

## THE MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:18-20.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" John 20:21.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" Acts 1:8.

Christ never built but one thing after he quit the carpenter shop in Nazareth, and that was His church. He instituted His church during the days of His personal ministry here on the earth out of the material which had been prepared by John the Baptist. There are three objectives of His church:-

### 1. Evangelism.

"Make disciples of all the nations." "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Evangelism means winning lost souls to Christ. To do this effectively we must first realize that there is something to save men from, which is sin; there is something to save men with, which is the blood of Christ; and there is something to save men to, which is a life of respectability, personal victory, Christian service, and a home in heaven.

### 2. Education.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." By this I mean to make known the gospel message, show people their need of Christ, persist until they are brought to Christ, and teach them all things commanded by Christ.

### 3. Enlistment.

This means enlistment in real loyalty to Christ and to the church. We prove our loyalty to Christ by our attitude toward and support of His church. He requires our loyalty to Him and to His church. We should support the church with our presence, our prayers, and our purses.

This church is a necessary institution, the best teacher of righteousness in this community, the friend of childhood, the inspirer of youth, the strengthener of middle life, and the comforter of old age.

What is the real mission or function of this church?

### I. To Proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

What is this gospel which is so prominent in the scriptures? Let me indicate what the gospel is not. The gospel is not the Bible. The Bible is the word of God, but there is much in it that is not the gospel. The gospel is not a call to repentance, or to the amendment of one's ways, or to promise to do better in the future. These things are excellent in their proper places, but they

do not constitute the gospel. The gospel is not good advice to be heeded, but it is good news to be believed. The gospel does not tell us to do anything, but it is that glorious message that tells us what God has done for us in order that we, who are guilty sinners, may be saved. After man had fallen into sin and broken his fellowship with God, what we call "the Gospel" is the message which was intended to bring about the restoration of that fellowship with Him. Through the glorious gospel man is offered the opportunity of returning to full fellowship with God, which will culminate in his safe arrival in heaven, where he will live throughout eternity.

Gospel is a word of deep significance and wide import. I presume that all of you know it means "good news" or "glad tidings". The famous Alfred Tennyson once asked an aged lady, "What is the news today?" She replied, "Why, Mr. Tennyson, there is only one piece of news that I know--that is, Christ died for all men." Mr. Tennyson remarked, "That is old news, and good news, and new news." The best news that has ever been told is that God has done for us that which we never could have done for ourselves, namely, provided a Saviour for us. All of the good news of this glorious gospel can be summarized in one matchless statement: "Christ died for our sins." This is the best news for our broken-hearted, sinning, suffering and dying humanity.

His gospel is not concerned with what men should do, for there is no good news in that for any sinner, but it is concerned with what God has done for sinners already. The gospel is God's good news for lost sinners. It is the announcement of the fact that He has provided righteousness for unrighteous men. It is called "good news" because to those who are under the curse of imputed sin, it carries the message that they are given the opportunity to escape the curse of death. By His death on the cross, Christ Jesus paid the penalty which God was forced to inflict on man because of his sin.

#### I. The Content of This Gospel.

Christ Jesus is the person around whom this gospel is centered. The revelation of His person and His accomplished work are the contents of the gospel.

With the exception of Christianity, all religions speak of salvation by character or by conduct. They hold out the hope of earning salvation by merit of one kind or another. But salvation by conduct or by works is the doctrine of Satan no matter by whom nor where it is preached. Christ alone can save. Salvation is not a matter of merit on the part of the receiver, but it is entirely a matter of grace on the part of the Giver. Salvation is not partly of grace and partly of works; it is all of grace and none of works. Man must accept salvation as a gift from God; otherwise, he will never receive it. This fact is illustrated in a statement by Dr. Alexander MacLaren, the great preacher of Edinburgh. Not long before Dr. MacLaren's death, his associate minister, Mr. Gustart, visited him and inquired, "What are you doing, brother?" Dr. MacLaren replied, "I'll tell you what I'm doing, brother: I am gathering all my prayers, all my sermons, all my good deeds and all my evil deeds; and I am going to throw them overboard and swim to glory on the plank of free grace". Man's only hope of salvation is in the marvelous grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is wonderful news to hear that God has done for us that which we could never do for ourselves.

The facts that constitute this glorious gospel are three in number.

1. Christ Died For Our Sins.

On Calvary's cross the purposes of divine love became intelligible, and the great problem of human redemption was solved. No man preaches the gospel, no matter how many nice things he may say about Christ, if he leaves out His vicarious death on Calvary's cross.

2. Christ Was Buried.

Joseph and Nicodemus came and removed Christ's body from the cross and placed it in the tomb, but some women saw where they laid Him. His kingdom had shrunk to the narrow dimensions of the grave.

3. Christ Arose.

Early on Sunday morning the angels of the Lord came down, the soldiers fell away, the seal was broken, and the stone was rolled away from the tomb. Christ arose from the dead, laid aside His grave clothes, and walked out of the tomb a living Lord and His resurrection is an indispensable part of the glorious gospel.

II. To Make Christ Known to Lost Sinners.

Evangelism is not the only task of the church. A balanced, scriptural ministry properly includes, along with evangelism, instruction in Christian ethics, civic righteousness, stewardship and numerous other subjects. But this is not evangelism, and when we preach on these commendable things we are not preaching the gospel. Evangelism is the proclamation of the "good news" concerning the redemptive love of God as revealed in the atoning sacrifice of His Son. While making Christ known to lost sinners is not the only task of the church, it is nevertheless the primary task. Woe be it unto the church which preaches not the gospel. Let it ever be our first concern that the unsaved may know Christ.

Every New Testament Church needs a minister who will stand in the pulpit and open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel; one whose message concerning God and Christ and man and sin and salvation will carry home to the hearts of his hearers because that message is based upon the Word of God and has been found true in his own experience. But every church needs more than this. It needs men and women who have been born again, and are the children of God, and who by God's grace are willing to live the Christian life, bear the Christian witness, and to do Christian work. The true evangelistic value of any church is the sum total of the lives of its members in their collective effort to present the gospel of Christ.

A church without a passion for souls is valueless in God's sight. One of the great weaknesses of our churches is that they have delegated soul-winning to the preachers and a few missionaries. In the early Church at Jerusalem every member was a soul-winner. The church members did not wait for the unsaved to come to the services, but they carried the gospel message to them. The record tells us that they went everywhere preaching the Word. People were saved daily because of the witnessing of the Christians in the homes and at the places of work. Any church that uses this method will succeed.

III. To Win the Lost to Christ.

Christ instituted the church for the specific purpose of winning the lost to a saving knowledge in Him. His mission in the world was "to seek and to save that which was lost." The true mission of every New Testament Church is that of winning lost souls to Christ. There is something seriously wrong with any professed Christian who is not constantly working to get people to repent of sin and to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If we love Christ we will strive to please Him, but we cannot please Him unless we win lost souls to Him. If we love others we will strive to win them to Christ. We need a new concern for the lost around us.

When you win others to Christ you experience the joy of helping others. There is no joy this side of heaven comparable to the joy of bringing souls to the Lord Jesus. Then, you will win the gratitude and affection of those whom you influence to accept Christ. Also, you have the assurance of fellowship of additional persons in heaven. Above all, you will experience the bliss of pleasing and glorifying the Lord Jesus.

IV. To Baptize the Saved.

We are obligated to observe this ordinance because of the example of Christ, the command of Christ, the exhortation of the scriptures, and the invariable practice and teachings of the apostles.

V. To Teach The Saved.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Whenever any church neglects educational methods, the cause of Christ suffers. He taught and trained the twelve apostles. The more training our people have, the better work they can do.

VI. To Enlist the Saved in Doing God's Will.

One of our great needs is enlistment in real loyalty to Christ and to the church. We should be loyal to the worship, the work, the officers, the membership, and the great name of the church.

VII. To Glorify The Lord Jesus Christ.

"Unto Him be the glory in the church" Ephesians 3:21. It was a noble and true reply that William Burns, the Chinese missionary, gave to the lady who wanted to know how many souls had been saved through his ministry in China: "Madam," he said, "God did not send me to China to save souls. He sent me to bring glory to His name." To glorify God is the noblest occupation in the world.

No one can read through the epistles and ponder the words, "His glory" without being convinced that all the church has, does, is, and will be should be for His glory. Since all of God's actions in the past, and all His promises for the future, tell out His worth and wealth, should we not in all we do bring glory to His name? "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" I Corinthians 10:31.