

# **“The Plans of the Diligent Lead Surely to Abundance”**

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Prov. 21:5 - Churches with good vision for their future are churches that grow
1. We live in a time where the majority of congregations are gradually drifting down in number, losing elderships, no longer able to support a local preacher, canceling Gospel meetings, eliminating Sunday evening worship, making Wednesday Bible study an option. Christians are treating their membership in a local church as an accessory rather than a commitment. Why is this happening?
  2. On the other hand, there are a few congregations that are growing and thriving. How do they do it? Let me assure you that it is not about local economics or a dynamic preacher, or lots of young people. The members have a vision of what the Lord's church is supposed to be and they are committed to fulfilling it
  3. What will transform a congregation on the cusp of drifting into a church that is a beacon in the community and an example to other churches?
    - a. A congregation that is a family in love with one another, not just a gathering of Christians
    - b. A congregation that loves Bible study and works together tirelessly to make the best Bible classes humanly possible
    - c. A congregation that loves to be guided by godly leadership and appoints every qualified man to be elders and deacons
    - d. A congregation that encourages every member to challenge himself or herself to more works and greater use in the kingdom
    - e. A congregation that realizes that problems will arise and will stand shoulder to shoulder trusting God to supply the solution they will eagerly implement. A church like that will only grow.
  4. No church without forward momentum can remain stationary. It is either purposefully moving forward in more than just good intentions,
    - a. Or it is coasting along on the momentum of the past, in which case it will drift down to a standstill and begin to decline
    - b. Or it is into decline, experiencing increasing party spirit as brethren begin blaming one another for the decline.
    - c. It is important to choose and zealously commit to the choice
- B. An Old Testament example with a NT application - Num. 13:26 - 14:10
1. A short time after receiving the Law at Mount Sinai, Israel was commanded to go into the land of Canaan and possess it. Twelve spies were sent to view the land and report. Ten advised against entering and led most of Israel in fear. Two believed that with God's help, Israel would take the land. They had a great zeal for God.
  2. Quite often, the difference between brethren who do and brethren who simply talk about doing is zeal.

3. "One person with a divine purpose, passion and power is better than 99 people who are merely interested. Passion is stronger than interest."  
(Israelmore Ayivor)
4. Why does it appear that the majority of Christians have lost their zeal?  
What rekindles zeal for God?

## **I. REMEMBER THAT GOD IS WITH US**

- A. Num. 13:28-33 - Numbers and size are irrelevant when God is involved
  1. They looked at the size of their enemy and forgot the size of their God.
  2. When we return our focus to the size of our God and stop worrying about the size of our obstacles, our zeal will be rekindled
  3. We have formidable obstacles: error advocated by brethren, the size and influence of denominations, government's opposition to morality, and the number of unsaved persons we must teach
- B. We must:
  1. Remember the unstoppable power of God's word
    - a. Rom. 1:16; Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:12-13
  2. Remember that the King is with his subjects - Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5

## **II. REMEMBER TO REVERE GOD (and not fear men)**

- A. Num. 14:1-3 - Israel forgot that what God did to Egypt, He could do to them or the Canaanites, depending on who they feared the most
  1. Who are we afraid of: Parents, spouses, children, friends, class mates, co-workers, neighboring religious groups, or civil leaders?
- B. Who has earned our reverence?
  1. Luke 12:4-5; Ecc. 12:13-14; 2Cor. 5:10-11

## **III. REMEMBER GOD'S BLESSINGS**

- A. Num. 14:4 - Israel had forgotten how much and how often God blessed them
  1. God remembered them in bondage, delivered them from Egypt, destroyed the Egyptians and their gods, saved and fed them, helped them to prevail against their enemies along the way.
- B. What would help us to remember and rekindle our zeal?
  1. A pleasant setting and peaceful group with which to worship. You are able to be here today because of the zeal of those who went before you
    - a. "The church in Trilacoochee had its beginning at Clay Sink, FL, in June 1947. Clay Sink is about 8 miles east of Trilacoochee. Several ladies, at the encouragement of Mrs. Nettie Boyett, began having Bible classes on Sunday afternoons. The ladies met in a barn and sat on boxes and boards set across concrete blocks. After meeting there for several months, the group moved into a vacant house. In May 1949, they began worshiping in an old Army barrack on an acre of land leased from the government. This group grew to approximately 20 members. A concrete building was started in 1960 and, with most of the work done by the members. The first services were held here the first Lord's day of 1964.
    - b. What did those who went before you sacrifice in their zeal that you can be here today? What have you done in your zeal in the

- past, to become a congregation that lives and loves and grows together in peace?
- c. What sacrifices and efforts are you willing to expend to ensure that three generations from today will have a faithful church here with which to assemble?
2. You have a Bible in your hand: how many countless hours were spent copying, translating and preserving the scriptures? How many lives were lost in their zeal to get the word of God out of the hands of popes in palaces and into the hands of people in the pews?
  3. How many of us in this room today are here because of the zeal of someone who opened their Bible, studied it, and cared enough about you to teach it to you?
  4. The zeal of the Lord - John 2:13-17. What price did the zeal of the Lord extract on our behalf?
  5. The zeal of gospel preachers - Acts 14:14-15, 19. What price did their zeal extract from them that we might have the Gospel.

#### **IV. FORGET WORLDLY COMFORTS**

- A. Num. 11:4-6 - At the edge of the Jordan River, the children of Israel suddenly felt they would be safer in Egypt.
  1. They forgot about their enslavement, the taskmasters' whips, and the cities many of them died while building
- B. Sometimes the saved remember:
  1. Worldly fun, drinking, dancing, obscene humor, provocative fashions
  2. Worldly friends, partying, living without restraints and regrets
  3. Sleeping in on Sundays, fewer obligations and sacrifices, more spending money
  4. Less embarrassment, no set convictions, fitting in with the crowd
- C. Sometimes the saved forget:
  1. The guilt of sin that all of the distractions of Satan could not divert
  2. The dread of aging and the fear of death
  3. The discomfort of the awareness of a selfish and pointless existence
  4. The fear of facing God in judgment bound by sins - 1Cor. 6:9-11

#### **V. REMEMBER THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE**

- A. Num. 14:6-9 - Joshua reminded them of the Promised Land and that the Lord would be with them
  1. Unfortunately, they did not remember, and the fires of their zeal died out
- B. Those who remember the blessings of obedience rekindle their zeal
  1. Rev. 2:10; 2Tim. 4:6-8; Phil. 3:13-14
  2. You find the embers of your zeal and rekindle them; God will supply the opportunities, the means, and the strength to use it.

Invitation: Several years ago, an article was published in Time magazine about a doctor who lived through the bombing of Hiroshima. When the initial blast occurred, Dr. Fumio Shigeto was waiting for a streetcar only one mile from ground zero, but he was sheltered by the corner of a concrete building. Within seconds after the explosion, his ears were filled with the screams of victims all around him. Not knowing what had happened, Dr. Shigeto stood there for a moment bewildered, wondering how he as one man could ever handle the "mountain" of patients. Then, still somewhat stunned, Dr. Shigeto opened his black bag, and began treating the person nearest to him.

When we look at the staggering needs of a world dying from sin, we can easily become overwhelmed by the great number of lost souls. God certainly doesn't expect us to frantically try to help everyone in need. That's too big of a burden. Galatians 6:10 says that we are to "do good to all," but that doesn't mean God expects us to reach everyone. We are to help anyone we can when we have the opportunity to do so. So where do we start with the mountain of dying souls. Open your Bible and start treating the one next to you. When we are faced with the distressing spiritual needs of a lost world, don't despair. Go to the field for the harvest is ready; start reaping and pray for more laborers. God will coordinate our efforts.