

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS!

(Anniversary - 2021)

Scripture Reading. Psalm 127.

Psalm 127: 1-5. 1Unless the LORD builds a house, They who build it labor in vain; Unless the LORD guards a city, The watchman stays awake in vain. 2It is futile for you to rise up early, To [a]stay up late, To eat the bread of painful labor; This is how He gives to His beloved sleep. 3Behold, children are a [b]gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 4Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. 5Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Introduction:

Pandemic has killed some businesses, even some churches. But the Lord has brought us this far. Great is His faithfulness. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for this favor. I thank God for all of you who have stood by us faithfully week after week. In this dire moment of history, I thank God for those who supported us through online. I also thank God for those people who faithfully supported this church financially also!

Psalm 127:1a. 1Unless the LORD builds a house, They who build it labor in vain;

During my seminary days, I learned so many different techniques about growing a church. I tried them all when I began this church. But I failed to understand that it is the Lord who grows the church. None of the modern marketing gimmicks will work with the genuine Christians. Only God could move them to a certain church to be a member of that church.

I have learned this valuable lesson from my own personal experience.

I tried many ways to draw people to our church

- in letting some people lead in certain areas,

- drawing people of the same ethnicity, playing songs in their own language,

- through marketing products such as pens, calendar, colorful flier, and advertising through radio and local papers!

Don't get me wrong..these things did create an interest but it was temporary.

- designating them to a committee, When I had only 30 people, I developed 30 committees. People were happy for a while, but then it became just a bureaucratic cobweb.

- One pastor advised me to build church through the programs, and people did come for that particular programs, but then then they went off.

- I kept bringing great evangelists from India. It drew great crowd, but people came running here for the preacher, and not for building this church. It was nothing but rabble, as we came across last week!

- We tried targeted marketing toward Hindus. We went to all their fairs, set up a stall, and exposed the church. We sent tracts to all Howard county residents, yet no one came.

- I used the power of persuasion to pull people to this church. I used phone, and visitation to persuade people to come to our church, and they all came, not because they would get some spiritual food, but because they just wanted to please me or Viola through their presence. They reluctantly came for our sake, not for Christ's sake or for church's sake.

I tried to cajole my close relatives, and friends. Some of them rejected the idea, but others, God brought them, and anchored them as pillars of the church. They strengthened our church! I praise God for them.

But when God brought all those families that came week after week, either online or in person, He seems to say, I am the one who will bring people, and I am the one who will take them away.

I saw God's doing with my own eyes. He brought Praveen's family from nowhere. We all enjoyed their fellowship so much. But then God moved them to New Hampshire one

fine morning. But they are still faithful trying to attend online. This particular Scripture verse comes alive when I think of Praveen's family.

16So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (Rom. 9:16)

Apostle Paul also says the same thing in 1 Cor.3:6,7 in a different way!

6I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Yes, it is God who grows according to His own will.

Man could grow only lot of weed with his cunning marketing devices and gimmick, but he cannot grow the heavenly spirit filled plant. Only God can! It took me a long time to understand this lesson. Now I have real peace in my heart over this church growth matter.

127:1Unless the LORD builds a house, They who build it labor in vain;

When the Lord brings certain people to church to build His church, that church stays strong! The wind may blow strong, the rain flood may try to shake its foundation, but still the church stays strong because the foundation of church is anchored in Christ. When Christ is the head of the church, when He brings people to anchor His church, no matter how small that church is, it will stand strong!

127:1b. Unless the LORD guards a city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

I don't have to say much about this verse. We have witnessed it with our own eyes. For the past few months, this building was shut down due to pandemic. It was a perfect opportunity for anyone to break in. But God watched over this building, and we never had any incident.

Spiritually speaking also, wolves could have come in and lured the sheep with false doctrines. But God protected and guarded this church. He has protected us from going after erroneous false doctrines. We were all without worries about the church because we knew that God was watching over us and guarding us all the time. I thank God for it.

Psalm. 127:3. 3Behold, children are a [b]gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

It may not look like the Lord is strengthening the church through new families during this

pandemic time, but He did bless us through our children and grand children. They are our future, and I hope, they will run this church sooner than we expect.

The youth are like the arrows in the hands of the Lord. Yes, Joshua, Patrick, Hannah, Samantha, and soon Jesse, and Sairah, Josiah, Joshua, and then Elise, and Jeshua will join them to strengthen this church. Few bright children with wisdom can rock this world, and draw people to Christ. Let us invest in our children's spiritual growth and focus on them. They are like the arrows in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed is the church that has a quiver full of them!

But there are few problems in our church., and we must address it as quickly as possible. Few people work very hard, and carry this ministry on their shoulders. The burden is heavy, and I am hearing them mourning and groaning of their pain! Can we share their burden?

Last week, we heard Moses complaining about carrying the Israelites on his shoulder, and this is how the Lord replied.

Numbers 11:17,18. 16The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their stand there with you. 17Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take away some of the Spirit who is upon you, and put Him (the same) upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it by yourself.

God didn't say, well we'll do it tomorrow or next week. He said, "Let's go right now". Bring 70 elders to me and I will take some of your Spirit and give it to them. God is not going to beg us to minister to Him. Actually it was God who was bearing them on His wings, and not Moses. Spirit of God is like the Niagara Falls. He was flowing through Moses, and He was in him as a well that can gush out like the spring of living water! We should not think that Moses lost some of his Spirit because of this move. The more you give others, the more you will receive!

The word Spirit is used sometimes as gifts also. In this context, I take it as a spirit of administration and, prophecy to see through people.

Numbers. 11:24,25. 24So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. He also gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and positioned them around the tent. 25Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took away some of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. Yet they did not do it again.

As God instructed, Moses gathered 70 elders around the tent, and the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to Moses only! He took away some of the Spirit who was upon

Moses, and placed Him upon the seventy elders. Note the word “upon him”. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God sat upon the prophets, and not in them? It was a temporary arrangement. But for us, God, the Holy Spirit dwells within us!

When the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied at that time, but they never did again! It reminds us of Acts 2 where all those 120 people start speaking in diverse tongue. Same Spirit but diverse gift. This kind of prophecy is more like ecstatic prophecy delivered in a state of trance. King Saul also experienced that, and people started asking, Is Saul a prophet too?

1 Corinthians 12:27,28 27Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. 28And God has [u]appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then [v]miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and various kinds of tongues.

Here we see many gifts from the same Spirit, but in Numbers, the Spirit is given them mainly to administer, and spirit of prophecy to discern various people.

Numbers 11:26-29. 26But two men had remained in the camp; the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the [v]other, Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (and they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. 27So a young man ran and informed Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” 28Then Joshua the son of Nun, the personal servant of Moses from his youth, responded and said, “My lord Moses, restrain them!” 29But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? If only all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!”

This is an amazing passage! Two people did not show up in spite of God's command. Yet, since they were chosen by Moses as one of the seventy elders, they were given the spirit of prophesy too! We have people who are watching online, they could be prophesying, they could still be doing God's work also, and be helpful to the church. Yes, we are in need of a lot of help, and you could do just that! Jesus and His disciples encountered similar incident.

Mark 9:38,39. 38John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” 39But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40“For he who is not against us is for us.

Let us encourage anyone who wants to serve the Lord in whatever capacity. For he who is not against us is for us! Let us start using anyone who is not against us!

God wants all of us to be engaged in the ministry in some way. We need our kids to engage in working together with all ages. They need to share the burden of the adults and alleviate their pain. It is time we become participants in worship and not just spectators. We need people to help with slides, handling this complicated live streaming, we could start recording everything through YouTube, but then we need good editors! Believe it or not, we have a budding editor already! That is Jessie! She did it so well right in front of my eyes when I visited their house. We need help in setting up everything before the worship and taking it down. We need help in the area of hospitality, setting up, cleaning the kitchen etc. Believe it or not, we need help in sharing the Word.

Let us all share the burden in the area of sharing the Word also. I have been invited to speak in a couple of churches. It could happen more often. I may have to tag Johnson also to go to other churches. That means, you all may want to share the burden of prophesying God's Word. I am speaking to all who have engaged in communion meditation, and Good Friday sermons, should continue to meditate and be ready. Share the burden! People are crying out loud, "help me". Don't take it away completely. Just try to share the burden, and make it easy for others.

We may have to share the burden of other churches also so that they may not burn out. Let us all step in and help God's kingdom! God's kingdom is just one. Let me come back to my original point. It is God who equips us and He is the one who builds the church the way He wants to.

Romans. 9:14-16....." I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

We can run around year after year for the Lord. But everything will grow only according to God's plan. Our job is to be faithful to His calling! Let us be consistent and committed in building His church, filling all the holes so that the church may move forward! If we have problem handling a small church like this, how are we going to handle church growth in future. Let us share the burden and make our burden easy.

Summary:

Except God builds our church, all our effort is in vain. Look toward Him!

Children are our future! Focus on them!

Step up and share the burden.

Pray for the Spirit of prophesy and administration.

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