

Lifting Up The STANDARD

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

Monday, September 14, 2015

The Fallen Pastor

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen...”

(Revelation 2:5)

God's messages are addressed to the pastors of the “seven churches.” In verse eleven, He tells us where those churches were and in verse twenty He makes it plain that the focus is on the pastors. In verse thirteen, Christ is in the “the midst” of all the seven churches; however, at the end of the local church age we find Christ saying, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

The message to the church at Ephesus begins with the information that Christ “Holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.” (Chapter 2:1). “The seven stars are the angels (the pastors) of the seven churches.” (Chapter 1:20).

Planting The Seeds That Produced A Sick Church

Churches do not get sick on their own, churches get sick because the pastor plants seeds, or allows someone to plant seeds that results in a sick church.



A Major Change At Ephesus

The Bible gives us more information about the church that Paul established at Ephesus, than any other church in the New Testament.

The Beginning of The Problem

In Acts chapters nineteen and twenty, we read of the establishment of the church. The Book of Ephesians was written concerning problems that the pastor allowed to creep into the local church at Ephesus.

About Ten Years Later

The Books of First and Second Timothy were written to the pastor of the church at Ephesus who was given the responsibility to deal with the problems left by the previous pastor.

Paul's Warning Went Unheeded

Paul had a group of Believers in the church at Ephesus that meant business for God. They had a sweet spirit of unity and love; however, Paul saw a danger looming on the horizon that the leaders did not see, or simply refused to see.

We read in Act 20:28-32 that Paul admonished the pastors to,

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

A Final Message From The Lord Himself

Finally, we have the words of Christ in Revelation 2:1-7 concerning the sad condition of the church, forty years after it had been established. Our Lord's rebuke was sharp! To the pastor, He said,

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Revelation 2:5).

“Repent, and do the first works; or else...” (Revelation 2:5)

The problems that arose at Ephesus were not taken care of quickly, and their local church was in serious trouble in a few short years.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says,

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."



The Fall Was Gradual

In Acts chapter nineteen, the church at Ephesus was in excellent health. In the Book of Ephesians, the church was in a declining health. In First and Second Timothy the church was in a critical condition. In Revelation chapter two the same church was sick unto death. Like the house built upon the sand, "great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:27).

Putting The Blame Where God Puts The Blame

First and Second Timothy places the cause of the problem directly at the feet of the pastor. Young Timothy had inherited a mess and Paul's charge to the pastor was...

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (Second Timothy 4:1-4).

As pastors we have a "charge" from God to "preach the word." Pastors are commanded to preach "in season," when there is fruit for our labours, and "out of season," when there is no fruit for our labours. Pastors are commanded to "reprove" (Express what is wrong) and to "rebuke." Pastors are also commanded to "exhort (lift up the fallen) with all longsuffering and doctrine" (Teaching).

No Compromise!

In John chapter six, Jesus had great multitudes following Him. They asked Him what they must do to "work the works of God." He told them and we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (V.66).

Should Christ have soft-pedaled the message to keep the crowd? No!...and neither should we! Not only did the crowd leave, in the next chapter we read, "they sought to kill Him" (John 7:1).

Forty Years After The Church Started

By this time whoever the pastor was at Ephesus he was busy building his own church Christ said,

*"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove **thy candlestick** out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).*

The first time the word church is mentioned in the Bible we read Jesus said, "I will build **my** church" (Matthew 16:18). In the verse above, Jesus told the pastor He would, "remove **thy** candlestick."

A pastor who will not preach Bible standards, neglects church discipline, and refuses to expose false prophets is a compromiser, regardless of how many people he has listening to him on Sunday.

The Pastor Changed

The pastor "tried them that say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars." The pastor would not allow any false teachers to get a foothold in that church.

The Pastor's Service

Christ knew about the pastor's service concerning the ministry ("works"). He knew about the pastor's efforts in the ministry. ("labour") and Christ knew about the pastor's "patience."

The Pastor's Separation

The pastor at Ephesus did not, "bear them which are evil." The pastor faithfully, "tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." The pastor at Ephesus, unlike many so-called fundamentalists of our day, was faithful in keeping the church pure rather than keeping it full.

The Pastor's Stability

Verse three says the pastor had "borne, (not abandoned truth) and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

The Pastor's Shortcoming

In verse four, Christ rebuked his pastor, saying, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, (The pastor, not the church) because thou hast left thy first love."

The Pastor Left His First Love

God charged the pastor saying, "Thou hast left thy first love." It does not say the pastor lost his first love, it says he "left" it. To lose something might be excusable; however, to leave something is to make a conscious decision. The word here means to "depart from one place or position to go to another."

A Tragic Decision

The Ephesian church failed because the pastor purposely "left" his first love. He made a conscious decision. The problem was not the *people*. The problem was not the *program*. The problem was the *pastor*.

First Love?

As Christians our first love should be our love for Christ. First John 4:19, says we should, "love him, because he first loved us."

A husband's first love should be to his wife.

Ephesians 5:25,

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

A wife's first love should be to her husband.

Titus 2:4-5 says wives are to,

"Love their husbands, to love their children...that the word of God be not blasphemed."

God's Word also deals with relationship concerning fathers, mothers, children, etc.

The Pastor's First Love

When Jesus was speaking to John, who would become a pastor of a local church, Jesus said in John twenty-one, "Lovest thou me?...Feed my lambs...lovest thou me?...Feed my sheep...lovest thou me?...Feed my sheep."

Jesus said, "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11).

The pastor's main responsibility is not to be a great public speaker. His main God-given responsibility as a

pastor is to love his people with an unconditional love.

Years ago, when I was traveling as an evangelist, I was in a pastor's office one Sunday morning, before the Sunday School began. The phone rang but the pastor didn't bother to answer it. When I asked him why, he said "it is probably just a bus kid."

JUST A BUS KID? That bus kid needed a pastor who would genuinely love him or her. JUST A BUS KID? That bus kid might have been the next D.L. Moody, if he had made it to church that day. Jesus said, "lovest thou me?...Feed my **lambs**" (little sheep). Christ even mentioned the "lambs" before he mentioned the "sheep."



The Flock Becomes a Prey

Ezekiel 34:8,

"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock."

The pastor at Ephesus was serving, he was separated, he was stable, however, Jesus said,

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first (main) love."

He was rebuked because, as a pastor, he had made a conscious choice to focus on a program that might swell the attendance at the expense of loving the people God held him responsible to love.

Whose Church?

The first mention of the word church is found in Matthew 16:18. There Jesus mentioned the church as being His church. He said, "I will build **my** church." To the pastor of the church at Ephesus, Christ referred to the church as being the pastor's church. Christ said, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove **thy** candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Today, although many people live in the area where the church was at Ephesus, there is no thriving church there now. The warning of the removal of the "candlestick," went unheeded by the pastor and the same situation will occur today if pastors continue to ignore the warning of God in this portion of Scripture.

Five of the seven churches recorded in the early chapters of the Revelation were eliminated by the Lord because the pastor refused to do things God's way.

Paul's Final Message To The Pastor At Ephesus

Paul was sitting in prison He was scheduled to die shortly, and he knew it. No doubt his aged body was racked with pain from the dampness as it takes its toll on him. His final message was to a young pastor named Timothy, concerning the problems he was facing in his local church.

Second Timothy 4:1-2,

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

To "charge" someone is to entrust them with a serious responsibility. Timothy was charged by Paul to fulfill his God-given responsibilities as a pastor, and to be bold concerning charging other Christians concerning their responsibilities.

Seven Charges For The Pastor

- **First Timothy 1:3,** "**charge** some that they teach no other doctrine."
- **First Timothy 1:18,** "**charge** I commit unto thee, son Timothy...that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."
- **First Timothy 5:7,** "**charge**, that they may be blameless."
- **First Timothy 5:21,** "**charge** thee...that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."
- **First Timothy 6:13,** "**charge** in the sight of God...That thou keep this commandment without spot..."
- **First Timothy 6:17,** "**charge** them...that they be not highminded..."
- **First Timothy 4:1-2,** "**charge** thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ...Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

What Is The Purpose of This Article?

For over thirty years the purpose of Local Church Ministries has always been to "Invest In Eternity By

Strengthening The Local Church." We are living in a day when we need to "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" (Revelation 3:2).

Apostasy Is Prophesied

We should not be taken off guard by the apostasy of our day. It is prophesied in the Word of God.

First Timothy 4:1-2 says,

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith..."

Sadly, our Fundamental Independent Baptist movement has many influential leaders who have departed from "the faith." Our movement is now far more apostate than was the Evangelical movement when I got out of it in the mid sixties.

Forget The Movement

We have no scriptural grounds whatsoever for a movement. Calling it a fundamental movement does not change that fact. Calling it a fundamental, independent, Baptist movement does not change that fact either. **With every movement comes politics.** There is enough politics in our fundamental Laodicean movement to choke a horse. We are living in an age when leaders in our movement are more concerned about what other people think than what God thinks.

Silence Gives Consent

It is not enough to quietly disassociate ourselves from compromising leaders or those who promote unscriptural heresy. Jude said, "*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (v.3). The dictionary says to contend is to "*state a fact or belief confidently and forcefully.*"

Stand up and be heard. All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good pastors to say nothing about the blasphemous heresy being promoted under the banner of our so-called fundamental movement.

As pastors we need to withdraw ourselves "from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received," and our people need to know why.



"Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not."

(Jeremiah 5:21)