**HOW SHALL THE CHURCH GROW**

**Acts 8:1 – 4**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. As the New Testament church [we] should be interested in several things.

 A. Things like doctrinal purity (Jude 3) and how the church shall grow.

2. The New Testament has provided the guide lines for church growth and man has **NO** right or need to change God's Laws in regard to it.

 A. Satan has filled us with flimsy excuses as [we] fail to be successful in the Lord's Work.

3. During the early years after the beginning of the church the “God’s Word grew and

 multiplied” (Ac 12:24). It did so amid trials, duress and animosity.

**BODY:**

**1. THINGS [WE] THINK [WE] NEED TODAY**

 A. A “good” preacher with an educational background; A nice building in a fine location

 B. Acceptability in the town we live; Successful men in the leadership

 C. Freedom of religion (a nation at peace); Good weather / right time of the year

 D. Good “prospects” everything convenient; Young people “camped” rallied and catered to

**2. WHAT DID THE EARLY CHURCH HAVE IN THE 1ST CENTURY?**

 A. Preachers of mediocre background: Even Paul's speech was contemptible (2 Cor 10:10).

 1. Our educational requirements would have eliminated the Galilean fishermen who

 served so well - think about it.

 B. They owned **NO** building at all; yet the cause flourished/run out of town (Ac 11:19).

 C. Humble fishermen were their leaders (l Cor 1:17-21; 4:9).

 D. The harsh rule of the Roman Caesars (Ac 4:13-21).

 1. The opposition mounted as the church grew / They had everything, **BUT** peace.

 2. They could **NOT** pray, “We are thankful / gathered here without fear of molestation.”

 E. As to good weather and opportune time, this seemed to be of **NO** consequence to them.

 1. Ac 20:27, 31; 2 Tim 4:2

 F. As to prospects and conveniences - they had neither.

 1. **NO** baptistery (much less a heated one) / **NO** heated or cooled building.

 G. Who were their prospective members?

 1. The Philippian jailer (Ac 16:25-33) / The wicked Corinthians (Ac 18:8)

 2. Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:1-12; 22:6-16) / The ruler of the synagogue (Ac 18:8)

 A. Most of these prospects would scare most members of the church today.

 1. Many would **NOT** want them as members.

 2. Maybe they should “worship” down the street; more to their station in life.

**3. WHY ARE [WE] NOT AS SUCCESSFUL AS THEY WERE?**

 A. [We] are too concerned with popularity (Lk 6:26).

 1. There will come a distinct choice to be made for God and against men (Ac 5:29).

 2. In our haste to gain a place up high on the ladder of religious groups, [we] have developed far too many public relations men and all too few preachers of the word!

 B. [We] do **NOT** have enough soul-stirring prayer.

 C. [We] lack faith, vision and optimism in the Lord's Work.

 1. Someone has convinced us, the “cheapest way is the best way”.

 2. 1st Century Christians pressed closer to the glory each day.

 A. Rom 13:11; Php 1:20-23; 1 Pet 2:11