

The Survival of the Local Congregation

Rev. 3:1-2

Introduction:

- A. The universal church or kingdom will survive forever (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28; Matt. 16:18)
 - 1. The seed cannot be destroyed (Matt. 13:19; 1 Pet. 1:23-25)
 - 2. There will be Christians alive at his coming (1 Thess. 4:15-17).
 - 3. The kingdom will be here to be delivered up to the Father at Christ's coming (1 Cor. 15:24)
- B. Local congregations often survive only for a relative short time.
 - 1. Where are the local churches named in the New Testament?
 - 2. Strong churches 30 years ago in the Birmingham area (B. points, N. B'ham, Midfield, F'view, 4th Ave.)
 - 3. Some congregations are barely holding on with a little handful of older members.
 - 4. What must be done to insure the survival of this and other local churches?
- C. We notice 3 *steps* that must be taken for a local congregation to survive – to say nothing of growing.

Discussion:

I. We must Activate the Present Generation.

- A. The local church is edified by the effective working of every member (Eph. 4:16).
 - 1. "Every church is made of willing members, 10% willing to do all, 90% willing to let them."
 - 2. Preachers and elders cannot do your work, nor you theirs.
- B. Local churches seldom survive without an active program of work beyond Sunday AM services.
 - 1. How many do you know that have survived with only Sunday AM services?
 - 2. How many do you know that have survived by just "keeping house?"
- C. Local churches cannot survive when most members are spiritual "couch potatoes."
 - 1. With little or no interest in participating in church's edification activities – classes, meetings, etc.
 - 2. With little or no real participation in services they do attend – just passive observers.
 - 3. With more of a sense of duty than with a sense of gratitude.
- D. How long do you think this congregation would survive:
 - 1. Without the members growing in knowledge? (Cf. 2 Pet. 3:15)
 - 2. If we had to drop our Bible class program for lack of interest?
 - 3. If we had to drop our Sunday night services for lack of interest?
 - 4. If we depend solely upon the "old folks" to keep things going?
 - 5. If it depended on folks like yourself to keep it going?

II. We must Indoctrinate the next Generation. (Cf. Judges 2:10-12; 2 Tim. 1:5)

- A. They need to be grounded in the fundamentals of faith.
- B. They need to be grounded in the gospel plan of salvation.
- C. They need to be grounded in the New Testament pattern for the church.
 - 1. It's worship, work, and organization.
 - 2. It's distinction from denominational churches.

III. We must Replace Our Loses.

- A. Loses due to death, disability, backsliding.
- B. Lost members must be replaced with new members.
 - 1. Means we must put more effort into sowing the seed (Mk. 16:15; Acts 8:4; 1 Cor. 3:6)
 - 2. Means we must put more effort into restoring backsliders (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20)
- C. Lost preachers must be replaced with new preachers.
- D. Lost elders and deacons lost must be replaced with new ones.
 - 1. More effort made to qualify men for these offices (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-13)
 - 2. More effort made to appoint the qualified to these offices.

Conclusion:

- A. If this congregation survives, it will be because of these things.

B. If you are inactive – become active, help indoctrinate the next generation and replace those lost.