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HOW TO MELT ICICLES IN A CHURCH

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DEDICATION

This book is heartily dedicated to that class of Christian people who faithfully attend church services, who gracefully take part in the worship and work of the church, and who joyfully support the church with their tithes and offerings. Then it is also dedicated to that class of church members who do not do so, but who should do so every Sunday.

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01 -- HOW ICICLES ARE FORMED

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What are icicles in a church?

How are icicles in a church formed?

How may icicles in a church be melted?

How may icicles be prevented from forming in a church?

An icicle is a pendent, usually conical, mass of ice, formed by the freezing of dripping water. An icicle on the outside of a building is formed by the melting of snow on a roof during the warm period of the day, then when evening comes on, the temperature falls, the dripping of the water from the eaves freezes, forming a conical mass of ice, continually enlarging until all the drippings are frozen.

Water is a mystery.

Water is a Bible symbol of the Holy Spirit, of the spirits of men, and the spirit of a church or congregation.

Some people and churches are a mystery.

Water has a wonderful possibility. So do people and a church.

Water is susceptible to many changes under different conditions, and so are people.

Water may serve many useful, or harmful purposes, and so may people and churches.

Icicles in a church are formed by the falling of the spiritual atmosphere and temperature.

* * *

Chilling Breezes of Gossip

In a church a chilly breeze will lower the spiritual temperature. These breezes are formed by words uttered in an unkind spirit, or with an unwholesome purpose. It requires breath to speak, and breath is air which has been inhaled and exhaled. With the exhalation (moving air forming a breeze) the thoughts, feelings and purposes which have been framed into words pass from one person to others. People just will talk, and there is no power on earth which can prevent them from talking, except extreme sickness or death. The more people are cautioned not to speak, the more they are tempted to speak, and the more they will speak. Words and reports have a way of traveling like the wind.

When anything evil is discovered or reported concerning the pastor, church leaders, or members, some people who take delight in the failures and faults of the best people are prone to pass such misrepresentations on to others. Probably this is done to justify themselves and to cover

up their own shortcomings. More often than not, the report is false and distorted. Instead of stopping or killing it, the evil report is passed on by that class of people who are lukewarm or spiritually cold. Of course, passing it along does not make them nor the person to whom they give the report any warmer spiritually. It has started a cold breeze which is cooling in its sweep.

When some people know or hear an evil report, they pass it along in this manner:

"Hello there."

"Hello."

"Say, did you hear about So and So?"

"No. What is it? Do tell me."

"I will tell you if you will not tell any one else. Will you keep it as a secret?"

"Yes, I will. I won't tell anybody."

"All right. Why, So and So did so and so."

"Oh! Is that so?"

"Yes. That is so."

"Well, I didn't know."

"Please, don't tell any one."

"All right, I won't."

The cold breezes have started to blow which will form icicles in the church.

Mrs. A and Mrs. B are friends, and their conversation, of course, was confidential. But when any person has a friend, she likes to tell her confidentially what she thinks no one else should know, always warning her not to tell anyone else.

Mrs. B has a friend, Mrs. C, but with whom Mrs. A is not acquainted. Mrs. B thinks it is perfectly safe to tell Mrs. C, if she will inform her confidentially.

The chilly breezes increase and the icicles are increasing.

Mrs. B meets Mrs. C and says, "Have you heard so and so?"

"No. Why? What is it? Do tell me."

"All right, I will if you will promise not to tell anyone else."

"I won't tell anybody."

"Why, So and So did so and so," and in telling it Mrs. B has distorted the report a little.

Mrs. C seems surprised and shocked, declaring she never would have suspected it.

Mrs. C has a friend Mrs. D. Of course, she reasons, I want her to know. I will tell her confidentially, and strictly charge her not to tell any one else.

Mrs. C hurries over to see Mrs. D.

"Have you heard?" etc.

Etc.

The cold breezes continue to blow. The report has become more distorted; and the faster the breezes blow, the faster the temperature falls. The icicles have enlarged. "It is an ill wind which does not blow any good thing."

In an old Reader there appeared a poem by John Byrom, entitled, "The Three Black Crows," which has a very good moral. Read it and ponder carefully. Here it is:

* * *

The Three Black Crows

Two honest tradesmen meeting in the Strand,
One took the other briskly by the hand.
"Hark ye," said he, "'tis an odd story this,
About the crows." "I don't know what it is,"
Replied his friend. "No? I am surprised at that.
Where I came from it is the common chat."
"But you should hear -- an odd affair indeed!
And that it happened, they are all agreed.
Not to detain you from a thing so strange;
A gentleman, who lives not far from 'Change,
This week as all the Alley knows,
Taking a vomit, threw up three black crows!"
"Impossible." "Nay, but 'tis really true;
I had it from good hands, and so may you."
"From whose, I pray?" So having named the man,
Straight to inquire his curious comrade ran:
"Sir did you tell ____" (relating the affair).
"Yes, sir, I did; and if 'tis worth your care,

'Twas Mr. Such-a-one who told it me.
But, by-the-by, 'twas two black crows -- not three."
Resolved to trace so wondrous an event,
Quick to the third the virtuoso went:
"Sir ____" (and so forth). "Why, yes -- the thing is fact,
Though, in regard to number, not exact:
It was not two black crows -- 'twas only one.
The truth of that you may depend upon:
The gentleman himself told me the case."
"Where may I find him?" "Why in such a place."
Away he went: and having found him out:
"Sir, be so good as to resolve a doubt."
Then to his last informant he referred,
And begged to know if true what he had heard:
"Did you, sir, throw up a black crow?" "Not I!"
It is sad, how people propagate a lie!
Black crows have been thrown up, three, two, and one;
And here, I find, all comes at last to none!
"Did you say anything of a crow at all?"
"Crow? Crow? Perhaps I might, now I recall
The matter over." "And pray, sir, what was it?"
"Why, I was horrid sick, and, at last,
I did throw up -- and told my neighbor so --
Something that was as black, sir, as a crow."

* * *

Cold Blast of Indifference

The spirit of indifference will help to form icicles in any church. The "I don't care" spirit is very chilling. It does not help any church. It lowers the spiritual temperature. In almost every church there may be found some members who either by words, an indifferent action, unfaithful attendance, giving little support, not praying, taking no part, or the attitude which bespeaks the "I don't care" spirit. In summing up such an attitude it leads to, I don't care --

if the church does or doesn't grow,

if the pastor is or is not supported,

if the finances are or are not maintained,

if souls are or are not saved,

if the Sunday School increases or does not increase,

if the prayer meeting continues or is laid down,

if the missionaries are supported or are not supported,

if the preaching is inspiring or dry,

if revivals are or are not experienced,

if the church does or does not exist, etc.

Such an attitude is very chilling and is as certain to form icicles in a church as anything than can form carnal icicles. One such member will bring a chilling effect which will take several spiritually-hot members to offset. If too many are indifferent, it will chill a church until it will freeze up, and lead to a closing up. When some do not care to attend regularly, the nominal and lukewarm members will become chilled and freeze. Unless there are enough warm, spiritual members to keep up a spiritual warmth, indifferent members will freeze and close up the church.

* * *

Frigid Effects of a Lack of Interest

This class of people are not quite as cold as the indifferent ones. These want to see the church prosper and keep going; however, they do little about it. They want others to carry the load, bear the responsibility, finance the work; but they do very little. They are not inspiring or aggressive. While the atmosphere they create is lukewarm, and they do not form icicles themselves, neither do they help to melt any icicles which have formed.

Some one has conjectured that of the reported number of church members,

5 per cent do not exist,

10 per cent can not be found,

20 per cent never pray,

25 per cent never read the Bible,

30 per cent never attend church services,

40 per cent never give to any cause,

50 per cent never go to Sunday School,

60 per cent never go to church Sunday night,

70 per cent never give to missions,

75 per cent never engage in church service,

80 per cent never go to prayer meeting,

90 per cent never have family worship,

95 per cent never win a soul to Christ.

It is no wonder that spiritual icicles abound in many churches, and that many have frozen up so that no revival is experienced, no souls are saved and many churches go out of existence!

* * *

Failure of Appreciation

This attitude allows icicles to form. It, also, is chilling in its effect. The Bible says, "Honor to whom honor is due;" "Obey them that have the rule over you;" "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;" "Remember them which have the rule over you;" and "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

Many pastors have been made sad and heavy-hearted and tempted to think their labors have been in vain because no one has expressed any appreciation. These indifferent, interest-lacking members become displeased should a pastor become successful. They even say, "The Bible says, 'Woe unto you when all men speak well of you,'" as though church members should speak evil of good pastors and the spiritual members. They forget, however, that the Bible also says, "Speak evil of no man." They forget, too, that the world will speak evil of the godly, but that the righteous should speak well of the righteous. Do not think that it is doing God an honor, and spiritual members a holy service to speak evil of them; or that by taking a cold, indifferent, and unappreciative attitude toward them will help to keep them humble. Instead of helping, it is doing the Devil a service; and when a saintly person is slandered, it cripples his usefulness and wrecks the confidence of good people. The unappreciative also help to form icicles in a church, thus lowering the spiritual fervor and atmosphere.

* * *

Lack of Fellowship

In most churches there is too much social visiting, and not enough fellowshiping. Fellowship is a precious virtue. From the fact there is so little of it makes it more precious. Many good people do not manifest enough interest in the spiritual welfare of others. This does not tend to increase any spiritual fervor or to melt icicles.

Sometimes we may learn a lesson or moral from a dream. Mr. Moody once told the story of a man who in a dream went to heaven. After arriving there he became acquainted with a saint who

had preceded him, and they began to speak of their earthly lives. "I came from America," said one of them.

"Why, so did I," replied the other.

"In what State were you brought up?"

"In the State of _____."

"Indeed. Why that is the State in which I was born and lived."

"May I inquire which city?"

"In the city of _____."

"Well, I lived in the same city."

"And, Sir, to which church did you belong?"

"I was a member of Dr. _____'s church."

"Is that so! Why I also was a member of the same church."

According to this dream, these two men from the same country, state, city and church had to die and go to heaven in order to fellowship and get acquainted. Is not this the way many people live today?

* * *

Half-hearted and Half-time Devotion

Little as the half-hearted and half-time attenders realize it, they also are that class which help to form icicles in a church. These seem to forget that the Lord is displeased with a half-hearted, half-time service. If fuel were placed in a stove in winter time only every other day in the manner some go to church, the fire would burn out, or burn very low.

It is sad and sickening to study the Sunday school register in about eighty per cent of the churches. The following is an actual record taken from a Sunday school register:

Enrollment -- 143

Attendance Today -- 39

Record Attendance -- 229

It is very plain to see that many Sunday schools are on the decrease. It were well for a prophet like Daniel to come along to preach to them one sermon, taking his text from the wall (church bulletin). It is estimated that just fifty per cent of the church members attend at all, and that only half of the time. If this fifty per cent would attend full time, the attendance would increase one hundred per cent. Then if the fifty per cent who do not attend at all, would attend full time, the increase in attendance would be three hundred per cent over the present attendance. Coming one Sunday, then being absent the next, makes both a different and an indifferent congregation. Besides, it makes a heavy load and a heavy heart for the pastor; and is a most certain way to allow icicles to form and abound in a church.

* * *

Few Men Attending

It is a clever scheme which Satan is working all over the country to keep people from attending church services, especially in keeping the men at home. The few who do attend are mostly women and children. If the children are not soundly converted, they will attend only as long as they are imposed upon by their parents; then when the boys are about fourteen years old and the girls sixteen, they drop out. If they are not converted they may become tired of Sunday school and cease going. It then will be a hard matter to sufficiently interest them again to attend.

One of Pharaoh's subtle objections concerning Israel was: "Sacrifice to your God in the land of Egypt." Today the Devil says, "Stay in the world and try to go to heaven without going to church." Another objection was: Only the men go, and the women and children stay at home in the land. Pharaoh was very subtle. He is a type of Satan. Indeed, dividing the home and ordering only the men to go makes us think that Pharaoh was much like Satan and Satan a little like Pharaoh.

It is God's purpose that salvation shall go by the house, and He has made provision that the entire family may be saved, although they must be saved individually. If Satan can not keep all in sin, he would at least keep part in sin. Satan, as it were, says, "Don't all go to church. Just let the women and children go, and the men stay at home."

If any one from the pulpit should check over the attendance he would observe that the proportionate grouping would be something like this:

Section one -- 18 women, 3 men.

Section two -- 20 women, 5 men.

Section three -- 38 women, 7 men.

Section four -- 23 women, 4 men.

This is certainly a sad ratio and accounts for many icicles in a church. There should be as many or more men than women in the church pews. Church work is more than a woman's job. It calls for men -- more men.

Let no man think that he can get into heaven on his wife's salvation. The story is told of a man on Sunday when the church bells began to ring would say, "Wife, you go to church for yourself and me." In the evening when the bells began to ring, he would say the same thing. This continued for several years. One night he had a dream. He dreamed that both he and his wife died at the same time. After their spirits left their bodies, he said to her, "Let us now together start for heaven." When they arrived at the gate of heaven, he knocked.

A heavenly porter asked, "Who are you?"

He replied, "I am So and So."

"What do you want?" asked the porter.

"My wife and I have died, and we just now have come from earth and we want to enter heaven."

The porter opened the door and allowed the wife to enter in, saying, "She has entered in for you and herself." Then he shut the door, closing the wife safely within and shutting him out. Such a dream should have made a great impression upon him and led him to confession and repentance, and to seek the forgiveness of his sins in order to make all preparation for heaven, then to attend church faithfully.

* * *

Going to Sleep in Church

The church is not the place in which to go to sleep. All who go to sleep do not add to the fervor or inspiration of a religious service. Going to sleep in church services is another way in which icicles are formed. No spiritually-asleep sinner can be awakened by a physically-asleep Christian. Going to sleep in church is a habit with many. Such an act is pleasing to the Devil, grievous to the pastor, and chilling to the spiritual atmosphere.

Many of the sleepers do not guard against it, but court it and favor sleeping in church services. The sleepers generally do the following: They arrange to get a seat at the end, then slide down, placing the elbow on a song book and support the chin, then they relax and soon are asleep. These sleepy-headed church members are responsible for icicles forming and abounding in the church. Such members should go to bed earlier on Saturday evening, get more sleep at home, fight sleep at church and pray for deliverance and victory.

* * *

Social Visiting Before and After Worship Services

Social visiting before the service, and after the service is a very unwholesome act for any church in which to indulge. It grieves the Holy Spirit, dulls the spiritual appetites, desires, and

senses. Such a condition is very chilling, and icicles form while many are visiting, talking, and laughing. There is no spirit of worship in it, and the members are not in a state to enter into the spirit of worship. In fact, the service may be nearly half over before they are in a state of worship. What benefit they do derive may be offset by more social visiting after services. Then the supposed worshiper goes home with little or no spiritual help received for the days to come.

A spiritual man recently came to a minister after an evening service, saying, "I have a question I want to ask you. We have a peculiar situation here. Almost half of our people are late for services every time, then when the worship hour is over it is a difficult matter to get them to leave. What do you suggest as a remedy?"

Such a condition is very conducive for icicles to form in a church. It does not give much time to get a spiritual fire started, and that which may be started will be allowed to burn down quickly. Such church members do not add much spiritual warmth to a church, neither do they take home with them much that is of spiritual value.

* * *

Late Comers

There are rare occasions when faithful worshipers may be inadvertently detained and be late for religious service. These will be embarrassed and sorry for being late. With many, however, it is otherwise. They are habitually late, and do not feel any sense of chagrin or sorrow. When a check is made, it will be discovered they are about ten minutes late in getting up in the morning, ten minutes late for breakfast, ten minutes late in getting started, ten minutes late in arriving, and ten minutes late in leaving church. We could wish that these, somehow, would make a desperate effort to regain ten minutes, and then never get behind time, but always be on time. To say the least concerning habitual latecomers, it is a condition that allows spiritual icicles to form in a church.

* * *

Looking Around at Late-comers

Such a condition prevails in many churches. When a late-comer enters a worshiper in front becomes inquisitive and wonders, "Who is it?" Then to satisfy that curiosity he will turn around and look back to see. Of course that does not make him feel better, or like saying "Amen" or "Praise the Lord." All who are seated behind him had not thought of looking back until the first back-looker turned around; and before all is over, twenty-five people may have turned around to look back, all because one man looked back when one person entered late. Such a condition is very chilling and allows icicles to form. It makes it hard on the pastor who can sense this situation more than any one else. There may be a detraction all because one person comes late and another becomes inquisitive who it is, then many more become inquisitive and turn around to look. Every time one turns around, it has a cooling effect, as if a window were opened on a cold winter day, and when many turn around it is as though every door and window were opened to allow all warmth to escape and the cold air to enter. It is no wonder that icicles form under such a situation.

Ask your pastor to see how he feels concerning this and how it effects him when all turn around while he preaches.

* * *

A Listless Spirit

Another chilling condition is when worshipers are listless and look around, read a paper, fumble through a song book, pare their nails, etc. No one feels the cooling effect as much as the pastor. It is like a gust of cold wind blowing upon him. It helps to form icicles.

F. W. Farrar relates the following in, "Why the Sermon was Dull."

"That was the dullest sermon I ever listened to!" exclaimed Sam one Sunday after he had come home from church.

"Yes, I thought so myself," replied grandpa with a twinkle in his eye.

"Did you, grandpa?" inquired Sam, glad to have some one stand by him.

"I mean that I thought you considered it so," replied his grandfather. "I enjoyed it, because my appetite was whetted for it before I went to church. I noticed it was just the other way with you."

"Just the other way!" cried Sam; "how was that?"

"Why, before you went," answered his grandfather, "instead of sharpening your appetite, you dulled it by reading that trashy paper. Then after you were in the building, instead of sitting straight up and looking at the minister while he preached, as though you wanted to catch every word he said and every expression of his face, you lounged down in your seat and turned half way around. Then you let your eyes rove about the church and out of the window. That dulled your ears by listening to a dog that was barking and an automobile that was passing. You dulled your mind and your soul by thinking that you were a terribly abused boy for having to go to church and stay through the sermon, and you made yourself a dull listener. I never knew it to fail that a dull listener made a dull sermon."

* * *

A Frigid Look at Strangers

It is not only cold, harsh words which have a chilling effect, but a cold, uninviting look at strangers who enter to seek a warm, friendly and spiritual atmosphere. Little do these cold on-lookers realize the longings and feelings which are in the heart of a stranger or newcomer. It may be possible for a church to hold a high profession, be all taken up with themselves, their joys, and happiness in such a subjective manner that they forget the objective side of religion and allow strangers to come and go unnoticed or ignored. But a worse state than that is to give them a cold,

uninviting look, which will make them feel as if they were intruders and not wanted. These frigid stares are chilling. They form icicles and a coldness which drives away, instead of drawing newcomers to that church.

A minister one time announced that he would preach the following Sunday on the subject, "The Recognition of Our Friends in Heaven." A man with a hungry heart who had attended there for two months without one person speaking to him or giving him a welcome remarked that it were better if he would preach on the subject, "The Recognition of Our Friends on Earth."

* * *

Failing to Pray

All church members who fail to pray for their pastor, church, and fellow members during the week and before going to church, and who do not enter the church in a prayerful spirit have allowed the spiritual fire to burn without adding any fuel to the fire. As far as they are concerned, the fire has gone down and the temperature fallen, making it easier for icicles to form.

* * *

A Doleful Testimony

Testimonies are inspiring and edifying when praises are offered to the Lord for that which He has done. When a person gets up and gives a doleful testimony -- magnifying the Devil and his power, his own trials and defeats; how hard it is to live with those around him, and belittles Christ and His grace, that will bring a coldness and is killing to a service.

* * *

Consuming Too Much Time

Occasionally in a good testimony meeting some person will employ too much time. Such a testimony at first is enjoyed; but when it extends into an exhortation and then into a long dry talk, lasting longer and longer, getting colder and colder, requiring more and more endurance, will give the listeners a spiritual chill and kill the spirit of the service. Such a testimony should be cut off at both ends with just the cream being given. The same obtains in a long, dry prayer. It were better if some people would pray much longer at home and in secret, then they would not need to pray so long in public. Whenever the spirit of prayer does fall upon any worshiper, he will know it while he is praying, and so will everyone else. On such an occasion the thing to do is to hold on and pull on the throne of grace as long as the Spirit keeps moving. Everyone praying or testifying should consider others and give them the same time and privilege that he enjoys. D. L. Moody would call down a man if he prayed too long in public, saying, "Brother, you have prayed long enough. Now give somebody else some time."

* * *

Allowing Pastor to Pull Entire Load

The situation of allowing the pastor to pull the entire load is not conducive to a glowing, fervent atmosphere. When Sunday morning arrives, all worshipers jump on the gospel wagon and allow the pastor to do all the pulling, while by action they say, "Pastor, pull the load. We are riding. This is why we have secured you; and if you do not succeed, you are a failure; and if you succeed, that is the reason we are paying you."

Such an attitude on the part of church members will bring a cold and formal state. These may desire spiritual warmth, but do not want to add any fuel to the spiritual fire. The work of the Lord and going to heaven is "up-hill" business. The pastor needs and is worthy of all the help that may be given to him. Those members who do not pray for the pastor during the week, who do not pray for him while he preaches, who show no interest in the sermon, who express no joy or approbation are that class who always ride and never pull or push. They would like to go to heaven, being pulled there by their pastor. Indeed, many would like to ride into heaven on "flowery beds of ease, while others fight to win the prize and sail through bloody seas." The non-pullers and the non-pushers want to get to heaven as first-class passengers, while icicles abound all around them, while others have to walk, struggle and toil along the way.

In England during the days of the stage coach, people could travel as first, second, or third class passengers. An American traveling there purchased a ticket as a first-class passenger. Others purchased second fare, and some third. When the time came to start, all went aboard, with no distinction being made where they sat. The American wondered what difference there was when any passenger could sit where he pleased. Many times, however, we learn by being silent and observant. They traveled without any distinction until they came to a steep hill. Here the driver stopped and said, "All first-class passengers stay in your seats. All second-class passengers get out and walk. All third-class passengers push." Let every church member honestly classify himself. Christ said, "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

* * *

Worldly Amusements

The more formal, worldly, and cold a church becomes, having lost its spiritual power and its power to attract, the more will it resort to worldly and carnal methods to raise money and to attract attenders. This may be in the form of suppers, entertainment, plays, etc. On the other hand any spiritual church which will resort to such means to carry on its activities will dissipate its spiritual power. It is this condition that has allowed the spiritual fire to burn out and the cold breezes to enter, which fact accounts for many icicles existing in that church.

* * *

Taking Offense

Probably the most frequent grievance in a church is. when people take offense. This may break out in the pastor, his wife, a deacon, trustee; Sunday school superintendent, Sunday school

teacher, pianist, song leader, worshiper, or janitor. It does not matter whether in the highest official, the least member, or the janitor that offense is taken, the entire church keenly feels it, even as when any member in the body suffers, the entire body suffers with it.

It is strange how some people can become offended so easily when no issue or principle is involved, only personal preference being considered. They will absent themselves, leave a vacant place and have every one guessing what is wrong. The pastor generally feels this grievance more than any one in the church. The sad part is that often other members become involved and the issue grows, becoming a very delicate problem to deal with.

Being offended is often expressed as going up a "miff-tree." Going up the "miff-tree" will not run the spiritual temperature up, but it will have a very chilling effect upon the entire church and will form icicles. Any one who goes up a "miff-tree" will not produce any fruit of the Spirit, neither obtain any from the "miff-tree," nor will he share any fruit with any one else. All who are up a "miff-tree" need Christ to come along their way to call them down as He called Zacchaeus from the sycamore tree, assuring them He would go home with them; and they like Zacchaeus should make a confession that all may know they are restored unto the fellowship of the saints. Then they should sweetly take their place and fill it so that others will not get out of their place.

* * *

The Lost Anointing

One of the tragic conditions in a church is for those who have had the anointing of the Spirit of God upon their lives to lose that anointing. In the past they knew how to pray and pull the blessing of God down; they could shout and were an inspiration to all. Their influence and faithfulness were inspiring. They could always be counted on to help make a religious service a success, whether it was by praying, shouting, weeping, testifying, giving, or whatever it required to make it a success. By losing the anointing of the Lord they lost their power with God and with men. By becoming soured, they have become as an iceberg or a cold storm in its chilling effect. Formerly they helped to make the services of the church inspiring, aggressive and interesting. With the anointing of the Lord upon them, they were a flame of fire; now they are but as ashes and a chilling atmosphere, the sequel of a fire that has burned out.

* * *

The Freezing Effects of Modernism

The last thing to be mentioned which will bring a frigid state into any church is modernism. Apostasy always sets in with the giving up of preaching sound doctrines. The ministry more than anything else is to blame for the apostasy which creeps into the church. When the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, such as the verbal inspiration and authenticity of the Bible; the virgin birth of Christ; the Deity and perfect humanity of Christ; the vicarious death of Christ; the miraculous resurrection of Christ; the literal coming again of Christ; repentance; the new birth; the baptism with the Holy Spirit; judgment; eternal punishment and hell are denied, there is no gospel nor saving element in such preaching. The denial of these doctrines grieves the Holy Spirit so that He

leaves; and when He has left, there will be no conviction, no drawing of the love of the Father, no regenerating operations, no blessings from the Lord. These will be forsaken by the Lord, for the Lord will give them up. Such a church is in a worse state than that of icicles abounding in it -- it is like an iceberg. Unsound doctrines have always been the greatest enemy and hindrance to the church. They lead back to superstition and paganism, close up heaven, and freeze up the church.

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02 -- HOW TO MELT ICICLES IN A CHURCH

Water freezes when the temperature goes down to thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit or below; therefore, the way in which to prevent it from freezing is to keep the temperature above that point. Water absolutely can not freeze above the thirty-two degree point.

If any church is full of icicles, they can be melted. Where there is a warm spiritual atmosphere created, they begin to melt, and if the spiritual fervor is maintained, they can not form.

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Get the Fire

The fire which melts icicles in a church must be obtained from heaven. All other fires are only "strange fire" or "wild fire," but "holy fire" must fall from heaven. In Old Testament times the fire from the Lord fell when the proper sacrifice was offered at the dedication of the brazen altar. The fire fell in the sight of all the people and consumed the offering (Lev. 9:24). The Lord started the fire. It was up to the priests, however, to keep it going. The Lord said, "And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev. 6:12,13). In this dispensation every Christian is a spiritual priest (Rev. 1:6). Any person may get the fire from heaven by accepting Christ as his Sacrifice, Savior and Substitute, and by making a full dedication of his all unto God. John the Baptist said unto the people that Christ would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire. This baptism is needed by the church.

It is up to ministers particularly to have this fire. Fire is a consuming, purifying, energizing, activating, drawing, and spreading energy. All church members, too, need this fire.

"The fire shall never go out," and it will not if the fuel is added to it. When the spiritual fervor is cooling off, that is an essential time to add fuel to the fire. The best way in which this may be done is by

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Praying.

No icicles can form around a praying church, pastor, or Christian. Indeed, prayer is the most adequate means of getting more things accomplished for the Lord -- the most sure way of

getting the fire from heaven to fall. There are many examples of this fact recorded in the Bible and in the history of the church. When God is acknowledged, honored and earnestly sought, He will answer prayer. The fire fell in answer to Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel.

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The Pastor

Of course the pastor should be prayed up-to-date and have the anointing upon his ministry. The Lord said, "He maketh His ministers a flame of fire." A splendid thing for a pastor to do is to make a daily pastoral visit in spirit by taking the prayer route via the throne of grace. If he prays daily for each family by name, he will pray upon them a fervor that will enable them to come into that spirit and will thus melt icicles and prevent any from forming.

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The Church

The entire church should do the same with their pastor, that is, every member should daily pray the blessing upon the pastor and upon each other; then when all meet to worship, a warm spiritual atmosphere and sweet fellowship will prevail in which the holy fire will burn and the Lord's presence will make that church such a warm spiritual place that others will be drawn there for help, comfort, spiritual warmth and soul food.

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The Pastoral Body

If the pastoral or the governing body of each church would meet with their pastor in a prayer-room for fifteen or even ten minutes before the service begins to pray the anointing of the Lord upon him and the message, no icicles could exist in that church and the blessing of the Lord would be bound to fall. That church would be experiencing seasons of blessing from the Lord and sinners would be converted. These newly-converted people would find it such a warm spiritual place they would thrive instead of chilling or freezing, or being forced to live in a state of hibernation.

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Directing the Trend of a Service

The trend of a service will in a measure depend on the attitude in which people come to church. David wrote, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him and bless His name" (Ps.100:4). If worshippers would enter into the house of worship in such a state, the Lord would receive more adoration and praise. This would court His favor and blessing, as well as help to create a sacred and warm atmosphere. "To say the least about it, this would be bringing fuel for the holy fire, which creates spiritual warmth.

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Praying for the Minister While He Preaches

This may be done by breathing a silent prayer to the Lord for him. This will be a great help to him and make it easier for him to preach with greater freedom and inspiration. At the same time, worshipers will receive more good out of the worship service by following such a practice.

A pastor relates that he had a church officer to whom he would go and in his private office talk with him whenever he needed counsel. This officer received him one day and told him that he put his preaching into practice and it greatly helped him in his business. Then he added, "When you see me in my pew drop my head in my hands, always remember that I am praying for you, and sometimes when you are preaching, if you see me do this, do not forget that I am asking God to bless you as you preach." This pastor said, "His eyes were full of tears and mine were too, and I never saw him in his pew afterward that my heart did not go out to him, and thus he helped me win others and made my preaching easy." If every pastor had several such church officials, he would be certain to rise higher. If any icicles abounded there, they would all melt in a few Sunday services and others could not form.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman related that when he began his ministry in New York City, his church officers had agreed if he came they would assist him in every way, especially promising that they would pray for him, and they kept their word. Each Sunday morning and evening and before the midweek service they would meet for prayer, standing around him in a circle. One of them with his arm around his shoulder generally would pray last and ask God to bless and strengthen him and help him win someone to Christ. This accounted for much of his success. If more churches would do likewise, the usefulness of their pastors might be multiplied. And one thing would be certain, no icicles would abound in that church.

Mr. John Wanamaker, an official in the Bethany Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, had been to London and heard Dr. Spurgeon preach. He came home and related to his pastor that he had discovered the secret of Spurgeon's power and success. When he was asked by his pastor what it was, he said that Dr. Spurgeon's church officials prayed with him, came into the church with him, sat near him and cheered him as he stood pleading with the people. This pastor suggested that his church officials should do so for him, which they readily agreed to do. He said sometimes as many as twenty-four of them sat on the platform with him, which gave but little space in which to move. Being near them as he moved about, he would hear an elder say, "Amen," then hear another whisper, "God bless you." This pastor would get on the side where Mr. Wanamaker sat and hear him say, "That is splendid! God bless you." Sometimes he would reach out and rub his hand up down his pastor's arm in a manner which was greatly appreciated. What inspiring acts for church officials to do to help to cheer and to hearten their pastor! No icicles could abound in a church like this with such fervent spiritual backing.

It is a beautiful scene where pastor and church officials work together in unity, each inspiring, encouraging and helping the other. Let a pastor so preach and instruct as to insure a

beautiful backing and co-operation from his church officials, and let the church officials fall in line 'and get behind their pastor and help him to succeed.

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Assenting to the Truth

The nodding of the head or a hearty "yes" will inspire the minister and help the worshipper to receive more benefit out of the truth. It also helps other worshipers to obtain more good out of the sermon. Nodding the head, or assenting to the truth is witnessing to the truth. The more who witness to the truth the more convincing the truth becomes. A hearty "Amen," and expressing a delight, will help the entire service and make it easier to get blessed. If all worshipers would do this, if there are any icicles they soon would melt.

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Going to Church by Families

A very inspiring scene is to see people going to church by families. It specifically is inspiring to a pastor. It helps to fill empty pews and prepares another generation to carry on the work of the church. It also reveals unity in the home and an interest in the church. Any Christian home will be a help to the church, and the church will be a great help to the Christian family.

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When Absent -- What?

Good church members do not miss services unless it can not be avoided. Being faithful in attending regularly has the tendency of running the spiritual thermometer up. If a member is going to be absent it is well to inform the pastor beforehand, to express regret, to assure him that he will pray for him and that he will send his offering or bring it the next Sunday. If this is done it will keep the spiritual thermometer from going down. Such a member would melt icicles and not be responsible for forming any.

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Art of Missing People

It is a refined act for the pastor and all members to learn the art of missing people whenever they are absent. Of course, every good pastor keenly misses members whenever they are absent. When any are absent, it would be a fine thing for some one to make inquiry into why they were not present. The pastor and especially the members should express to them the next Sunday their regret for their absence by saying, "We missed you very much last Sunday and are so glad you are here today." They will feel like they are appreciated, and this in turn will help to keep icicles from forming. It also will prevent carelessness on the part of the absentees whenever they can not be present. It also builds up confidence in each other. It is the duty of the church to make people

who miss feel that they were missed by those present and that they missed something good by being absent.

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Late-comers

If any are prevented from getting there on time, they should enter very quietly and take a seat behind others so that no one will be disturbed. If any are habitual late-comers or seek to be late purposely to attract the attention of others, they should repent of their carelessness and pride, and humbly get there on time. This would melt those icicles which they have helped to form.

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How to Treat Late-comers

It is a fine art to know how to treat late-comers. The way to do this is to not turn around and look to see who they are, but to keep your eyes and attention upon the leader. If you wish to do anything about it, wait until after the service is dismissed, then meet and greet them with a hearty handshake, and say, "I am so glad to see you here."

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Expressing an Interest in Strangers

No strangers or newcomers, sitting through the service should be allowed to get up and pass out without some member showing a personal interest, giving them a hearty handshake and asking for their names and addresses. Make an inquiry about their interests and give them an invitation to come back. Make them feel that you are interested in them and that they are welcome. Their names and addresses may be passed on to the pastor for his information, who may follow it up with a pastoral call if they do not attend or belong to any church.

Of course, this is the pastor's duty, and he is paid for it; but why leave it all for him to do when a stranger may slip out unnoticed without a kindly word being uttered before the pastor can get to him? It would be a blessed matter for every member to possess and practice the spirit of friendliness and kindness, and even purposely go out of the way to practice this beautiful virtue which will make a stranger feel glad he came and also make him feel like coming again. This also will help to prevent icicles from forming.

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A Spiritual Usher

The office of an usher may seem very menial, but it is not a minor office. One Bible writer said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." A spiritual usher may represent the "host spirit" of the entire church by being present

early and welcoming all guests, strangers and worshipers. His appearance is of great importance. He should be well-dressed, neat appearing, but guard against being fastidious so that he will not be repellent to the people.

The usher may help to create a warm, friendly and restful atmosphere by greeting each worshiper with kindly spoken words, a friendly smile and a look of appreciation. He should recognize people by their names; if they are strangers he should inquire who they are; and if they are not regular attenders any where, he should invite them to come back.

In seating worshippers the usher should study the arrangement of the building and always observe any empty seat so that he may seat every one. He should be prepared to seat people before they arrive. Special attention should be given to strangers and elderly people. During the services he may further assist the guests by handing them a hymn book, Bible, or a fan, if one is needed, attracting as little attention as possible.

After the service is over the usher should show the same friendly concern and courtesy when the worshiper leaves as when he arrives. He will do well to speak such kindly words as, "We have appreciated your presence," or "We are glad you worshipped with us today." Ushers like this would do much in melting any icicles if they abounded in a church, and their spiritual, friendly and courteous labors would wonderfully help the spiritual atmosphere to rise to the point where icicles can not form.

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Taking a Live Interest

One of the best manners in which to increase the spiritual temperature in a church service is for every member to take a real, live interest in the church and show it by doing something to build up the church. When a new Sunday school or church is organized, everybody works and takes a delight in doing something. Where the pioneer spirit prevails, everybody works as though the success largely depended upon what each one does, a glow and fervor exists and the spiritual thermometer rises high.

If the report given under, The Frigid Effects of a Lack of Interest could be shifted into the reverse order, which really would be shifting the work of the church into high gear, then instead of there being 95 per cent who never win a soul to Christ the situation would be something like this:

95 per cent win souls for Christ,

95 per cent have family worship,

95 per cent go to prayer meeting,

95 per cent engage in church work,

95 per cent go to church Sunday night,

95 per cent go to Sunday school,

95 per cent are tithers,

95 per cent read their Bibles,

95 per cent pray.

Then it would not be such a serious matter if the other five per cent did not exist. Such a church could run the spiritual temperature up to the boiling point, with plenty of steam to pull the load and over-supply to allow some to pass by the way of the whistle to testify and magnify the Lord's doings.

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An Inviting Appearance

Both the outward and the inward appearance of a church are of far greater importance than most people realize.. The outward appearance and the inward appearance should be clean, inviting, restful and worshipful. This will have a great influence in moving people to come again, though they may be insensible to the real reason why they wish to come back. No congregation has done its full duty before God until it provides for and keeps up the church as well as all families do their own homes. This, too, will be an essential matter in preventing icicles from forming in the church.

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Tithing Releases Blessings

Christ said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Too often the case with people is: their treasures are not where they should be; therefore, their hearts are not in the right place. The way to get their hearts in the right place is to get their treasures in the right place, which is the kingdom of God. Many churches have failed and gone out of existence because of a lack of hearts in them. If church members would put more of their money into the church treasury, the building could be kept in better repair and the pastor could be better supported so that he could devote more time to the ministry and direct his prayer energy more upon others and not upon his personal needs. Then missionaries could be sent forth and supported, thus bringing enlightenment to the heathen.

God commands tithing, and there can be no question but that He instituted this established form of giving. Tithing releases blessings from heaven. The Lord even has challenged His people to prove Him and see if He would not open the windows of heaven if they would bring all their tithes into His storehouse.

Tithing should be taught by all pastors. It is just as sacred and holy to give as it is to pray or testify, if it is given in the right spirit and for the right purpose.

The following points are some reasons why every Christian should tithe:

It is Scriptural.

It is a part of worship.

It glorifies and pleases God.

It courts God's love and favor.

It makes room for greater blessings.

It benefits the giver.

It is God's way for arranging the support of ministers and missionaries.

It will keep the windows of heaven open.

It inspires others to tithe.

It encourages gospel workers.

It will melt icicles in a church and prevent others from forming.

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Special Prayer Meetings

Most churches, pastors and church members generalize in their prayers; therefore, their blessings are merely general. If they would specialize in their prayers and have special prayer meetings, then they would experience special seasons of blessing and refreshing from the Lord. No icicles can exist in any church where there is much fervent praying.

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Returning to the Old Paths

God never changes, nor does He change His standard. His method of dealing with sin is ever the same. Without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin. Christ died once and for all. His sacrifice holds good once and for all. The need of one person is the need for all, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All men need to be born again. The conditions are the same -- even repentance, confession, and faith. It is the same old truth that ever needs to be

repeated from one generation to the next. The gospel never changes, the Bible never changes, the sinful heart never changes for the better, the remedy for sin is ever the same.

One sad fact is that many churches and ministers have departed from the old tried and well-worn doctrines and paths, and have allowed modernism to creep into the ministry, which does not produce conviction for sin or conversion from sin. The message of Jeremiah was, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). If people would do this, the blessing and fire of the Lord would fall as in olden times. This would melt all icicles in a church: and as long as the Christian people would walk therein, no icicles could form.

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Enjoying the Overflow

Sometimes the Lord blesses people directly and sometimes indirectly through some other saint of God. When the Lord blesses some one, every child of God should rejoice with those who rejoice. Never envy the victory and success of others. To do so will form icicles. The Lord often blesses some dear saint of God in order to make him a channel of blessing. When the Lord does fill some one to the point of overflowing, He also desires to bless others through that one. It is when "Brother Cup" overflows that "Brother Saucer" receives a share, and when "Brother Saucer" overflows "Sister Tablecloth" shares in the blessing.

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Confession and Restitution

Last, but far from the least, is the confession of sins and failure. Probably the one thing above all others which will move God and men and open the windows above us to allow floods of blessings from heaven to fall upon a church is the confession of sins and failures and the making right of things that are wrong. It has been observed where friction has arisen and unity and fellowship have been broken, blessings from heaven being withheld and icicles having formed, that even when revival efforts have been put forth, no fire from heaven fell until some one in fault humbled himself before the Lord and confessed his sins or failures. It also has been observed that it was then the floodgates of heaven were opened and many others also took their right places before the Lord, forgiveness being asked of each other, feuds being made right, fellowship and confidence in one another being restored. Whenever people humble themselves before the Lord and truly repent, God will condescend to meet them. There are two places where God dwells. Isaiah writes, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). Contrite means repentant, broken, smitten, crushed, subdued, surrendered, and brought low. If any sinner, and also a church member that has become cold and barren, will under the movings of the Spirit take his rightful place before God and humble himself, which means to make low, to bring low, and to trample on self, the high and holy One will condescend and lift that one up. God will speak peace to that confessing soul. With the presence and blessing of the Lord will come a spiritual warmth that melts icicles and often an entire church.

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THE END