

The Mission Of The Church

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THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The word mission has a variety of applications, but when it is used of the duties incumbent upon the church it is somewhat restricted. The word means: "a sending out or being sent out with authority to perform a special duty." We do have some special occasions when the church did this in Acts 13:3 "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." This was one of the duties of the church, which was to make known ... "the manifold (much varied) wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). This incident did nothing to qualify Paul and Barnabas, for they had been called for this mission earlier, for the expression, "...Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). But the mission had to officially recognized and executed by the church.

The first and foremost mission ever given to the church, was the commission to preach the gospel. Paul said, "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21) and "... in due times manifested his word through preaching ..." (Tit. 1:3). There may be varied (or several) approaches to what we may think is the best, and most effective way to preach the gospel unto them (I Cor. 16:2), also he said, "... faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Earlier in this same chapter, Paul asked a question, "...how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Paul was a preacher - "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher - a teacher of the Gentiles..." (I Tim. 2:7). Paul repeats this affirmation in 2 Tim. 1:11. No one can accuse Paul of having no conviction of the importance of preaching the gospel, for said he, it is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 10:17). Now by the law of deduction, Paul reasons:

1. No gospel preaching - No hearing (Rom. 10: 14).
2. No hearing of the word - No faith (Rom. 10: 17).
3. No faith - No pleasing God (Heb. 11:6).

Paul never confined his preaching to the pulpit. He said, "...and have taught you publicly, and from house to house" (Act 20:20), but he did not exclude the pulpit preaching (Acts 20:7). Paul did not pick out what he thought might be a better place to preach. He preached on the river bank (Acts 16:13-14), he preached in a jail house (Acts 16:32), in a synagogue (many of them no doubt) (Acts 17:1), in a sinking ship, (Acts 27 and 28), on an island infested with poisonous vipers (Acts 28:3), to the people in Caesar's household while he was waiting to make his first appearance before Caesar, where no man stood with him (Acts 20:30-31; 4:16).

Preaching the gospel is not all, but a very important part of the mission to the Church. And now we need to define the word church and put the church and its mission together. The mission gives the purpose and the reason, while the church puts the plan in motion. The church is (1) a body of baptized believers (2) called out from the world (3) over which Christ reigns as head (4) directed by the Holy Spirit through the word of truth. Such is the signification of the word "church" as used by Christ in (Matt. 16: 18).

To the apostles the whole wide world was a mission field, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:16), and Paul declared it had been accomplished before his death, but since that time the world's horizon seems to have enlarged, and so the need to "preach the gospel" lingers on. Jesus reminded his apostles that when they had baptized all who would obey the gospel at a given place, that they should teach them to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). This includes many things!

- (1) Preaching the gospel
- (2) Taking care of needy saints
- (3) Providing a place for Lord's day worship
- (4) Promoting unity in the bonds of peace
- (5) Church government
- (6) Church discipline

There are a sundry other matters that no doubt could be included, but what we have listed will do for a starter.

One matter that concerns me no small amount, is the apparent indifference (bordering on unbelief) manifested by church members. Could it be possible that some church members do not believe that it is absolutely necessary to take the word of God for what it says. I can imagine that this could be so in the denominational world, but surely not in the body of Christ! Let me offer one simple example. Guy N. Woods, was asked a simple question. "Please show by the scriptures that the theory of evolution is false?" He gave one of the simplest most irrefutable answers that can be given. He quoted Gen.2:18,21,24. Then he showed that it is utterly impossible to harmonize the Biblical account of creation and the evolutionary theory. I'm sure we all believe the Bible account - then why not on other matters?

Christianity has been in the world almost two thousand years. Is the world closer to being converted to Christ than when Christianity was first introduced into the world? Is it because of what we preach or what we do not preach? Is it because of what we believe or what we do not believe?

Ever so often, a "slick" little word works its way into our vocabulary like the word "autonomy" and it doesn't seem to matter whether it can be found in the scriptures or not, some people jump on it and abuse the word, and confuse the hearer. I grant that the meaning of the word is set forth in the scriptures, but nothing like I read from the pen of some.

To fulfill the mission of the church let us speak the same things, be joined together in the same mind, and all walk by the same rule.