

10-25-20
THE LOCAL CHURCH AND MISSIONS

Recently, I got a notice from YouTube that our documentary video entitled "The Cure" was being age restricted because it violated YouTube community standards concerning covid 19. In other words when we said that Jesus is the cure for all sickness and disease, they think that is a dangerous statement. According to them the only ones that can offer advice about covid is the World Health Organization and The Center for Disease Control. Now this is a dangerous thing that we are seeing in our society. I believe if Jesus were walking planet earth and healing people He would be arrested for practicing medicine. It is only a matter of time before this kind of selective censoring be applied to other areas, like speaking out about abortion, immorality, homosexuality, and a host of other things. I could see it being applied to the concept of climate change. Little by little we are seeing our religious liberties taken from us. Churches are being forbidden to assemble in the name of health and safety, free speech is being hindered, except when it comes to vulgarity and blasphemy. We are in perilous times.

Now in light of all this, let me remind you that we are in missions month. We are focusing on missions and the great commission. For years the USA has been a lighthouse to the world concerning missions. Today we are seeing that we are in fact becoming the greatest mission field of all.

**THIS MORNING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT
THE LOCAL CHURCH AND MISSIONS.**

- I. CONSIDER THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE SENDING AGENT OF CHRIST FOR MISSIONS AROUND THE WORLD.
- II. CONSIDER WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHRIST'S LOVE AND DEDICATION TO HIS LOCAL CHURCHES.
- III. CONSIDER IF YOU LOVE CHRIST YOU WILL LOVE HIS LOCAL CHURCH.
- IV. CONSIDER WAYS YOU CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.
- V. CONSIDER HOW COMMITTED ARE YOU TO YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.

I. CONSIDER THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE SENDING AGENT OF CHRIST FOR MISSIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Romans 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Rom. 10:15 says how shall they preach except they be sent. The question we need to ask ourselves is who is the one that sends out preachers and missionaries.

In the book of Acts we read this:

Acts 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Acts 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

In the book of Acts it is clear that God directed the sending out of Paul and Barnabas through the local church of Antioch. While they were ministering, the Holy Spirit spoke to the leadership and said, separate Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work I have called them.

We get the word missions or missionary from the latin word Sent.."Missioneum" or "Missio" The term apostle is derived from Classical Greek (apóstolos), meaning "one who is sent off", from sgelein ("stellein"), "to send" + aPo (apó), "off, away from". The literal meaning in English is therefore an "emissary" (from the Latin mittere, "to send", and ex, "from, out, off".

Though the word missionary does not appear in our English Bible, the concept of a missionary is very much present. A missionary is a preacher who is sent out for the purpose of winning people to Christ and establishing a church.

So in the book of Acts we see how the local church of Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry or mission of preaching the gospel to places where it was not preached.

The local church needs to be reaching out to others locally and around the world with the gospel message.

The local church is the sending agent for missionaries around the world. Most missionaries are supported by little churches like ours. I believe the greatest need for missions is to strengthen the local church. If the local church goes missions around the world goes.

The Church is called the pillar and ground of the truth I Tim 3:15.

The Church is given this commission to go into all the world and preach.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Christ said, He is actively involved in building His church.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Without the local church there would be no missions or missionaries. So missions must start with strengthening the local church.

II. CONSIDER WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHRIST'S LOVE AND DEDICATION TO HIS LOCAL CHURCHES.

Ephesians 5:25 Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

1. THE CHURCH IS LOVED OF CHRIST LIKE A MAN SHOULD LOVE HIS WIFE.

The Bible uses the illustration of marriage to illustrate the relationship that Christ has with His church. As a husband and wife are one flesh, the Bible says the church and Christ are one body.

We see in the book of Acts the following.

2. WHEN YOU HATE THE CHURCH YOU HATE CHRIST. SAUL (Paul) Made havock of the church.

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

I Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Acts 26:9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

Acts 26:11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Acts 26:12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

Acts 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Acts 26:15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Notice what you do against the church you do against Christ.

I am amazed at the attitudes that some people have towards the local church as if it is this entity that just seeks to be a leech or a mooch. They are so afraid of being spent for the church.

Realize this, what you do for Christ's church you do for Christ. What you do against Christ's church you do against Christ. Christ and his church are one.

When Paul persecuted the church he persecuted Christ. What he did against the church he did against Christ.

The church is Christ's witness to the community. If you hurt that witness you are damaging Christ. I wonder how many people Jesus would say to, today _____ why persecutest thou me? Why do you hate me? Why are you against me?

What you do for the church you do it for Christ.

Ladies when you clean the church you are cleaning Christ's house.
Men when you are working on the building you are working for Christ.

When you gossip about the church you are gossiping about Christ.
When you complain about the church you are complaining about Christ.

When you support the church financially you are giving to Christ.
When you tithe, when you give to missions you are giving to Christ.

What you do for the church you do for Christ.
What you do against the church you do against Christ.

III. CONSIDER, IF YOU LOVE CHRIST YOU WILL LOVE HIS LOCAL CHURCH.

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

John 21:16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Notice, does God have to repeat Himself?

Do you love me He asked. Then do something for my church!

Do you love me He asks. Then love His church.

Do you love me He asks. Then build up His church!

The thermometer of your love for Christ can be measured by your faithfulness to His local church. You say you love Him, but if you are not feeding His sheep, you are a liar. What you do for His church is what you do for Christ.

IV. CONSIDER WAYS YOU CAN STRENGTH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.

1. You strengthen your local church by your faithful attendance to the church.

The word church means assembly.

Another thermometer measuring your love for Christ is measured by how faithful you are to assembling yourselves together.

How good a marriage would you have if you never spend any time with your wife?

Let's say, you didn't see your wife for 3 weeks, and months, and then a week here and a week there. Would you say you had a good marriage?

I think your marriage would be about ready to break up.

How can you say you love Christ but you never darken the doors to His church?

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Jesus said to Peter, do you love me? He said yes I love you, then Jesus said, why are out you here fishing, when you should be feeding my sheep? I didn't call you to be a fisherman of fish, I called you to be a fisher of men.

Get back to doing what I called you to do. Preach, teach, feed my sheep. You can't do that hiding out here fishing all day. Get with it Peter. Words are cheap. You can say you love me all you want, but if you love me keep my commandments. Do what I told you to do.

DO WHAT I CALLED YOU TO DO. You can't minister to God's church and be absent from the assembly. It doesn't work that way.

You are a wall if you do not attend services.

DURING TOUGH TIMES JOHN MARK LEFT PAUL AND WENT HOME. Paul said he disqualified himself from future service.

2. YOU STRENGTHEN YOUR CHURCH BY YOUR FAITHFULNESS AND COMMITMENT TO THE MINISTRY IN HARD TIMES.

A. Timothy was faithful in his service for the Lord, and Paul said,

Philippians 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Philippians 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Timothy had a heart to serve and be faithful to the ministry the Lord called him to.

B. John Mark worried about his own welfare and forsook the work in hard times and disqualified himself from future ministry.

Acts 15:37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

Acts 15:39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

3. YOU STRENGTHEN YOUR CHURCH BY YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN GIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS.

A. CONSIDER THE TITHE.

God told the children of Israel, to bring their tithes to the place that he would choose. That of course became Jerusalem. The purpose of the tithe was to support his work and his workers. He said,

Deuteronomy 12:19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

Deuteronomy 12:17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

Deuteronomy 12:18 But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

In the New Testament, Paul reiterates, this command and applies it to the local church. He quotes:

I Corinthians 9:7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

I Corinthians 9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

I Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

So in the Old Testament the Lord says, bring your tithes to the temple, don't forsake the Levite.

In the New Testament he says, don't forsake his ministers.

B. CONSIDER OFFERINGS.

Offerings are finances you give above the tithe towards missions or special projects for the Lord.

Offerings are expressions of your love and devotion to the Lord. They are not something that is commanded but proceed out of a heart of love.

These were called a offering of a sweet savor to the Lord. They were sweet because they showed a sincere heart of love and thanksgiving on the part of the giver.

II Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

V. CONSIDER HOW COMMITTED ARE YOU TO YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.

I am amazed at how committed people are to earthly causes, political candidates, and earthly endeavors.

The Bible tells us to examine ourselves.

The Bible says to judge ourselves.

I think of King David when he was younger and the nation Israel was facing the enemy of the Philistines, and out came Goliath, who defied the whole army and said, give me a man to fight, if I win you will be our servants, if he wins we will be your servants.

We are facing Giant obstacles against the church today. We have hostilities like never before. We have this giant enemy called secular humanism that fights against what we believe at all levels of society. Churches are being pressured to stay closed, YouTube is censoring our videos because they present Jesus as the answer for society's problems. They are literally saying that what we believe is dangerous to society.

Think about this. People can be rioting in the streets shouting death to cops, and that is ok. If you are promoting radical ideas about changing moral law that is ok. You can promote satanism, communism, sensualism, be vulgar and crude, have anti Christian ethics and you name it, that is acceptable. But present what the Bible says about Jesus as the hope for eternal life and quote Isaiah 53 as the answer to all men's problems including Covid, and now you are offering medical advice!

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

This is dangerous information, we need to censor this we can't let this on our website someone may believe that. Look, we are all going to die of something, and what is the church all about?

Is there not a cause? How committed are you to the cause?

The Importance Of The Local Church And Missions
IS THERE NOT A CAUSE PART II
IS THERE NOT A CAUSE?

As we face Goliath attacks on the church in this day that we live, we need to consider: Is there not a great cause for us to get behind in defending the local church? David was filled with the spirit of God when he said, "Is there not a cause?" Did not God choose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise? We have churches being fined for assembling, we are seeing the world dictate to the church what they can say and what they can't say. Do you know that Hillary threatened churches, with censorship if she got elected? Do you think the platform of the demon-cratic party has changed. In other words Hillary said, "we need to get over" our archaic views on morality, and social views. Her famous catch all phrase was "Just Get Over It". That goes for so many other things that go against the Bible. In other words just like YouTube censored our video, the democratic party, if they had their way, would censor our views on homosexuality, Paganistic radical environmentalism, behavioral modification, our view of parenting, child training, and so many other areas that go against the humanistic agenda.

It is only a matter of time, just like YouTube gave notice that our video was deemed inappropriate by their community standards. It is only a matter of time that they will deem our whole church inappropriate for the community and ask us to close. Is there not a cause? Just to what extent are you willing to fight for that cause and stand up for the cause?

I. Is there not a cause?
What is the purpose of the church?

The church is here to obey Christ and be His voice.

1. We are to go into the world and witness to others.

That is the reason we give out tracts, invite people to church, have special meetings, and bring other preachers in, to be a voice. This gives you an opportunity to invite people to church.

Did not Jesus say,

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Is that not part of the cause of the church?

Did Jesus say to His church that you don't have to go, if the government says don't?

Remember the famous words of Peter,

Acts 5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Do you know when YouTube banned our video, I put it on our website. Do you know that video is now downloadable. Why don't you download it and use your facebook page for a good cause? Download it and put it on your facebook page. With a little note, "Why did Youtube ban this video?". Ask all your friends and relatives to judge. Is there not a cause? This is nothing more than liberal secular humanism at work.

YouTube says that saying "by Jesus stripes we are healed" is offering medical advice and should be banned!

Is there not a cause? Are we afraid of the Goliaths of this world?
We are told to go to them, we are to be on the offence not the defense.

Remember, the Lord went to Adam and Eve, they were running from God.
The Lord went and got Peter, James, and John.
The Lord appeared to Paul.

Who is going to get saved unless we approach them? THERE IS A CAUSE.
The Lord gave us a cause, just like He gave King David a cause.

The Lord gave this commission to His church. After you witness to someone what then?

2. *The Lord gave us a second command, He said to follow up with those who believe and tell them to get baptized.*

Where do people get baptized? They get baptized in the church. Baptism is an ordinance given to the church.

Baptism pictures being placed into Christ.
Baptism is an ordinance of identification.
Baptism is a the first step of obedience.

Paul used the illustration of baptism to explain the church.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

There is Spirit baptism, there is water baptism. You can't see Spirit baptism, but you can see water baptism.

Is there not a cause? Unless a person is filled with the Spirit of God he will be fruitless and ineffective for the cause of Christ. The church is essential to bringing a person to that point.

A member of your body unattached to your physical body will die being alone. God wants His people to be united in the cause and division will hinder that. When the church meets we allow an opportunity for the whole body to work together for the edification of the whole. **THAT CANNOT BE DONE ANY OTHER WAY BUT TO PHYSICALLY MEET.**

The Church needs to meet as a body to be effective.

I Corinthians 14: a whole chapter is devoted to the public administration of the individual gifts of the members of the church. These gifts need to be exercised when the church meets as an assembly.

We are going to have a baptism, next Sunday evening. Why did the Lord tell people to get baptized? He told them to get baptized because it is a public way of confessing Jesus before others. That needs to be done live in a public setting.

The local church is important because it is a place where God's people meet publicly, to obey the commands of the Lord.

3. The Third purpose of the church is to obey His command to teach all things He has commanded us.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Matthew 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Is there not a cause? Where do we find the commands of the Lord?

We find our Lord's commands in the Bible! How much of the Bible should we be teaching? He said teach all things. That takes a long time to do that.

Jesus is called the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Christ can be found in every book of the Bible. Jesus said,

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Right now we are attempting to go through the whole Bible. Christ can be found in every book of the Bible. Who do you think was the one that was speaking to Moses in the wilderness? It was Jesus in His preincarnate person.

Is there not a cause? God is going to hold you accountable for everything that is taught in this church.

Some things may be new, some may be reminders. Do you just read the Bible once and you have it? No, you read it again and again over and over again. It takes a lifetime of study to master the book!

II. What level of commitment does Christ expect us to have to His church?

Remember this, what did it take for Christ to establish His church?
What sacrifice on His part did it take for Him to establish His church?

The problem we have is that we dis-associate Christ from His church. When we think of the church we think of Pastor Bissol, Brother so and so, as if it is some social club run by people. That is a perverted view of the church. We need to believe the Scripture, where Christ said,

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

A church as small as two or three meeting for prayer and Bible study is not too small a group for the Lord to show up. But why is it, that it is not important enough for you to support?

Some would say the church is full of hypocrites. So is the local bar, but that doesn't keep people from going there.

Christ died to establish His church. Your lack of commitment to the body that He died for shows a disregard for Christ's sacrifice. Each time you forsake gathering together or assembling yourselves together, you need to ask, is what you are choosing to do instead of attending church more important than the sacrifice it took for Christ to establish his church?

IS THERE NOT A CAUSE?

Some would say, but preacher, Christ died for the whole church not just the Elkdale Baptist Church.

Read I Cor. 14:

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

I Corinthians 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

I Corinthians 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

I Corinthians 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

I Corinthians 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

I Corinthians 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

I Corinthians 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

I Corinthians 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

I Corinthians 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

I Corinthians 12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

I Corinthians 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

I Corinthians 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

I Corinthians 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

I Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

The question is, are you in the body or not?

Are you a member of the body or not?

If to establish this body was important enough to God to send His Son to die on the cross to establish this body, who are you to say it is not important enough for you to support?

Remember, what you do for the church you do for Christ.

What you do against the church you do against Christ.

Consider, just to what level the Lord expects us to be faithful to Him.

Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Revelation 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

The Lord told the church of Smyrna to be faithful unto death. Many believe that the pastor of the church during that time was Polycarp who was burned at the stake. Here is the account of Polycarp's martyrdom..

Polycarp Refuses to Deny Jesus

As Polycarp was being taken into the arena, a voice came to him from heaven: "Be strong, Polycarp and play the man!" No one saw who had spoken, but our brothers who were there heard the voice. When the crowd heard that Polycarp had been captured, there was an uproar. The Proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On hearing that he was, he tried to persuade him to apostatize, saying, "Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent, and say, 'Down with the Atheists!'" Polycarp looked grimly at the wicked heathen multitude in the stadium, and gesturing towards them, he said, "Down with the Atheists!" "Swear," urged the Proconsul, "reproach Christ, and I will set you free." "86 years have I have served Him," Polycarp declared, "and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

Now every time you neglect His local church you are despising the death of Christ, and you are making light of the sacrifices of His saints who died maintaining the testimony of Christ.

Just what level of commitment do we have to obey Christ?

Jesus said,

Be thou faithful, unless your favorite TV show is on Sunday night.

Be thou faithful, unless your favorite football team is playing.

Be though faithful, but if you are tired you can stay home.

NO! HE SAYS, BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

Men like Polycarp believed the command and lived the command.

Do we not have a cause???

III. WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF COMMITMENT TO THIS CAUSE?

IV.

II Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

I remember when I first trusted Christ and was reading through the Bible. As I read through the Bible, I read about the persecution of God's people through the ages. I read about Cain and Abel, I read about Jeremiah, I read about John the Baptist, Peter and the apostles, Paul the apostle, and then on into the book of Revelation. The Bible contains the history of the struggles and persecutions of God's servants.

I thought to myself, I wonder if I would have the courage to stand up for the cause of Christ and give my life for Him. I just didn't know if I would. I asked myself, could I do what these great men of God did? I was not sure I could do it. Shortly after this I had the following experiences.

It was the early days of my conversion, and it was at the tail end of the campus riots and unrest in our universities and colleges. I got saved October 1974 and in the late winter of 1975 I was visiting a friend whose house bordered the campus of Princeton University. I heard a commotion in his back yard and I asked my buddy Bobby Aliach to drive around back of the campus and see what was going on. There was a group of students holding clubs, and all fighting in the parking lot of the campus. I said to Bobby, lets go over there and see what is going on. He told me I was nuts and went back to his house. So I went back around to Bobby's back yard which bordered the campus, and the crowd of students were facing each other with clubs in hand. There must have been about 100 of them. I had some tracts in my pocket, and I prayed, because I was within walking distance of the crowd. I prayed, and asked the Lord if He wanted me to go witness to these people. Just then, the 100 or so students started forming into lines and started to chant, they chanted I have the joy joy joy down in my feet, up in my blankety blankety head, down in my blankety blankety feet. I just ended my prayer when they started to do this and I thought that must be a sign that the Lord wanted me to go and witness to these people. So I took the tracts in hand and started walking towards the students. I said to the Lord, ok Lord I will witness to them, but I wonder what is going to feel like to die. So I walked over to the place where all the fighting was, and then the students started to march. Half of them marched one way and the other half marched the other way as I walked up to them and there I stood right in the middle them holding out a tract in my hand.

Now you may not believe me, but this happened, and I said to the Lord, Lord, I guess it is not my time yet.

I wonder what is our level of commitment to the Lord. He told the Christians at Smyrna be faithful unto death. Would we be faithful unto death? I don't think many would, if they can't be faithful to attend church.

DO YOU HAVE A CAUSE?