

## The Church Moving Forward Challenges To Accept

Text: Phil. 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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### INTRODUCTION

A. I think the saying is basically true: we are either going forward, standing still or falling behind.

1. That saying is true for churches
2. The problem is that it is very easy to become complacent and comfortable (the prelude to standing still)
3. Once we stand still, everyone passes us by and we begin to fall behind.

B. Phil 3:13-14

1. Paul believed in moving ahead.
2. It is the only way to avoid stagnation and failure

C. As a church, we need to think about what it takes to move ahead.

1. We will be discussing a different issue involved in moving forward as a church.
2. We must never be satisfied with the past or believe that what we are doing in the present is all that we can or should do.
3. To achieve all that God will give us opportunity to do, we must be ready to move forward to meet the challenges of the future

D. Today: Challenges to accept

1. I don't intend to list a lot of specific things to do.
2. I do intend to list many of the different kind of things we can do.
3. We just need to decide that the challenges before us are there because God wants us to do something about them

### I. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

A. Some verses we need to focus on:

1. Matt 5:13-16.
2. 1 Pet 2:9.

B. We need to accept the challenge of making a difference in our world.

1. That difference must come as we live rooted in and founded on the word of God.
  2. Christians have been silenced and made to feel unwelcome and unwanted by the world.
  3. I've got news for you -- you are unwelcome and unwanted by the world, and it probably won't get any better.
  4. But we cannot let them shut us up, shut us own, shut us out or shut us in
- C. We must not resort to ungodly actions, but we must continue to show the world that we have answers to the problems plaguing mankind.
1. Prime example -- we need to oppose the abortion of unborn children, not because it is politically unacceptable, but because it is morally wrong.
  2. However, those who advocate killing abortionists are just as wrong as the abortionist are.
  3. How can someone miss this point so drastically?
- D. We can change the world the same way God's people have always changed the world -- by teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus and changing the hearts and minds of those who live around us.

## II. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE OF EVANGELIZING OUR OWN COMMUNITY

- A. Everywhere I have ever been, most people thought their community was not open to the gospel of Jesus.
1. Was that based on the failure of well planned and well financed efforts to evangelize the local community? - No.
  2. Was it because there was so much opposition or animosity to the church that no one would listen? -- No.
  3. Not because the people so hated God or his people that they refused to yield to his will?
  4. Mostly, it was because the local church simply did not make the effort.
- B. Mark 16:15-16.
1. Coca Cola is so well known, that you can go into some of the most remote places in the world and there you will find bottles of Coke.
  2. Their motto: Think globally but act locally! They want to be everywhere, but to do it they know they take care of each location.
  3. The church needs to learn this lesson.

## III. ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- A. Have you thought about who will lead the church in 10, 20, 30 years?
1. 2 Tim 2:2

2. Paul invested himself in the training of Timothy. Timothy was to do the same with other faithful men, who would in turn invest themselves in yet others.
  3. Christian leaders must develop future leaders
- B. Just as there is a responsibility of leaders to train, there is a responsibility of followers to become trained.
1. The best leaders have always had good followers.
  2. Good leaders, most often, first learned how to be good followers.
- C. I might add that currently the challenge is to develop male leadership.
1. 1 Cor 11:3
  2. Eph 5:23
  3. God has a chain of authority that we must respect and develop if we are going to succeed in accomplishing his will.

#### IV. THE CHALLENGE OF FOLLOWING GOD'S WORD

- A. The effort to move the church forward into the future must not abandon the foundation of Scripture as our authority for what we do.
1. In recent years, there have been decisions made that threaten to change our worship and our work with unbiblical reasoning.
  2. Some of those are:
    - a. the increased use of entertainment as a replacement for worship.
    - b. abandoning the model of male leadership.
    - c. use of instrumental music in our worship.
    - d. de-emphasis on the role of baptism in salvation.
    - e. compromise of various other doctrinal points for the sake of making Christianity more appealing to the world
- B. Here's what the Bible says about the importance of God's word
1. Deut 12:32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (NKJ).
  2. Rev 22:18-19.
- C. Those who are going to believe that the Bible is the word of God, must also believe that God has put in it all that we must believe and do. Beyond that, people simply add or subtract their own ideas and desires in place of God's.
- D. We must be a people rooted in the book.
1. We must know what God's will is.

2. We must not be so tied to our traditions or customs that we fight against God's will.
3. We must not be so quick to look for new answers and methods that we neglect what God says

## CONCLUSION

A. Ultimately, moving the church forward into the future involves every member.

1. Since the church is people, the church moves only as its people move.
2. All these challenges are personal challenges to each one of us

B. Someone wrote a short piece titled, "This is my church..."

It is composed of people just like me.

It will be friendly if I am.

It will do a great work if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am generous.

It will bring others into its fellowship if I bring them.

Its seats will be filled if I fill them.

It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service.

If I who make it what it is, am filled with these.

Therefore, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being

All these things I want my church to be.

-- Ohio Union Reminder

Invitation