

THE LORD PERPETUATES HIS CHURCH

It seems to be the opinion of some that the perpetuity (continuation) of the Lord's church depends solely upon their ability to devise means and methods, not employed by Christ nor His apostles, to enlarge the membership. But I have never yet met the man who could come up with a way to convict people of their sins, strip them of their self-righteousness, or kill them to the love of worldly religion and bring them to love the preaching of the true gospel. And until such things are done and a person is made willing to suffer the stigma of being identified with the meek and lowly followers of Christ, they are in no condition whatsoever to occupy a place of usefulness in the Lord's kingdom here in the world.

Christ said *He* would build His church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). If this is true, and it is, then it is not left to men to either build it or to perpetuate it. It is certainly the duty of God's enlightened people to let their light shine before men, but only the Lord can so deal with men as to make the old church attractive to them. It is a *spiritual* kingdom, and only *spiritual* subjects can occupy it. God is just as able now as He has ever been to make fit subjects for His kingdom, and, if He chooses, to providentially lead those subjects to find that relatively small and persecuted band of believers who make up that "little flock" spoken of in (Luke 12:32).

We may help humble inquirers by instructing them in the truth, but we cannot make humble inquirers. We cannot kill people to the love of sin, and neither can we make them love the doctrine and practice taught by Christ and His apostles. Only the Lord can chisel out and prepare lively stones so that they fit perfectly into the place He intends for them in His temple. Men labor in vain when they attempt to perform such a work. The Lord never gave any man that job. It requires nothing less than the direct work of the Holy Spirit.

—Elder Ralph Harris

