

## LET US GO FORWARD

### Int.

1. Aim: To give encouragement that we go forward as a congregation and as individual Christians.
2. Ex. 14:15 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:"
3. Excellent advice for all of us. We need to go forward !!!
4. ARE YOU TWO-FACED ?
  - a. The month January is named after the Roman god - Janus.
  - b. Janus was pictured as a two-faced man, one face turned back to the old year with its sorrows, disappointments and shortcomings, and the other face was toward the new year with all of its hopes, and anticipations of good things to come.
  - c. Many of us are like Janus - we look back to the past and its failures and at the same time look to the future.
  - d. We learn from the past but we cannot live there. We must press on to the greater achievements of the future.
5. Phi. 3:13 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,"
6. As the Lord told Moses, "that they go forward..." so should we today!
7. We should be advancing and progressing toward the goal.

## Discussion

### **I. CONTEXT OF EX. 14:15**

#### A. Down to Egypt

1. About 70 souls went down to the land of Egypt because of the famine
2. Jacob and his children along with Joseph made about 75.
3. They were given the Land of Goshen and multiplied to about 3 million.
4. A king that knew not Joseph put them in bondage and made them to be his slaves.

#### B. A deliverer

1. The people cried to God and He sent Moses to deliver them
2. Pharaoh refused to let the people go, so God sent 10 plagues upon the people.
3. After the last one, the death of the first born, Pharaoh was ready to let them Go!!  
They were released.

#### C. Uncertainty set in.

1. The Israelites were scared, they were filled with fear.
2. They wanted to look back at the land of Egypt as well as to the land that flowed with milk and honey.
3. They were going out of Egypt and came to the Red Sea. The Egyptians were following them.
4. They didn't know what they were going to Do.

## D. God speaks

1. This is when God speaks to Moses
2. Ex. 14:15 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of I srael, that they go forward:"
3. Ex. 14:15 NKJV "And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of I srael to go forward."
4. The children of I srael had come part of the way to the promised land. Then they had stopped and started looking back. And they were crying unto God.
5. God says - "Let us go forward." They had many problems in front of them, but God said you can make it.

**II. APPLICATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE**

## A. Today we must go forward as a church

1. All of us were at one time in bondage to sin and the devil
2. God has set us free from sin Rom. 6:17-18 "17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
3. Sometimes we get discouraged over problems in life:
  - a. Individual problems - sickness, disappointments
  - b. Church problems - brethren sin against us - do things that are wrong - we are hurt
4. We can't look back. Gal. 6:9 "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

B. We must go FORWARD !!! We must move on !!

1. Phil. 3:12-14 "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
2. Forget those things behind - look forward
  - a. With heaven as his goal and eternal life his prize, Paul pressed onward and upward!
  - b. We must forget The past mistakes.
  - c. The past hurts and disappointments
  - d. Do not harbor ill will toward those who have hurt us. We must forgive.
3. Press toward the mark - Keep trying to improve - do better
4. We as a congregation must grow and as individuals we must grow. That is going forward!!
  - a. Growing means going forward
  - b. If we do not go forward we are not growing

### III. **HOW DOES A CHURCH GROW ?** [Notice 4 areas or ways of growth in ACTS ]

#### A. NUMERICAL GROWTH

##### 1. Jews

###### a. Jerusalem

- (1) 3,000 on Pentecost - 2:41
- (2) Increased day by day - 2:47
- (3) 5,000 men - 4:4
- (4) Multitudes of men and women - 5:14
- (5) Multiplied greatly - 6:1,7

###### b. Palestine

- (1) Acts 9:31 & 12:24 - were multiplied
- (2) Many thousands had believed - 21:20

###### c. Samaria

- (1) Multitudes responded - 8:6
- (2) Baptized - 8:12

###### d. Ethiopian Eunuch - road to Gaza - converted - baptized ----- 8:26-39

###### e. Joppa - many believed in the Lord - 9:42

##### 2. Gentiles

###### a. Cornelius is the first - Acts 10

###### b. Antioch in Syria - 11:21, 24, 26 "A great number ...turned to the Lord. -- "Large company"

###### c. Paul and Barnabas on missionary journeys -- word spread throughout all the region - 13:48-49

3. The church today must be concerned about growth in number
  - a. Every number represents souls
  - b. The Good Shepherd had to keep accurate records or He could not know when one of the 100 sheep was missing.
  - c. Acts speaks of the 120, the 2,000 and the 5,000.
  - d. God wants His church to grow in number.

**B. GROWTH IN AREA**

1. Acts is concerned with showing how the gospel went to all parts of the world -- to all creatures -- to every nation.
2. Acts 1:8 - it spread like circles from a rock thrown in a pool of water
3. They went to key cities - like Jerusalem and then to Antioch in Syria where Paul and Barnabas went on the first Missionary Journey - and Paul and Silas on the next two.
4. We today must be concerned and working to take the gospel to all parts of the world. Christ died for them just like he died for us.
5. Grow in area!!!
  - a. Mission work
  - b. Local
  - c. State
  - d. National
  - e. World

### C. GROWTH IN APPEAL

1. Gospel is for every creature - Mk.16:15
2. In Acts the gospel was taken to all flesh
  - a. Acts 2:17-18 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:"
  - b. All human beings - persons of all nationalities
3. Different kinds of people
  - a. Priests, jailer, seamstress
  - b. Magician, tanner, tentmaker
4. The church today must take the gospel to all creatures
  - a. Rich and poor, educated or uneducated
  - b. Gal. 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - c. Col. 3:11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."
  - d. Farmer, factory worker, merchant, young and old, school teacher, mechanic, military
  - e. Grow in appeal - be friendly to all - especially visitors.

## D. GROWTH IN SPIRITUALITY

1. The church in the book of Acts grew to be more like Jesus
  - a. Acts 1:1 He told before "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."
  - b. Acts 10:38 - It is said that He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil:"
  
2. Therefore the church was:
  - a. "Edified" - Acts 9:31 "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."
  - b. "Established in the faith" - Acts 16:5 "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."
  - c. Cleave unto the Lord - Acts 11:23 "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would **cleave** unto the Lord."
    - (1) Cleave - Glued to, adhere, joined
    - (2) RSV = "to remain faithful to the Lord"
  
3. God wants us to grow spiritually
  - a. 2 Pet. 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
  - b. 1 Pet. 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

- c. Signs of Spiritual growth
  - (1) Obedience to all God's commands
  - (2) Faithfulness in worshiping God
  - (3) Purity of Life
  - (4) Increase of love to fellow man
  - (5) TEACHING OUR FELLOW MAN
  
- 4. The early church went about teaching the word
  - a. Only way church grows is for the "seed of the kingdom" to be sown in the hearts of men (see Jn. 6:44,45; 2 Tim. 2:2).
  - b. Early disciples taught that they had a personal responsibility for sowing the seed. Growth of the church did not depend on "professional clergy."
  - c. Word produces faith (Rom. 10:17). "Seed" of the kingdom (Lk. 8:13). "Seed" as powerful today as sat beginning. It Will produce same today.
  - d. Regardless of "power in seed" there will never be "fruit" until seed is planted. "Reaping" always in proportion to "sowing" (see 2 Cor. 9:6).
  - e. Gospel is still the "power of God to save" (Rom. 1:16). Saves in the same way as in the past: Through gospel, man comes to realize his condition, made aware of God's means of providing salvation.
  - f. Church will grow as gospel "seed" is sown in "honest and good hearts."

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The church in the book of Acts went forward by growing in:
    - a. Number
    - b. Area
    - c. Appeal
    - d. Spirituality
  2. The reason they grew was that the word of God was spread
    - a. Acts 12:24 "But the word of God grew and multiplied."
    - b. Acts 19:20 "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
  3. Let us go forward - grow - increase - teach
  4. More churches are dying than growing!!
  5. Let us go forward!!! Alive!!! Growing!!!
    - a. The Israelites reached the promised land
    - b. We will someday reach that promised land of heaven.
    - c. But only if we go forward !
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Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Morning Jan. 21, 2007  
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