

## A Successful Church

### Int.

1. Aim: To discuss some principles of the first century church that made it successful and apply the principles to us today.
2. Jerusalem church grew
  - a. Started with 3,000 Acts 2:41 Acts 5:14 "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."
  - b. Acts 6:7 "And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
  - c. Multiplied greatly
3. The church today is not growing very fast, if growing at all.
  - a. Some think we need a new gospel.
  - b. Others predict that the church will die - will cease to exist.
  - c. Will the church fail?
4. We want the Lord's church to be successful. What makes it successful?
  - a. It is not great buildings, large crowds, or popularity.
  - b. Success involves saving of souls, serving others and righteous living. They were preaching and practicing the truth !!
  - c. If the church of the first century was successful then the church of the 21st century can be successful.
5. Let us see some five reasons why they were successful ! They were...

## Discussion

### I. A UNITED CHURCH

- A. Jn. 17:20-21 - Jesus prayed for it "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
- B. How the early church was united:
1. Organization
    - a. The local church was the highest and only unit
    - b. They had elders, deacons, and evangelists - Acts 14:23
    - c. Eph. 4:11, Tit. 1:5
    - d. There was only one head of the church - Christ - Col. 1:18 - Acts 6
  2. In faith and Doctrine
    - a. Eph. 4:5 "one faith"
    - b. Jude 3b asv "...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints."
    - c. I I Jn. 9-11 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

### 3. In practice

- a. I Cor. 16:1-2 "...as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye."
- b. I Cor. 11:2 -- keep the ordinances "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you."

### C. The Lord's church today is to be united spiritually over the world

1. Eph. 4:3 - "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
2. Jesus prayed that all who believe in him should be "ONE", that is united.
3. We must be united in [1] organization, [2] faith & doctrine and [3] practice.
4. United we Stand - Divided we fall. - Seal for State of Kentucky. One in Buckskin, the other in formal attire. They represent all the people. They work together for the good of all.

## **II. A CONSECRATED CHURCH**

### A. Consecrate

1. It means to devote, to separate, to set apart.
2. To devote to a purpose with deep solemnity

### B. The church must be consecrated:

#### 1. Individual consecration

- a. Rm. 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

(1) Do not be molded by this world - McCord

(2) Not conformed - to make like another

- b. A living sacrifice
- c. Do not live like the world - but be transformed - change character
- d. I Jn. 2:15-17

## 2. Consecration of possessions

- a. Acts 2:44-45 -- sold and divided "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."
- b. Be willing to share
- c. Gal. 6:10 - do good unto all men
- d. Jas. 2:14-16 "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

## 3. Consecration of time, talents and influence

- a. Acts 8:4 - went everywhere preaching the word
- b. Stephen - Acts 7 - teaching the lost
- c. Philip - Acts 8 - preaching the gospel to the lost

### **III. A STEDFAST CHURCH**

#### A. Stedfast

1. Firmly fixed in place, not subject to change, firm in belief, determination or adherence.
2. Loyal, faithful

#### B. A successful church will be stedfast in:

1. The Apostles doctrine = truth, gospel Gal. 1:6-9
  - a. Acts 2:42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
  - b. I I Tim. 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
2. In fellowship = communion - sharing - partnership
  - a. Phil. 1:5 "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;"
  - b. I Jn. 1:7 "But If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
3. In Worship
  - a. Acts 20:7 "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
  - b. Heb. 10:25

#### 4. In prayer

- a. Jas. 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
- b. "Pray without ceasing." I Thes. 5:17

### **IV. A SACRIFICING CHURCH**

#### A. Sacrifice =

1. To suffer loss of, give up, renounce - Giving up one thing for another
2. Permit injury or disadvantage to, for the sake of something else.
3. Give up -- a mother will sacrifice her life for her children

#### B. The successful church will make sacrifices:

1. Early Christians sacrificed all they possessed
  - a. Phil. 3:7-8 "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,"
  - b. Lk. 14:33 "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
  - c. Acts 4:34-35 "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35. And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

2. Many sacrificed their lives
    - a. Acts 12:1-2 -- James was killed by Herod
    - b. Rev. 2:10 "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
- C. This principle still exists:
1. I Pet. 2:5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."
  2. Rm. 12:1 --- living sacrifice

## **V. A MILITANT CHURCH**

- A. Militant
1. Aggressive, Active - positive and forceful in action
  2. Engaged in warfare
  3. I Tim. 6:12 - "Fight the good fight of faith"
- B. The successful church will be militant:
1. In Its stand against error and wickedness -
    - a. Eph. 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
    - b. 1 Jn. 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

2. In its advancement of the truth
  - a. Mk. 16:15
  - b. Eph. 3:10 "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,"
  - c. Acts 5:28 -- "Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."
  - d. It is evangelistic
  
3. In its demand for Christian unity.
  - a. Eph. 4:3 "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
  - b. Call upon those in denominationalism, who believe in the Lord, to come out.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. In order for this church to be successful we must all desire it.
2. Be zealous and united for this purpose.
3. Successful
  - a. "A favorable termination of a venture"
  - b. "A favorable result; wished-for ending"
4. A successful church is not necessarily one with:
  - a. A large building
  - b. Large numbers
  - c. Popularity

5. But The church that is successful will:
  - a. Save souls - preaching the gospel to the lost
  - b. Help others - with their needs
  - c. Live righteously - godly living
  - d. Preach and Practice the Truth !

6. This church must:

- (1) Be United
- (2) Be consecrated
- (3) Be Stedfast
- (4) Make sacrifices
- (5) Be militant.

7. The Evans Church of Christ must be:

- (1) Be United
- (2) Be consecrated
- (3) Be Stedfast
- (4) Make sacrifices
- (5) Be militant.

8. To be successful.

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