

# WHAT WILL MAKE THE CHURCH GROW?

Sermon by Donald Townsley

## INTRODUCTION

1. This question is often asked by members of the church.
2. Those who are sound in the faith will ponder upon this question, not from the standpoint of members alone, but as to what will make the church grow spiritually.
3. Let us study some things that will make the church grow.

## I. FAITHFUL TEACHING

1. The church is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose -- Eph. 3: 10 -11
2. The church is a spiritual institution with a spiritual message -- John 18:36; Rom. 14:17; I Tim. 3:15
3. The local church with Christ as its head, elders as its overseers, deacons as its servants, evangelists to preach the Word and saints (Phil. 1:1) is assigned the task of :
  - (1) Preaching the gospel --I Tim. 3:15
  - (2) Caring for the needs of its saints -- Acts 6: 1 - 6
  - (3) Edifying -- Eph. 4: 11 -12
4. When the congregation meets these responsibilities, it is faithful to the Lord in these matters.
5. A church that will not discharge its obligation in these matters is not a faithful church.
6. A church that won't support all the GOSPEL (Acts 20: 27) will soon see the disastrous results.
7. Some churches have QUIT preaching the gospel to be popular with the people and to grow in number.
  - (1) Churches that do this need to ask, "How are we growing?"
8. The church at Sardis had the name that she lived, but the Lord said this church was dead -- Rev. 3:1
9. A growing church is one that is faithful in its teaching.

## II. THE CHURCH MUST BE STEADFAST IN PRAYER

1. A growing church is one whose members are devoted to prayer -- Acts 2:42
2. The Jerusalem church was a praying church -- Acts 12: 5, 12
3. The Lord's people should be a praying people -- I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1; James 5:16
4. Prayer is essential to the growth of the church -- Matt. 18: 19 - 20

## III. THERE MUST BE SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS

1. Numbers have too often become the center of attraction.
2. Elders, preachers and many other members of the local church are too often influenced by the flashy appearance of number.
3. Elders are too often absorbed by the material building improvements, details and errands that can be assigned to others -- Acts 6:2
4. Elders should not let the material deter them from their MAIN work -- Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:2
5. The preacher may become so involved in social activities and details in general that he does not have time to study, to read, meditate and "preach the word" -- I Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4: 2 - 5; 2 Tim. 2:15

6. Members, in general, are too involved with television, pleasure trips, business and other enterprises until they become disinterested in spiritual things and become unfaithful in attendance at services.
7. Worldliness is the attitude that is basically responsible for our problems within the church -- Col. 3: 1 - 2; Rom. 8:6
8. Spiritual emphasis is necessary to the growth of the church.

#### IV. PERSERVERANCE IN PERSECUTION

1. Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 3:12: "*yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*"
2. Members of the church who stand for the truth shall suffer persecution today.
  - (1) It is not "may" or "perhaps", but they SHALL suffer persecution.
3. PERSECUTION defined: "The act of persecution; cruel oppression; any period of systematic oppression; infliction of torture, death, etc., on account of religious belief; persistent petty annoyance."
4. There are different ways by which the Godly are persecuted:
  - (1) By being inflicted with injury personally and even bodily. It has always been true that if a man's message cannot be answered, then "destroy the man" -- i.e. Stephen, James, and Antipas -- Acts 7: 54 - 60; 12:2; Rev. 3:13
  - (2) By being placed in some unfavorable circumstance or light.
  - (3) By being shunned, isolated, and boycotted.
5. When persecution comes we should not "cry" but rejoice -- Acts 5:41; Matt. 5: 11 -12
6. Perseverance in persecution will make the church grow -- Acts 8: 1 - 5

#### V. LIBERALITY IN GIVING

1. The early church was liberal in its giving -- Acts 2: 44,45; 4: 34 - 35; II Cor. 8: 1 - 5
2. God and Christ are our examples in giving -- John 3:16; II Cor. 8:9
3. Liberality in giving will make the church grow.

#### VI. PURITY IN LIVING

1. It is not enough to know the truth, believe the truth, and preach the truth -- we must live pure lives if the church is to grow -- Matt. 5: 13 - 16; Tit. 2: 11 -12
2. Godly living will make the church grow.

#### CONCLUSION