GROWTH IS NOT ACCIDENTAL

Our text for this message is Acts 2:42-47, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls, And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The subject of this message today is "Growth Is not Accidental." This subject carries with it the idea that before Growth there must be some other things to happen. A few years ago I read an article in one of the leading publications of our day. In this article they were discussing the subject of Growth. A writer had interviewed leaders from many of the larger religions and cults. He had asked them to give him some reasons why there particular organization had grown and flourished like they had. At the end of the article, he summarized the reasons given and found that many of these organizations had given the same answers. The thing that really astonished me about this article was that I recognized that the principles that they had given were principles that the Lord had given to His church. Now, isn't that amazing? Here, we see where false religions and cults have taken some concepts that Our Lord gave to His church and their making those same concepts work for them in building up their false religions. Now, before I'm misunderstood, let me quickly say that I realize that in the eyes of the Lord what their doing will come to nought. I also realize that the Lord is building his own church. Psalms 127:1 states, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The reality that I'm trying to convey is this. We cannot just sit down and do nothing and expect the Lord to bless. The same Bible that says the Lord adds to His church also tells us to represent Him and tell others. He does His work through us. If we refuse to be obedient to His commands, we can't expect the Lord to bless us. As we Go - we will Grow.

Grace Missionary Baptist Church
1823 ALMOND MAIL ROAD
HOUSTON, TEXAS
May the Lord help us to quit trying to please the people and say what "they want" to hear. The best way that we can "help" others is by doing what the Lord says. We'll find that if we please Him, then we'll be doing what's best for those around us.

II. THEY HOLD FORTH PROGRESS
This principle is seen in 1 Peter 2:9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

This concept is of extreme importance. They said, we never tell others about the problems or difficulties that we are having in our organization. We always hold forth progress. I try to preach to our church that we are to pray to the Lord about the problems and praise the Lord before the people. This concept is certainly a Biblical concept as noted in the above scripture. He did not say to shew forth the problems - but rather shew forth His praises.

An example of this is seen in Mark 5:1-20. After the Lord delivered the Maniac of Gadara he didn't tell him to go and tell about the problems that were experienced, but rather, he told him to go forth and publish the blessings of the Lord. Notice Mark 5:19 for this truth. "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

III. THEY DIRECTLY APPROACHED PEOPLE
They do not build a big building and then wait for the people to come to them, but rather they go out after them. Now dear friends, this is another Biblical concept. Notice the following scriptures which verify this statement. Acts 2:46, Acts 8:4, and II Cor. 5:20.

In the midst of an age when so much activity abounds everywhere, it seems like God's people are neglecting this most important part in the Lord's work.

IV. THEY HAVE A GREAT ZEAL
This simply means that they have a goal or vision. This is certainly needful because without it there can be no growth or progress. Once again this is a Biblical concept. Notice Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

I have often been told that my zeal, goals, and vision are unattainable and possibly they are, but I had rather have goals and not attain them than to never have any vision or goal. If the Lord can use me to stimulate and stir others in the service of the Lord, even though I never reach my goals, then I believe the Lord has helped me to accomplish part of my vision.

Yes, we need to be zealous, enthusiastic, and fervent in our work for the Lord. We have a Living Saviour and a Living Hope and as a result, we need to be a lively people - not a bunch of lifeless dead heads.

V. THEY SHEPHERD THEIR CONVERSANTS.
This simply means that they watch out and care for the ones who are new in their congregation. This again is a Biblical Concept. Notice the great commission. Matt. 28:19 through 20.

A lot of the time, I'm afraid that in the work of the Lord we look at someone walking down the aisle and accepting Christ as Saviour and then praise the Lord for their decision and then forget them. If they stumble or seemingly fall back in the ways of the world, we usually hear someone say - "Well, I knew they wouldn't last." We fail to recognize that the Church is to help the babes in Christ grow and mature. If you're a
member of the church it's just as much your responsibility to help the weaker brothers and sisters in Christ as it is anyone. A lot of the time you get the idea that folk feel like they have to be "ordained" before they can do anything in the service of the Lord. That's just not true. May God help all of us to watch over one another with brotherly care and love. This is Shepherding the Converts.

VI. THEY EXPECT THEIR CONVERTS TO LIVE RIGHT.

This means that they expect the converts to live according to the standards that they have set up. This is just another way of saying that they expect their converts to live a Separated Life to be different than the world. Once again, this is a Biblical Concept that the Lord gave to His Children. II Cor. 6: 17 states, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

As children of God, we've been (1) called out. (John 6: 44). We're not of this world, it's systems, practices, philosophy or its future. We have been delivered from the power or darkness of this world and translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. (Col. 1: 13)

As Children of God, we've been (2) set apart for a specific use. Notice I Cor. 6: 19-20, II Cor. 6: 14-18, Eph. 2: 10, Phil. 2: 12-16. We are to be different than the world in our attitudes, actions, articulations, and appearances.

Also as children of God, we are to (3) hold forth the Word (Phil. 2: 16), and (4) reach forth to those who are lost (Matthew 4: 19). Even though we are to be different than the world we need to watch out that we fall not into some sins which are horrible and hurtful to the work of the Lord. I refer to these two sins as the Pre-eminent or Prouful Spirit and the Pharisaic Spirit. One deals with self-exaltation and the other with self-gloration.

The importance of our living right is 2-fold. Rewards for you in eternity and redemption for others due to your Godly example. II Cor. 5: 20 tells us we are Christ's representatives to a lost and dying world.

The ingredients that are involved in this separated walk are as follows: We must realize that this sanctification is a work of the Lord as we submit to Him. I Thess. 5: 23. It's a progressive work, (Prov. 4: 18, Heb. 6: 1). The Word of God is very important in accomplishing this principle. (John 7: 17). Also included in this is self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer. The sanctification is not by you - it's done by the Lord as you submit to His Leadership. This realization is very important.

May God help us to see that the Ungodly World has taken principles or concepts that the Lord gave to His Children and making them work for their organizations. May the Lord awaken us to the need to do His work His Way. It works. The Word of God will do the work of God. Let's study it - meditate upon it - become doers of it - and then watch God work in a wonderful and marvellous way.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

JOHNNY WILLIAMS

We have already discussed in this series through the book of James, "The Trials From Without," and "The Temptations From Within." Now we take up a subject of rejoicing for all of us who know the Lord as our Saviour, "The Treasures from Above." In James 1: 17-18 we read: EVERY GOOD GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE AND COMETH DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS, WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING. OF HIS OWN WILL HE GIVE US THE WORD OF TRUTH, THAT WE SHOULD BE A KIND OF FIRST-FRUITS OF HIS CREATURES.

I. THE GIFTS OF GOD

Last month, the first thing we noticed about the temptations we experience is that they do not come from God, but from Satan. In the first part of v. 17, James continues to teach this truth by stressing the positive side. Just as we must admit that no temptation comes from God, we must also admit all good things comes only from Him. In the world of the 1980's with all it's scientific achievements, we are many times led to believe that man of himself has the ability to solve all his problems and eventually create that "perfect world" we are promised every time a presidential election rolls around. The truth is, such just is not the case. All good things come from God.

The words "Every Good and Perfect Gift" tell us something of what God gives. Some Bible commentators understand this to mean that God gives "Good Gifts", referring to all that is "benevolent" and "Perfect gifts", referring to that which is "entire or complete." I do not believe that interpretation does any injustice to scripture at all. There are many examples in scripture where God has supplied a need that a person had. Moses, Abraham, and Noah are just three that come to mind. For Moses, God provided a basket that his life would be spared as an infant. For Abraham, God provided a ram so that he would
not have to give his son as a sacrifice. For Noah, God provided instructions on how to build an Ark that he and his families' lives might be spared. Many Christians today, give testimonies of God supplying a particular need in their lives today. These are God's gifts of Benevolence.

There are also some things mentioned in scripture that you cannot measure in terms of money, property, or prosperity. Gal. 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." No one I know has all these fruits in operation at the same time, although I do believe we need to strive to attain as many as possible. The only place we can acquire these fruits is from God. Many today are trying to create a world in which these fruits abound by law or even education. However, they do not come from men, only from God. All good and perfect things come from God.

II. THE GREATNESS OF GOD.

We could write another series of articles on the attributes of God. At this time, however, we will focus on the one attribute mentioned by James in this particular passage of scripture, that God is unchangeable. James called Him in verse 17, "The Father of Lights, with whom is no variability." In our world of mistrust, slick salesmanship, and uncertainty, it should give us great comfort that we can depend on God to keep His Word. Mal. 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord and I change not." The Word of God also makes the same statement concerning Jesus Christ in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

There is no change in God concerning (1) His Person, (2) His Purposes, (3) or His Plans. As far as His person is concerned, He is and always will be God. He cannot turn bad because He is Holy. He cannot get better, because He's Perfect. He cannot get smarter because He knows everything that is happening, has happened, or will ever happen. He cannot go anywhere, because He is everywhere. He cannot get stronger, because He is all-powerful. As far as His purposes are concerned, they are still the same. His purpose for His children is to live for Him. His purpose for His local church is to carry out His commission. His purpose in His coming again is to rule and reign forever. As far as His plans are concerned, they will be carried out. His past plans were completed at Calvary. His present plans are being completed now. He will complete His future plans Himself. All His plans involve the preaching, promoting, and practices of the Gospel that will redeem man's soul. This has never, and will never change.

III. THE GRACE OF GOD.

The Greatest Treasure from above is that of the New Birth provided through the death of Christ on the cross. Verse 18 says, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." The phrase "Of His own will," is another way of expressing the meaning of the word "Grace", which means "unmerited favor." Even though we were undeserving, God still was willing to send His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. He didn't have to do it; He wasn't required to do it. He wasn't forced to do it. He did it of His own free will.

We today, who are saved, heard the Gospel that told us of our need of Christ, by the preaching of God's Word. James said God begat us with "the Word of truth." Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." As the Word of God is presented we come face to face with the Gospel. The Holy Spirit then applied that Gospel to our Hearts. When we believe it, and then repent of our sins, are saved. Paul wrote by inspiration in Rom. 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth: to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

James calls us a "kind of first-fruits." The word "first-fruits" seems to have two uses in scripture, (1) That which is first, the beginning, or that which has the priority of time (2) That which is a part or a portion of the whole which is to follow; as the first sheaf of ripe grain was not the only first in time, but was the earnest or pledge of the entire harvest that was to follow. In Romans 16:15, Paul mentioned a family that was one of his first converts in Achaia, thus using the first definition. I believe it is used in that same sense here. James was writing to people who were early converts of the Gospel under the ministry of the Apostles. All the saved today are "a kind of first-fruits." We have not yet seen the completion of the harvest. Greater days lie ahead for God's people if we realize we belong to Him and commit ourselves in faith to do His will.
grouped as they were. But an understanding of the meaning of their names reveals a remarkable lesson of spiritual value. For the arrangement of the twelve months of the year reveals the step-by-step spiritual development of one who comes to God by faith.

January represents the opportunity to be saved, and the invitation that is given to the unbeliever to receive Christ as his Saviour. As January is the first month of twelve months, salvation is the first step of twelve steps in man's personal relationship with God.

There are three main thoughts connected with the month of January: 1) January was named for Janus, the Roman "god of the Doorway." Since the door was the beginning of the house, Janus came to be the god that presided over all beginnings: the first hour of the day; the first day of the month; and, the first month of the year. January, then, is the door or gateway to the new year. 2) Janus was also depicted as a figure with two faces looking in the opposite direction. He could look forward and backward at the same time. Hence, another reason January was named after him. It is the month that looks backward to the old year and forward to the new. 3) From Janus comes our English word, "janitor," the "keeper of the keys."

All of this is highly typical of the doctrine of salvation in the Christian faith. The "door of salvation" is opened, and the invitation is given by the Holy Spirit to those who are lost. They are bidden to enter by faith and be saved. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture," John 10:9. In Acts 14:27, it tells how that God had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." And in the parable of the Ten Virgins, it is states that the day will come when the "door" will be shut, Matt. 25:10.

It is significant that the first month of the year typifies and signifies that open door to salvation, and the invitation that God, the "Keeper of the Keys," gives to all who are lost to enter in by repentance and faith. This is the first step in man's approach to a holy God. And when he enters the "door of salvation," he is told that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new," II Cor. 5:17. This new believer's salvation is secure, for he has trusted in the One who is the "Keeper of the Keys," the One who eternally holds the "keys to Hell and death," Rev. 1:18.

As we study the other months this year, we will see an amazing demonstration of the spiritual development of the man who enters the "door of salvation" and begins his walk with God. Coincidence, or Divine Providence, God's plan with man is clearly defined in the naming and order of the twelve months of the year.

"God holds the key to all unknown. And I am glad, If other hands should hold the key, Or if He trusted it to me, I might be sad.

What if tomorrow's cares were here without its rest? I'd rather He unlock the door,And as the hours swing open,say, 'My will is best.'

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**Friday - 7:30PM**
Evangalistic Service
Special Speaker: Bro. George White

**Saturday - 7:30PM - Film**
"The Touch Of the Master's Hand."

**Sunday - Regular Services**
Special Speaker: Bro. George White
SOME THINGS THAT CAUSED JESUS TO WEEP

Introduction:
A. There are different things which cause people to weep.
   1. Some weep with joy.
   2. Some weep because they are sad.
   3. Such was the case with Jesus.
B. He wept because much was wrong in the city of Jerusalem.
   1. Last week of life spent there.
   2. He overlooks the city and weeps.
   3. Why? Because much was wrong.

I. HE WEPT BECAUSE HE SAW A CITY FILLED WITH FALSE RELIGION!
   A. Jerusalem was a religious city.
      1. In fact it was the religious center of the world.
      2. If any people should have known the Lord, it should have been them.
      3. But their religion had degenerated to a cold, formal religion.
      4. See Mark 7:6.
   B. I feel confident that He feels the same way today as He looks on our cities.
      1. 65% of population are church members.
      2. Only 40% of population attend church.
      3. On a given Sunday morning only about one-third of people in church.
      4. Not all of them are saved and know the Lord.
      5. He — no doubt — weeps over lost, but religious America.

II. HE WEPT BECAUSE HIS OWN DISCIPLES HAD GROWN COLD AND INDIFFERENT!
   A. Shortly after He wept over the city.
      1. He was arrested.
      2. Peter followed afar off.
      4. He did not stand up for the Lord.
   B. Today — many like Peter — cold and indifferent.
      1. Rolls filled with people’s names who never attend church.
      2. Some who once loved the Lord — no longer do.
      3. Grown cold and indifferent.
      4. It must grieve the Lord.

III. HE WEPT BECAUSE OF LOST SOULS!
   A. In text:
      1. Weeping — over lost city.
      2. He had visited them — knew not day of visitation.
      3. They rejected Him as Savior.
      4. Now He was weeping over lost city.
   B. Lord looks down today.
      1. He sees lost populous.
      2. The majority rejecting Him.
      3. He must weep over our cities.

IV. HE WEPT BECAUSE OF THE IMPENDING DOOM OF THE CITY!
   A. Luke 19:43, 44
      1. He predicted their impending doom.
      2. It happened in A.D. 70 under Titus — the Roman army.
   B. God’s judgment must be about to fall on America.
      1. People unconcerned.
      2. Sin abounding.
      3. People are away from Lord.
      4. Judgment is inevitable.

Conclusion: Don’t be like the Citizens of Jerusalem.
   1. Use your opportunities.
   2. Be saved today.
   3. Get right with God.

GOD’S PLAN FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH

Text: Acts 11:19-30
Introduction:
A. A successful Church is not necessarily a big church. Successful means "to achieve the desired goals, "prosperous", "flourishing" and "progressing."
B. The word Church means " a called out assembly of saved, scripturally baptized believers who have covenanted themselves together to carry out the commands of Christ."
C. The Church at Antioch had the Biblical characteristics of a successful church.

I. THE SUCCESS OF ANY CHURCH DEPENDS UPON THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD.
   A. Acts 11:21
   B. Man is not the indispensable ingredient. God is the supreme necessity. I Cor. 3: 6-7.

II. THE SUCCESS OF ANY CHURCH DEPENDS UPON THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.
   A. Acts 11:19 - "...preaching the word..." When a church begins to leave off the preaching of the Word of God, trouble is ahead. The preaching of the Word of God is of paramount importance in the Lord’s Church. Nothing is to take the
place of the preached Word of God.
B. God commands "Preach the Word" - II Timothy 4:2.
C. "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". I Cor. 1:21.

III. THE SUCCESS OF ANY CHURCH DEPENDS UPON THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF TEACHING.
A. Acts 11:25-26, Barnabas and Paul taught the people at Antioch. The ultimate success of a Church depends upon one generation teaching and grounding the next generation in the truths of God's Word.
B. The purpose of teaching is two-fold:
   1. That people might know the truth.
      II Timothy 2:2.
C. No Church can prosper and be successful in the eyes of God without being dedicated to teaching the Word of God.

IV. THE SUCCESS OF ANY CHURCH DEPENDS UPON THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.
A. Acts 13:2 - God blesses a mission-minded Church. A Church who will support Missionaries with prayers and offerings will be blessed of God.
B. A Church that is not Missionary in spirit and practice cannot claim to be a successful Church.

V. FOR A CHURCH TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THE CHURCH MUST BE A GIVING CHURCH.
A. Acts 11:29-30, God's work is to be supported by the offering of God's people.
B. God loves a cheerful giver. I Cor. 9:6-8.
C. One cannot out give God. Malachi 3:7-10.

VI. A CHURCH CANNOT BE SUCCESSFUL UNLESS THE CHURCH IS CHRIST-LIKE.
A. Acts 11:26. "...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Christian means "Christ-like".
B. Galatians 5:22-23.
C. Titus 2:11-12.

VII. A CHURCH CANNOT BE SUCCESSFUL UNLESS THERE IS FAITHFULNESS.
A. Acts 11:23, "...and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Barnabas encouraged the people of Antioch to make up their minds to be faithful to the Master.
B. I Cor. 4:2

Conclusion:
May God help us through His power to have a successful Church.

Help SPREAD "THE WORD"

PLAYING CHURCH AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS

ELVIN CROCKER

Text: Romans 12:1-11; I Cor. 12:12-27

Introduction:
A. This text encourages fervency in the Lord's work, not slackness.
B. Too many today just play church.
C. Play means: "to move aimlessly about, to deal or behave frivolously".

I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR GOD'S CHILDREN JUST TO PLAY CHURCH.
A. This is done when God's Word is ignored, (Contains many instructions for us -- James 1:22). How to Live, Work, Give, and Attend.
B. This is done when self-interests precede the Lord's cause, Luke 14:26, 27, 33. (Hate means: love less.)
C. This is done when people forget the purpose of their redemption -- I Cor. 6:19,20.
D. This is done when the value of a New Testament Church is overlooked -- Eph. 5:25; 3:21.

II. IT MAY BE DONE AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS.
A. It may be done at the expense of Jesus. Gal. 2:20.
B. It may be done at the expense of the pastor. (Many heartaches, burdens and even extra work.)
C. It may be done at the expense of the faithful few. (Someone must keep things going.)
D. It may be done at the expense of the lost. (Possibly your own family.) Cf. II Sam. 24:24.

III. IT IS A BUSINESS WHICH IS FAR TOO SACRED TO PLAY WITH.
A. An accurate record is being kept. Mal. 3:16. (We may fool people, but not the Lord.)
B. We are dealing with eternal things instead of the temporal. II Cor. 4:17-18. "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, ---only what's done for Jesus will last."

Conclusion:
To do thing for Christ, --- one must know Christ. Can you say with Paul? "I know whom I have believed." II Tim. 1:12.
SOME THINGS A SAVED PERSON CAN LOOSE

Text II John 1:9

Introduction:
A Saved person cannot lose his salvation. Heb. 10:27. The Words "once for all" is from the Greek word Ephapax. It carries the idea of something that never needs to be repeated. It is for all time.

I. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.
A. As far as I can see the average Christian is out of fellowship with the Lord.

II. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE THE JOY OF HIS SALVATION.
A. Psalm 51:12. This is a beautiful prayer of David. The Apostle Peter is another example.

III. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE HIS INFLUENCE FOR GOOD.
A. The closing chapter of this age is dominated by the prince and powers of darkness. Eph. 5:11.

IV. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE HIS REWARDS.
A. Heb. 9:27
B. Rev. 22:12
C. II. Cor. 5:10

V. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE HIS BURDEN FOR LOST SOULS.
A. There isn't a saved person who is a Christian who should not win souls.

VI. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE HIS DESIRE FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP.
A. Neh. 13:11
B. Heb. 10:25

VII. A SAVED PERSON CAN LOSE HIS LOVE FOR PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY.
A. Acts 12:7, 9-11. This is an example of answered prayer.

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