

Challenges Facing the Church and Home

TEXT: Various

THESIS: To make the church aware of the challenges that are around us.

INTRODUCTION:

1. When considering a “Successful Christian Life” which is, reaching our eternal home in Heaven, it is appropriate to examine some of the challenges to the home and to the Lord’s church.
 - a. We live in a day in which old-time moral standards, ethics, in our beloved country are continuing to be attacked.
 - b. The value system, upon which the United States was established, is seriously threatened.
 - c. Some have rejoiced as God’s absolute standard of morality has been ridiculed and abandoned by many and many of our societies values, have for the most part, been abandoned.
2. One has but to observe the influence of Secular Humanism and moral relativism in our schools, in the media, and in Hollywood to realize that God, His Word and Biblical morality have been ruled out and new “values” have become the major thrust.
 - a. We are facing a moral crisis in America.
 - b. With rapid and tremendous advances in technological and medical fields, there is an ever-increased and urgent need for a moral/ethical standard.
 - c. Yet, in the field of human philosophy, it does not matter.
 - d. Human reasoning is unsure of itself; “O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23).
3. Paul affirmed that when people have turned to human reasoning (Col. 2:8), they “became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21).
 - a. Why? It was “because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks.”
 - b. Can that happen to our beloved nation, to the church, to our homes, to us as individuals?
4. In Scouting, one is taught about maps of the woods and how to use a compass.
 - a. He is to be taught the “truth” in the areas of morality and ethics which were not subject to one’s opinion or to the situation.
 - b. It is regrettably sad that many have lost their moral and religious compass and are walking aimlessly and without direction through the deep “woods” of this life.
 - i. And, this has not had a positive effect on the home or the church.
 - ii. Nor has it enhanced the individual needs of security, love, acceptance, fulfillment, and hope.
5. I would like to talk about the challenges that face families and the Lord’s people.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE CHALLENGE OF REJECTING GOD

- A. In 1933, the Humanist Manifesto appeared following the second Manifesto in 1973.
1. Since these documents have been written, our society has increased their attack upon God.
 2. They desire to chase God out of the universe despite that Daniel said, “there is a God in heaven” (Dan. 2:28).
 3. Some think the universe is self existing and came about by mere accident and fate of nature.
 - a. Atheistic humanism claims that life came from non-life and that we are a product of mindless evolution and therefore, we are merely advanced animals.
 - b. Thus, advance life beginning with humans, not God and there is no purpose for man. Just a process of nature.
 - c. They claim, “No deity will save us; we must save ourselves” (Humanist Manifesto II).
 4. However, the Christian knows that we are responsible for what we are or will become.
- B. Now, when God is ruled out, mankind is without a compass for life, morals are not grounded in the absolute Divine Standard, the Word of God, but are simply the product of the experiences of human beings.
1. Thus, ethics are situational depending upon what man at a certain time and place thinks may bring personal “happiness” and “fulfillment.”
 2. And since they claim there is no God, then whose values are going to be the authority because with man, they constantly change?
- C. Now in previous generations, most people turned to the Bible as the standard of right and wrong.
1. The principles in God’s Word were the commonly accepted and shared rules for morality and ethics.
 2. Speaking of His people, God through Moses stated the wisdom and understanding and blessings of keeping His sacred statutes.
 - a. Let’s look at Deut. 4:6-8, “what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?”
 - b. When they respected and observed God’s laws, He blessed them; when societies respect God’s will today, He will bless them.
 - (1) For, “Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).
 - (2) You see, when a culture places more emphasis upon themselves than God, that culture is in spiritual decline and when one stands up for God in that society, they are either dismissed, called out of hand or belittled which is why

many do not speak out at all.

- D. Now, Paul warned that when societies reject the knowledge of God and then attempt to answer the basic questions of life (Where did I come from? What is my purpose? Where am I going?), it always ends in vain speculation and vain imaginations (Rom. 1:18-25).
1. In fact, man cannot even understand himself (Rom. 1:26-32).
 2. Apart from the Holy Scriptures, human beings are even unable to direct their own steps (Jer. 10:23).
 3. And so, Paul warns against human traditions, philosophies, and rudiments of the world (Col. 2:8).

II. CHALLENGES OF LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY AND SELF SACRIFICE

- A. God, our Creator, wants human beings to be truly happy.
1. He made us and therefore, He knows us (Gen. 1:26-27; Jn. 2:25).
 2. Solomon set out to see what makes a person happy, but ended by saying all attempts were a delusion (Eccl. 1:17).
 - a. Solomon experimented with all sorts of ways that might bring happiness, his conclusion was to fear God and keep his commandments (Eccl. 12:13).
 - b. This brought happiness and fulfillment.
 3. Christ came to teach us the life and joy of serving God and others (Lk. 19:10; Matt. 20:28).
 - a. He taught His apostles the invaluable lesson by stooping to wash their feet (when they had refused to humble themselves to wash each other's feet (John 13:1-17)).
 - b. Our Lord taught the great principle of loving our neighbors as ourselves, as well as honoring our fathers and mothers (Matt. 19:19).
 - c. And, we all remember the good Samaritan and the Lord's command to "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:27-37).
- B. Now, what if all the world took seriously the admonition of the apostle Paul in Phil. 2:3-4, "...doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other [people] better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others."
1. What if they had the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:3-5)?
 2. Do you think it would enhance our society?
 3. Like Christ, we are to obey God's commands; "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).
 4. Christ stated, "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man..." (Matt. 7:24).
 5. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev.

22:14).

- C. You know, in order to become a Christian and to be freed from sin, we must sacrifice “self,” and submit to the rule of Christ who is King over His kingdom (Mk. 16:15-16).
1. We are then delivered “out of the power of darkness,” and are translated “into the kingdom of the Son” (Col. 1:13-14).
 2. But then, we must keep the old man of sin buried, as did Paul (1 Cor. 9:27), “through love being servants one to another” (Gal. 5:13), and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God renewing our minds in Him (Rom. 12:1-2).
- D. But in our culture, less emphasis is being placed upon individual service and sacrifice and more emphasis is on self, pleasure, on being free from personal sacrifice and free from thinking of the needs of one’s fellow human being.
1. “Watch out for Number One,” they say.
 2. Yet, when we do this, man has the tendency to abandon God and become like Eve who was tempted and deceived by the devil because she thought only of herself and thus ate the forbidden fruit.
 3. Satan had convinced her that God was trying to take away her “rights,” when in actuality, He was telling her by being obedient to Him, she was free in the magnificent Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).
- E. When we think of the lack of responsibility and self sacrifice, we find it ever so present in marriages.
1. God created male and female (Gen. 1:26- 27) and instituted marriage (Gen. 2:24).
 2. The Hebrews writer stated, Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).
 3. Unfaithfulness to the marriage bond is “a heinous crime” (Job 31:9-12); God hates putting away, “therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously” (Mal. 2:14-16).
 4. Christ commanded, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6-9).
- F. But in emphasizing “the preciousness and dignity of the individual person,” the Humanist Manifesto II stated, “The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitative, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered “evil.” Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one.”

III. THE CHALLENGE OF LIBERTY WITHOUT LAW

- A. We live in a nation of freedoms and law and that liberty requires the existence of

law.

1. Adam and Eve had freedom from sin in the Garden, but they had the law of God.
 2. When the Hebrews were freed from their cruel taskmasters in Egypt by being “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1-2), the Lord placed them under law, for freedom without law is impossible.
 3. Now, liberty without law is a license to do whatever one’s heart desires.
 - a. Without restraints or restrictions, it ends in anarchy.
 - b. So, any civilized society must be characterized by laws and by punishment when those laws are broken.
 - c. Otherwise, chaos will develop, and out of chaos will come bondage and slavery under a dictatorship or a dictatorial regime.
 4. You know, God did not want the Hebrews, His chosen people, to return full-circle into bondage, which they ultimately did, roughly 800 years later
- B. So, we can understand why Christ said, “If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).
1. It is certainly unbecoming for Christians to continue to sin because grace cannot continue to abound where there is sin (Rom. 6:1-2).
 2. When one escapes the defilements of the world, to be again entangled therein, is folly because he departs from freedom in Christ back into the pollutions of the world which is why the last state is become worse than the first (2 Peter 2:20-22).
 3. But, the same is true of any culture; whenever a nation’s laws have not been based upon the Divine Standard, its principles of morality, honesty, human dignity, ethics and freedom are in jeopardy.

IV. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE HOME

- A. Marriage and the family unit are facing ever-increasing pressures and attacks as God is becoming increasingly rejected, as responsibility and sacrifice are being ignored, as more and more people seek individual freedom and “rights” apart from the restrictions and protection of law.
1. God’s authority in personal lives and in our homes to many is a relic of the past, in spite of the fact that the home is the foundation of society.
 2. The God-given two-parent family is often the subject of ridicule, and the role of fatherhood in the home is often given up (Eph. 5:22-33).
 3. And often, God’s ban of having sexual relations out of marriage is not taught.
 - a. Instead safe sex is practiced.
 - b. Fathers, it is God’s will that young men and young women keep themselves pure for marriage.
 - c. It is our responsibilities to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

- (1) That includes their morals.
 - (2) Let's keep our daughters and our sons away from poachers who attempt to come and to steal the hearts of our children.
 - (3) And children, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22).
 - (4) "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe...in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).
 - (5) "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22).
 - (6) Keep away from fleshly lusts, which war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11).
- B. Now, in the home, there is the family unit and the responsibility of the husband and father, the wife and mother, and the children.
1. One's self-interest and pleasures does not take superiority over what one owes to his/her home and family.
 2. The family and marriage which is sacred in the sight of God, must be stable.
 - a. It is permanent, "till death do us part" (Rom. 7:1-3).
 - b. And, as God's standard of morality is increasingly abandoned, the home should ever more appreciated and treasured as we train our children to love and cherish God's sacred mission and commandments for our lives.
 - c. And, as the influences in our culture, in our schools, in the media, in Hollywood become increasingly Humanistic and secular, the duties of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord becomes increasingly urgent (Eph. 6:4).
 - (1) They must be taught Biblical morality, honesty, ethics, and service.
 - (2) "Great peace have they that love thy law; and they have no occasion of stumbling" (Psa. 119:165).
- C. Great responsibility rests upon the husband and the wife toward each other in marriage, and it rests, as well, upon them as parents.
1. But, responsibility also rests upon the children.
 2. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).
 3. Solomon said, "Even a child maketh himself known by his doings, Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Prov. 20:11).
- D. And it is in the Godly home, children learn to sacrifice, to share, to cooperate, to serve, to be pure, to live within constraints, to have commitment, and to love.
1. The world will not teach you these things.
 2. These great attributes will serve children well all the years of their lives.
 3. Deeply blessed are the communities, the states, the societies, the nations, whose children are brought up in the Lord's nurturing.

V. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CHURCH

- A. Christianity and the New Testament church are also facing great challenges.
1. Like the home and the nation, the Lord's church was instituted by God.
 2. It is part of His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10-11) and was built by Christ (Matt. 16:18), who is its Head.
 3. And as King of it, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18).
- B. And so, one challenge of the Lord's church is to continue its preaching on the existence of the God of heaven and earth as Paul did (Acts 17:16-31).
1. In 1 Cor. 8:4-6, "...there is no God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (1 Cor. 8:4-6).
- C. A second challenge of the Lord's church is to be set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:17), to maintain the New Testament pattern (Acts 2:42; Gal. 6:16); to reject feelings, subjectivism, and relativism and accept and abide in truth (Rom. 10:17; John 8:32); and to "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2).
- D. A third challenge of the Lord's church is to maintain moral and ethical purity.
1. We remember when sin arose in Corinth and the brethren did not love their brother enough to mourn over his wickedness, and so, Paul rebuked them and commanded them to rid the congregation of this old leaven and to seek to save his soul (1 Cor. 5:1-13).
 2. As the result, the erring brother repented and was forgiven and comforted by the brethren (2 Cor. 2:5-11).
- E. A fourth challenge of the Lord's church is to sacrifice on behalf of others and to demonstrate a servant's heart.
1. The church in Jerusalem cared deeply for each other, even to the point of having all things common and of selling their possessions and parting the monies to all, as they had need (Acts 2:43-46).
 2. They were of "one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32).
 3. They suffered and rejoiced as one, and they showed great lamentation over our dear brother, Stephen, who was stoned to death for preaching the Word (Acts 7:54-8:2); our brothers and sisters of the past together endured great persecution for their moral and ethical goodness, for their helping to save souls, and for their bond to the Scriptures.
- F. A fifth challenge of the Lord's church is to realize that one's soul is worth more than things, worldly pleasures and riches.
1. The rich young ruler preached to himself that "things" were his most valuable possessions, whereas Christ stated that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:13-21).
 2. If we are too busy gaining the world, we will lose our soul (Matt. 16:26).

CONCLUSION

1. Life is serious, the temptations are great, and the challenges to us as individuals, to our marriages, and to the church are many in number.
2. Let us fortify ourselves in the gospel of Christ and be anchored in hope.
3. Let us consider a successful Christian life by reaching our home in heaven.