A CHURCH WITH A FUTURE

The Text for the message is Ephesians 3:19-21, "AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE, THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD. NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. A-MEN."

It is frightening to look at the future and ponder on what it may hold for us as individuals and a church. Sometimes the future of a church may look bleak and dark and gloomy. Pastors become extremely discouraged when 2 to 8 families move into other towns. An unfamiliar look at the economy creates an uneasiness in the heart.

I am fully persuaded the future of a church does not depend upon the circumstances or situations as much as it depends upon the attitude and quality of the people. Circumstances do contribute to the success or failure of a church, but they do not primarily give the victory or cause the defeat. Every church which possesses certain qualities definitely has a future.

1. A CHURCH THAT HAS CONVICTION FOR THE TRUTH.

A conviction for the truth about salvation, it is the truth who sets men free. "AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE," John 8:32. Jesus is the only way to salvation. "NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER: FOR THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN, WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED," Acts 4:12.


A conviction for the truth about the Lord's churches. Jesus is the founder and head of every New Testament church. "FOR THE HUSBAND IS THE HEAD OF THE WIFE, EVEN AS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH..." Ephes. 5:23. The Bible is our text book and doctrinal statement of belief. The Lord's churches are local, visible bodies of self-governing people saved of God's grace and baptized according to the scriptures. Their purpose is to go into all the world, preach the gospel, baptize the saved, and to teach the all commands of the Lord, Matthew 28:19,20.

A conviction for true morals. Marriage is a holy and sacred union ordained of God, Gen. 2:24. Marriage of a man and woman is honorable and decent, Heb. 13:4. In our day of sexual permissiveness which leads to perversion God has not changed His mind about marriage. Paul instructed converts about dealing honestly and rightfully in Ephes. 4:24-32. The Lord's people ought to be righteous, honest, fair and hold a high standard of integrity.

II. A CHURCH THAT LOVES THE LORD.

Experience love for the Lord. God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit at the new birth, Romans 5:5. John tenderly states, "WE LOVE HIM, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US," I John 4:19. Love for the Lord is the driving force in our lives. Love is the power that moves and motivates the Lord's people.

Express love for the Lord. Love for the Lord is evidenced...
by obedience to Him, John 14:23. For love to mean anything it must be expressed. For a man to tell his wife, "I love you," and walk out the door and not come back for a year is ridiculous. When we love someone we want to be with them. We want to experience life together. We want to help them and give of ourselves to them. People who love the Lord will want to live like Him, act like Him, talk like Him and do all we can for Him and His cause.

IV. A CHURCH THAT IS JOYOUS IN SERVICE.

Sing with joy. Paul admonished the Ephesians, "SPEAKING TO YOURSELVES IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING AND MAKING MELODY IN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD," Ephes. 5:19. Songs that praise and exalt our precious Lord should be sung with joy and fervor. Congregational participation in singing soul-stirring songs will lay the groundwork for a good spiritual service. The Lord's people have more to sing about and praise to proclaim. May our hearts render a lively song of praise to our Redeemer. As we gain knowledge of our Lord, He becomes more real and personal. The greater reality stirs the heart to sing and make melody in our hearts to Jesus. May the praises of our Redeemer be heard in song, sermon, and supplication.

Speak with joy. Our speech is a revelation of the heart and an indication and gauge of our fellowship with the Lord. Living for the Lord is not one lifelong mountaintop experience. Elijah, Moses, Jonah and others became tired and weary and wanted to give up. Notes of joy should be reflected in our speech in times of victory, death, sorrow, trial, and persecution. Our speech should be used to edify and administer grace to the hearer, Ephes. 4:29. May our walk and talk identify us as disciples of the Lord Jesus, Acts 11:26.

The joy, contentment, thankfulness, positive attitudes, hopeful outlook, and dependence upon the Lord when seen and heard by others bears fruit and is a testimony for the Lord.

Serve with joy. The queen of Sheba saw Solomon's servants and observed they were happy and content within his service. She said, "Happy are thy men. Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom," I Kings 10:8. So it ought to be with the redeemed. We should be glad and joyfully render service to our Lord. Paul said it is within reason to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, Rom. 12:1. The height of joy is reached in obeying the Lord. The depth of despair is experienced in disobeying Him. To serve and labor with true joy and gladness is a tremendous testimony. Such a real joy comes from the heart which trusts, fellowships, and obeys the Master, I John 1:7.

V. A CHURCH THAT LONGS TO SEE PEOPLE SAVED AND SERVING.

Believe the Bible. The Bible teaches us that there is a literal hell where lost sinners will die eternally, Rev. 20:11-15. God's wrath will be poured out upon Christ-rejectors, John 3:36. Listen to the solemn words of Paul, "IN FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD, AND THAT OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: WHO SHALL BE PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWERS," II Thess. 1:8-9.

God also punishes His children. "FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH, AND SCOURGETH EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH," Heb. 12:6. In this decade of sinfulness and helplessness God still punishes His children for sin. We must have a deep and abiding conviction and uncompromising stand for Bible truth. God's word concerning the lost sinner and the lingering saint must penetrate deep within our hearts and become a reality.
that will cause concern for others.

Be burdened for others. The Apostle Paul could well tell us of what a burden for others is. He experienced a great heaviness and continual sorrow for his lost countrymen, Rom. 9:2. The Apostle wrote, "BRETHREN, MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED," Rom. 10:1. Paul knew what it meant to move in a cold, ceremonial religion as a lost sinner. After he was saved he wanted his countrymen to know Jesus as he did.

A church who wants to see people saved and the saved serving does and will have a future. It is a blessing when a church is bothered and disturbed because no one is saved and other laborers are not added to our membership. The very purpose churches exist is to win the lost and teach and train the saved in the ways and word of the Lord, Matthew 28:19,20.

Be bold to go to them.


A church that is going, preaching the word, with burdened hearts definitely has a future.

D. This will be part of what goes on in heaven, Rev. 7:11a-12.

IV. LOOK UP TO GOD FOR DIRECTION!
A. He directed Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised land.
B. He directed Noah in building an ark that would withstand the great flood.
C. He directed Moses and the children of Israel forty years by a cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night.
D. He directed the wise men from the east to Israel at the time of the birth of the Saviour.
E. He directed the wise men not to return to tell Herod where baby Jesus was.
F. He directed Joseph to go from Bethlehem to Egypt and then to return at the proper time.

G. Jeremiah 10:23
H. Proverbs 3:5,6

V. LOOK UP FOR GRACE FOR THE JOURNEY, SITUATION, OR TASK!
A. We are insufficient within ourselves, II Cor. 3:5.
B. I Cor. 10:12
C. II Cor. 12:7-9
D. He is awake and listening, Heb. 4:14; I Pet. 3:12.

VI. LOOK UP! JESUS IS COMING SOON!
A. Phil. 3:20
B. Rev. 22:20

NEW OFFER: We are offering you all of the back issues of the SOUNDING OUT THE WORD PAPER. A total of 30 papers have been printed since this ministry started. All 30 papers are available to you. An offering to help cover handling and postage would be appreciated.
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Ronald Witcher

Text: Lam. 3:22-27

Intro:
A. Loyal—steadfast in affection or allegiance, firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty.
B. God has always been faithful.
C. God has never failed to keep all His promises.

I. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES.
A. God has made many promises to His creation and has never failed to keep any of them.
B. After the flood God promised He would never destroy all the earth with a universal flood again, Gen. 9:11.
C. God often remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Gen. 12:1-3; Exodus 2:24.
D. God is loyal to keep His promises about salvation, Gen. 3:20,21; II Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:13; Rom. 1:16; John 3:18; I Pet. 1:5; Rom. 8:38,39.

II. GOD IS LOYAL TO HIS CHILDREN.
A. God has promised He would always be with us.
B. God is faithful to His children.
C. God is faithful to His children in trials and temptation.
D. God is faithful to supply our needs, Psa. 37:24,25; Phil. 4:19.
E. God is loyal to His children at all times, Acts 7:55-60; Psa. 23:4.

III. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT.
A. Often we do not think of loyalty in this way.
B. God executed judgment on Lucifer.
C. God will bring judgment on all false religion and false teachers, Jude 14,15; Matt. 13:41.

IV. GOD IS LOYAL TO COME AGAIN.
A. God has promised to send Jesus back again.
B. God's word tells us about His second coming.

Conclusion:
A. God is loyal.
B. God's loyalty challenges us to be loyal to Him.
C. Lost friend, God is faithful, Acts 4:12; John 5:24.

WHY PASTORS LEAVE CHURCHES

Odis Bryan

INTRODUCTION:
This message was prompted in part by reading a report in a religious paper. According to that report pastors are leaving the ministry in record numbers and many pastors have turned to tranquilizers, drugs and alcohol because of the pressures they face. The vast majority of these are not Baptist, but why would a person, who at one time felt the importance of the office, turn from it? While in our fellowship few leave the ministry, the majority do not stay at one place very long. It is past time the churches ask why this happens.

LEADERSHIP OF THE LORD TO ANOTHER PLACE OF SERVICE.
While this is a real happening, at times the Lord gets credited for things He did not do. I do not imply that pastors deliberately lie. Many times it is very hard for a pastor to know for sure whether the Lord is leading him from a church or not. One can know better after he has been at a place for a time, although he might have felt strongly before the move. Feelings play part in this, and when conditions are not what they ought to be it is easy to feel that an opportunity to go elsewhere is the Lord opening a door. It is my belief that the majority of pastors who resign to accept another church do so because of conditions that exist rather than the fact of their work being finished. When such conditions exist and the church people will not correct them, the Lord may open a door to go elsewhere, but take away the conditions and there would be no reason to leave.

FAILURE OF THE CHURCH TO FOLLOW HIS LEADERSHIP.
No pastor worth having wants a church to follow him blindly. However, few, if anyone at all, spends as much time thinking about the church (her needs, her prospects for the future, how to see her grow) as he does. A church should consider suggestions and recommendations made by her pastor carefully. The pastor is not just another member. God has placed him there to lead the church. He is not a dictator, but if his recommendations and suggestions are worth no more consideration than any other church members, someone needs to get in step with God and His way. The pastor is not the undershepherd to the people. He is their leader, their overseer. God holds him responsible and accountable for that work. The pastor is the undershepherd to Christ, Who is the Chief Shepherd. The office of past and him who fills it are to be respected (I Thess. 5:12,13). A church who thinks of her pastor as just another member usually soon finds herself looking for a pastor.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE PASTOR'S FAMILY.
Sometimes churches take advantage of a pastor's family. If someone does not particularly
like a remark the preacher made in his message they will make sure his wife hears about it.
Some pastors can dish it back to members about as good as members can dish it out to them.
Rather than get right with God, the pastor's family gets the cold shoulder. Also, a church
can put too many responsibilities upon the pas-
tor's wife. Her main work is not to fill sever-
al offices in the church. Few pastors will stay
with a church when their family is being mis-
used.

CHURCH TROUBLES

No one right with the Lord likes church trou-
bles. No trouble can eat away on the inside of
t parsers like church troubles. Sometimes people
act like trouble will go away if it is left
alone. When trouble gets into a church it will
not go away by itself. If the members will
stand up and be counted for righteousness the
trouble will be stopped before it grows into a
major disturbance. There are people in churches
who are born troublemakers. Sometimes after a
steady diet of trouble which the church will not
stand up and stop, the pastor moves elsewhere.

DISCOURAGEMENT AT FAILURE TO REACH GOALS

A pastor wants to see the church move for-
ward. Sometimes after a prolonged period of
standing still the pastor can become discour-
gaged. He begins to think that maybe someone
else could get things moving. Usually about
this time the grass begins to look greener else-
where. Pastors are subject to discouragement
just as much as anyone else. Members should al-
ways seek to be a source of encouragement to
their pastor.

(Continued in April)

GIVING TO THE LORD

BY CHARLES SWILLING

Text: Ephesians 2:8-10

I. Give the Lord Your Life.
   A. As an obedient son, I John 3:1,2; I Sam.
      15:22
   B. As a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1
   C. As a willing servant, I Pet. 2:21

II. Give the Lord Your Light.
   A. Let is shine, Matt. 5:16
   B. Let it show, John 14:6
   C. Let it share, Rom. 1:6

III. Give the Lord Your Love.
   A. Love seeks Jesus, Phil. 3:10
   B. Love settles you, I John 4:19; I Cor.
      13:4-7
   C. Love solicits others, II Cor. 5:21;
      Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1

IV. Give the Lord Your Loyalty
   A. Loyalty is faithfulness, I Cor. 4:2
   B. Loyalty is fruitfulness, John 15:5
   C. Loyalty is fatefulness, Ephes. 2:10

V. Give the Lord Your Living.
   A. Give Him your time, Ephes. 5:16
   B. Give Him your talent, Isa. 6:8

C. Give Him your tithe, Prov. 3:9,10; Matt.
   23:23

VI. Give the Lord Your Load.
   A. The load involves problems, Job 14:1;
      I Peter 5:7
   B. The load involves pressures
   C. The load involves plans

VII. Give the Lord Your Language.
   A. Pray to Him, I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1;
      Heb. 4:16
   B. Praise Him, Ephes. 5:19
   C. Promote Him, John 1:29; John 14:6

VIII. Give the Lord Your Laughter.
   A. Joy of salvation, Psa. 51:22; Psa.
      51:9,14
   B. Joy of the forgiveness of sins, Rom.
      4:6-8; I John 1:9
   C. Joy of victory and peace, John 16:33;
      I John 5:1-4; Rom. 7:25; I Cor. 15:57

IX. Give the Lord the Lead.
   A. Lead in making decisions
   B. Lead in desires
   C. Lead in direction

X. Give the Lord Your Labor.
   A. Labor daily
   B. Labor diligently
   C. Labor dedicatedly

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Ownership Verse 1
Leadership Verse 2
Lordship Verse 4
Stewardship Verse 5
Friendship Verse 5
Citizenship Verse 6
CLAIMING OUR POSSESSIONS

This is the first installment of a series of lessons on the Book of Joshua. It shall be my prayer and desire that the Lord will use these messages to instill in the hearts of his people a greater desire to be what the Lord wants them to be. Would to God that we would get out of the way and let the Lord accomplish in us and through us His purposes.

It is unfortunate, but yet true, that many professing Christian people today have no power in witness, no radiance in their faces, no sweetness in their personalities, no reality in their spiritual lives. They are indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord, but not anointed or controlled by Him.

The principles that will insure for us a better and more beautiful life are found in this glorious book of the Bible. This first lesson will be labeled, "CLAIMING OUR POSSESSIONS." The scripture reading for this message will be Joshua 1:1-9.

Perhaps at this point, we should give a summation of the activities of the children of Israel. God's People, Israel, had been in bondage in Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world. Through God's plan, purposes, and power they had been delivered from this terrible bondage. After this deliverance, it was God's desire to bring them into Canaan. He wanted them to claim their possessions. He wanted to bless them, use them, and through them, show to the world His glory and power. However, they rebelled and refused to follow Him into this place.

The result of this refusal is reflected in the Books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They wandered in the wilderness and were very miserable people. Their lives were filled with murmuring, complaining, discontent, unrest, and defeat. They had no real purpose or goal. Why? They had refused God's way.

Canaan, or the promised land, as seen in this book, does not represent heaven as some erroneously teach. Canaan represents a place of spiritual rest and victory -- claiming our possessions or what is rightfully ours in Christ. If one believes that it represents Heaven, they are going to have a hard time explaining why they had battles, fights, and conflicts when they got into the land. We are not going to do this in Heaven. The real impact of spiritual significance which is seen in this is that the Lord wanted them to enter this land and learn how to rest and trust in Him for victory. Rest, in this sense, does not mean inactivity, but rather learning the extreme importance of depending upon the Lord.

This is exactly what the writer had reference to in Hebrews. Notice these verses prayerfully and allow the Lord to speak to you through His word.


Hebrews 4:9-11, "THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD. FOR HE THAT IS ENTERED INTO HIS REST, HE ALSO HATH CEASED FROM HIS OWN WORKS, AS GOD DID FROM HIS.

LET US LABOR THEREFORE TO ENTER INTO THAT REST, LEST ANY MAN FALL AFTER THE SAME EXAMPLE OF UNBELIEF."

Also notice Hebrews 3:7-19.

Now let us turn our attention to the text, for now a new generation of Israelites has arisen and now the Lord desires through them to once again fulfill His plans and purposes with them and through them. In this section of scripture, Joshua 1:1-9, we notice the following main areas:

I. THE COMMITMENT, vs. 1-9
II. THE CONFLICT, vs. 5
III. THE CO-OPERATION, vs. 6-8
IV. THE CONQUERING, vs. 8-9

I. THE COMMITMENT.

In verses 1 and 2 we notice the CAPTAIN. "NOW AFTER THE DEATH OF MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IT CAME TO PASS, THAT THE LORD SPOKE UNTO JOSHUA THE SON OF NUN, MOSES' MINISTER SAYING, MOSES MY SERVANT IS DEAD: NOW THEREFORE ARISE, GO OVER THIS JORDAN, THOU, AND ALL THIS PEOPLE, UNTO THE LAND WHICH I DO GIVE TO THEM, EVEN TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL." Here we see the new leader or captain. His name is Joshua. I believe there are several reasons why he was chosen and the reasons which are given are principles that are seen in his life that declare to us a format of characteristics that are needed in the person that God uses.

First, we notice that he was an obedient man. This is seen in Exodus 17:8-14. Here we find where Moses commanded him to choose some men and go out and fight with Amalek. Joshua immediately responded in obedience to God's Man.

Next, we notice that he was a ministering man. This is seen in Exodus 24:13. "AND MOSES ROSE UP, AND HIS MINISTER JOSHUA: AND MOSES WENT UP INTO THE MOUNT OF GOD." He was willing to minister or help without a lot of wrong
motives. Then we see that he was a faithful man. He stayed at his post of duty. Compare Exodus 24:18 and it’s setting with Exodus 32:15-18. Here you see his faithfulness to Moses. This stands out more vividly when you notice what the other people were doing.

The last characteristic that we will notice at this time is that he was a believing man. This is declared in Numbers 14:6-10. He was one of the spies which had been sent out the first time into the land of Canaan. He and Caleb were the only two who were positive in their report. They believed that God could give them the victory. They believed victory would come when they made themselves available to the almighty ability of the Lord. The other spies were too concerned about their ability—or rather their lack of ability. They had made their calculations and drawn their conclusions without considering God.

In verse two we see the call. "Moses my servant is dead: now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them even to the children of Israel." So you can see the commitment which was needed. Joshua had to decide and so did the people.

II. THE CONFLICT.
This is seen in verse 5.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

The implication of the conflict is seen in the first part of the verse. God did not say that there would not be men to try to stand before or against him, but rather that they would not be successful. We need to realize that there is a divine operation, there will always be Satanic opposition. This opposition, as it relates to us, comes through Satan, sinners (lost), self (flesh), and carnal believers. Now let us notice the third point.

III. THE CO-OPERATION.

This section very vividly tells us that if we want to be prosperous and successful, we must meditate on His word and seek to do exactly what He tells us to do. If we will cooperate with God, we will see and experience victory.

Joshua 1:6-8, "Be strong and of a good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

IV. THE CONQUERING.

Notice this again in verses 8 and 9. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

God desires that we be overcomers not come-overs. He desires that we might live in a state of rest, en joy the benefits of a victorious life in Christ, enjoy life, and bring forth spiritual fruit to His Glory.

God help us to COMMIT ourselves to the purpose of the Lord in our lives, realizing that the CONFLICTS will come, but also recognizing that if we will steadfastly CO-OPERATE with the Lord that He will make it possible for us to be CONQUERORS.
JABEZ

RAYMOND HOWARD

I CHRONICLES 4:9-10

INTRO:

How many of you have heard of a man by the name of Jabez? Not many people know about him. Only two verses mention his name.

I. THE BIBLE SAYS JABEZ WAS MORE HONORABLE THAN HIS BRETHREN.

A. Being honorable is good but it does not mean one is saved.
B. Many people pay their bills, work hard, are good to their families, but if they are not saved they will go to hell.
C. I Sam. 16:7, "Man looketh on the outward appearance but God looketh on the heart."
D. The Bible says Jabez called on God.

II. JABEZ ASKED FOR GRACE.

"Oh, that you would bless me."
A. When you ask God to bless you it involves grace, Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 4:16.
B. Jabez said, "Lord, bless me, I need your grace."
C. The starting place is coming to God.
D. So many lost people will never admit they need grace. Until they do they will never be saved.

III. JABEZ ASKED FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

"Not only bless me and enlarge my coast."
A. He asked God for growth.
B. The Bible says God's people ought to have desire to grow, I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18.
C. Are you satisfied as you are now?
D. There has to be a desire to grow in grace.
E. Many are not thankful for what God has given them.

IV. "OH GOD, THAT THINE HAND MIGHT BE WITH ME."

B. If you want to be used of God, let God take complete control of your life and guide you.

V. "OH GOD, THAT THOU WOULST KEEP ME FROM EVIL."

A. He wanted godliness.
B. Godliness will keep us from sin. I Tim. 4:7; Titus 2:12.
C. God's people ought to desire godliness.
D. If you have godliness you have to fellowship God's people.
E. If you have godliness, you will have concern about the souls of others.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

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