

The Church Moving Forward #1, Challenges to Accept.

Text. (Phil 3:12-13)

INTRODUCTION:

A. I think the saying is basically true: we are either going forward, standing still, or falling behind.

1. Sadly, this is also true in the Lord's church
2. The problem is that many congregations have become complacent and comfortable (the prelude to standing still)
3. And once we are standing still, everyone passes us by and we begin to fall behind

B. To introduce our theme... [Philippians 3:12-14](#)

1. Paul believed in moving ahead
2. We can't rely on our past laurels or on past reputation
3. Moving forward is the only way to avoid decline and failure

C. As a church, we need to think about what it takes to move ahead

1. We must never be satisfied with the past or believe that what we are doing in the present is all that we can do or should do

2. [2 Peter 3:18](#)

3. To achieve all that God will give us opportunity to do, we must move forward to meet the challenges of the future

D. Today, we are going to be noticing that there are CHALLENGES TO ACCEPT if the church is going to move forward.

DISCUSSION:

A. WE MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

1. Notice this critical passage of Scripture

a. [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

b. [1 Peter 2:9](#)

- 1) People need to see a difference in us
- 2) We must “show forth” God by the things we do...
 2. We must accept the challenge of making a difference
 - a. That difference must come as we live rooted in and founded on the word of God
 - b. Christians have been silenced and made to feel unwelcome and unwanted by so many in the world.
 - c. But we cannot let the world shut us up, shut us down, shut us out, or shut us in.
 - d. [1 Corinthians 15:58](#)
 3. We must not resort to ungodly actions, but must continue to show the world that we have the answers to the problems plaguing mankind
 4. We need to fight in our nation, in our communities, and in our schools for morality and oppose every evil
 5. We can change the world the same way God’s people have always changed the world - by teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus and changing the hearts and minds of those who live around us.
 6. Paul turned the world upside down ([Acts 17:6](#))
 7. We MUST accept this challenge - the challenge of making a difference in the world!

B. WE MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF EVANGELIZING OUR OWN COMMUNITY

1. Everywhere I have been, most people thought their community was not open to the gospel of Jesus
 - a. Was that based on the failure of well planned and well financed efforts to evangelize the community? - NO!
 - b. Was it because there was so much opposition or animosity to the church that no one would listen? - NO!
 - c. Was it because the people so hated God or His people that they refused to yield to His will? - NO!
 - d. It is mostly because the local church simply did not put forth the effort needed.
2. [Mark 16:15-16](#)
3. [Matthew 28:19-20](#)

4. Here is an illustration to help us see the challenge:

a. Coca Cola is so well known, that you can go into some of the most remote places in the world and there you will find bottles of coke

b. Their motto: Think globally but act locally. They want to be everywhere, but to do it they know they must take care of each location

c. The Lord's church needs to learn this lesson

d. It is good for the church to be involved in mission work, but the most important work we need to be involved in is locally

1) Many times our numbers drop because we are more concerned about evangelizing the world than we are our own community

2) Does the community cry out as did David in the long ago? "No man careth for my soul" ([Psa. 142:4](#)).

3) The gospel is best spread into the world - one community at a time

4. Remember [Proverbs 11:30](#)

5. We must accept the challenge of making a difference in the world, evangelizing our community, and...

C. WE MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING LEADERS

1. Have you thought about who will lead the church 10, 20, 30 years from now? Elders....?

a. Notice this key passage... [2 Timothy 2:2](#)

b. Paul invested himself in the training of Timothy, and Timothy was to do the same with other faithful men, who would in turn invest themselves in yet others

c. Christian leaders must develop future leaders

d. There needs to be planning - leaders are not trained by accident - we can't just work day to day

2. Just as there is a responsibility of leaders to train, there is the responsibility of followers to become trained

a. The best leaders have had good followers

b. Good leaders first learn how to be good followers

3. I might add that currently the challenge is to develop male leadership. Notice the chain of command...

a. [1 Corinthians 11:3](#)

b. [Ephesians 5:23](#)

c. We must abide by God's chain of authority if we are going to succeed as God's people.

d. We might ask, "Why are women in many places usurping the authority over the men?" It is because many men are acting like wimps and not taking the leadership role.

e. We must accept the challenge of making a difference in the world, evangelizing our community, developing leadership, and...

D. WE MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF FOLLOWING GOD'S WORD

1. There is a movement in the church today to abandon Scripture as our authority for what we practice

a. But as we move forward into the future, the Bible must be the foundation of what we believe and practice religiously.

b. In recent years, there have been some decisions made that threaten to change the true worship and work of the church...changing worship, women's role, etc.

2. Notice what the Bible says about the importance of God's word

a. [Deuteronomy 12:32](#)

b. [Proverbs 30:6](#)

c. [Revelation 22:18-19](#)

3. We must be a people rooted in the book

a. We must know what God's will is... [2 Timothy 2:15](#)

b. [Matthew 15:9](#)

c. [Jeremiah 6:16-17](#)

CONCLUSION:

A. Ultimately, moving the church forward into the future involves every member

1. Since we are the church, the church moves only as its people move

2. All these challenges are personal challenges to each of us

B. This is the Lord's Church...

It is composed of people just like me.

It will be friendly if I am.

It will do great work if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am generous

It will bring others into its fellowship if I bring them

Its seats will be filled if I fill them

It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service.

If I who make it what it is, am filled with these

Therefore, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being

All these things the church should be

C. WILL YOU ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?