

Brentley Sept. 4, 1991 Prayer Meeting v.v.

THE VOCATION OF THE CHURCH

I Cor. 1:26-2

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter begins unto the church of God which is at Corinth. Have you ever read the rhyme of The Ancient Mariner by Coleridge. I dare say you thought it one of the strangest poems ever put together. Especially when you read the section that the old man represents the corpse of all the dead men rising up to man the ship. Dead men pull the rope, dead men steering, dead men spreading sails. I thought it was a strange idea. But do you know, as Charles Spurgeon said, I have lived to see that time. I have gone into churches and there I have seen a dead man in the Pulpit, a dead man as a Deacon, a dead man hauling the offering plate, and a dead man sitting in the pew to hear.

This is exactly something like Paul writing a special letter and he says in that second verse that he is writing to the church of God. With all of its faults he still calls it the church of God. Because Jesus Christ sustains it, continues it, and bear in mind that it will always be God's church -- not yours, not mine. For we shall pass on, others will take our place, and through the ages God's church remains. How God plans purposes for his church best be served through us.

He describes his church as santified in Christ Jesus. It doesn't necessarily mean they are holy but it means they are set apart - separated. In another place he calls them saints. Not that they have become saints, but believers are God's called men and women set apart by Christ to sainthood. Taken up the purposes, the new manner of life to which they have been called. They are trusted with his work. He sends a greeting to these people. He offers thanksgiving for them and he tells them there are some things that he is glad of in the 5th Verse - looking back upon, that he is happy about.

Verse 9 - He says if you are called unto a fellowship. Now this means that he is speaking here of the church as a fellowship in Jesus Christ. That they are to take part of it. I think Acts 2:44 says this more clearly. The disciples after Pentecost



"all things common".... they were not just privileged people but they had all things in common and they shared it as partners. I mean through partners - now a man and a wife may be in a partnership but they may be oft times running two separate establishments. But this is a mutual interest, a mutual devotion, a mutual activity, and they were working together for everyone's good. But we discover here that they had some problems.

In Verse 10 - That ye all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions. Now here in Verse 10 and especially in Verse 11 tells the story, or the condition that existed. There was some disorder that ought not to have been there. And these things needed correcting and Paul was writing concerning this. Now Satan will divide and he will conquer. His people will pay attention to him. Some of these people lived in this pagan city and were following after the pagan pattern of life. And there were factions and the preacher knew about it. How did it start? Well, the greatest factions that ever aggravate any church are really not around Jesus Christ. But they come up around persons. I don't think the greatest factions we have ever really develop about doctrines, policies, but 90% of the trouble you have in the church comes up around some individual. Generally it is some man or some woman who cannot harmonize and cannot be content. You can be sure that the stick pole is not Jesus Christ. Paul says look at yourselves. You are a bunch of thieves, murders, adulterers. He certainly was pretty harsh on their sins. But they had been disrupting the fellowship of Christ. They did not have the liberty to do this. Sometimes I know people will say a whole lot of things in a meeting and then afterwards they will say, oh, this is just a Baptist meeting. But they ignore the fact that the New Testament democracy is not a freedom that we can exercise without a limit to be Christlike. There is a vast difference in a person stating his personal views and expressing something that has a righteous tone to it. Much of this can be credited to the devil, not to Christ. Because when Christ reigns in a man's heart, his lips, his life, his whole attitude is going to be Christlike. This is declared. It has been rumored there are divisions within the fellowship. Ranglings he calls them. They broke up into parties. Now he made an appeal in the 10th verse and he said I beseech you, I call your side to try to straighten out these things.



Well, what was the matter with these people. What caused these quarrels and different views. They are wrong only because they produce different results. The reasons are given in the 3rd Chapter - Verse 1. Paul says I couldn't speak to you as Spiritual but as unto carnal unto babies. There was the problem. Any Bible student knows that the trouble anywhere, in any church is that of a carnal baby-like spirit. And how many times have you observed this. Now Paul said some of them were saying they belonged to this party or to that party. Paul said you are wrong. Christ is not divided. Verse 13, Christ is the one you are serving. Paul did not die for you on a cross. No one else has been redeemed or baptized for you. And here you are following Billy Graham or someone else and you are divided among yourselves. The foundation of this was human judgment.

Verse 26, ye see your calling brethren. You know that the foolish things of the world confound the wise. The weak things of the world unfound the mighty. The little things of the world confound the things that exist. And Paul proceeds to remind these brethren that they have a calling. And that the vocation of the church is not for the purpose of rangling but for the purpose of three or four things. First of all, the church is to endure critics. <sup>Persecution</sup> Second, she is to maintain worship. Third, she is to foster Christian character and Fourth, she is to build the Kingdom of God.

I  
First, endure her critics. <sup>Persecution</sup> Now a new type of persecution is rising against the churches of America and it has existed many times in the past as churches have undergone persecution. Today in this most highly civilized, legal, moral nation -- the highest in history, churches are the objects of an entirely different type of attack. In fact there comes criticism, ridicule, and verbal chastisement, for not doing more redemptive work in the church and society. What strange creatures we human beings are.

For centuries we persecute a company of committed believers and those who have discovered the Kingdom of God. A Man - Expressed his Frustration "It seems I just can't break through to God. I don't enjoy my church life any more. I've lost all interest." He was removed from the warmth & joy of the Christian life. Do you ever feel that way?

We have editorials in leading periodicals and research study. We have religious addresses to be given today. And they provide us with the news of the inadequate church. Restore the joy - Isa. 51:12 - David "Restore unto me the joy of Thy Salvation". We have statistics indicating that there are all sorts of spiritual decline. We have

3 things: 1 - there is joy in the Christian experience, 2 - This joy may be lost and, 3 - It may be restored.



the race problem, and the immorality in Hollywood, the graft in Washington, and we have a thousand prophets who tell us that the church is going to fail.

A. L. Griffith says, whoever despises the church displays ignorancy in history.

To be sure much in the church is history and there has been times when the church has been far from in nobling society, but you read the story of the wholeness and you cannot find a single institution that has portrayed such a role in human freedom and dignity. To relieve suffering, the conquest of disease, the growth and concern of the weak and the helpless. The great art and literature, architecture, and music - all of these have come because of the church. You cannot tell the story of the church without telling the influence of the church. We find that the church continues to move. That in 1850 only 16% of the population claimed any church affiliation. By 1961 about 63% of the American population claimed membership in some religious body.

We have more than 500 religious periodicals that are mailed out to hundreds of thousands of people. There are at least 250 social and civic agencies, that are directly supported by the church and religious groups. In fact, Life Magazine, states that over 17 million Americans are involved in welfare work. A conservative estimate would say that 80% of these people were at least church members. So it is impossible for us to regard less how small the statistics may show, to evaluate the results of the church reaching out. The church must silently go on about its job, knowing that it cannot fall to the critics of the world. Because the church has helped young women conquer temptation. It has helped young men retain their integrity. It has helped politicians to fearlessly voice their convictions. It has made its print upon their lives. And the church continues her influence. As we think about the courts of our land. Half of every jury which have decided another man's fate has been directly influenced by the church and its teachings. The critics of the church would imply that the church must speak louder. But the church is active, marching and moving quietly in her way. The church is not a policeman. It cannot be involved in the forces everywhere at the exact time. The message is basically the same. The Scripture, And rating the church would certainly not be the answer. The church must endure all of her critics. Men will listen to what it has to say and will realize they must personally



do something about it. In fact the church is in the business not to create a new society or a new social order, but to create the creators, who will make the new society and the new order.

Second, maintain worship.

*People Need to meet God*

In the busy world today, one of the vocations of the church is to maintain worship. Because this, Paul knew that these brethren had been called together in God and this was a noble exercise. To express their worship and their fulfillment and realization was fellowship with him.

For we know that the purpose is this. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Hence the church's supreme roll and vocation is to make provision for that chief end of man. So that man (Sunday by Sunday) throughout the year can come at exact intervals. And when the church sounds a call to worship, then this is a point which the members should be faithful and welcome the call. If you read outside the Bible, Bunyan's Palace Beautiful you get the point. Because that man had never been acquainted with anything but some of the Baptist meeting houses in Bedfordshire. They were not better than barns. They seemed to the common place just an ordinary building but they were palaces beautiful because when seated on one of their benches the eyes of imagination could look up through the dingy rafters and he would see the church universal. Love to God whose house it is, can make the humblest material structure a home of the spirit. If everyone had Bunyan's attitude toward the church we would not need a message even of this type on the vocation of the church because he was quite honest, that the church was important. Because it was a relationship to God with him, a group of people had given themselves to the church. What is our place with Christ

*Mountain woman to Pastor - "It appears to me that we have a better Prayer meeting when I take part" - Not spectators - David - "let all the people praise"*  
First of all if you are a Christian, you belong to Christ. Paul says here. *Then*

You are not your own. It is a settled issue. The issue of church membership when you accepted Christ as Lord for you (promised) to follow and obey him. Christ is the example for every Christian and he expects us to follow his example. John 13:15. A regular member participates in this. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Eph. 5:25 (For us to ridicule, reject, and neglect the church is certainly unchristian, Christ founded the church upon himself. Verse 30. Do we dare to destroy that which the Master



in Berkley - Staged Home - Bossier Parish - Mr Will Sentell - Elder - Dick  
time - landed Bible asked Paul Payer - Student take charge presence gray haired Elder -  
built. Did Christ make a mistake. Who needs the church. Therefore the location of  
50 requested him - Smiled - "No, That's what we pay you for" - you can not  
the church is to endure critics, to maintain worship  
Pay the preacher or any one else to do your worshipping for you!

III. Third, foster Christian character. This is one of the great evangelistic  
tasks of the church, that human nature can be changed. Here again the church is  
unique. In sharing by all other society in the world today. Of course there are  
many who stand on the outside of the church. But the very survival of society as  
we know it is the spirit in man that is called conversion, the new birth, regeneration.  
That it is something that God does in response to the individual. The roll of the  
church is to publish the good news of the power and the readiness of God, to change  
human men and women. And this is the roll of the church - the vocation of the church.  
To set men right Godwards. To set men right towards his fellow men. And to set men  
right as an individual. These believers of the church were called saints. The term

Dr. John A. Broadus - someone asked - how he knew he was a Christian? - Beatitudes "Blessed  
are they which do hunger & thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" - do hunger  
They were marked by moral failure. But they had been converted and they had been  
& thirst after the things of God & that is not the mark of an unregenerate heart -  
redeemed. And hence this was their responsibility.  
The heart touched by grace, has impulses toward Christ likeness for him.

Once in a while a man today will say, I don't want to get involved. Your life,  
your family, your school, your work, your community, your nation, your world all demands  
and receives involvement. Not only that, but a lot of your hobbies, your friends, your  
entertainment, your sport, the question is not one of involvement but one of value.  
With which quality of activity do you wish to be associated with. Will you waste your  
time on selfish unproductive involvement.

I haven't time. Who's time are you using. Yours or God's. Who gives you the  
life and breath. Jesus asked what has a man profited if he should gain the whole world  
and lose his soul. The question is not how much time you have. For we all have 24  
hours a day. The question is how well we spend that time.

Others will say I know not how long I will be here Well, none of us do. We  
don't know exactly how long we will live. The very uncertainty of time makes it imperative  
that you place your membership in a local church and go to work. Make your life count  
for Christ while you are here. What you will do while you are here is the thing that  
is interesting. And God is interested in.



There are too many hypocrites in the church, of course there are. And this grieves everyone. But the percentage of hypocrites in the church will always be far less than those in any other kind of group. How many organizations have you refused to join

because of this childish excuse. It is just like complaining about a hospital, having

*Leslie Weatherhead: Letter of a missionary who visited an Indian village where a Mr. Murray had been preaching. He asked a native, 'What is it to be a Christian?' and Mr. Murray had*

sick people in it. So we have to be honest, do we really believe that God wants us to delay or stay out all together. Whatsoever you do, do all for the glory of God. When you leave

out the church, then you leave off your duty to Christ. What effect will your staying out of church have upon your family, and upon your friends. What effect will it have upon the lost people that you know. Will it help them to repent. What effect will it have upon your own spiritual life. Are you growing, by your present course. Are you praying and studying the Bible, winning souls to Christ, laying up treasures in Heaven. Would you have moved here if this had been a churchless community. If not, could the church survive if everyone took your attitude.

I read of a woman who was a member of a church. She was old and very deaf. And her eyes were bad. But she always was in the church services. On Saturday she was given the Church Bulletin and she looks up and read the hymns and the Scripture lesson. One day she remarked, that all she got out of the services and received from the Bulletin and I told her what a fine thing it is that she comes. She replied, well, you know the Psalmists said the Lord is in his holy temple. And I come here to meet the Lord.

I come back to what Paul said. They first gave Christ first place in their life. Surely they gave it the rightful place. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things - food, the simple necessities of life, and all that is necessary to make Christ's church victorious in this earth. And of course many answers would come. Never one times does God in his book place the emphasis on numbers. Never one time but on quality. If you want to know how to count - he wants to know how much you weigh!. When David got in serious trouble having his men take a census of the people throughout the Kingdom, they went up and down the land for months counting the heads of people. And while they did so, they took their thoughts and eyes away from God and the outcome of their census taking was their downfall, and defeat. And they lost out temporarily. So here is a warning. That one soul living at the highest and best means more to



the Kingdom of God than a vast Army living inconsistently and unworthy lives.

These Christians whom Paul praised set the pace for us when they gave the Lord's cause first place in their lives. And it was not primarily their money because he tells us the cattle on a thousand hills are mine. The silver and gold are all mine. If I want it and need it, I can come after it. He warns us about the perils that can be in money. He reminds us that the love of money is the root of every kind of evil. And that we are to watch against this. What is the supreme need of the church today - anywhere and everywhere. It is that we give Christ the primary place in our lives. The first place! Then Paul says, whatsoever you eat or you drink, or whatsoever you do, do all for the glory of God. Whether you go to the shop, to the farm, to the bank, to the store, to the doctor's office, the law office, or school - your first appointed task is to give him the glory. And this is the thing that made the great shoe man, Mr. Brown, in St. Louis - great power with men in the world and in the church. He had a motto on his desk - a little cardboard. Six words. God first, Family second, Shoes third. And that is exactly the right way for us to live. Put God first. If a man doesn't love me more than he loves Father or Mother says Jesus - he cannot be my disciple. God first and then family. God before family. God the maker, the creator. He is to be first. The shoe business was third. And this is the way to make the greatest contribution. The story is often quoted of a small boy who was a newsboy - who went into one of the churches and was converted. He wanted to do God's will and he sought out the Preacher and he was about 10 years of age, when he was baptized. And soon the Preacher preached on the great program of Christ and his church. The business of people carrying the good news around the world. We ought to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And we must pay the price to go. The boy heard this message. He never had heard anything like it in his life. We are to go in person. Or if we can't go in person, we can send men and women to go. We are to support them and maintain them. The Preacher made a powerful appeal for people to give money for Foreign Missions. And when they brought the baskets around for the foreign mission offering, the little boy was concerned. He didn't have any money to give. And when the officer passed by him, he said, put the basket lower., and lower. And finally he put it on the floor. And to



humor the little boy the officer put the basket on the floor and he stepped into it and said, I give myself. I have no money to give. And that's the heart of it. I give myself. These early Christians gave themselves. They gave themselves that the mighty Preachers of all the ages. The incomparable Paul takes time and space to describe how wonderful and praiseworthy the people in this church were.

In the interior of China, many many years ago, there were a number of church members who died for Christ. These people had been won by a missionary. The barbarians came along and sought to do away with the entire church. And they told the people, you step on this metal which has on it the cross of Christ, you must trample it under foot to show your contempt for Christ and the cross. And if you will do this, your head will not be chopped from your shoulders. Every member of the church died rather than deny Christ. They came to one boy, who was a small boy, and they thought here was a little spark left - just a tiny spark. And they said to the boy, you are a little fellow, we don't want to kill you. Just step on it one time and we will let you go free. He lifted his eyes and with a great sob, Lord Jesus, you died for me - I am willing to die for you. And he said to the men, chop my head off, I am not going to deny Christ. And they chopped off his head.

What happened in the community for 500 miles - when you talk about Christ, their faces are serious. When they say "yes" - he had some friends back there who were devoted and who loved him so that the last one of them layed down his life for Christ. The blood of those Christian martyrs, became the seed of the Kingdom of God over a wide area of inland China. We are told why the early Christians triumphed - they over came Satan by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they loved not their lives even unto death.

That is the vocation of the church. Men must be willing to pay the price. For many years Dr. Truitt preached to the cowboys on the plains. One day, he preached on the subject, you are not your own - you are bought with a price. When the service was over a cattle man, perhaps who owned 20,000 head of cattle and a great ranch told him that he would like to talk with him just before lunch. And so, he said they took a walk about 1/4 of a mile distant from the camp. And when they got to their destination, he



said he could tell this man had something serious. I want you to pray for me. Now what do you want to dedicate. I want to dedicate my ranch - I know much about Christianity. You have taught me since coming here. But I have faced the situation today. You are right. We belong to Christ. He created us. He died for us. And you kneel down here and tell him that I want to dedicate my ranch to him for the glory of God. And all of my energy and all my devotion that I shall give to him. And when you are through, you wait a minute and let me pray, if I can. I have something I want to tell him. Dr. Truitt said I offered my prayer, telling the Lord that this man was willing to give his life. And the old rancher said, yes, master. He called Jesus the master. I mean what the Preacher says and he says I have learned this. And Dr. Truitt said he waited for him to pray and he began to sob and he said from this time on, I am going to be your steward and your trustee. But master, he said, I want to give you one thing the Preacher couldn't give you - I want to give you my wild boy. His Mother and I have lost control of him. And he is wild. Take him and for the glory of your greatness - save my boy and let him counsel the glory of God. Now this was his prayer. They walked back to the camp and there was silence at night time. The trumpet sounded again, and they had a service called and the Preacher had been preaching about 15 minutes and there was a commotion on the out skirts of the throng of people, a young man some 21 or 22 years of age was standing in the rear. He was under deep strong emotion, tears were running down his cheeks, then he started down the aisle, leading to the platform. In spite of the commotion of his movement, Dr. Truitt said he thought he was coming to say something to me and he came all the way down the aisle and turned to one side toward a post which was leaning. And he came to the same man he had prayed with that noonday. Hundreds of people were there but the young man was within 25 or 30 feet of his father, called out so that all heard him say, "Daddy, I can't wait until that preacher has finished his sermon. I have made my surrender to Jesus." What did the sermon matter anyway. There was joy in the Father's heart and in the hearts of the people and among the angels of Heaven.

This is what men must do. They must give Christ the primary place in their lives. The first place. The rightful place. How much are we going to give of ourselves



to Christ. Here is the church, family, and here is a great opportunity for you to become involved in the Vocation of your church and to serve. George McDonald of Scotland had a wonderful idea when he said, I said let me walk in the fields. He said, No, walk in the town. I said, there are no flowers there. He said, no flowers but a crown. I said but the sky is black - there is nothing but noise and dim. And he wept as he sent me back, there is more he said, there is sin. I said but the air is thick and fogs are veiling the sun. And he said, but hearts are sick and souls in the dark undone. I said I shall miss the light and friends will miss me they say. But he said, choose tonight, if I am to miss you or they. I pleaded for time to be given me, he said, is it hard to decide. It will not seem hard in Heaven to have followed the steps of your guide. Then I cast one look at the field and set my face to the town. He said, my child, do you yield, will you leave the flowers for the crown. Then unto his hand went mine. And into my heart came he. And I walked in a light divine. The path I have feared to see.

I submit to you, this is glorious and beautiful. That if we give ourselves to the Vocation of the church without hesitation and with a whole-hearted purpose, that Christ will have our will, our loyalty, our love, our lives. Then it will be love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Dr. Robt. G. Lee - visit to holy land - young Arab guide climbed to the top of the hill calvary where today grow three trees. Dr. Lee said he knelt there in contemplation. The tears began to flow unbidden down his cheeks. The young guide asked Dr. have you been here before? "yes, Dr. Lee answered, it was there two thousand years ago." The young arab shimmered but Dr. you can not be that old, you could not have been here then. Dr. Lee continued it was here 2000 year ago I was here when Jesus died, it was my sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. He did for us. love so amazing. Did for the church