

DO NOT DESPAIR

Even the apostle Paul, facing what seemed to be overwhelming problems, admitted that the vexing difficulties were sometimes just almost too much. In (2 Cor. 4: 8-10) Paul wrote, *“We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened, perplexed, yet not unto despair; 9 pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed;*

10 always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” With no sure answer for all the problems, he could only say, “For we walk by faith, and not by sight”. Not knowing what was ahead, the apostle wrote, (Philippians 3:13 &14), “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus". His faith led him to press on even if he didn't know what lay ahead.

In our society today, we too, are facing uncertainties and perplexities. However, there is no reason for us to despair, all we need is greater faith and courage to work out the problems ahead. We will never solve these problems with a defeatist attitude. We must

firmly believe that God will lead us on to final victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. As He has promised in (Ro. 8:31-32) written by Paul, *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things”?*

None will deny that we are living in a very crucial period of world history. A challenge is ringing out against the people of God that is reminiscent of the day when the Philistine giant, Goliath, challenged the army of the Lord. That challenge brought forth David (1 Sam 17), who responded with courage and rose to great fame, power and fortune. This present challenge should call forth the very best within each of us. May we rise to the challenge, as David did.

The church today stands at the crossroads facing the greatest challenge since Pentecost or the most devastating relapse since the entry into the Dark Ages. When a military leader, Charles Martell, living in 8th century Europe won the Battle of Tours, he was said to have “save the world for Christ.” But there are forces today, no less powerful, at work to destroy Christianity. Remember what Paul told the elders at Ephesus in (Acts 20:28-31), “*Therefore take heed to*

yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears”.

Today it is Love vs. Hate, Materialism vs. God. It was in 1919 that David Lloyd George, the last liberal prime minister of the UK, told other statesmen, “It is Christ or chaos now”. Recent developments have shown how right he was. But have we learned our lesson?

We are living in a different world today than what we faced fifteen years ago. We face changing world problems where victories did

not really obtain world peace. New battle skirmishes and uprisings are heard almost daily. These are only festering sores that disclose some internal disorder. The whole world is torn with social and economical unrest, most of which stems from mistrust and hatred. Only the love for truth will dispel this enmity. The spread of the gospel is sorely needed to bring peace and order to our chaotic world.

We are facing a world where theological systems are toppling and false religions are being exposed. But this has also promoted a moral delinquency that becomes more and more dangerous to our very existence. Violence, lusts and crime are becoming more more open. Social and political ethics are crumbling at our feet. Over the ruin of these things, conniving degenerates seek personal gain by stirring up class hatred, turning ethnic group against ethnic

group, creed against creed, labor against capital against all curbs and restraints. It seems that selfishness, greed and lusts are sweeping the field.

Human efforts to remedy this situation have failed miserably. Our problems are only multiplying as we view the misguided and futile efforts being made. Bruised and battered men of

every station in life look to the church for light to guide them into an uncertain future. Above all, keep this in mind: the church hasn't failed the world, the world has failed the church! Nor has Christ forsaken the world, the world has forsaken Christ. Isa. 59:1&2 confirms this.

*“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it
cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have
separated*

you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear”.

Jesus said in (Matt. 16:18,19), “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and

whatsoever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven". The church is a divine institution that is composed of human beings, ordained to serve the needs of mankind. It is adequate for every age and every need of man. The church was not built as a social order or lodge. Even though it does provide fellowship, that was not its primary purpose. Nor is the church primarily a benevolent organization. Although we are to "*do good unto all men*" yet this is still a by-product

of the church and not the principal purpose for which it was established.

The church was established to testify of a Savior for all mankind and to hold forth the gospel of that salvation message. The church must always remain “*the pillar and the ground of the truth*” (1Tim. 3:15). The commission which Jesus gave to His church was simple: “.....*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.* 16 “*He who*

believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16”15&16). The commission to every follower of Jesus is to perpetuate His teaching to all the world. That is the reason He built the church, and that is the reason the church exists in the world today.

Since the church is composed of human beings, human frailties are also to be expected.

Humans err, fall away, or act in such a manner as to mar the beauty of the church. But, it should always be remembered that the divine side remains perfect. The Lord did His part-planning, building and giving guidance perfectly. And His work remains perfect. Too, the human part is composed of those who have been “*born of water and the Spirit*” (Jn. 3:5). Although they can sin, they have been regenerated and cleansed from the sins of their former lives.

But the church today must call for a higher standard of conduct. The day of the careless, indifferent and compromising church member must end. To overcome these faults, there must be a clarion call of certainty to dispel the doubts and fears that plague the church. Our conduct, our language and our attitude must give energy to the idea that we have new life in Christ. The world must see the change in the way we live.

With the calm assurance of Paul, in (2 Cor. 5:1), we must be able to say: *“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We must have the faith to say “.... for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2Tim. 1:12).*

There can be no compromising on the vital issues of this importance. There must be the thundering of Amos for social justice, the lament of Jeremiah over departure from the will of God and the cry of Hosea. *“Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God’”!* Hosea 2:23. People must be awakened.

There must be a note of certainty about God. The attempts of modernists to deify man and humanize God must be challenged and defeated. The church must also set forth the will of God so that the sinner can know that he is a sinner, and that he can learn what he must do to be saved from sin. Nature discloses the existence of God, but it doesn't unfold the mind of God so that man can know the will of God and thus might please Him. Nature-loving only leads to the worship of the creature

instead of the Creator. Others have made this mistake as revealed by Paul in (Ro. 1:18-25),
“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His

eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22

Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to

uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen”.

There must be a recognition of the reality of sin. In (Isa. 58:1) the prophet wrote, *“Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins”*. All folk realize the ruinous

effect of sin. Sin blights every community and brings its curse into every home; “*For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God*” (Ro. 6:23). The church, then, must return to the high standard of its founder and remain pure. If we can set forth the purity of the church as portrayed in (Eph. 5:25-27), then the world will take notice of the church and its message. But first there must be a separation from the world:

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new... Therefore come ye out from among the, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:17 and 6:17).

What would be the impact upon the world if all who follow Christ withdrew their support from those who willfully sin? What would the world be saying of us, if we really became a “*separate people, zealous of good works*” (Tit. 2:14)? You can rest assured that we would no longer be taken for granted.

It is with this outlook that we face crucial days ahead. During the great spiritual crisis the world is looking for the church to lead them out of chaos and confusion. You cannot help in this cause if you are not a part of body of Christ.