyond mere religion to Christ!** The "*carnal*" must not be allowed to have precedence over the "*spiritual*" and if it does, **the church ceases doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His glory, and ceases to be what people so desperately need!****

II. A RESPONSIBILITY, DUTY, AND DESIRE TOWARD SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Spiritual excellence is spiritual health! The church that people need is A SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY CHURCH, PROGRESSING IN SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE! Here we are in a time of rampant sin and open defiance of God's authority, a time when there is a brazen openness about sin, and when there is an all out attempt to force that which is sinful, rebellious, ungodly, filthy and vile upon an entire society, and even upon the Lord's churches! We are in a time when sin is passed over as if it did not matter, and in a time when wrong is defended, applauded, accepted, and embraced and that which is right is mocked, ridiculed, and attacked! Ours is a time of Satanic bombardment and onslaught, and when the corrupt influence of the world, society, and our culture is like a torrent! It is a time when people have bought into, are duped by, and who earnestly pursue that which is filthy, vile, wicked, ungodly, abominable, blasphemous, and heretical! And in order **to be the church that people need**, WE MUST BE A SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY CHURCH! WE MUST BE PROGRESSING IN SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE! This is a safeguard against becoming the world! Robust spiritual health is the key to not being mesmerized and swallowed by the ways, the philosophies, and the pursuits of a world gone mad! In order to be **the church that people need**, THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS MUST BE SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY! To be in ill-spiritual health is to be part of the problem! It is not about how many people we have, it is about those we do have are to be excelling spiritually!

In **(I Corinthians 14:12)**, notice the pronoun, "*ye*". It is personal and it is collective! EVERYTHING THAT A CHURCH IS TO BE THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO BE! A body of Christ can develop no further in spirituality than the degree of spirituality of its individual members! But here we are in a day when many if not most of the Lord's churches are more concerned about making it convenient for its members tied to the world than they are the spiritual health of its members! Here we are in a time many members of the Lord's churches **do not want their comfort disturbed, and want what will cost them little or nothing, and do not want their self-esteem hurt!** A time when **many want to stay in tune with the world, and have no problem exhausting their energy in worldly matters, and busying themselves in worldly pursuits, and putting more esteem on worldly matters than God!** We are in a time when many if not most members of the Lord's churches **have allowed the allurements of the world to dull their spiritual taste for the Bread of Life, and find spiritual things to be dull and tedious!** And are **content with a mere form of godliness, and a mere shadow of a relationship with God!** Here we are in a time when many if not most members of the Lord's churches **consider the service and worship of God a mere sideline, that they try to fit into their busy schedule, rather than a life commitment!** This is a day when the lives of many members of the Lord's churches are more characterized by unbelief than faith! And more characterized by worry than assurance! And more characterized by frustration than peace, more characterized by discouragement and misery than joy! And more characterized by doubt than godly conviction, and more swayed by the world than **"Thus saith the LORD"**. And more influenced and impacted by the world's ways than God's ways! This is a time when so many members of the Lord's churches and have had their hearts stolen, and have fallen victim to the traps of the flesh, the world, and Satan! And whose spiritual interest, enthusiasm, and conviction has been consumed, and have more invested in the world than the Lord! And whose priorities are in the world, and are more dictated by the world, and are consumed with worldly-mindedness, covetousness, idolatry, spiritual coldness, pride, ingratitude, bitterness, jealousy, pettiness, hypocrisy, do it yourself religion, and spiritual shallowness, and formality! But if we are

going to **be the church that is doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory**, and if we are going to be **the church that people need**, then the individual members that make up this body of Christ must be spiritually fit, and advancing in the realm of the spiritual! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE, humbled before God, with warm and tender hearts, a people responsive to the voice and movement of God! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE fascinated, enthralled and absorbed with God, a people submissive to God, a people that acknowledges God! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE filled with thanksgiving, praise, and worship! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE moving toward God, clinging to God, seeking to glorify God, a people identifiable with God! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE forsaking and turning and fleeing from sin! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE aroused and stirred by God, a people who live in the realization that He is worthy of all, a people who cannot love Him enough, a people who cannot do enough in His service! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE with a right attitude toward God's day, God's house, God's book, God's man, and God's people! WE MUST BE A PEOPLE that rise above the difficulties, the problems, the storms, the temptations, the adversities, the sorrows, the disappointments, the discouragement, the obstacles, the giants, the irreverence, the defiance of the day! WE MUST NOT GET STUCK IN THAT WHICH WILL SUCK SPIRITUALITY RIGHT OUT OF US! If we are going to **be doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory**, and if we are going to **be the church that people need**, then the individual members that make up the Lord's churches must be THRIVING SPIRITUALLY! In the face of adverse circumstances and times the individual members that make up the Lord's churches must be still servicing the Lord, still loving the Lord, still believing, still standing, still preaching Christ, still determined for Christ, still passionate and zealous for Christ, still exuberant for Christ, still eager for spiritual excellence, still not deterred, and still rejoicing!

1. The Attitude Necessary To Excel Spiritually:

The attitude necessary to spiritually "*excel*" is seen in the words "*zealous*" and "*seek*". WE MUST BE ZEALOUS OF THE SPIRITUAL! THE SPIRITUAL MUST HAVE PRIORITY! The spiritual aspect must be foremost, and primary, and supreme! If we are going to continue to **be the church that people need**, it is not about being numerically progressive, or financially progressive, IT IS ALL ABOUT PROGRESSING AND ADVANCING SPIRITUALLY! To be "*zealous*" to "*excel*" is the responsibility of each member, and it means to,

"be passionate, devoted, dedicated to excelling spiritually to be enthusiastic, and eager to excelling spiritually, to be vigorous, and committed to excelling spiritually"

It is the opposite of indifference and apathy toward the spiritual realm! We are to zealously "*seek*" spiritual excellence! That is,

"we are to go in search of spiritual excellence, we are to look for it, we are to try to obtain spiritual excellence, we are to work toward it, this is to be our goal and aim, our focus"

Again, there is a **higher plane of spiritual living**, there is a **greater experience** of the things of God "*seek that ye may excel*". The greater our desire for **spiritual excellence**, the more zealously we will "*seek that ye may excel*". The world and our culture continue to grow worse and worse, and unless we "*seek that ye may excel*" we will not continue to **be the church that people need**! To "*seek*

that ye may excel" means that we must get out of the mindset of contentment when it comes to spiritual matters. To "*seek that ye may excel*" means that we must get out of the mindset of mediocrity! THERE IS MORE, AND WE MUST NOT SETTLE FOR LESS! We are not to settle for the norm, the ordinary, the typical, and the usual, we are to passionately with devotion, dedication, commitment, enthusiasm, and with great energy, and eagerness WORK TOWARD AND PURSUE SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE! To "*seek that ye may excel*" means that,

"we, with great passion, and energy, extend ourselves toward a higher plane of spiritual living"

It means that;

"we, with great desire and longing, reach and press forward, and launch out to 'excel' spiritually"

Again, it is absolutely necessary, **if we are going to be the church that people need**, THAT WE EXCEL SPIRITUALLY, THAT WE BE SPIRITUALLY PROGRESSIVE! What is stated in (**I Corinthians 14:12**), is also stated in the second paragraph of the Church Covenant:

*"We engage therefore by the aid of the Holy Spirit ... to strive for the **advancement** of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort: to promote its prosperity and spirituality".*

This is a pledge of **active interest and participation in the progress and well-being of the church!** As members, we are responsible, we are obligated, and we are accountable for such! It should be our commitment to put forth the labor, the exertion, and the time necessary to cause this church to be always moving forward spiritually! THIS SHOULD BE THE DESIRE, THE ASPIRATION, THE LONGING OF EACH MEMBER! And such is necessary if we are going to continue to **be the church that people need!** Each member must be willing to contribute, to assist, to help in causing this church to be increasing spiritually, to be developing spiritually, to be advancing spiritually! Each member is to be a true addition, and NOT JUST A NUMERICAL ADDITION! Again, a church must be progressing spiritually if it is **going to be the church that people need!** WE MUST NOT BE CONTENT TO STOP ANYWHERE IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE!

2. The Result Of Excelling Spiritually:

This is seen in the words "*to the eddying of the church*". To "*excel*" spiritually, to continually **surpass** where we are spiritually, to continually be better spiritually has a positive, a favorable, a constructive, a useful, a beneficial, and productive affect upon the church of which you are a member! The word "*edifying*" means;

"to build, to fashion, to model, to shape, to increase, to establish, and confirm"

Our spiritual condition goes toward building or demolishing the church of which we are a member! Our spiritual condition goes toward fashioning and shaping the church of which we are a member, whether favorably or unfavorably! Our spiritual condition either contributes to the spiritual increase or demise of the church of which we are a member! Our spiritual condition is to go toward the spiritual support, the spiritual help, and the spiritual assistance of the church of which we are a member! Our spiritual

condition is to go toward the spiritual nourishment and continuance of the church of which we are a member! Therefore we ought to, "*seek that ye may excel*". Our spiritual condition determines whether or not you have a positive, and favorable impression upon the church of which we are a member! Our spiritual condition determines whether we contribute to the strengthening or the weakening of the church of which we are a member! Oh, how "*zealous*" we ought to be to "*seek*" to continually "*excel*" spiritually! Oh, how we ought to strive to "*excel*". That each one of us, from this day forward, would dedicate and commit ourselves to spiritual excellency in our attitudes, and in our behavior, for the honor and glory of God, and for the "*eddying*" of the church of which we are a member!

If we are going to **be the church that people need** WE MUST BE MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SPIRITUAL, with the spiritual being our purpose, aim, and object in mind! IT IS LIVING VERTICALLY IN A HORIZONTAL WORLD! There must be an intense endeavor, desire, hunger, longing, passion, and enthusiasm for the spiritual, and everything that we do, preaching, teaching, singing **must work to that end!** Every time that we assemble together, **it is to be to that end!** What a sham when churches concentrate on everything but the spiritual! This is why it is so important that we never lose sight of **doing the Lord's business, the Lord's way, for His honor and glory**, such keeps the spiritual aspect where it belongs! And enable us to **be the church that people need!**

11. A MAINTAINING OF UNITY AND SHARED PURPOSE

PSALM 133:1

In order to be **the church that people need**, it must be our purpose, our determination, our intention, and our objective, **to do the Lord's business, the Lord's way, for His honor and glory!** This is our aspiration, and the object of our quest! And THERE MUST BE UNITY IN THIS OBJECTIVE! **Unity of purpose** is absolutely essential to the well-being and the effectiveness of a New Testament Baptist Church! By this **unity** we mean that there must be harmony and accord, and uniformity in simply doing the Lord's business, the Lord's way, and for His honor and glory! That there must be a joint effort, a partnership, and a solidarity among the members of a local body, in order to **be the church that people need!** IT IS INCUMBENT UPON US THAT WE HAVE A UNITY AND SHARED PURPOSE!

I. UNITY WITHIN THE LORD'S CHURCH

As members of the same "*body of Christ*" we have a peculiar relationship to each other! Paul states (**I Corinthians 12:24**), that as members of the same "*body of Christ*" that we have been;

"tempered (harmonized and proportioned) together"

He stated in (**Ephesians 4:16**), that as members of the same "*body of Christ*" that we have been;

"fitly (tightly and securely) joined (united, connected, and linked) together and compacted" (knit together as one).

So much so, that Paul states in (**Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25**) that as members of the same "*body of Christ*" that,

"we are members one of another"

A RELATIONSHIP OF **ONE!** Paul wrote to the church t Corinth (**I Corinthians 1:10**)

"that there be no divisions (partitioning, segregation) among you"

And in (**I Corinthians 12:25**),

"that there should be no schism (division) in the body"

He wrote in (**I Corinthians 1:11**),

"that there be no contentions (disputes, discord, disharmony) among you"

This **division** and **contention** go hand-in-hand. CONTENTION CAUSES AND FEEDS DIVISION, AND DIVISION CAN FEED CONTENTION! Paul rebuked them (**I Corinthians 1:11; 3:1-4**) for the **contention** and **division** that existed amongst them. They had a dispute among them, that **was not based upon God, but upon individual preferences, and upon the trivial**; as a result, there were **hurt feelings, wrong attitudes, and their human preferences became the issue, or the main thing!** Notice, that their **dispute** and the **division** that resulted from it (**I Corinthians 3:3**), were the result of **carnality**.

Carnality will not only cause unnecessary strife, IT WILL FEED IT, AND WILL NOT LET IT GO! Carnality is the enemy of ***"unity of the Spirit"***. Wherever there are people, there will be occasions of **contention** and **division**, (*including the Lord is churches*), but we must be willing to honestly examine whether we are acting from a spiritual or carnal aspect. DO NOT CONFUSE THE TWO, because IF YOU DO NOT GET RID OF THE CARNALITY, THE CONTENTION AND DIVISION PERSISTS!

Contention and **division** within a ***"body of Christ"*** is a very **grave** and **consequential** matter! When **contention** and **division** persists in a ***"body of Christ"***, it is **like a dark cloud that hovers above, creating a stilling atmosphere to the spiritual and an atmosphere of apprehension!** When a spirit of **contention** and **division** persists in a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, THERE IS A PROBLEM, for where **contention** and **division** persists, one's **vision is obscured**, and one's **judgment is skewed**. When a spirit of **contention** and **division** persists in a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, due to carnality; THERE IS A **STUMBLING BLOCK, AND AN OBSTACLE!** And preaching is affected, and there is an inability to receive the things of God!

1. Unity Described:

Again, this unity is A UNITY OF **ONE!** A church of the Lord (**I Corinthians 12:20**), has

"many members, yet one body"

And again, in (**Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25**),

"members one of another"

The idea is, A VARIETY OF MEMBERS, YET ACTING AND FUNCTIONING AS **ONE!** The force of the phrase ***"members one of another"*** is illustrated in (**I Corinthians 12:21**). As a member of a ***"body of Christ"*** YOU MUST NEVER THINK OF YOURSELF AS INDEPENDENT FROM THE BODY! The force of the phrase ***"members one of another"*** is illustrated in (**I Corinthians 12:24**). YOU CANNOT SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM ONE ANOTHER'S CIRCUMSTANCES! This **unity** has its basis in the **Holy Spirit leading and adding** us to the same ***"body of Christ"*** (**I Corinthians 12:12, 13**). This ***"unity of the Spirit"*** is like 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork, they are automatically tuned to each other. But the accord that exists between them is not the result of being tuned to one another, but the result of them individually being tuned to the same standard!

This "*unity of the Spirit*" is imperative for a church of the Lord to be and to do. what they ought! And because it is so imperative, Satan will seek to give the members that make up an individual "*body of Christ*" a false notion as to what constitutes this "unity of the Spirit". This "unity of the Spirit" is more than an **agreement in doctrine**, it is more than the **outward display of unity**, it is more than **being of the same mind in a business meeting**, it is more than **pleasantries** and **politeness**! Most churches of the Lord, have these things, yet there is a cloud of contention and division that hovers overhead! Satan has convinced many that as long as there is the outward display, and agreement, then everything is okay! It is a very dangerous matter, to be misled as to what constitutes **unity within a body of Christ**!

- A Unity Of Being **Tempered, Framed And Joined Together**:

Paul, speaking of the church wrote in (**I Corinthians 12:24**)

"God hath tempered (mingled harmonized, and proportioned), the body together". And in (**Ephesians 2:21**), he uses the phrase *"fitly (harmoniously) framed (bound and welded) together".* In (**Ephesians 4:16**), he uses the phrase *"fitly joined (organized) together and compacted" (pressed firmly together).*

- A Unity Of **One Body And A Whole Body**:

In (**I Corinthians 12:12-13, 20; Ephesians 4:24**), we read;

"one body"

The word, "*one*" speaks of a unit, a combining! In (**Ephesians 4:16**), we read;

"whole body"

The word, "*whole*" speaks of that which is, intact and unbroken! We are to be; "*one body*" and a; "*whole body*" doing the Lord's business, the Lord's way, for His honor and glory!

- A Unity Of Being **Of One Heart And Soul**:

We read in (**Acts 4:32**),

"the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul"

A MULTIPLICITY BUT ONE! It speaks of a kind, tenderhearted, compassionate, sympathetic, and an affectionate unity! They felt alike, they felt attached, there was a tender (*caring, compassionate, sympathetic, and warm*) **union**! They were joined, merged, fused, and blended in "*heart*" and "*soul*". THIS IS NOT MERE PLEASANTRIES, AND OUTWARD DISPLAY, BUT AN **INWARD UNION**! They were joined in "*heart*" and "*soul*". THEIR AFFECTIONS AND INNERMOST BEING WERE SET UPON THE THINGS OF THE LORD! Notice, that because they;

"were of one heart and of one soul"

that **they did not see things from the viewpoint of self**;

“neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own”

but rather;

“they had all things common”

Disagreements, and different viewpoints may occur, BUT WHERE THERE IS ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL THESE THINGS DO NOT LINGER!

- A Unity Of Being Of The Same Mind:

Paul wrote in (Romans 12:16),

“Be (continuous, ongoing), of the same mind one toward another”

He further describes this as being, *“likeminded”* and of; *“one mind”* (Romans 15:5-6; II Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:2; I Peter 3:8). This is a spiritual unity of view, of feeling, of attitude and thought toward one another, and toward the things of God!

- A Unity Of Being Joined Together In Mind And Judgment:

This is brought out in (I Corinthians 1:10). Notice, it is;

“no divisions among you; but (rather or preferably) that ye be (present tense, ongoing), perfectly (absolutely, completely, entirely, totally), joined (united, connected, and linked) together (in conjunction) in the same (identical and matching) mind (inclinations and intentions) and in the same judgment” (discernment).

Again, this is *Holy Spirit led* and *produced*, and constitutes A UNITY OF ONE!

- A Unity Of Living In Peace:

This is brought out in (II Corinthians 13:11, I Thessalonians 5:13). This is tranquility, a calm, a restfulness, a quiet, a composure, and a contentment! SUCH SHOULD BE THE ATMOSPHERE OF A BODY OF CHRIST! In (Ephesians 4:3), it is called, *“the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”*. It is a relationship, a tie, a link, a friendship, a fellowship, a partnership, an association, and an attachment among the members of a New Testament Baptist Church!

- A Unity Of Striving Together:

This is brought out in (Philippians 1:27). A oneness of *“spirit”* and *“mind”* and; *“striving together”*. Oneness of *“spirit”* and *“mind”* resulting in a oneness of effort for the truth! Contention and division causes effort to be toward the wrong things, and leads to a misidentifying of the real and true cause! This *“unity of the Spirit”* causes **united movement toward the cause of God!** Notice, as a church we are to;

“stand fast” (firm and unmovable).

And we are to do so;

“in one spirit (one attitude and frame of mind), with one mind (judgment), striving (effort) together for the faith of the gospel”

There is to be a joint effort, a cooperation of effort, a partnership of effort, a working in tandem, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand toward the goal of doing the Lord's business the Lord's way, and for His honor and glory!

- **A Unity Of Fellowship:**

This is brought out in **(Philippians 2:1; I John 1:3)**. This ***“fellowship”*** is more than **fellowship dinners**, it is friendship, affection, understanding, support, comfort, encouragement, and help! It has its foundation **(Philippians 2:1)** in ***“fellowship of the Spirit”***. And also **(I John 1:3)** in; ***“our fellowship is with Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”***. So this unity involves fellowship with one another, based upon the foundation of our fellowship with the Lord!

- **A Unity Of Being In One Accord:**

This is brought out in **(Philippians 2:2)**. The word, ***“accord”*** speaks of agreement, concurrence, harmony, comparability, and correlation! And this is both inward and outward! The objective is not to appease the ungodly, not to make them feel comfortable, but to **do the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory**, AND WE MUST BE STRIVING FOR THE SAME THING! A UNIT OF ONE MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION!

- **A Unity Of Walking By The Same Rule And Minding The Same Thing:**

This is brought out in **(Philippians 3:16)**. Notice;

“walk by (according to) the same rule (authority or standard), let us mind (care, look after, pay attention to) the same thing”

Again, A UNITY OF ONE!.

- **A Unity Of Doctrine:**

This is brought out in **(Ephesians 4:13)**,

“unity of the faith”

A UNITY OF ONE AROUND TRUTH!

2. The Benefits Of Such Unity:

- **Unity Is Good And Pleasant:**

This is brought out in (**Psalm 133:1**),

*"Behold how **good** (excellent, acceptable, right, praiseworthy and admirable), and how pleasant (enjoyable, satisfying, pleasing and gratifying), it is for brethren to **dwell** (a word of residence, abode, and continuation), together (with each other), in **unity**"*

A GOD-PRODUCED ONENESS IS FOR THE GOOD OF HIS PEOPLE! Notice (**Jeremiah 32:39**),

"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and for their children after them"

IT IS POSITIVE, FAVORABLE, USEFUL, BENEFICIAL AND PRODUCTIVE TO THE SPIRITUAL! Unlike division within the "*body of Christ*" (**I Corinthians 3:1-3**), unity gives liberty to the preaching of the Word, and enables people to properly hear the preaching of the Word, all of which is beneficial to the spirituality of the "*body of Christ*".

- Unity Is Like Precious Oil:

This is brought out in (**Psalm 133:2**). The "*oil*" spoken of is the anointing oil! It had a sweet perfume about it (*very pleasing*). It was a holy thing!

- Unity Promotes Fellowship Which In Turn Produces Joy:

This is brought out in (**Philippians 2:1; I John 1:3-4**). This "*fellowship of the Spirit*" is the result of "*unity of the Spirit*" and is friendship, affection, understanding, support, comfort, encouragement, and help! Contention and division cause much distress, apprehension, and unhappiness, but "*fellowship of the Spirit*" brings much delight and gladness!

- Unity Is Edifying To The Body Of Christ:

It is beneficial, favorable, constructive, and useful for the spiritual development, improvement, and betterment of a "*body of Christ*". It supports and assists in the spirituality of a "*body of Christ*". It helps to build, fashion, shape, establish and confirm a "*body of Christ*". This unity is constructive to the spirituality of a "*body of Christ*". It supports the spiritual health of a "*body of Christ*".

If we are going to be **the church that people need** there must be a **unity of burden, of felt need, of purpose, of priority, readiness, devotion, and steadfastness!**

II. HOW TO HAVE AND KEEP UNITY

Paul, in (**Philippians 2**), following the exhortation to "unity" (**verse 2**), went on to instruct (**verse 3**),

*"Let nothing be done through **strife** (in the spirit of animosity), or **vainglory**" (the desire for personal honor, attention, praise, and preeminence). He then went on (**verses 3-4**) to state the remedy for such "*let**

each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others"

1. The Necessary Personal Qualities In Keeping This Unity:

In (**Ephesians 4:2**), Paul mentions four personal qualities that proceed from one another, and that are absolutely necessary to keeping unity within a *"body of Christ"*. These four qualities are not something that we can work up or produce, but are the product of the Holy Spirit!

"lowliness"

This is **humility of mind** and is foundational to the entire Christian life. It is this *"lowliness"* (*humility*) that causes one to have a vivid realization **of the greatness of God**, and of **one's own sinfulness and unworthiness!** It is this *"lowliness"* that realizes **one's own insufficiency**, causing one to **die to self**, and to **submit to the Lord!** This *"lowliness"* has an affect upon one's thoughts concerning the **work and cause of the Lord**, and upon **self in relation to others (Philippians 2:3)**. **IN ORDER TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT THIS LOWLINESS IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY!**

"meekness"

This relates to,

"the manner in which we receive personal injuries"

This *"meekness"* is,

"a willingness to accept and bear ill-treatment, without the feeling of ill-will"

This *"meekness"* is,

"to be willing to lay down ill-treatment toward see and leave it alone"

This *"meekness"* is,

"willingness to put self in second place and to submit and yield for the good of others"

This *"meekness"* is,

"a servant-like spirit"

This *"meekness"* is the antithesis of **self-will, self-interest, and self-assertiveness!** It is the avoidance of a **hasty and contentious** spirit (**Proverbs 14:29; 26:21**), and is exemplified in (**I Peter 3:9**). **THERE IS NO SUCH MEEKNESS WITHOUT LOWLINESS OF MIND!** And is absolutely necessary for keeping unity within a *"body of Christ"*.

"longsuffering"

This is,

"the power to bear up under a burden, a power to endure, and to resist pressure, the capacity to withstand a tremendous strain"

This ***"longsuffering"*** in relation to others is,

"self-restraint in the face of provocation"

It is the antithesis of haste and retaliation! LONG-SUFFERING STEMS FROM LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS! And is absolutely necessary for keeping unity within a ***"body of Christ"***.

"forbearing one another"

This ***"forbearing"*** is,

"putting up with and tolerating others"

The very word implies that sometimes people do things that are irritating! This ***"forbearing"***

"makes allowance for the fact that people are different, have different needs, and are at different places and seasons in their lives"

This ***"forbearing"***

"makes allowance for the fact that people have inconsistencies, oddities, shortcomings, mistakes, and flaws"

This ***"forbearing"*** has its foundation in love! Notice, ***"forbearing one another in love"***. FORBEARING STEMS FROM LONGSUFFERING, MEEKNESS AND LOWLINESS! And is absolutely necessary for keeping unity within a ***"body of Christ"***.

These qualities, ***"lowliness"***, ***"meekness"***, ***"longsuffering"*** and ***"forbearance"*** are absolutely necessary in, ***"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit"***. It is the individual responsibility of each member of a ***body of Christ*** to endeavor ***"to keep the unity of the Spirit"*** and part of that endeavor is that each individual member **strive to possess and retain "lowliness", "meekness", "longsuffering" and "forbearing"**.

2. There Are Certain Behaviors To Be Practiced And Avoided In Keeping Unity:

Due to the sinful nature of man, this relationship of **unity within a "body of Christ"** is very fragile! And due to the constant endeavors of Satan this unity is always in danger of being disrupted and destroyed! And therefore, each individual member of a ***"body of Christ"*** is exhorted to undertake the responsibility of, and to look after, and to preserve, and retain this unity! Each individual member of a ***"body of Christ"*** is responsible to behave in a way that is conducive to keeping such unity! And each individual member has the responsibility to avoid behaviors that are detrimental and destructive to such unity!

- Keeping Unity Requires An Endeavouring To Do So:

In (Ephesians 4:3),

"Endeavouring (*continuous, ongoing action*), **to keep the unity of the Spirit"**. The word, "Endeavouring" conveys the idea of, "*be diligent or constant in effort*"

- Keeping Unity Requires A Behavior That Corresponds With Our Salvation:

In (Ephesians 4:1),

"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"

The spiritual is to take precedence over all other callings!

- Keeping Unity Requires Living Above The Practices Of The World:

In (Ephesians 4:17), we read; **"walk not"**. And then he mentions two things, *"as other Gentiles walk"* and; **"the vanity of ... mind"**. In order to maintain unity in a **"body of Christ"** we must rise above the lifestyle and thinking of the world! This requires a **dying to self (verse 22)**, and a **putting away of sin (verses 25, 31)**, and a **renunciation of the unsaved life (verse 28)**. Flesh based responses to people, situations, and circumstances are destructive to unity in a **"body of Christ"**.

- Keeping Unity Requires An Inward Spiritual Power:

Notice (Ephesians 4:23-24). Everything is to be brought under the control of the Spirit! THERE MUST BE A TAKING CARE OF THE HEART!

- Keeping Unity Requires Not Sinning In Our Anger And Letting Go Of Such:

Notice (Ephesians 4:26). WE MUST NOT GET STUCK IN ANGER! There must be the avoidance of anger driven attitudes and behavior!

- Keeping Unity Requires That We Do Not Give Place To Satan And His Ways:

Notice (Ephesians 4:27). Satan is an opportunist, and we must not allow him to work in our thoughts, our emotions, or our lives!

- Keeping Unity Requires Proper Speaking:

Notice (Ephesians 4:29); **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth"**. This would be inclusive of talebearing (Proverbs 11:13; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20), slander (Proverbs 10:18), hasty words (Proverbs 29:20) and malicious words (III John 10). Rather that corrupt speaking; **"but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"**. These are right words (Job 6:25), and appropriate words (Proverbs 25:11), words that are spiritually instructive and enlightening, contributing to the betterment of others! Unity in a **"body of Christ"** requires a guarding of the tongue!

- Keeping Unity Requires That We Speak Not Evil Of One Another:

Notice (**James 4:11**). Included in evil speaking is: **Whispering**, (**Psalm 41:7; Proverbs 16:28**). This is,

"gossip, malicious, unconstrained conversation about other people"

Slander, (**Proverbs 10:18; 11:9**). This is,

"the making of false statements damaging to a person's reputation"

Backbiting, (**Proverbs 25:23**). This is,

"malicious talk about someone who is not present"

By evil speaking **friends are separated (Proverbs 16:28; 17:9)**, **deadly wounds are caused (Proverbs 18:8; 26:22)**, **strife is stirred (Proverbs 26:20)**, and there is **discord (Proverbs 6:19)**. From this, we see that evil speaking is **hurtful (Jeremiah 18:18)**, and **destructive**, and therefore called (**Proverbs 15:1**), *"grievous (painful and injurious) words"*. Therefore, the tongue that speaks evil is said to be as a **razor (Psalm 52:2)**, as a **sword (Psalm 64:3)**, as an **arrow (Jeremiah 9:81)**, and as **fire** and **poison (James 3:6, 8)**. This evil speaking of one another is **a means of devouring** one another, (**Galatians 5:15**). This evil speaking and what is included in it is **a very fearful thing (II Corinthians 12:20)**. This evil speaking is to be **put away, (Ephesians 4:31-32; I Peter 2:1)**. It is no wonder that James writes; *"Speak not evil one of another, brethren"*. This prohibition concerning one another is a reminder of **the power and the impact of the tongue for both good and evil (Proverbs 18:21; James 3:2-8)**. **UNITY AND EVIL SPEAKING OF ONE ANOTHER DO NOT CO-EXIST!**

- Keeping Unity Requires That Nothing Be Done Through Strife:

Notice (**Philippians 2:3**). Each member of a *"body of Christ"* has the responsibility not to allow their actions be controlled by strife!

- Keeping Unity Requires That Each One Not Be Desirous Of Vainglory:

Notice (**Philippians 2:3**). This is the desire for personal honor, attention, praise, and preeminence! It is the desire to make self the main object! If a *"body of Christ"* is to have unity, it is imperative that each member avoid the desire for personal glory! This spirit of *"vainglory"* is condemned throughout the Word of God (**Proverbs 17:19; Matthew 23:12; Luke 22:24; John 5:44; III John 9**).

- Keeping Unity Requires The Seeking Of Heavenly Wisdom:

Notice (**James 3:13-18**).

- Keeping Unity Requires A Marking Of Those Who Cause Division:

Notice (**Romans 16:17-18**).

3. There Are Certain Attitudes And Behaviors Toward one Another:

- Love One Another:

We see such in (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; II John 5). THIS IS FOUNDATIONAL! Paul exhorted in (Galatians 5:13),

"by love serve one another"

This is the same as (I Peter 4:10),

"minister ... to one another"

The idea conveyed is,

"to promote the welfare of others"

Each member of a *"body of Christ"* is to work for each other, and be of service and use to each other, and not to wait for others to love and serve them! And this service to one another is by love for each other, which makes service pleasant rather than grievous (I John 5:3).

- Kind One To Another:

Such is taught in (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32). To be *"kind"* is to,

"be generous, benevolent, gentle, well meaning, helpful, thoughtful, considerate, and friendly"

In (Romans 12:10), it is;

"Be kindly affectioned"

And in (Ephesians 4:32),

"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted"

The words *"affectioned"* and *"tenderhearted"* convey the idea that this kindness is,

"to proceed from attachment, endearment, care, and warm feelings"

This is the privilege, the opportunity, and the responsibility of every member of a *"body of Christ"* toward one another!

- Preferring One Another:

This is taught in (**Romans 12:10; 15:2-3; Philippians 2:3-4**). This means,

"to favor others over ourselves, to be partial to others rather than ourselves"

This means that each member of a members of a **"body of Christ"** prefer others within the body to be recognized and esteemed rather than themselves. Putting others ahead of themselves!

- Edifying One Another:

We see such in (**Romans 14:19; I Thessalonians 5:11**). This means that,

"we seek to instruct, to cultivate, to improve, to enlighten, to build, and to establish one another spiritually"

It should always be the concern of God's people never to hinder one spiritually, but to spiritually uplift brothers and sisters in Christ (**Romans 15:2; I Corinthians 14:26; II Corinthians 12:19; Ephesians 4:29**).

- Teach One Another:

Notice (**Colossians 3:16**). Though only a few hold the office of a teacher, there is a sense in which each individual member is to teach one another spiritually. To teach is,

"to instruct, to enlighten, to illuminate"

Each and every member of a **"body of Christ"** is to instruct, enlighten, and to illuminate by the example of their lives! Each member's life is to demonstrate, exemplify, and exhibit Christ and spirituality! This is what **Jesus** is referring to in the Sermon On The Mount (**Matthew 5:14-16**). The life of each member of a **"body of Christ"** is to be an example in spirituality, a pattern to imitate (**I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; James 5:10**). The prerequisite for teaching one another and being an example (**Colossians 3:16**), is found in the phrase, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"**. This **"teaching. ... teaching one another"** is part of unity within a **"body of Christ"**.

- Admonish One Another:

Notice (**Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16**). This **admonishing** conveys the idea of

"reminding one another of the duty of behavior becoming of child of God"

It includes warning one another, rebuking, reproving, and advising one another. This admonishing is to proceed from love for one another, and a deep concern for one another's spiritual well-being. DO NOT CONFUSE THE SPIRIT OF ADMONITION WITH THE SPIRIT OF CRITICISM! The qualification of the admonisher is stated in (**Colossians 3:15-16**), **"let the peace of God rule in your hearts ... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"**. This **"wisdom"** includes knowing when and how to **"admonish"** (**Proverbs 25:11**). The means of admonishing is to be spiritual; **"in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"**. The goal of admonishing is to be **spiritual restoration** (**Galatians 6:1**). To **"admonish one another"** is to **look out for one another!**

- Salute One Another:

This is spoken of in **(Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Peter 5:14)**. These verses have reference to the manner in which we are to greet one another. The word **"salute"** (**Romans 16:16**) means that we are,

"to greet one another with expressions of kindness, courtesy, honor, and respect"

The word **"kiss"** has reference to the custom of greeting at that time, and conveys the idea of warmth and affection! The words **"holy kiss"** speaks of the spirituality of the greeting! We read in **(I Peter 5:14)**,

"Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity"

We are not only to **"greet one another"** but we are to **"greet one another"** with honor, respect, warmth, affection and love, and it is to be a spiritual greeting! This command includes all personality types! Some are naturally more outgoing and friendly than others, but the command excludes no personality type! Something is terribly wrong, when it pains people to **"greet one another"**. It is difficult to **"minister"** to others, when you cannot even **"greet"** them properly! DO NOT WAIT TO BE GREETED, GREET OTHERS!

- Bear One Another's Burdens:

This is seen in **(Galatians 6:2)**. The word **"bear"** means,

"to carry and to absorb"

The word **"burdens"** has reference to,

"a weight, a pressure, that which exhausts the strength and spirit"

To **"bear one another's burdens"** involves,

"a willingness to take on one another's burdens"

We **"bear one another's burdens"** by showing sympathy, by assistance, by praying, by seeking to comfort, and to encourage! To **"bear one another's burdens"** is to **"fulfill the law of Christ"**. This is a reference to **(John 13:34)**. To **"bear one another's burdens"** requires a **heart of love**! Each individual has a responsibility to **"bear his own burden"** (**Galatians 6:5**), and while he **"bear his own burden"** he is to **"bear one another's burdens"**. OUR OWN BURDENS DO NOT EXEMPT US FROM BEARING THE BURDENS OF OTHERS! Members of a **"body of Christ"** **must not become so consumed with their own burdens, that they cannot be concerned with, and bear the burdens of others!** A **"body of Christ"** is a place of burden-bearing! THIS IS UNITY! To **"bear one another's burdens"** is a great privilege and opportunity to be a blessing to others, and also serves as a means to **not become stuck upon our own circumstances!** We are to **"bear one another's burdens"** as we would want others to bear our burdens! Members of a **"body of Christ"** are NOT TO WAIT FOR OTHERS TO BEAR THEIR BURDENS, BUT THEY ARE TO BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS!

- Forgive One Another:

Notice (**Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13**). Both of these passages are written to a *"body of Christ"* and the phrase, *"forgiving one another"* is indicative of the fact: "that we will be wronged by others within the body of Christ, and that whether or not we are actually wronged by others, we will feel ourselves wronged by others". The subject of **forgiveness of others** is something that all struggle with from time to time, especially when a person feels that they have a right not to forgive. WE MUST NEVER FEEL THAT IT IS OUR RIGHT NOT TO FORGIVE! Don't get caught in the trap of objecting to forgiveness due to the wrongness of what has been done! We are to have the spirit and attitude of forgiveness, whether someone attempts to make it right or not! A failure to forgive is extremely dangerous because of what it leads to. Of all the emotions that a human being is capable of feeling, **hate, anger, and resentment** are among the most **powerful** and **destructive**, and a refusal to **forgive** will result in **hate**, and can leave hearts **bitter** and **hardened** (**Matthew 24:10**). An **unforgiving spirit** brings about personal **torment** and **bondage** (**Matthew 18:23-35**). Forgiveness is one of the antidotes to *"bitterness", "wrath", "anger", "clamour"* and *"evil speaking"*. Know this, THERE CAN BE NO UNITY WHEN THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS! **Forgiveness** is a **choice**, God chose to forgive us, *"I will forgive their iniquities"* (**Jeremiah 31:34**). FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE AND SO IS A REFUSAL TO FORGIVE! And it is A CHOICE DETRIMENTAL TO UNITY! **Forgiveness is a choice not to remember**, God chose (**Jeremiah 31:34**), to forget, *"and I will remember their sin no more"*. Only God can entirely forget, but in human forgiveness, **the forgiver chooses not to bring attention to the sins of the forgiven!** TRUE FORGIVENESS CHANGES FOCUS AND PERSPECTIVE! **God** calls upon us to **forgive**; and the truth is, to be able to do so is a privilege! In **forgiveness**, the offended party must be willing, ready, and desirous to forgive the wrong done! Members of a *"body of Christ"* are to have the spirit and attitude of forgiveness! The motive and pattern of the forgiveness of others is **the forgiveness of God in Christ** (**Ephesians 4:32**), *"even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"*. Our **forgiveness** of others is to mirror **God's forgiveness in Christ!** In order to have unity, there must be ongoing forgiveness!

- Submit One To Another:

Notice (**Ephesians 5:21; I Peter 5:5**). The passage in **Ephesians** goes back to (**verse 18**), being; *"filled with the Spirit"*. And is the basis, and the prerequisite of *"Submitting yourselves one to another"*. This conveys the idea of

"giving in to one another; yielding to one another; the relinquishing self"

Peter puts it this way,

"all of you be subject one to another"

conveying the idea of,

"make yourself vulnerable to one another"

This requires being, *"clothed with humility"*. Both of these verses teach, that,

"there is a sense in which we are no longer to recognize ourselves as individuals, but totter as members one of another"

The teaching of these two verses is opposed to self-assertion, self-centeredness, individualism, and self-seeking! ALL OF WHICH ARE DETRIMENTAL TO UNITY! The teaching of these verses is opposed to haughtiness and selfish preference, and the stubborn insistence upon personal preferences! ALL OF WHICH IS DETRIMENTAL TO UNITY! The teaching of these two verses stands opposed to **striving for the mastery and personal advantage!** It gets back to **(Romans 15:1)**, *"not to please ourselves"* and **(Philippians 2:3)**, *"in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves"*. Again; *"Submit one to another"*. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE TO UNITY!

- Comfort One Another:

Notice **(I Thessalonians 4:18)**. To *"comfort"* is,

"to help, to try to cheer a person, to relieve, to refresh, to renew, to reassure, to commiserate, and to sympathize"

It is important that we always recognize that the **source** of *"comfort"* is not to tell people what they might want to hear, or the telling of untruths, but from the context of **(I Thessalonians 4:18)**, the source of *"comfort"* is the Word of God! The members of a *"body of Christ"* are to strive to *"comfort one another"* by directing one another to *"Thus saith the LORD"*. It is important that each member maintain a proper spiritual condition, whereby they can receive the Word of God and be comforted! And again, THIS IS NECESSARY TO UNITY!

- Exhort One Another:

Notice, **(Hebrews 3:13; 10:25)**. To *"exhort"* is,

"to urge, and to encourage one spiritually"

The necessity of such is found in the words; *"lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* and the urgency of this is found in the words; *"and so much the more as ye see the day approaching"*. This encouraging one another spiritually enhances the spirit of unity!

- Consider One Another:

Notice **(Hebrews 10:24)**. To *"consider one another"* has several facets. It is,

"to take the time and effort, and give attention to know the needs of others"

It is,

"to think about and be mindful one of another at all times"

It also carries the responsibility,

"to earnestly, seriously, and continually to consider the effects of our actions upon others"

The members of a **"body of Christ"** are to ponder the effects of their decisions and actions upon other members of the same body! It is our responsibility to ask ourselves,

"What seed am I planting by my decisions, my actions, and my speech?" "Do my decisions, actions, and speech encourage spirituality in others, or is it detrimental to the spirituality of others?"

The purpose of this consideration of one another is; **"to provoke (arouse, cause, prompt) unto love and good works"**. The members of a **"body of Christ"** are to diligently, and lovingly **"consider one another"** in everything that they do! THIS CONSIDERATION IS NECESSARY TO UNITY WITHIN THE BODY!

If a church is going to be **the church that people need**, THERE MUST BE A UNITY OF ONE within the church body in **doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory!** Again (Psalm 133:1),

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"

And such is necessary to being **the church that people need!**

12. A MAINTAINING OF A SENSE OF NECESSITY

HEBREWS 10:22-25

These verses contain several exhortations, and admonitions. The writer is issuing a **call to action**, seeking to inspire and encourage the readers to do something of tremendous importance. These urgings are followed by the phrase "**Let us**", an imperative, and a common phrase throughout the book of **Hebrews!** It is used thirteen times throughout the letter to the Hebrews (**4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 28; 13:13, 15**). With these exhortations the writer is **urging them to persevere in the faith, and the life that God has called them to live**, and this in the face of trials, temptations, difficulties, dangers, and heretics! The words "**Let us**" are imperative, which is expressive of that which is vitally important, crucial, and absolutely essential, indispensable, and urgent! These words; "**Let us**" occur three times in our text, and it is added at the end (**verse 25**),

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

SO MUCH THE MORE! SO MUCH THE MORE! SO MUCH THE MORE! Oh that those words would be God-planted deep within our hearts! The fact that the end is near, adds to the importance of our duties to God! The fact that we do not have much time left makes our duties to God even more crucial and necessary! The fact that we are nearing the end adds to the urgency of what we are to be doing! If we are going to be **the church that people need**, WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO! **Doing the Lord's business the Lord's way, for His honor and glory** is our top priority! And the closer we get to the end, the more we ought to be aware of such! Each "**body of Christ**" must MAINTAIN A SENSE OF ABSOLUTE NECESSITY in **doing the Lord's business the Lord's way, for His honor and glory!** THIS IS INDISPENSABLE if we are going to be **the church that people need!** Again, SO MUCH THE MORE! SO MUCH THE MORE! SO MUCH THE MORE!

I. THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE SHOULD BE AN INCENTIVE IN OUR SERVICE TO GOD

The days in which we live should not be a detriment, but rather an incentive in our duty to God as one of the Lord's churches! We have been hearing for decades, and I believe many times as an excuse,

"The Lord churches are this way because of the times in which we live"

And though there is some truth to such, it is not an excuse or a license not to be what we ought to be! But rather, the days in which we live ought to add to the importance and urgency of what we are to be and do! It is like Mordecai's message to Esther (Esther 4:14). He is basically saying to her,

"God has positioned you exactly where he wants you for such a time as this, and you have an obligation to fulfill"

This was a very serious, and pressing, and urgent time! An eleventh hour situation, time was running out! And in that situation there was the cause of God, and Mordecai and Esther had been so positioned by God, and they had an awesome responsibility to the cause of God! The Lord's churches today, like Esther have been assigned a specific time and place for the cause of God!

"For such a time as this"

When society has an open disdain and hostility toward God and the things of God, and find God to be a nuisance and an annoyance, and are bent on eliminating any semblance of God from everyday life, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE THAT STAND FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

When we are surrounded by filthiness, defilement, vileness, wickedness, ungodliness, abomination, blasphemy, degradation, and heresy, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

When the world is almost thoroughly humanistic and filled with evolutionary thinking, and a me-first philosophy, and when people are mesmerized by the world's twisted and perverted fantasies, philosophies, and ideas, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE THAT REALIZE WE HAVE BEEN GOD-PLACED FOR THIS TIME!

"For such a time as this"

When homes, marriages, churches, and lives are being robbed, looted, ransacked, and stolen, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE STANDING FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

When the dysfunctional has become normal, when there is mass confusion in knowing the difference between good and evil, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE DECLARING THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

When the vast majority of those who profess Christ are cold, careless, lax, and indifferent toward the matters of God, and who have no heart to worship God, and when there is no fire, zeal, and passion for God, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE ZEALOUS FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

When so many have swallowed hook, line, and sinker, the devil's lie that the Lord's churches should be more accepting, more inclusive, and more accommodating of that which is sinful and leads to more sinfulness, WE NEED TO BE A PEOPLE WHO REMAIN SEPARATE FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD!

"For such a time as this"

Mordecai is saying to Esther,

"God has given you the position that you are in for such a time as this. Esther it is your turn"

Mordecai is saying to Esther,

"this is your hour, and God has positioned you exactly where He wants you for such a time as this, and you have a God obligation to fulfill"

And so it is for the Lord's churches today! **Esther was brought to see that her own lifestyle and comfort were to take a backseat for the cause of God!** OH, MAY THOSE WHO MAKE UP THE LORD'S CHURCHES BE BROUGHT TO SEE THE SAME! Think of people such as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Apostles, and Paul, these are men that served God through the difficulties, the trials, the obstacles, of the times in which they lived! **All through history there have been men and women who have faithfully served God!** We have all known people who have done so! AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! There have been men and women who have not bowed to the gods, and who have not been sucked in by the world's corruption, who have lived above the world's ways, who have not been led away by the error of the wicked, AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! There have been men and women who have been firm and decided for God, immovable, unwavering, who have displayed great spiritual resolve, and great courage and backbone, AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! There have been men and women who have unashamedly declared their allegiance, their commitment, their loyalty to God, AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! There have been men and women who have displayed a strict adherence to truth, without compromise, who have openly declared their belief in the BIBLE, who have stood firm for the BIBLE, and who would not let go of the BIBLE. AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! There have been men and women who have stood against the wiles, and the advances, and the attacks of Satan, who have stood against the enemies of God, who have stood against the sins of their time, and who have faced and defeated the Goliath's of their time, AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN!

"For such a time as this"

We are here to **glorify God**, to **show forth God**, to **be holy**, and **everything that God has called us to be**, to **walk with God**, and to **please God!** Thank God, that others have had their time, their place, their turn, and they have faithfully fulfilled their time, and have faithfully taken the place that God gave them, and took their turn to do what God would have them to do, AND NOW IT IS OUR TIME, IT IS OUR TURN! Like Esther we have a God-given role to fulfill! **We have a responsibility to God, and to God's people, and to future generations**, and WE MUST NOT LOSE OUR FOCUS WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!

"For such a time as this"

We must not embrace or give way to the ways and philosophies of a world gone mad! We must not allow our minds to be clouded by the philosophies and carnal reasoning of the ungodly! We must not allow Biblical convictions to be weakened! WE MUST NOT RESIGN OURSELVES TO THE STATUS

QUO! But like Esther (**Esther 4:16**), **be determined to give all, even life itself for the cause of God!** If we are going to be **the church that people need**, WE MUST FEEL AN URGENT NECESSITY UPON US!

We live in the days described in (**II Timothy 3:1-8, 13-14**). Times that are rebellious and sinful, times of great hatred and opposition to everything that Jesus Christ represents! These are hostile and aggressive times! These are times in which there has been a massive infiltration of that which is absolutely contrary to God, and days of great spiritual decay! And the Lord's churches in such times are called upon to **be doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory!**

In Joel's day (**Joel 1:4**), there was the plague of locusts! These were **successions of destruction!** And here we are living in a time far worse than this plague of locusts! Satan and the forces of Hell, the enemies, and haters, and deniers of God, like the plague of locusts have relentlessly swarm after swarm come upon land, upon government, upon the judicial system, upon schools, upon families, upon marriages, and homes and **stripped them** of respect, faith, and dependence upon God! Ours is a society stripped of values, morality, justice, integrity, that which is good and decent, and beneficial, and sanity, and common sense, things far more precious than what we read of (**Joel 1**). The plague of locusts of our day is more horrific and monstrous, more widespread, more contrary and opposing to the good of man, and far more destructive, and far more troublesome, and destabilizing, and crippling, and degrading, and heartbreaking than the locusts of Joel's day! **AND THE CHURCHES OF THE LORD MUST FEEL A URGENT NECESSITY to be doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory!** Here we are in a time when the majority of those who profess to be God's people are spellbound by modern day sorcery, looking for solutions and answers in that which is futile, useless, and empty! A time, when even God's people are so distracted, consumed, and entangled in the affairs of life that they cannot worship God! Here we are in a time when even God's people are more influenced by the godless philosophies, reasonings, viewpoints, goals, and pursuits of the world than they are the matters of God! Here we are when so many of God's people have more attraction to recreation, entertainment, school, careers etc. than spiritual matters! **AND THE CHURCHES OF THE LORD MUST NOT LOSE THEIR FOCUS WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!** Here we are in a time when many of God's people have had their conscience seared, and when many are living in the prisons and dungeons of this world, going through life with a ball and chain, living lives of emptiness and despair, **AND WE MUST NOT GIVE IN TO THE STATUS QUO!**

THESE ARE THE TIMES IN WHICH GOD HAS PLACED US! Days when even God's people want to walk like the world, look like the world, talk like the world, and think like the world! These are extremely difficult, trying, threatening, dangerous, and hazardous times! But the fact that we live in such days **is never an excuse or a license** for indifference and apathy concerning the Lord's work! It is **never an excuse** for lack of interest, enthusiasm, concern or passion in the matters of the Lord! It is **never an excuse** for spiritual slackness, coldness, carelessness, or lingering! But rather, the fact that we do live in the last days of the last days, and that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, this is an incentive, a motivation to be more earnest, more serious, more diligent, more dedicated, more zealous, and more impassioned in the service of the Lord! The fact that we do live in such wicked days, any adds to the urgency, and manifests the extreme importance of our duties to God! If we are going to be **the church that people need**, we must have an awareness, an understanding, and a grasp of the times in which we live, and **WE MUST MAINTAIN A SENSE OF URGENCY AND NECESSITY!**

II. THERE MUST BE A SENSE OF THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF DOING GOD'S WORK

In a day when the "*religious world*" has an improper perspective concerning the Lord's work, seeking to be loved, accepted, and approved by the ungodly, and when churches feel compelled to revamp their services to accomplish such, and become the world to accomplish such, WE NEED TO FEEL THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of **doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory!** We must be a people fully persuaded that **it is not our duty to make God or His Word acceptable, BUT TO DECLARE GOD AND HIS WORD!** And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

Those who make up the Lord's churches MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY **to be what we need to be**, regardless whether we are accepted and loved by the world!

In a day when the "*religious world*" has for their mission and focus being successful by the world's standard of size and numbers, we must be more and more persuaded that **the Lord's churches are successful if they be and do what God would have them be and do!** Numbers must never become the focus and the goal, because if they ever become the focus and goal, **you will adopt unscriptural methods to attain the goal!** Oh, may we understand that mere numbers and so-called "*success*" is not what we are here for! WE ARE HERE TO UPHOLD GOD'S STANDARDS! Oh, may we firmly grasp this wonderful truth that **it is not our business to appease and pacify people so that they will join the church, nor do we need to appease people so that they will stay!** THE LORD ADDS AND HE DOES SO WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF SCRIPTURE! Oh, may we not be interested in people joining, but **the Lord adding!** It is God that adds to His churches, and He does so deliberately, and with purpose, and according to His own order, and He does not need our help! WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY of a **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, and God-situated church membership!** THESE ARE WONDERFUL TRUTHS THAT MUST BE FIRMLY GRASPED! And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

In a day when the "*religious world*" chooses their pastors that they deem best to attain their secular goals, WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY of a **God-added, God-placed, God-positioned, God-situated membership and pastorate for that particular membership!** Oh, that we be more and more convinced that the who, when, and where of a **God-placed membership and pastorate** are according to God's purpose, direction, and wisdom, and are a branch of His love, care, and protection of His churches! And it is this **God-placed membership and pastorate** that will result in a very special relationship, alliance, and bond between church and pastor! It needs to be the ever growing conviction of the Lord's churches that **a pastor is GIVEN BY GOD to His churches for the purpose of PASTORING!** And this is for the benefit and good of His churches! WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY that a **God-called, God-placed pastor is essential to the church being what people need!** And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

The Lord's churches are **distinct by design, in purpose, and in function**, so much so that IT IS UNLIKE

ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION UPON EARTH! And in this day of "*seeker friendly*" and "*seeker sensitive churches*" when the emphasis is upon **giving people what they want, and what is pleasing to their flesh, and in line with their perceived needs, and in line with their twisted notions of God**, there is an ever-present and ever-increasing danger of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ falling prey to such thinking, and losing their God-given distinction! But the Lord's churches must remain as the Lord established them to be separate (*fenced off*), independent, different, and detached from the ways of the secular and religious world! WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY that the Lord's churches are to be set apart from the policies, the philosophies, the reasonings, the manners, the values, the loyalties, the goals the pursuits, and the ways of both the religious and secular world! And **set apart to the Lord!** This is the Lord's church, it is not mine, it is not yours, and it is not ours, IT BELONGS TO HIM! He chose it! He bought it! He owns it! We are not at liberty to do as we please, IT IS HIS, AND IT BELONGS TO HIM! As the Lord's church we are distinguished from others! And WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY, not to be allured by contemporary culture and we must not allow our self to become just another religious organization! WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, not to allow the secular or the "religious" world dictate what we believe and practice! WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, that our God-given distinction be maintained! And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

In a day when the "*religious world*" has a secular and carnal objective, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, that the Lord always be our foundation, center, and purpose! WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, that it always be about the Lord, and that we always move in the direction of the Lord! WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, that He always be our ambition, our aspiration, and our continual quest, And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

In a day of upheaval and change, when constancy, regularity steadiness, dependability, and reliability in Biblical matters is quite rare, and anything but the norm, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, of being a people rooted and grounded in truth! In a day filled with opposing forces, barriers, and obstacles, and when the devil's programs and agenda is more accepted, and tolerated, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY of being firm, resolute, adamant, unwavering, unshakable, and valiant for the cause of the Lord! In a day when people want to do away with the absolutes of a Holy God, and want nothing to do with the God of the BIBLE and will not tolerate Biblical convictions, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, to have a strict adherence to the Word of God, complying with it, acting in accordance with it, conforming to it, submitting to, and be obeying it! WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, of being a people who grasp, hold, and stick to the ways of God! And again;

"and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"

In a day when the "*religious world*" is becoming further and further removed from the Word of God, and have become silent concerning the real needs of mankind, **the salvation of their souls**, WE MUST FEEL A NECESSITY, to declare the BIBLE! The message of the BIBLE is **Christ**, and He is the answer to the dysfunction all around us! **The message of the BIBLE must seize and captivate our hearts and minds!** But in the "religious" world the plain message of the BIBLE has been replaced by programs, activities, and so-called "ministries". WE MUST FEEL A NECESSITY to preach the BIBLE in a straightforward, plain,

firm, steadfast, resolute, determined, unwavering, and unbending way! WE MUST FEEL A NECESSITY, to be committed to preaching the BIBLE, like we believe it, and with earnestness, fervency, passion, and a sense of urgency! This world is a mixed up place, filled with that which is vile and wretched, and a people who have been deceived, and who are pursuing after and clinging in to what will not work. We have the solution, the answer, the remedy for that which is futile, useless, hollow, empty, and hopeless! **We have what the world so desperately needs**, and WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, without becoming the world, to share, and communicate what they so desperately need! And again;

“and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”

In this day when we so much need spiritual uplifting, recovery, awakening, stirring, energizing, and rejuvenating, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, to be a church that bands together in prayer! WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY, to be a church committed to taking everything to the Lord in prayer! We must be committed to praying for lives to be changed, for chains to be broken, for showers of blessing to come down, for one another, and for marriages and homes! Commit to praying that the truth be preached, and stood for at all times! Commit to praying for more courage and steadfastness! Commit to praying that God would grant us the ability, the burden, and the power to be what we ought to be! And again;

“and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”

In this day of superficial, shallow, empty, and hypocritical "worship" when the "worship" is saturated with the things of the world, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY, of being a people who come apart from the world to worship God in spirit and truth! In this day when most of what is called "worship" is a sham, and religious entertainment, WE MUST FEEL THE URGENT NECESSITY of maintaining an environment and atmosphere of true worship! In this day when the vast majority have designed their "worship" services to please the flesh, and to make people feel comfortable, WE MUST FEEL THE NEED to be a people impacted by who God is, and who worship God in spirit and truth! And again;

“and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”

In this day of secular religion, and a religion void of spirituality, WE MUST FEEL THE NECESSITY of being a people who seek to excel spiritually! It must be our commitment to put forth the labor, the exertion, and the time necessary to **be always moving forward spiritually, increasing, developing, and advancing spiritually!** And again;

“and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”

Again, it is imperative that we do not become what the world wants, and thus, ceasing to be what the world needs! The times in which we live are not an **excuse** for spiritual indifference and apathy! The times in which we live should not be a **detriment** to doing the Lord's business the Lord's way for His honor and glory! But rather, the times in which we live should be an **incentive** to be more diligent, more dedicated, more zealous, more impassioned and determined in the Lord's work! These days in which we live should manifest the importance and the urgency of being what the Lord would have us to be and do! And again;

“and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”

Oh, that the Lord would help us to always be doing THE LORD'S BUSINESS THE LORD'S WAY, FOR HIS HONOR AND GLORY! And that we would BE THE CHURCH THAT PEOPLE NEED! As Paul desired for the Philippians church, **(Philippians 2:15-16)**, may such be our desire as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

“blameless, and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life”

OH, MAY THIS ALWAYS BE US! That we would always **be the church that people need!** Always **doing the Lord's business, the Lord's way, for His honor and glory!**