



IBFNA

May 2011
Volume 19, Number 4

THE REVIEW

Don't Miss the 2011 IBFNA Family Conference!

by Dr. Bob Payne, Moderator IBFNA



In these perilous days when those who describe themselves as “independent Baptists” are being attacked and others who also freely bear the label are sliding into compromise, we need the encouragement to be “Holding Fast the Faithful Word.”

This summer's IBFNA Family Conference will be held June 21-23, 2011, at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center in Lancaster, PA. The hotel is located at 2300 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA 17602 (<http://www.lancasterhost.com>). I trust by now you have already made reservations. As I stated in a previous moderator's letter and as stated on our web site, hotel reservations **should have been made by May 1, 2011, in order to be guaranteed a room.** The good news is that if rooms are still available after that time, the hotel has promised to extend the same room rate (\$99 per night) to late callers. Don't delay, call right away! You may make reservations by calling 800-233-0121. Mention that you are with the IBFNA conference to take advantage of the special room rate.

Something Special

Keep in mind that if you will be attending Sight and Sound's original production of *Joseph* on Wednesday afternoon, **you must reserve all tickets by June 1, 2011.** Please send your check for full payment to the IBFNA home office in Belleville, MI. The tickets will be held for you until you arrive. There will be no refunds after June 1, 2011. If you do not send your reservations in by June 1, tickets *may* be available at the door but may be less desirable seats. The ticket prices are: children 3 – 12, \$16.00; teens 13 – 18, \$28.00 and adults, \$46.55.

Come Join Us for Needed Fellowship!

In the New Testament, fellowship is shown to be first and foremost a *relationship* (1 John 1:3). It is also seen as *partnership* (Phil. 1:5), *stewardship* (2 Cor. 8:4), and *companionship*. Concerning this companionship-type of fellowship, Acts 2:42 states that the early Christians “continued stedfastly (*proskartereo*, speaks of a continual devotion to something) in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Notice that one of the things that the early church constantly devoted themselves to was *fellowship*.

Along with the great preaching at the IBFNA conferences is the wonderful opportunity for like-minded believers from all over the nation to come together and *fellowship* with each other. In these difficult days we need the fellowship and mutual edification of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't slight the importance of this to your Christian life! Even Paul confessed that he needed this fellowship and mutual edification, and he encouraged the church at Thessalonica to continue to minister to one another:

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For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted (or “encouraged”) together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. (Rom. 1:11-12)

Fellowship on a local church level is both imperative and wonderful, but fellowship at a national conference has its own unique blessings. Sometimes we feel as though our local church is the only island in the stormy sea of worldliness and compromise, and there is no one else

who shares our convictions and struggles. Coming together at a conference like ours brings great encouragement and assurance that we are not alone in our spiritual battle. It gives Christians who sometimes live great distances from each other the chance to minister to one another, pray for each other, and bear one another’s burdens.

I pray that you may come to Lancaster this summer; and, as Paul put it, “be comforted together” by one another’s “mutual faith.” Lord willing, see you in Pennsylvania!

**The New Testament
Local Church**
by Dr. Clay L. Nuttall, D.Min



The State of the Early Church

The state of the New Testament local church, in the first century, is clear and descriptive. The book of Acts gives us the kind of detail we need to understand what God was doing. The special ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church beginning at Pentecost energized this new body of believers. Not only did God give this distinct ministry to the whole body but for the first time the Holy Spirit indwelt each individual believer and all believers in the body of Christ. This new ministry to believers came in fulfillment to the promise of Christ and was the source of effective service and growth in the early church. Peter, for instance, was never the same after Pentecost and the coming of this special function of the Holy Spirit.

The self-sacrificing boldness and focus on Christ rather than self interest is evident in Peter’s message in chapter two. Instead of a cowardly denial, Peter stands before his accusers in chapter four and lays the blame for the crucifixion at their feet. It is no wonder that, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (4:13).

This boldness was manifested by the disciples at large and is recorded in Acts 4:23-31. The story of Stephen underscores this power and serves as an example of how believers responded to a “great persecution” (Acts 8:1). As the Christians were scattered abroad, they “... went everywhere preaching the word.” Much of this courage and boldness had to do with the fact that the Spirit who dwelt in them also filled them in obedient service.

Since we have the complete canon, there is no need for the sign gifts that were exercised by the apostles. It has been argued that the effective ministry of the first Christians was directly related to sign gifts. However the scriptures tell us that it was not the sign gifts that brought courage, as well as effectiveness and growth. These gifts were confirmation of the message and the messengers. They gave witness to the claim that Jesus was the Christ and that He was God. None of these confirmations were needed once the total scripture had been given. It is also clear that the Jews who required a sign were not impressed

by them. As a wicked and adulterous generation, God had said that even with signs they would not hear and believe (I Cor. 14:21).

The key to the overwhelming effectiveness of the early church was the Gospel, the death burial and resurrection of Christ. The message of the resurrection was a particular irritant to the Jews. It was truth that made the difference. This is demonstrated in the number of those who came to faith in Christ. First there was Pentecost with “about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). Then under persecution we observed “the number of men was about five thousand” (Acts 4:4). Instead of the exception, this was the norm for the early church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47). “Then the churches... were multiplied” (Acts 9:31). The book of Acts is about “growth” both spiritually and numerically.

The first church was also known for the power of the Holy Spirit. There are many examples of this. The death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), as well as the death of Herod (Acts 12:20-25) are illustrations. The incident with the Philippian jailor (16:23-34) and even the shipwreck of Paul (Acts 28:1-6) are but a few of those events that demonstrate the power of God in the church. These instances were the norm, and they were expressions of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Asking the Tough Questions

We often refer to our churches as fundamental, independent, historical, New Testament Baptist Churches. But in what way are they fundamental? Our answer should be that this would be a statement of what we believe. That would entail the fundamentals of the faith, but it cannot be just an adherence to a statement. Fundamentalism is not about a statement. It is about a demonstration. We need to know what those fundamentals mean; we need to believe them but we also need to practice them. They are only as true as what we actually practice. For instance, in reference to the Word of God, we claim “it is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.” That should mean that in every area we believe to be biblical truth that we need to practice it, but this is where the trouble begins. Why don’t we practice what the Bible teaches if “it is really the final authority”? Just think of all the things we do or omit that do not square with scripture.

If we claim to be independent, self governing, self sustaining, why would we yield to outside rule and

authority? Of what actually are we independent? When the church yields to an outside authority, why do fancy foot work to defend it, yet still claim to be independent? What do we mean by historical? How accurate are we to an historical standard, and are we in some cases just leaning on tradition that may well be flawed. The point this article has made is that we really do not represent a New Testament church. In what way should we say we are like the church of the first century?

We are unashamedly Baptist, so much so that we put it in our name; but what does Baptist mean? Once again this should represent what we believe. Is it possible that we have carried human ideas into our bosom and baptized them with a name? Are we even willing to let the scripture test us in these areas? Baptist is just a category. It is often called a denomination, and this has its dangers. For instance each denomination is actually defined by polity. The polity of the Roman Church is papal. The polity of the Episcopal group is an oligarchy with Bishops. The polity of Presbyterian/Reformed churches is the synod, board, a committee with what is referred to as lay elders. The polity of Baptists should be congregationalism. But what is congregationalism as outlined in scripture? If a church chooses the Reformed polity of using lay elders, is it still a Baptist church?

The State of the Local Church Today

It is difficult for any of us to participate in evaluation. As humans go, we would rather people did not ask questions about things that appear to be inconsistencies. With that in mind, it might be better to begin by asking questions about our churches as a whole. We will limit this consideration to Bible-believing churches who might be considered ecclesiastical peers. In what way do they reflect the early church, the New Testament local church?

We should begin by asking about a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit? It should be clear that we are not talking about sign gifts. We are talking about the very character of the Holy Spirit as exhibited in the early church. We are talking about believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and, in obedience, know the filling of the Spirit. All of this is available to us today just as it was then.

Where is the courage and self-sacrificing spirit that allows us to speak the truth of the gospel in the market place and the public arenas? The early church not only declared the gospel, the death, burial and resurrection, they stated truth in the public forum, truth that represented the whole counsel of God. Those early saints did not hide their message within the four walls of a church. They did not limit the gospel witnesses to public worship services. God's Word was the authority as a priority in their lives and ministry. It was not a secondary past time, and it was not limited to the leaders of the church. They did not search for safe places to take a stand. In the palace, court room and other public venues, they boldly declared Bible truth as the final authority.

The end result of their commitment and witness was stunning. Even their prayers were marked by the unusual. God's response to their faithful confrontation with the pagan world resulted in the salvation of many. This may hurt, but it won't help if we run for cover and try to defend ourselves. Where is the church, where are the churches where people are saved daily? Where are hundreds, let alone thousands who are truly coming to Christ? Where is the great growth, meaning those truly converted and changed into new creatures who have a hunger for God and His Word? In light of these questions, are we really New Testament Churches?

Where is the multiplication of churches? Is there a key in scripture that might tell us why it happened in the first church and now we count solid church plants on our fingers? Dare we ask about growth? The emerging church has found a way to do it. But their methods and their theology is not found in the record of the early church. So many of our peers have fallen into the pit of doing church their own way rather than going back to the real answers demonstrated in the great growth of the first century.

Reviewing the Excuses

Excuses do abound, but it would be far better to find the real reasons for the absence of the original model of the local church. We say we can't do it because our society or culture is so difficult. Things are different today, and we face a complex world. We should be thankful that Paul never chose to use those excuses. Our cultural context is a Sunday School compared to what Paul faced. We argue that technology is our enemy when in fact it is one of our best tools. In the areas of communication and conveyance, we have all the advantages. Yet in Paul's day the known world was evangelized. Something is wrong, but it isn't the culture that is to blame.

It isn't the cults, intellectual pagans or even Islam that has kept us from the effectiveness surrounding our commission. We have everything we need, everything that the first church had. We have the indwelling Spirit of God, we have the complete Word of God; and we have the same commission from God. However, this is not about what we have. It is about what God does not have. The hour we were saved we got all of the Spirit we will ever get, and that will never change. The failure here is that God does not have all of us. Romans chapter six spells this out so clearly that one could not miss it. Rather than being offended and trying to defend our failure, we might spend a lot more time finding out what God has asked us to do, so that we would be bold and effective like that early church.

Despite all of our bravado about our knowledge and trust in scripture, we have missed something. A final illustration might be helpful. There is a renewed debate about the issue of the Elder in the local church. The question is not about "ruling elders." The Bible has settled that. The very word in verb form is best translated "to rule." The true debate is not plurality of elders. The Bible has settled that question. The norm in the Bible record is a plurality. The real debate is who is qualified to be an

elder. But the Bible has clearly settled that as well. The man, who is an elder, is a pastor, is a shepherd, is a bishop, is an overseer. He is all of these or he is none of these.

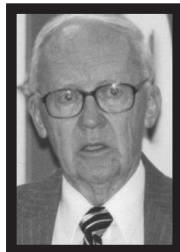
The painful issue rises with the question of why there is a debate about any of these. The answer is that

we are not willing to go with an open heart and mind to scripture. The answer to the question of multiple elders takes us back to the early church and causes us to ask why they had multiple elders. Rather than make up stories, just go back to the beginning of this article and read it again.

WHAT HAPPENED TO CHURCH?

By Dr. Robert Delnay

**Acts 2:41-42, Rom. 16:5,
Heb. 10:25**



By any reckoning church has changed during the last generation. My sister, in a large Florida city, checked 50 churches trying to find a fundamentalist church that was not a carnival. Since then her count must be well over 60 churches. I have friends in other cities with similar testimonies. Granting that no church is perfect, could we not hope that some might at least get somewhat closer?

What did we hope to find? Is it too much to expect to find a congregation led by a man of God, who preaches the Word of God, and whose music does not contradict it?

We look forward to the ministry of the Scripture, clearly preaching, teaching and applying it to daily life. If churches are not exactly soul-saving stations any more, we hope at least to see some genuine conversions, even if they come mainly through the Sunday school or the youth program. Even if not every message is evangelistic, can we not hope for a place where an unsaved friend might have a chance at meeting God? And do we not expect some attitude of respect for holy things, something we used to call reverence?

Then in such a place can we not hope to find Christian fellowship, even some folks to eat with after the service?

Such churches do exist in North America, but I hazard the guess that their number is shrinking. That guess is based on much anecdotal evidence.

What do we find?

Do we not find, in almost any church we might try, that there is a sense that the world has somehow slipped in? In some cases you feel a carnival atmosphere. As one contemporary pastor put it, "People ought to have a good time when they go to church." To such a church, the music may be raucous or rock and roll, perhaps to a recorded accompaniment. The special music gives the impression that the performer has spent a lot of time watching TV performers wailing and intoning their songs. Nearly 40 years ago a respected religious magazine printed an article saying that while your older members may not like the new sound, if you move slowly they will come to accept it.

Another format uses some familiar hymns or songs, but with new and different tunes, tunes that are easily forgotten, the words on Power Point. It does seem strange to some that we now reject the rich hymnody we inherited and trade it for a mess of pottage. By discarding the hymnals, we keep the saints from seeing what they are missing. We get them used to songs that are highly subjective and spiritually shallow.

The preaching comes in about three major forms. Some of it is moralizing, telling us at length what we ought or ought not be doing. What Christ may have to do with that does not often come across. A second form is scolding, which is Plan B of moralizing, but much less palatable. A third form we have long had is droning. We were walking out of the service with friends, when the wife remarked, "I wonder how long it took him to prepare that." We all agreed that three minutes would be a safe estimate.

The level of respect or reverence may sometimes be measured by the dress code observed by those who come. If we were to attend a reception for the governor of the state, we might expect to see the guests in clothes befitting respect. But in a service honoring the eternal King of Kings, it would seem all right to wear clothes that would befit working in the garden. My sister watched the special musician mount the platform in torn blue jeans and T-shirt. If we saw an airline pilot enter the flight deck looking like that, most of us might get off the plane. Does the current dress code reflect a wholesome victory over legalism, or does it reflect non-verbally one's respect for the Lord? I fear that the latter is the more likely. The pastor of a large church keeps the auditorium temperature at about 65 degrees. It is one way to keep the ladies looking modest.

Why go to church?

If we ask ourselves what we get out of it, we open ourselves to a charge of selfishness. But if we ask what we can give, might we also ask if we are giving to something that brings glory to the Lord?

Perhaps the leading reason to go to church is the command in Hebrews 10, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. So we make the wisest decision we can, hoping for a man of God preaching the Word, and with fitting music.

We may then ask what benefits we may get. One benefit is to stay alive spiritually. What becomes of the man who quits attending? Do we not have abundant evidence that he dries up spiritually? Bad enough the message to family and friends. How many of us have tried to burn just one log by itself?—Only with sticks and

kerosene to keep it burning. There is some sort of benefit in meeting regularly with other believers. That benefit may be poor help without daily quiet time, but it is worth something—depending on the sort of church he is able to find.

Those who preach will wonder how much even that does. Who remembers what he heard preached even two weeks ago? He might not remember what he ate that noon, but the nourishment had to have some value. The same should be true of the small decisions and resolves that come while attending a faithful pulpit ministry. Even if sermons and points are gone, the cumulative effect remains and tends to build, however slowly.

What then if the preacher is truly a man of God meeting Him daily? Can we not hope that his very presence will convey insights and impulses that have continuing effect? And can we not trust that for those who hear him, the conversations with one another may have a bracing effect?

For throngs of professing Christians, the above suggestions will have little appeal (Luke 18:8). What is there to entertain, to amuse Adam's nature? But there are people out there who hunger for spiritual reality, and we may hope that they will be attracted to a church whose pastor is a man of God, preaching the Word of God, and whose music fits that?

The State of the Church

by Dr. Charles L. Dear



We are well overdue for a critical assessment of where we are as the Church of Jesus Christ. If we were to measure the impact of the Church upon society in these times, it would seem that we have fallen short of the purposes of the Church necessary until the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Satan has ever used the tools of distraction, deceit and discouragement to hinder the Lord's work. It has also been a challenge and strain on available resources to simultaneously fight against error while advancing the truth of God's Word. We cannot do one at the expense of the other. Both have always been the task of the Church, but both have fallen on hard times as we have moved into the 21st century. The creeping paralysis of a bunker mentality has crippled the very reason for the Church's existence and, if not overcome, will turn our church buildings into the museums, restaurants and night clubs we can see today in Great Britain. While openly bemoaning the corruption of our nation, the corruption of the Church from within has been met by feeble protests and too many rationalizations uncharacteristic of the mighty voices God has used for righteousness in the past. In the spirit of a professed kinder, gentler Fundamentalism, we now witness a passive Church that has all but lost any significant witness to the Truth outside local church walls. We need to recapture our purpose and work, lest we fail our commission and resort to ineffective station-keeping, making little impact or difference in a lost world. Perhaps we should begin by rehearsing briefly why we are here.

God has always had a people for His name on the earth. Whether He used individuals, families, a nation or an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ, there has always been a testimony for the holiness and righteousness of God. Their constant purpose was to not only know Him but to also make Him known to others by their words, actions, values, morality, priorities and active witness. As we review examples recorded in Scripture, two things are clear: 1) Representing God in an unbelieving world

was never attempted through compromise with unbelief or the adoption of worldly methodology. 2) Those who speak for God always confronted a sinful people with the absolute holiness and righteousness of God. Never in the record of Scripture can you find where the message was watered down to appease or mollify the hearers, nor was God ever represented as less than all that He is revealed in Scripture. Furthermore, the witness for God by His people has always been about Him, not us. What a contrast to those among us who are convinced that the times in which we live demand a change in both method and message in an "end-justifies-the-means" rationalization for glorifying the wisdom of men to do the supernatural work of the Lord.

Consider a few examples from Scripture. Surely the days of Noah parallel the times in which we live. In Genesis 6:5 we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." As you read further, God wanted to destroy all of mankind, except for a few, and start again. There were two particular things that marked the ministry of Noah, according to Scripture: First, we are told in II Peter 2:5 that he was "a preacher of Righteousness...." Taken together with the testimony of I Peter 3:20, it is clear that while Noah was building the ark, he was proclaiming the righteousness of God to his own sinful world. Secondly, according to Hebrews 11:7, by faith, Noah built the ark for the deliverance of his family and other creatures, in obedience to God's command. Building the ark was a massive undertaking that underscored his message of the need of deliverance from the wrath and judgement of an all-holy and righteous God. Over the many years of construction, it stood as a monument to the truth of man's sinfulness and God's righteous judgment upon sin. And yet it also clearly demonstrated the love, mercy and grace of God towards those who would heed God's warning of impending judgment and Noah's message of deliverance. Surely there were those who mocked both the man, his message and God's means of deliverance; but we know that he was faithful and was delivered by God who shut him into the safety of the ark.

Likewise, we see the ministry of the prophet Elijah, in a period where successive generations of corrupt civil leadership (Omri, Ahab and Jezebel) also introduced the hedonism and idolatry of Baal worship to the children of Israel. So rampant was the impact of heathen idolatry that, as you read I Kings 17 and 18, it is clear that the children of Israel were no longer confident in Jehovah God and the exclusive worship of Him. The message of Elijah, however, is clear; they must make an unwelcome choice:

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." I Kings 18:21

How very different from the messages we hear today that not only suggest that you can choose the best of both worlds, but also contrive an impossible syncretism between the things of God and the things of the world, in His service and worship.

Thirdly, we look to the examples in Acts and the apostles' witness before the people and civil and religious rulers of their day. Here we find again the clear proclamation of the Gospel, the honest rehearsal of history, that describes the failures of men and brings them "short of the glory of God," and the condemnation of the wisdom of men and all false religion. Their line of authority was clear when we read, "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Far from lifting a finger to the wind, to determine their message; far from quoting the wisdom of recent authors rather than "Thus saith the Lord," no consequence was deemed so severe as to compel them to deny the Truth or tickle the ears of their hearers.

The mandates for the Church are clear in Scripture. First and foremost is the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The rationale behind Matthew 28:18b-20 is the fact that sinners without Christ face the eternal judgment of God in Hell. When you minimize the reality of God's judgment, you diminish his character, particularly His holiness. Where ministries diminish the reality of God's judgment, you will find a corresponding rise in emphasis upon the here and now, upon the human improvement of this world (including environmentalism) and upon God's kingdom on earth.

In a recent Easter letter from an evangelical mission agency, their task was expressed thus: "...King Jesus is calling us to carry the Good News of the Unshakeable Kingdom, ministering love, peace, and hope to all those who are lost in the brokenness." It was followed by: "Your generous gift... Will enable missionaries to continue proclaiming Christ's victory and His eternal reign - bringing hope to the world." Nowhere in the letter was there any expression of the desperate estate of those lost in sin, dying and going to Hell. While real evangelism may yet be taking place, in the eyes of the Board's International

Director, it would appear that anticipation of Christ's kingdom takes precedence over the message of Christ's sacrifice for hopeless sinners.

Which brings us to the importance of Missions in the Great Commission to the Church. It has been redefined by some cliches as "Mission" or "Missionality," usually employed to hide the abandonment of worldwide evangelism for other forms of service. Observing the trends in "Missions" over the last 25 years, there are two specific issues that come to mind: 1) The growing disconnect between local churches and foreign missions, and 2) the evolution of the definition of what missionary work is. The last time I read a comment about recruiting new missionaries, it was said that we are only replacing one out of every four missionaries who are now retiring. I doubt that statistic has improved since it was first stated. The question we must ask, however, is, "What is the role of the local church in missions?" Schools and mission agencies make more of an impact on the hearts of young people for missions than local churches. It begs the question of what are local churches doing to advance the cause of missions and what challenges are made to their young people about serving the Lord. Perhaps one major problem is that full-time Christian service conflicts with the wishes of so many parents for their children's future success and comfort. That is another problem, the lack of godly parenting. The issue before us, however, is why local churches are not more intimately involved in missions, from the call upon our members to enter full-time service to the sending and overseeing of their ministries. One of the marks of change has been the imbalance that has evolved between local churches and the schools and agencies, whereby some schools and agencies no longer acknowledge the preeminence of the Church. It is yet another example where expediency has prevailed over Biblical principle.

The other significant trend in Missions has been the trend away from direct evangelism towards social ministries. We have always been building hospitals and digging wells for water; but how many people receive missionary support from local churches who have no direct evangelistic ministry, even as a part of their job description?

A Second Mandate we find in Scripture is found in I Timothy 3:15 "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

While the first century church did not have buildings called churches, the household of God, the Body of Christ, was given clear instruction and responsibility to accurately and boldly represent the "living God" by serving as the pillar and ground of His truth before an unbelieving world. The "oughtest to behave thyself" speaks to a code of conduct for believers, reflecting their foremost responsibility to accurately demonstrate the presence and impact of God's Truth upon their lives. It echoes the words of Paul in I Corinthians 6:19 and 20, where we are told we are not our own and therefore, our task is ever to glorify God.

Likewise, the analogy of a pillar that Paul uses conveys the fact that the truth we possess is not to be hidden away under a bushel, but openly set forth unashamedly for all to see and hear. Noah wasn't building a boat in his basement. His preaching of the righteousness of God might even be considered confrontational by some today. He took his responsibility seriously and opened himself to the scorn of those who rejected his message willingly, because he believed God and there was much at stake. What we need to understand is how contradictory a bunker mentality is to being a pillar of the Truth. Consider the monuments raised beside the Jordan River (Joshua 4:21-23) or Samuel's Ebenezer (I Samuel 7:12) that bear witness to the power and glory of God. They stood tall as witnesses to all who saw them and over the years conveyed the same message that God is still able to do marvelous things for His people, from generation to generation.

Paul adds to the role of pillar the task of the Church as a "ground" or bulwark of the Truth. The role of a bulwark is to preserve and perpetuate the Truth. Altogether we might say that the Church serves as the possessor, the proclaimer, the preserver and the protector of God's Truth. That requires a peculiar honor for God's Word above all the words of men. It removes it from the realm of clay in the hands of the preacher, to shape it howsoever he will. It also makes the case that everything in the local church is to rest upon the authority of God's Word.

In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul also gives us the means of conveying the Truth and the objective of its preaching to believers in the local church. The theme remains the same: The priority of God's Word (the apostles and the prophets), the "foolishness of preaching" (the task of evangelists and pastor-teachers), for the saints to become enabled for service, to build up the Body of Christ. It provides the means by which we accomplish what Jesus taught us about being salt and light in this world (Matthew 5:13,14). However, being salt and light is not just a characteristic of believers with each other. Both terms speak to the necessity of the Church's making an impact on the world around us. After all, neither does any good unless it is applied to what would otherwise be corrupt and dark.

Having seen in the Scriptures both by principle and example, the past role of the Church in the world, we must ask what difference we have made, either locally or globally, by our presence and message? While we have always been hesitant to move in the realm of politics, we must also acknowledge that our founding fathers held the Bible and Biblical principles so highly that they incorporated its principles into our founding documents. Surely, we have all benefitted from the blessings of God from such a foundation, but over the last 50 years the importance of Biblical Truth has been abandoned for a secular state. Humanism has all but replaced God with human government. So where is the Church of Jesus Christ in response to this crisis of faith?

The answer might well be a combination of compromise, concession and cowardice if you follow the changes made in recent years. Rather than being the pillar and ground of the truth, we have watched the methodology

of the marketplace take precedence over the principles of Scripture. When people are sold a do-it-yourself religion by movements like the Emerging Church, our congregations and the world need to hear an answer from the Church based on rightly divided Scripture. When our young people become infatuated with the latest theological guru's new book or the Bible college professor's unique perspective on the Kingdom, it is time for the Church to be the bulwark of the Truth. Some of the issues we have been struggling with, such as contemporary worship, worldly styled music, casual attitudes, dress and conduct, are more symptomatic than the disease itself. While these issues and others cannot be ignored for the sake of Church purity, neither can we permit preoccupation with them to foster neglect of the other mandates that would resolve most of those issues by dealing with the hearts of our people from the Scriptures. The whole counsel of God will direct people away from the flesh to the Spirit. The word of God on every page brings our attention above the natural to the supernatural. Hearing more "thus saith the Lord" must help our people discern between the wisdom of God and the foolishness of men. Where in the past, the music and other parts of worship prepared hearts to receive the preaching of the Word, far too many of them have become ends unto themselves and produced admiration for the "performers" rather than praise to God. The simple truth is there will never be a substitute for Spirit-empowered preaching of God's Word. It is not just that we guard our pulpits from pretenders but also that we restore and/or maintain the pulpit as the focal point of the local church, preventing anything else from eclipsing the preaching of the whole counsel of God's Word.

That same message, however, needs to be heard beyond the wall of the local church. When our governments abandon the Biblical principles of our founding fathers, who better to speak the Truth to power but the Church? If the nation has lost its conscience and the ability to discern good from evil, is it not the role of the Church to proclaim the Righteousness that exalts a nation in answer to the sin that is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:30). Dare I ask, how long has it been since we've had a loud voice from among us that aggressively and publicly addressed the religious issues and government attacks confronting the Church. The compromised ministries of our day have squandered their ability to address such critical issues, having sold themselves out to worldly methods and a watered down message. They cannot speak out like an Elijah, but where is our voice in these critical times? If the Church is going to make an impact upon our society and the world, if it is going to speak to the leaders in government as well as to all people, then we must follow in the footsteps of the Apostles and our spiritual forefathers. We cannot passively watch while deceit destroys the spiritual foundations of our nation and corrupts the Church. The concept of "speaking the truth to power" is an apostolic principle only recently hijacked for socialist purposes. The voice of the true Church of Jesus Christ needs to be heard, more widely and more boldly than ever before, lest our silence be misconstrued as agreement and approval. We need to pray for boldness like the early church (Acts 4:29-31) that God would grant us the courage of our convictions and power to faithfully preach His Word.

IBFNA 2011 Conference Schedule

I want to express my gratitude to the local committee this year under the capable leadership of Pastor Allen Harris. The committee is doing its best to make sure that the 2011 conference will be a tremendous blessing to you and your family. Here is this year's exciting schedule of events:

TUESDAY, JUNE 21

TIME	ACTIVITY/SESSION
8:00 – 9:00 AM	REGISTRATION AND GREETING OF FRIENDS
9:00 – 9:45 AM	MORNING DEVOTIONS (DICK HARRIS)
9:45 – 10:15 AM	PRAYER TIME
10:15 – 10:30 AM	BREAK
10:30 – 11:30 AM	CHICK DEAR
11:30 – 1:30 PM	LUNCH
1:30 – 2:30 PM	KEN LYNCH
2:30 – 2:45 PM	BREAK
2:45 – 3:45 PM	CHUCK PHELPS
3:45 – 4:00 PM	BREAK
4:00 – 5:00 PM	#1 EVANGELISM AND THE LOCAL CHURCH (KEN LYNCH)
WORKSHOPS	#2 STARTING A LOCAL CHURCH BIBLE INSTITUTE (ED MASON)
5:00 – 7:00 PM	DINNER
7:00 – 8:30 PM	CHUCK PHELPS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22

TIME	ACTIVITY/SESSION
9:00 – 9:45 AM	MORNING DEVOTIONS (DICK HARRIS)
9:45 – 10:15 AM	PRAYER TIME
10:15 – 10:30 AM	BREAK
10:30 – 11:30 AM	ADAM TAUBERT
11:30 – 12:00 PM	IBFNA BUSINESS SESSION
AFTERNOON	FAMILY FREE TIME
7:00 – 8:30 PM	CLAY NUTTALL

THURSDAY, JUNE 23

TIME	ACTIVITY/SESSION
9:00 – 9:45 AM	MORNING DEVOTIONS (DICK HARRIS)
9:45 – 10:15 AM	PRAYER TIME
10:15 – 10:30 AM	BREAK
10:30 – 11:30 AM	RALPH WEER
11:30 – 1:30 PM	LUNCH
1:30 – 2:30 PM	MIKE ASCHER
2:30 – 2:45 PM	BREAK
2:45 – 3:45 PM	JUSTIN KAUFFMAN
3:45 – 4:00 PM	BREAK
4:00 – 5:00 PM	#1 CHURCH HISTORY (PAUL GUSTINE)
WORKSHOPS	#2 LADIES' WORKSHOP (BECKY PAYNE)
5:00 – 7:00 PM	DINNER
7:00 – 8:30 PM	PAUL GUSTINE

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