

## CHALLENGES A CONGREGATION MUST MEET

Eph 3:14-21

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. As congregation grows, it will face various challenges.
  - 1. Devil would like to hinder us in our work 1Thes 2:18
  - 2. Methods not always evident, a great deceiver 2Cor 11:3
  - 3. Through simple and seemingly harmless diversions, the devil can lead us astray 2Cor 2:11
- B. Must heed admonition to "Hold fast" Rev 3:11(Philadelphia)
  - 1. Accepting any challenges devil might throw our way
  - 2. Efforts to be "steadfast" are not for naught 1Cor 15:58
- C. Look at some challenges that any congregation must meet to serve the Lord faithfully

### DISCUSSION:

#### I. WE MUST REMEMBER WHAT OUR WORK IS

- A. Perfecting the saints (EDIFICATION) Eph 4:11-12
  - 1. Provide for the spiritual growth of members
  - 2. This is how body continues to grow Eph 4:15-16
  - 3. Provoke to love and good works, reason we are to assemble together Heb 10:24-25
  - 4. Are we all doing what we can to help others grow?
- B. Edify the body of Christ (EVANGELISM) Eph 4:11,12
  - 1. Sound forth Gospel like Thessalonica 1Thes 1:8
  - 2. By individual and collective efforts, must "sow seed"
  - 3. As building fills, its tempting to slack off, but we must either expand building or swarm (some leave to start another congregation)
  - 4. Are we all doing what we can to spread gospel?
- C. Minister to needy saints (BENEVOLENCE) Eph 4:11,12
  - 1. One purpose for collection 1Cor 16:1-2
  - 2. If no needy saints locally, may be in other places
  - 3. Are we all doing what we can to meet needs?
- D. Work of local church goes far beyond providing a place for worship. We should be preparing ourselves to work!
- E. Will we meet the challenge? Note another challenge

#### II. WE MUST LIVE ABOVE PETTINESS

- A. Good churches can be hindered by pettiness
  - 1. Pettiness: a feeling of smallness or insignificance - narrow interest, not important and not worth giving attention to: complaining too much about things that are not important:
  - 2. Note Paul's concern for church at Philippi Phil 4:2-3
  - 3. When churches lose sight of primary purpose, they are ripe for being torn apart by selfishness, gossip, and factionalism

- B. Must keep a proper sense of proportion
  - 1. Disastrous to blow problems all out of proportion
  - 2. Must see largeness and importance of our work in comparison to our own personal problems
    - a. Every church has problems - imperfect people
    - b. Paul's exhortations in Phil 2:1-5 will help
- C. Sad to have congregation hindered by pettiness. Yet congregations allow it to keep them from growing.
- D. Will we accept challenge to never allow pettiness to so affect us? Easy by meeting another challenge

#### III. MUST MAINTAIN GRATITUDE FOR OUR BLESSINGS

- A. As individuals we have much for which to be thankful
  - 1. Many physical blessings: our families, friends, homes, health, our freedoms, jobs
  - 2. Many spiritual blessings: Salvation in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, peace of mind, the love of God, the strength of the Holy Spirit, the hope of heaven
- B. As congregation we have much for which to be thankful
  - 1. Many physical blessings: free to worship, nice comfortable meeting place (heat - cool complaints), etc
  - 2. Many spiritual blessings: free from turmoil, filled with love and unity
  - 3. Great potential for individual & congregational growth
- C. Should be noted for our "attitude of gratitude"
  - 1. Paul often exhorted Colossians to be thankful Col 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2
  - 2. As individuals, and as a congregation, let us never become "unthankful"
    - a. It is a step toward depravity Rom 1:21-24
    - b. It is a sign of perilous times 2Tim 3:1-5

### CONCLUSION

- A. There are many other challenges that congregations may face; persecution for cause of Christ; natural calamities that may devastate community
- B. But in most cases, even those challenges can be met and overcome if we will:
  - 1. Remember what our work is
  - 2. Live above pettiness
  - 3. Maintain gratitude for our blessings
- C. With a will to do what the Lord desires of us, and with the "attitude of gratitude" lifting us above any sense of pettiness that might drag us down, let us do our part to answer the prayer of Paul Eph 3:21

From a lesson by Mark A. Copeland revised by JLH