

SOME CHALLENGES A CONGREGATION MUST MEET

Introduction

- A. Text: **Rev. 3:11-13**.
- B. The saints in Philadelphia were urged to be strong and not let the devil rob them of their salvation.
- C. In every possible way, the devil would like to hinder the Lord's people - e.g. **1 Thess. 2:18**.
- D. The problems our adversary can generate are of many different kinds: doctrinal, moral, etc.
- E. Sometimes, however, we overlook the more "practical" ways the devil can hinder us.
- F. What are some things we must do to meet the devil's challenges in areas like these?

I. REMEMBER WHAT OUR WORK IS

- A. It takes discipline to **stick to our work and let the Lord do His**. Cf. **Jer. 7:27**; **Ezek. 2:7**.
- B. It is our work to "plant" and "water"; it is the Lord's work to give the "increase" (**1 Cor. 3:6**).
- C. Ultimately, the Lord will want to know not how many people we baptized, but how many people were left in our community that we never confronted with the gospel.
- D. We are constantly tempted to bypass the work of seed-sowing or to believe that we are doing "enough" — we must resist both of these temptations.
- E. We need to be a congregation from which the gospel "sounds forth" - **1 Thess. 1:8**.

II. LIVE ABOVE PETTINESS

- A. It takes discipline to **keep away from "itsy-bitsy thinking."**
- B. Selfishness, gossip, and factionalism are the bane of the Lord's work. Cf. **Phil. 2:3,4**; **4:2**.
- C. We need a sense of proportion and priorities.
 - 1. It is disastrous to "major in minors."
 - 2. We must be able to see the largeness and importance of the *work* we are doing in comparison to our own personal concerns - e.g. **Phil. 1:12-18**!
- D. We must not only be able to *operate*, but also to *co-operate* - **Phil. 1:27**. Cf. the emphasis on "together" in **Eph. 2:19-22**; **4:16**.

III. BELIEVE WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

- A. It takes discipline to **believe we can bring about significant changes for good where we live**.
- B. Without some *hope* (desire + expectation), our work will cease altogether — and the devil knows it!
- C. When Christ sets before us an "open door" (**Rev. 3:8**), no one can shut it.
- D. We simply must keep in mind that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world - **1 Jn. 4:4**.

IV. MAINTAIN GRATITUDE FOR ITS BLESSINGS

- A. It takes discipline to **emphasize the positive rather than the negative aspects of our congregational situation.**
- B. Few congregations have had more problems than Corinth — yet even in Corinth, there were things to be thankful for - **1 Cor. 1:4-9.**
- C. A *scriptural* congregation is a *thankful* congregation - **Col. 3:17.**

Conclusion

- A. We must determine to meet these challenges successfully.
 - 1. It is true, congregationally as well as individually, that with every temptation there is a “way of escape” (**1 Cor. 10:13**).
 - 2. But we must see temptation for what it is and arm ourselves against it - **Eph. 6:10,11.**
- B. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed - **Rom. 13:11,12.** Cf. **Hb. 4:1.**
- C. We must not let the devil rob us of our salvation - **Rev. 3:11.**
- D. We must meet our challenges in the strength of God!