

Bringing a Congregation to Life

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the need for revival in the church and the characteristics of men who bring a church to life, including dead earnestness, being bent on success, men of faith, labor, and patience.

Duration: 1:24:27

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Revelation 3:1-15

Topics: "Church Revival", "Prayer Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Champions reflects on the decline of his church from 880 members to 300, and expresses his desire for revival. He emphasizes the importance of prayer and asks for God's guidance and intervention. He contrasts the true work of God with artificial excitement created by manipulators and gimmicks. Pastor Champions highlights the qualities of faithful ministers, such as seriousness about the work and Word of God, faith in the power of the Spirit, and patience in waiting for the fruit of their labor.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 3 and I want to read 6 verses of Scripture. Pastor Chaffee's overextended himself on bringing the churches to life. When I took this last church we had 880 members.

We're down to, and we really had a great revival, we're down to about 300 now. And if about 100 of those 300 get saved, we'll be in pretty good shape. Before we look to the God of the Book, let's bow our heads in our hearts and pray that the God of the Book might send His Spirit to help us.

Let us pray. Lord, You said we should ask and we would receive. And You've told us to knock and it will be opened unto us.

And today we ask and knock and seek. We've come here to this conference, all of us, seeking. We have not arrived, but we do diligently seek Thee.

And we love Thee because You first loved us. We thank You that You revealed Yourself in nature, so as to leave every man without excuse. You revealed Your power, Your wisdom, and Your goodness to us in all that You've made.

For our Father, we thank You for this further revelation of Thyself, where we learn of our sin and Jesus our Savior. And in His name we ask You to help us, even now. We ask it for His name's sake and for our

good.

Amen. Unto the angel of the church that saw this right, these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast the name that thou livest, and are dead.

Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain. They are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent.

If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast the few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. They shall walk in white, for they are worthy.

He that overcometh, he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As we know, these two chapters in Revelation are the very words of our risen Lord. They are not the words of John in the sense the same as it wrote the epistle. They are direct, words direct from the glorified Lord.

If we take these seven messages of Revelation and put them together, we have a complete or a composite picture of the variety of imperfections in the visible church today and in all ages. The severity with which our Lord rebukes these imperfections and sins should be a constant and an effectual warning against them in our churches that you and I represent. Since they are the last words of Jesus, these final messages of his love and concern for his church, we should well expect these various words in these churches to be words of power, words that are rich in instruction, words of warning, and bless God, words of comfort.

He does commend these churches. One of the great facts that stick out in these seven letters as you read them, one of the great facts that sticks out to me at least is, I know. Though there are different aspects in every one, this particular phrase is in all seven letters.

I know, so he knows your church, he knows my church, he knows us better than we can know ourselves. The enthroned Christ knows us. We can't even know ourselves.

Who can unravel all those emotions and hopes and fears and desires and aims and motives that go into every action? How much self and world is mingled with our love for Jesus and our regard to bring him glory? Who knows? But in these epistles, and I just think it might be good to call your attention to the verses. I may not be giving it in your translation, but by looking at several translations on these seven churches, I want to call your attention to the verses where he said, I know. To the church at Ephesus in chapter 2, verse 2, he said, I know thy works.

And the NIV says, deeds and hard work and perseverance. I know thy works. And Smyrna in chapter 2, verses 9, he says, I know your tribulation, affliction and poverty.

He also knew their hypocrisy. He said, I know those who say they are and are not. We have a lot of those.

And he knew, and that's chapter 2, verse 9. And then in chapter 2, verse 13, he says, I know where you dwell. You're holding fast and holding fast his name and not denying the faith. And then again, in verse 19,

Thyatira, chapter 2, verse 19.

I know thy works, thy charity, thy faith. But notice, each case, I know, I know, I know. Sardis, the one we just read.

I know you have a name, but you're dead. Philadelphia, chapter 3, verse 8. Your little strength, I know your little strength. Your faithfulness to keep his word.

See, these are not all rebukes throughout these churches. Sometimes we think of these churches and we see all that's the matter. But our Lord knew some good things about these churches as well.

And then last of all, Laodicea, chapter 3, verse 15. I know thy works, the one that did not know herself. He said, I know you.

Well, I can say to you, preacher, he knows your church, too. And he knows mine. A look at these churches, a look at the people of God in the Old Testament, a look at the church history will teach us that there is always a need of revival.

That's why our theme is so appropriate. It'll be appropriate next year, it'll be appropriate next year, and the year after that. Because there's always need of revival, of reforming the church, strengthening the things that remain, trying to bring her back to life.

That's not something peculiar to our generation. Of Sardis, Jesus says, wake up, wake up. And I'm taking that as my, in your American Standard Version, and our King James, it doesn't say that, it says be watchful.

But in the other version, it says, wake up. And that's kind of my assignment today. You notice it says, wake up.

They weren't completely dead. He did say you were dead, but not completely, because how are you going to wake up if you're dead? And how are you going to strengthen the things that remain if nothing remains? So they weren't quite dead. And then in verse 4, he said, there are still some who have not spoiled their clothes.

Well, some of us are in situations where they're pretty much dead, but there's still a little left. And we must strengthen the things that remain sometimes. Many churches are asleep, and some of them sleep the sleep of death.

Some of them are more sound asleep than others. And some are like, I guess many are like the lay of the sea in church there. They think they're well because they have the crowns and the buildings and the stained glass and all, every kind of thing you could think of.

And yet, our Lord's opinion of them is that they're pitiful. Pitiful, poor, blind and naked. But God, and I'm glad for this, He does not let sleep go unwarned.

Nor is that sleep, it's never been universal. There's always been a little light somewhere. Somewhere in the world, there's always been a little light.

There's always been the children of light. Though they be few at times, there's always been children of light living among the dead. Both the Bible and history are full of records of awakenings.

And we've been hearing this week of many of those awakenings since the scenes of Pentecost. We've been hearing a great deal about it, sometimes to individual churches, sometimes to a community, sometimes to a larger sector, and even affecting nations. We've heard about that all week long from different sources and different ways.

Well, we've also heard this, that there are always human instruments. And so today, for this bringing a church alive, or revival, or whatever you want to call it, I want to consider a little bit of some of the characteristics. First of all, surely they were men of light passion.

How then comes their success? And today I'm on the human side. I want to press on the human side a little bit. How comes their success? What kind of men were they? What kind of men were they? What weapons did they employ? What were their methods? This may be a very simple message, but I believe it's very true.

And I hope that you don't think it's an oversimplification of these suggestions to answer these three questions. First of all, and I judge this from the scriptures, reading the revivals of the scriptures, I judge it from reading history and where it took place. So this is not just taking some one instance.

These are always evident. First of all, there were always those who are dead in earnest about the work of God. Dead in earnest about the work and the word of God.

There must be that with preachers, and that's where it must start, and people, there must be that felt responsibility as stewards of the mystery of God. We examine the churches that have come to life in the past, and there's always been some men who were dead in earnest. They labored, they preached like men who were in earnest about eternity and about eternity-bound souls.

And I'm glad that note's been pounded from time to time through this conference. Concerned about eternity and eternity-bound souls. Everything they did was marked with, where it happened, was marked with genuineness and earnestness.

Not just religious excitement, but genuine, earnest men knew that necessity was laid upon them. That's why they were earnest. They knew that necessity was laid upon them.

Sometimes when we look at them, we feel that they're giants, and so they were. But if anybody's going to serve our generation, it'll have to be like little peanuts like you and me. But we must still feel the same thing.

Necessity is laid upon them. That felt urgency, the weight of that urgency, of the cause of the gospel that was entrusted to them. Without exception, that's always true.

They knew their whole soul, they threw their whole soul into the conflict against evil. Well, first then, there was dead earnestness, not indifference. Second thing I observe, and I believe these are very accurate, was things that preceded church come into life.

There was always bent on success. There were men who were bent on success. When a man enters Christ's army or the ministry, he must be bent on success.

If you're not bent on success, you're a traitor to Christ and his cause. You ought to be bent on success. I'm surprised at preachers who aren't bent on success.

I said success, not statistics. A lot of fellows are bent on statistics. I'm not talking about that.

There's nothing wrong with that. Some people get so pious they're afraid to count numbers. Some people have a numbers racket and others are afraid to count them.

I always remind people I'm not afraid of numbers. I don't mind saying I baptized so many people or so. They counted them in the book of Acts.

They said there were 3,000. How'd they know there were 3,000? Somebody counted them. Or else it's a figure of speech or else they're dishonest and I believe the Bible.

Well, we would see our churches come alive. There must be some warriors then, warriors who have set their hearts on victory, fight, believing, anticipating the victory under the guidance of our great captain. We have a great captain.

A shepherd who can't sit on the mountainside in the ease of the breeze, heedless and the straying and the perishing and the bleeding flock. Rather, we must be watching and warning, guiding and feeding the sheep committed to our care. I'm very interested in Pastor Martin referring to last night.

It ties into this very point about one of the men, Gilbert Tennant, how he was sick. He was sick and his friend was having success, but he was sick. But it was those views of eternity that affected him, affecting views of eternity.

And then he was bent on success. And he had it. He had it.

He had it. Maybe he wasn't bent on success before. Well, that's the second thing.

There must men be bent on success. You'd see a church come to life thirdly. There must be men of faith.

There must be men of faith. Not only know a definition of faith and preach faith. I'm talking about saving faith just at this moment.

There must be that plowing and sowing of the right kind of seeds. The gospel of the grace of God, plowing and sowing in hope, in hope that something will happen with this seed. Something will happen with this seed.

There must be that going forth, weeping, bearing precious seeds, knowing, knowing that in due season there will be reaping if we faint not. Knowing certainly that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Knowing that we'll return, bringing our sheaves with us.

Remember to lay hold of his promises of God like the psalmist. He reminded God of his promises in Psalm 119. He said, Remember thy word unto thy servant, whereunto thou hast caused me to hope.

Thou hast caused me to hope on this promise. And when we have those great promises, and have those great promises, it ought to cause us to hope. We ought to have some confidence in the Savior who commissioned us.

We ought to have some confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to take the wax of this world from deaf ears. Faith in the Holy Spirit to take the dust of this world from the eyes of poor blind sinners. Faith in the power of the word of God, believing that promise that my word shall not return unto the void, but it will

accomplish that which I please.

Whether it's preached or passed out in a piece of literature, it will accomplish that which I please. Not unlike the Apostle Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. That's the kind of faith I mean.

The kind of faith in the work of the Spirit, the work of the power of the word of God. The fourth thing I suggest. There must be labor.

There must be some bearing of the burden of the heat of the day. There must be some unwearied toil of body and soul. It takes time to do the work of God, right? Toil, time, strength, substance.

When I talk to some of these preachers here and know their schedule, know the hours they put in, I tell you, it would put some others of you to shame to know some of the hours that they put into the kingdom of God. I say you must be bearing the burden of the heat of the day. That's what the New Testament reveals.

History reveals the same thing. There was always those men, without exception, who bore the burden of the heat of the day. Not unlike the Apostle Paul, who could speak in language like this.

In weariness, in painfulness, and some of you know something about both. In watchfulness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness. Now you may not have to go to that extremity, that extreme, but that principle is true.

And there are men here that know something about it. No, I'm not literally hungry for them, maybe. But the principle behind it, there are men here that know that.

Fifth, to see a church come alive. I almost can't talk about this point. There must be patience.

And I wish I could tell you how much patience I have. But I'd be lying. I have more than I used to.

I used to get upset if I missed one of those sections in a revolving door. I'm a little better. But you see, I've got to preach above my experience.

If I just preach my experience, you wouldn't hear much. And that's something you ought to learn, preacher. You've got to preach above your experience.

What I want to preach is from the Bible, not my experience. You know, when I went to this prison church, I don't apologize for personal experiences anymore because I don't have any other kind. I don't understand these people who apologize for personal experiences.

I don't have any other kind. You can help me on that. I'll be all right.

But when I went to this prison church, two weeks they called up, the power company called up and said, I'm not going to tell you all the problems, but I'm just saying this, saying this, that I needed to have something to anchor my soul to. And I went to one of those favorite verses of mine, 2 Timothy 2, 24 to 26. And I suggest that to you if you're in bad straits.

The servant of the Lord must not strive. Boy, I meet a lot of preachers who strive with congregations. You never do any good striving with them.

That's point number one. The servant of the Lord must not strive. Henrickson says, quarrel, but be gentle, apt to teach.

You're a servant of the Lord. The servant of the Lord must not strive. Be gentle, apt to teach.

Patience. I say, Lord, give me patience. In meekness, instructing those.

Teaching. Instructing those that oppose themselves. If God, my hope is in what God might do, perhaps.

And what is it for us? It's sowing and sowing and sowing. It's teaching and teaching and teaching, week after week. We cannot be soon weary in well-doing.

We must keep that passage before our minds ever. Below the husband waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. And hath, notice, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain.

And the next verse says, be ye patient. Many good plans have been aborted by impatience. And I could tell you some of mine.

They were aborted because of impatience. Many cannot, men cannot force a revival or force a church to life. There's that, there's that intense longing.

But that intense longing must be coupled with patience. Patience and intense longing must be joined together. William Carey labored seven years before he baptized his first convert.

Adonai and Judson toiled in Burma for seven years before he harvested one soul. Morrison sowed seven years in China before he baptized the first Chinaman. Moffat declared he waited seven years to see the first evident moving of the spirit in Africa.

Henry Richard spent seven long years in the Congo before he saw his first convert. Well, what were they doing in these seven years? What were they doing seven years? Some of you preachers are in bad places and you're in tough straits. You ought to learn about this patience.

What were they doing? And this I don't want to miss. You miss everything else I say today. I don't want you to miss this point.

And I have a reason for not wanting you to miss it because I have a hard feeling that this is where we may be, many of us. I'll tell you what they were doing. They were laying foundations and thinking of future generations, patiently laying the foundations.

And while we live in a church age where foundations in a great many times have been removed, removed from our large denominations in some cases, the foundations have been removed. And I want to tell you God is interested in foundations. He began like that Himself.

The psalmist says, Of all God has laid the foundation of the earth. And the evangelical prophet put it like this. My hand, talking about God, is saying to God, to the evangelical prophet, My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth.

Solomon built the temple. Where did he begin? He began where the Bible begins. With Solomon built the temple, he laid the foundation.

1 Kings 5, 7, and the king commanded, They brought great stones and huge stones to lay the foundations. How long did it take? Well, if I understand, 1 Kings 6, 36, it must have been four years because it said, In the fourth year was the foundation of the house laid. It takes patience to lay foundations.

When the temple was rebuilt by Ezra, Ezra 3, 6-12, I won't turn to it today, but you can read that beautiful picture of him laying foundations. We live in a day when people want cheap, quick, slick, frothy foundations. And our churches are reaping the fruit of those foundations.

We're reaping the fruit of a past 50 years of forgetting about foundations, just eagerly and feverish activity, especially in the area of evangelism. Let me tell you something. Carnal men will not be interested in foundations.

And you know who will be interested in foundations? Only men who are interested in true foundations are those who have their eyes fixed on eternity, because it's painful, laborious, it's slow. You know, I've been in the construction business for a couple of years, like 25 or plus. I tell you, it's no fun out there pouring those footings, pouring that concrete.

It's all dirt and hard work. Some of you may know something about it. It's no fun.

But I tell you, if you don't do a good foundation job, you'll have a faulty superstructure sooner or later. The great apostle knew this. He said, I'm a wise master builder, and he was a wise master builder of churches.

But in that same context where he said, I'm a wise master builder, he said, I lay the foundation, and another man build their own. Some of you may be, do nothing but lay a foundation, and another man will get the glory and the superstructure and the stained glass and putting on the trim and hanging the doors and building the cupboards. That's nice work.

But I tell you, if you have your eyes fixed on eternity, you'll be willing to build a foundation. Paul built foundations. How did he do it? How did he do it? Well, you read the book of Acts, and it's not as complicated as you might think.

I'll tell you how he did it. I stood up more than once, and not too long ago, recently, and sometimes I stand up and read the book of Acts straight through. I stand up so I don't get drowsy.

I've done it more than once. And sometimes with this prayer, Lord, what did they have? What did Paul have? Well, I'll tell you what I found. It's very simple.

They preached, they taught, and there's one thing else. There's one other thing. It's very prominent in the life of the Apostle Paul.

He had some tears. He had some tears. They prayed, preached, and tears.

Listen to him as he leaves, that beautiful, beautiful picture in Acts where he leaves those men that he worked with for three and a half years at Ephesus. Oh, it's a beautiful picture of a right relationship between the pastor and the other elders and leaders. He recounts his time with them, and he says, with humility of mind, with many tears.

Tears, many tears. That's verse 19. Verse 31.

Therefore, he's coming closer to the end. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone, night and day, with tears. I'll tell you, there wouldn't be so many church splits if there would be more tears.

Some of you preachers wouldn't be having so much trouble in your congregation if there was a little more tears. You want to fight them? Tears. More tears, less church splits.

That's not the only case of the Apostle Paul. Let me read how he wrote with tears. 2 Corinthians 2.4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears, not that we should be grieved, not that ye should be grieved, but that we might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

Tears in his writing. Hear him again. In Philippians chapter 3, verse 18.

For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now I tell you even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. I was interested to notice this week how many times, and these men weren't thinking of my point, but they were making it, how many times Tenet and Davies, when Mr. Ellis gave his message on Samuel Davies, he brought out the fact that Tenet and Davies stood in the pew on the pulpit and wept. Now that was somebody trying to impress somebody.

Oh, if there's anything I hate, I agree with Pastor Martin, there's some preacher trying to cry when they're not putting all that baloney in the pulpit. That's a disgrace. I believe when Tenet and Davies wept, they were real tears.

And I noticed in Dr. Robertson's address, one of them where he talked about Joseph weeping seven times. John Elias, whoever gave that, I forget this now, but he talked about preaching about those Sabbath breakers. And he didn't go out there and read the riot act to them.

Scold them and all that. He preached to them. There's a difference between preaching and scolding people.

But let me tell you, what I noticed in that was he did it with tears and they saw him weeping. You know, we have many good facilities. We have comfort and equipment.

We have ways of communicating now that the gospel never knew in days past. The church has never been better in many ways, in so far as machinery and mechanics. But I ask myself and I ask you, where are the Bible tears? Where are some wet-eyed Calvinists? Paul had tears.

Oh, may God deliver us from that church like Laodicea to think all is well. I'm rich and I'm in need of nothing. Jesus said, You're poor and wretched and blind.

No tears. Joel who wrote in Joel 2 prophesied of the Holy Spirit coming to Pentecost says this in chapter 2. Let me quote it. Even now, declared the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.

Want to revive any church? You want to see your church come to life? Well, there must come some with that fasting and weeping and mourning. Red your hearts and not your garments. Return unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Let's try tears. He tried everything else. Try some tears.

First time the word tears in the Bible appears. And I don't make so much stock out of the law of first mention. I meet these people who make out the law of first mention.

Well, when they start, if they knew the original language, which I don't, they would soon find out that sometimes their little outlines all shot to pieces. Boy, these new translations really shoot your outlines, don't they? Well, first time tears is mentioned in the Bible. It's in 2 Kings 20, verse 5. It was the occasion where God was telling Hezekiah, you're going to die soon.

He said, you're going to die soon. And that wasn't very good news to Hezekiah. And so he started to pray and weep.

Well, the king became so desperate that he prayed and he wept. And the Bible said about that, he said, and God's seen his tears. And God's seen his tears.

Now, if the law of first mention did mean anything, I said if, it would seem like that that would be that it would mean something like this. It would indicate that God does not come only to our rescue, not only when we pray, but when we weep. Now, what is that? I'm not thinking that this necessarily is something that runs down your cheeks.

I believe there's some of that, too. But that's not my emphasis. I'm talking about a distress of spirit, an agony of a broken heart.

Paul was teaching with tears and he watered his teaching by tears. If time would permit, I'd take you to Jeremiah the weeping prophet, but most of you know that well enough and I'm not going to do it. You know, and I'm going to give you another personal illustration because I don't have any other time.

You know, I came from a pagan background, 20th century pagan. And a man on a construction job used to invite me to Sunday school. In fact, he did it for a year before I ever went once.

Be patient. Finally, the second time I went, this is what I wanted to, I'm not going to say all about that, but the second time I ever went to his Sunday school, and I've told a lot of people about this, and it'll stay in my mind, in my heart as long as I have a sound mind until I leave this world. Because the second time I ever went to his Sunday school, that carpenter put out his hard, rough carpenter hand.

I'd worked with him a year now. Put out his hard, rough carpenter hand, and he shook hands with me. And I looked at his face and big tears were rolling down his cheeks.

And I thought, he's not an emotional man. I work with him every day. He's not a sentimentalist.

And I never understood those tears until I started to read this book. And I read where Jesus was moved with compassion. I read where Jesus wept.

I see him entering the city of Jerusalem. And he looked over the city, and he wept. He wept, and Luke is recorded, and when he came near, behold, the city, he wept over it.

And this is what he said, saying, this is what he was saying when he wept. If, he was looking at them, if thou hast known, even thou, that at least this thy day, that the things which belong to thy peace. He was weeping because they did not know the things that belong to their peace.

Well, when I started to read this book, I understood old Elmer's tears. My answer to those tears now, as I look in retrospect with the Bible in my hand, I say that he walked in such a relationship to Jesus Christ, devotionally, that he knew, experimentally, a little bit of that compassion of Christ in a real and practical way. I don't know, those tears had a profound effect on me.

We had experience in our church years ago. We had a little girl from the wrong side of the track. She was converted by another girl bringing her to church.

And that little girl used to, in a prayer meeting, after she was converted, she used to raise her hand and say, pray for my daddy. And the pastor would say, any request for prayer? She'd have her hand up like she's in school, and she'd always say, pray for my daddy. He's not a Christian.

Well, I don't know how many times I went along, but I went along for a long time. And one night, in that prayer meeting, I sat down front with a vase, and I didn't hear her make a request, so I thought she wasn't there. But after the prayer meeting started, began a while, I heard this little feminine voice crying out to God for her father, and she started to weep.

And she wept, and she never finished that prayer yet. Never finished it yet. It put a holy ice on the prayer meeting.

And after a silence, somebody else started to pray, and we prayed and went home. The next morning when I met my friend who's here at this conference, we used to meet every morning. We did it for over 10 years, read the Bible together and prayed for our people.

We did it for 10 years. We read the Bible through like that. And I said to her the next morning, I said, Roger, I believe God's going to save that, save that man.

Well, of course, that shocked him because I had visited that man in a hospital bed, and he looked up off that hospital bed, talked to him, and he said he never did anything wrong. Well, I thought, I looked at it, I wondered what kept his head from falling in from sheer emptiness. And so I knew he was not even a candidate for salvation right then.

I said, Roger, I want to know why, why I had a different, a change of heart about that. Well, I said, Roger, I don't know what that verse in the Psalms means and I'm not sure all that it means yet, but it does say, He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seeds shall doubtlessly come again, yea, bringing his sheaves with him. In two weeks we had a businessman.

I said, I believe there's such a thing as Holy Ghost tears. I believe there's a lot of crocodile tears, too, some of our other kind, but I believe there's some Holy Ghost tears. Two weeks we had a businessman in, he was from Philadelphia, a real estate broker, and he was staying in my home, and young people used to come to our house and use our things, and we had someone sitting in the living room and he was upstairs taking a little Sunday afternoon siesta and he came down and here were some young people, he was a very gregarious type of fellow, he loved young people, and he started to ask each one, what did you all, ask each one as they went around the room, what did your father do? Well, they'd answer, butcher, baker, chemist, maker, lawyer, whatever it was, and then he would say to them all, they're Christian, and they would answer yes or no.

He finally got over to this little girl and her face started to get red, and I remembered the prayer meeting and I thought, well, we're going to have another scene, and I said, I objected to that. He got over to her

and he said, honey, what does your daddy do? He said, he works in the post office, is he a Christian? And she started to weep, she started to weep, and my friend just kind of moved on the end of the chair and he looked at me and I know what he wanted to do, and I looked at him and he said, I'm only an hour out of church, and I figured the one-eyed kleptomaniac would be blazing away and he'll have company and all that sort of thing. I must say, even though I believed God was with me, my faith was low, but I knew he wanted to go, so he goes over and sure enough they had company and sure enough the mechanical babysitter was on and there we are.

But I learned a little, you know, I was a construction man and we don't have much finesse in the construction business, but he was a stockbroker and he asked me and he had all that nice finesse and so he went over and he said, Dad, we've come to talk to you about something very important. You don't mind if we turn off the television, do you? You know, it's hard for preachers to visit today. Most people don't have enough sense to even turn it down, let alone turn it off.

It's aggravating, isn't it? Well, anyhow, I saw that same man without any pressure, no high-pressure evangelism. I saw him kneel by a chair. I heard him with these ears crying out to God to be merciful in the sinner.

He died and as far as I know, he came to church that night and we'd been trying to get him to church for a long time. He came to church that night and from what I learned from his family, he read the New Testament until the day he died. Paul said, I did it with tears.

The Redeemer had tears. The Savior had tears. Well, bringing a church alive into being, you have to lay some foundations and Paul's tool that I'd read the book of Acts, there was teaching and tears and I'm putting preaching and teaching together.

Tears and teaching and prayer. If the church is to come alive, there must be some teaching, there must be some doctrinal foundations. That's what you have in Romans.

All that great foundational first 11 chapters before he says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies. All that doctrine. Ephesians 1. 2. 3. And then you saw it was that foundational stuff.

There are foundations that you have to be laid. And I want to tell you, it takes patience. It takes patience to lay foundations.

And only the man who will have her eye on eternity. You know, there's two characters in Bunyan's Children's Progress and you might know he'll have to get into this messy somewhere. There's two characters in Children's Progress.

It's the third picture in the interpreters house. You know, the first picture is that most beautiful picture of a gospel minister. Best I've ever known.

I don't know a better picture of a gospel minister than John Bunyan's Children's Progress in the interpreters house. The next picture is a picture of the law and the gospel. Some people would study it.

You remember that picture where Paula stirs up the dust trying to get the room clean. You can't get it clean. And then a little maid comes in with a sprinkler and they get it clean.

Well, that's the second picture. But the third picture is of two little kids. You know what the name was? Passion and Patience.

Well, of course, Passion was discontent and he wanted everything. He wanted everything. They threw that pile of toys down in front of him.

He soon went through that. He wanted everything right now. And Passion was a picture of a man of this world.

And it would include some preachers. They want to see it all right now. Patience was a figure of a man who was concerned about the world to come.

He was concerned about the world to come. Passion's philosophy was a bird in the hands worth two in the bush. That's this world's philosophy.

That's my Bible philosophy. Patience was willing to wait. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us the importance of building foundations.

In the last part of the Sermon on the Mount, you remember the emphasis that he put on the foundations? The one man was not interested in the foundation. He built a structure. The other man labored for the foundation.

And when a storm of God's wrath came, it was only the foundation that counted. I say, true men, only men who have their eyes fixed on eternity, who care about foundations and future generations. The sixth thing that I suggest is this.

If the Church comes alive, there must be some boldness and determination, not only patience. Commitment closes on many a door of usefulness. Many a door of usefulness.

It wins no friends while it strengthens every enemy. Perhaps there have never been an age as wicked, as bold wickedness, in the front that there is now. And because that's so bold, Christians' boldness and courage must be encouraged.

We must be strong and of good courage. I like many references to Acts 4 this week. Three times the word boldness was in there.

The circumstances demanded boldness of Peter. Acts chapter 4, 13 to 29. I went back one night.

We heard about boldness. I went back and read that chapter. And three times boldness is there, the boldness of Peter.

When the vicar closed the church door, and Whitefield stood up in the tomb, somebody would say, well, the door closed. God closed the door. We'll go home now and fold our little hands and fold our little hands and fold hands and fold our little hands and fold little hands and fold our hands and fold our little hands and to several times this week, and I want to refer to it again because I've read that chapter on prayer four times, and it's very convicting, very convicting.

And I wish I could say to you today, Oh, I have prevailed in prayer, brethren, I know what it is to prevail in prayer. But I can't say that. All I can say is, I do prevail in my efforts to pray.

That's all I can say. I'll tell you, prayer is much labor in prayer. We say to each other, pray for the work, pray for the work.

Let me tell you something, brother, prayer is the work. Hardest work I know. Hardest thing in the Christian life.

Prayer is the work. I look in the Old Testament, and without exception, every man that was used of God, there was prayer connected with it. Without exception, I turn to the New Testament, and I see Paul requesting prayer.

No lesson 17 references to our Lord praying. No lesson 17. I look at church history, and every man that's left his mark on the stands of time for Christ has been a man of prayer.

They started out in Acts like this. Acts 1, it starts out like this. And we've been referring to those prayers this week.

Acts 1.14, here it is. They all continue with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women. Probably the last reference to our Lord's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the brethren.

Oh, my brothers, if we don't prevail in prayer, God help us to prevail in our efforts to pray. Nehemiah, when his friend came to tell him about the walls that were broken down, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and Isaiah teaches us that those walls are the walls of salvation, and the gates are the gates of praise. Well, they were broken down, and he tells him, what did Nehemiah do? Oh, it's a beautiful thing.

Read it in Nehemiah 1.4. He said he wept, and he prayed, and his prayers recorded there. And he prayed so long, for about six months or something like that. He never went to the king and said a word, but finally the king saw that his countenance was changed, and he had to say to him, what are you? What's the matter with you? You're not sick.

And then he told him, and from then on he did that work for God and built the walls of salvation and hung the gates of praise again. One of my highlights of my week is to meet with my elders at six o'clock every Friday morning to pray. It really is.

I don't know. I know in the Bible, the New Testament, the Old Testament, the Church history, and let me say this, in the churches that I visit where there's some prayer and people praying, there's things happening. Oh, for those praying churches, I don't know.

I don't know the relationship between a sovereign God and the cry of His people. I don't. But I do know there is a relationship.

I don't understand that relationship. But all I can do is take that promise with God, if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more the Father will give the Spirit to them who ask. And I keep praying out, and I hope you do too, for that Spirit to come and do what I can't do.

Who does it this week? The last day of the Church comes alive. The Church comes alive and there must be some men of solemn deportment, no levity, no flippancy. There must be some deep spiritual souls, no laziness, no looseness, levity, or lethargy.

Did you ever look that up in Webster's Dictionary what lethargy is? Well, I did. It's morbid drowsiness, no lethargy. Profound sleep in a state of inaction.

That represents some of you. I meet a lot of lazy preachers, sleepy preachers. No, it'll mar the work.

What kind of men who started out by asking three questions, what kind of men were these men where churches and things came alive? What weapons did they have? What methods did they use? Well, we've covered it and let me touch it quickly. They were men who were dead serious about the work and the Word of God. They were men who were bent on success.

They were men who had faith and hope and power of the Word of God and the power of the Spirit. They were men who labored and bore the burden of the day, of the heat of the day. They were men with patience who waited for the precious seed, for the fruit, for the seed that they've sown.

They were men of much patience, therefore. Men who were willing to lay some foundations. Men with some Holy Ghost boldness and determination.

Men of prayer, because prayer is the work. Men of solemn deportment. Well, you know what I want to know what it looks like in the making? I could send you home with this picture.

You know what it looks like in the making? You'll see a faithful minister of Christ, surrounded by maybe a very, very small band of praying ones, leading the battle against the powers of darkness. You'll not see a lot of pomp, not display of carnal attractions. You won't see platform artists or master of gimmicks or manipulators of crowds.

These things make a show, these manipulators of crowds and platform artists. They might make a show and they may bring a church to what is apparently alive, but you'll find it's only artificial excitement. Oh, these are things to yearn for.

Pastor Martin talked about yearning last night, yearning. And I thought to myself after I heard him press that point of yearning, holy yearning. You know, that's the best way you could leave this conference, with some holy yearning, yearning that won't let go.

I read where John Knox in his old age was helped to the pulpit, helped to the pulpit by friends. But when he rose to preach, the spirit of God's love burned in his heart in such a fashion, this is the report, the spirit in his heart of the spirit of God's love burned in his heart in such a fashion that one of the people that helped him to the pulpit said this, and I quote, so mighty was his yearning that I thought he would break the pulpit to bits. Oh, if God would send this many preachers, just this many, just this many.

Thirty-six states are represented here. If God would send this many people, this many preachers home to their pulpits with some yearning, real holy ghost yearning, you won't have so many questions asked how you do this and how you do that and how you do the other thing. Wanting some formula to make your church come alive? The formula I've given you today, it includes holy yearning.

Well, let's pray. Oh, gracious God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you that these lips that have cursed you can call you Father. We thank you that as men who seek to serve you in this world, we can call you Father, Father, Father.

We thank you for this conference. We thank you for every man and the churches and homes that they represent. And how we plead with you today that we would not gather to gain more information to cram in our little brains, but that we would go away with some feelings, some yearning, and oh, God, send us back as preachers who pray, not only know how to teach about prayer and preach about prayer, but oh, God, send us back, send us back as praying men.

And then, our Father, we pray, give us the patience we need with poor, ignorant, blind, and in some cases, dumb souls. Give us the heart of a shepherd. Lord, it never grew on Adam's vine.

That heart that we pray for never grew on Adam's vine. It's that heart, that heart, Lord, that comes from walking with you, Lord Jesus Christ. Give us a little bit of that shepherd heart as we go back to our people.

Give us love for them, the airy ones, the sheep that jump over the fence, the ones with broken legs, all kind of sheep we have. Give us the heart of a shepherd for them. And then, Father, be pleased to give us a concern for those who are outside the fold.

Lord, may we never become so theologically sophisticated that we forget about the poor needs, the needs of poor souls. May we never want to be so theologically articulate that we forget that there's souls on our street going to perdition. Lord, give us a burden, Father.

Hear our cries. Accept our thanks for this meeting and for each other, and for all our brothers who are out in the world seeking to serve you. We thank you for your service.

Hear our prayers for Jesus Christ. This lecture, A Message, is made available to you by the Banner of Truth Trust in America and in Edinburgh, Scotland, in cooperation with the Trinity Pulpit in Essexville, New Jersey. These conferences are held each year in America, and information regarding future conferences may be obtained by writing to the office of the Banner of Truth Trust in America at the following address.

Banner of Truth Trust, Post Office Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 17013. Also, a list of the reprinted works of great theologians and many outstanding scholars of today may be sent to you on request by writing to the Banner of Truth Trust. Now let Ernie Resinger, pastor of the Pompano Beach Baptist Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, tell you something of these conferences.

This is our sixth ministers and elders conference in the United States. However, in England, the Banner of Truth has had this type of conference for over 25 years. I think my first conference was 1962.

I believe that would be about 22 years ago. To my knowledge, they have all been used in a great measure, used of God to instruct and at times to search us and always to encourage those in the ministry. I pray that this will be no exception.

I have every reason to believe that the men attending such a conference are here not looking for frothy religious excitement, but rather biblical and experimental substance. Of course, that can only be received from the Bible. I believe the men who come to these conferences are men who desire to be instructed and desire to be searched like David, men who desire to be used.

Certainly, as already has been indicated, we all come because we need encouragement. Age doesn't change those things. You'll still need it when you're older, those three things.

We have a hymn in our hymnal back in our churches. The name of the hymn is, Brother and We Are Met to Worship. One of the lines, I think the line is, Brother and We Are Met to Worship and Adore the God We Love.

But there's a line that says this, All is vain, except all is vain, unless the Spirit of the Holy One come down. It doesn't matter about the conference or the speakers, for our spiritual good, that same thing is true here. All is vain, except all is vain, unless the Spirit of the Holy One come down.

And I pray that that will be our portion this week. If you would like a listing of these messages from the Banner of Truth conferences and many other Banner of Truth tapes from the Leicester conference in England, along with thousands of other messages, you may write to the Mount Olive Tape Library, Incorporated, of these excellent messages for a fee of \$4. Permission for the reproduction of this tape for further distribution should be requested from either the Banner of Truth Trust or the Mount Olive Tape Library, Incorporated, Post Office Box 422, Mount Olive, Mississippi, 39119.

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