

THE CHURCH: A UNIQUE OBJECTIVE

The Mission of the Church

Introduction

German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "What matters in the church is not religion but the form of Christ, and its taking form amidst a band of men." The church is not about religion. It is about Christ being formed in us.

Another wise man said, "We don't **go** to church, we **are** the church." I believe that one of the great errors in understanding the church is corrected in that simple statement.

Last week we spent some time looking at the church as a unique organism. Its members are those who have received the message of Jesus Christ and turned from sin to serve the living God. We talked about the activities of the members and the responsibilities of members to the body and to one another.

Today we are going to look at the unique objective of the church. What is the mission of the church – the body of Christ? We have a church mission statement. It hangs on our bulletin board. We need to begin putting it into our bulletin. Do you know what it says? *Get response from the congregation.*

At Clive Christian Fellowship our mission is to:

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| Celebrate | - A total life commitment of worship to God. |
| Lift | - Lift God's people up through prayer and fellowship. |
| Instruct | - Preaching and teaching which encourages maturity in Christ. |
| Value | - Value service as opportunities of praise to God. |
| Evangelize | - Reach people for the Lord. |

At times in the past, we have done whole series of messages based on these five purposes of our church. Today I am not going to look specifically at this again. Rather we are going to look at the unique objective of the church from a little different perspective. In order to do that I want to begin with a look at Colossians 1:28-29.

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28-29 NIV)

These verses could be described as the Apostle Paul's life mission statement. His mission was to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, for the purpose of seeing people come to maturity. *Discuss the term "perfect in Christ."* This really is the mission of the church. It is accomplished through all these other things. But what we want to be doing is bringing people to maturity.

So today I want us to consider what that looks like in the lives of the people in our church. What does it mean for each of us? We are working to build others to maturity and also to become mature ourselves, but what does that mean? This maturity involves several things.

I. Maturity of Christian Life

Turn with me to 1 Thess. 1. In this passage Paul commends the Thessalonian believers for the maturity of their life. In verse 3 there are 3 specific areas for which they are commended. We would do well to consider these areas as we think about our own level of maturity.

1. Faith – steadfast, working faith
Faith is based on the written Word – Truth
Faith is based on the living Word – Trust
Discuss these briefly, and then move on.
2. Hope – enduring, lasting hope
Hope is what purifies us as believers – 1Th 3:13; 1Jo 3:2-3
Hope is what comforts us – rapture – 1Th 4:13-18
- revelation – 1Th 5:1-11, esp. v.11
3. Love – caring, compassionate love
Love is an always growing factor in the life of a mature believer.
– 1Th 3:12
Increase – to make more of, to be augmented
Overflow – to abound, to excel more than, exceed

Faith, hope and love – a maturity of life in every believer. That is the mission of the church. But there are other areas as well, where we need maturity.

II. Maturity of Gifts

This is an area which could have a whole series of messages, but I would just like to highlight a few points regarding maturity in this area of spiritual gifts. The key passages for this are 1 Corinthians 12, and Romans 12. We are going to look at 1 Cor. 12.

1. Every person is unique – vv. 4-6
2. Everyone is important – v. 7
3. The gifts are divided among the members – vv. 11-12. No one person has all of the gifts or functions
4. No gift is necessary all of the time – 13:8
5. The gifts (and members) are interdependent – vv. 18-27
6. There is a unique order to the gifts – vv. 28-31

In the church, it is our mission to see people come to maturity in the development and use of spiritual gifts. We need to have a maturity in the area of spiritual gifts.

III. Maturity of Christian Witness

Let's go back to 1 Thess. In this chapter we see something of the pattern of growth in the witness of the Thessalonian believers to the world around them. It begins with...

1. The Word of God received – v. 5. The Word was internalized in response to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives. (*read v. 5*) The Word of God came to them with all its power; the Holy Spirit brought conviction on them and they responded to it and welcomed it. *Discuss the power of the Word of God.*
2. The Word of God lived – v. 6. Here we see the Word externalized. As the believers in Thessalonica received the Word and responded to it and to God, the message became a part of their life and witness. (*read v. 6*). The lives of these people began to shine forth with the love of Christ. They were facing famine, and persecution and struggles of all kinds, yet in spite of the circumstances in which they lived, they lived out the Word of God.
3. The Word of God magnified – vv. 7-8. The wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ was seen and heard all over the known world because of the maturity of these believers. Their lives became an example to others.

Conclusion

So, as Paul said in Col 1:28 – “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” (ESV)

That is the unique objective of the church. The reason the church exists is to bring people to Christ, to establish them and to build them to complete maturity. That maturity is seen in the way we live – our faith, hope and love; in the way we recognize and use the gifts of the Spirit for the benefit of the body; and in the way our lives bear witness to the world of our relationship with Christ.

As we close, two questions:

1. Are you growing and moving toward maturity?
2. Are you working and labouring toward the goal of bringing others to maturity?