

Missions 1 - Missionary Feet

1. The commission of the church

There are communities that you might pass through or read about that were once thriving but now have the appearance of dying. As you drive down the main street or past their shopping centers, you witness empty store fronts. A major business might have died or moved on and so has the workforce. Changing demographics happen and sometimes the communities adapt, but sometimes they don't and just flounder. The population that remains ages, not attracting new life into the area. If you were a pastor and received an invitation to come lead a band of aging church members in just such a place, what would you do? Just superintend that remaining band of believers? Pastors think in terms of growth and outreach. What would attract a pastor to such a church that for all intents and purposes has no hope of growth? Some areas are secluded enough that there is no nearby church for the remnant to go to. Should the aged Christian population move out? Should a pastor just pass on the opportunity and move to a place that is "white unto harvest"? There are places where conditions are dire enough that have to make you wonder about passing them by. But, if you had to admit it you would be a snob suggesting that there are *some* people not worth paying attention to.

The problem I have described is not just limited to a body of believers existing under such severe conditions. This could just as possibly be a description of a dynamic mega-church as well. It might be polished and shiny on the outside and have a slick operation on the inside, but it can be just as ineffective and truly lifeless.

Of the seven churches of the Revelation, the church of Laodicea in Rev 3 represents the final picture of the condition of Christianity before the Tribulation arrives. You don't have to wait till the end of the Dispensation of Grace to live under the threat of being a

lukewarm state. When you look at the *first* of the seven churches you see the problem of drifting off in the church of Ephesus that represents the beginning of churches.

Rev 2:1-5 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

As bleak as the picture might be for a dying community, there is still a purpose that can drive such a church forward. It is the same purpose that can revive a mega-church which has lost its first love. It is a sense of purpose that was slipping from the first church at Jerusalem. It could literally call itself The Church of the Apostles. It had fantastic leadership that was trained personally by Jesus Christ. It had at least 8,000 members. It existed in the spiritual center of the world. In spite of that, it had stagnated. Jesus had given them a commission.

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Aspects of the Great Commission were given on another occasion also and covered by Mark, Luke, and John.

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Luke 24:46-49 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48And ye are witnesses of these things.

49And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

John 20:21-22 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

That commission is covered in Acts 1:8 just before Jesus ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:8 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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

They were to sent to go to all nations in all the world preaching the Gospel to every creature beginning in Jerusalem, moving on the rest of Judea, then moving beyond to Samaria, and then to the uttermost part of the earth. That same mission should be driving our churches today.

2. The miss-step of the church

The mega-church that is nearly withered away inwardly and the remnant church in a depressed town and is nearly withered away outwardly have the same problem when it loses its vision of its outreach to the whole world. If any church is not careful it *can* wither away. In spite of Christ's command in His parting words, it could be argued that the early church had done this and turned inward into something like an exclusive club. Even as the churches were expanding, Peter was given a vision to let him know that the Gentiles were not to be considered unclean. He had to give a report of this back at the home church in Jerusalem.

Acts 11:1-18 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and

creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

8But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

[Peter preached to Cornelius, the centurion, who had sent for him]

15And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

18When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The Jerusalem church had excluded non-Jews. This is ironic because in the centuries since that time, being Jewish would make you excluded from many clubs. They had the commission, but they were having difficulty carrying it out.

3. The blossoming of the church

God had already begun to push the church by sending them a persecution to get them moving on their mission.

Acts 8:1-4 And Saul was

consenting unto his death. [**The death of Stephen, who had just been martyred at the end of the previous chapter**] And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, **except the apostles.**

2And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

4Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Take note that the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem while the *believers* went out. The Apostles weren't being bad, it's just that the people didn't wait to do the job of missions. In Acts 9, God prepared Paul for his mission to the Gentiles. It was after this that Peter had to reinforce the understanding of the mission to the world. Not long after that, they started to realize the need to develop and refine their missionary plan.

Acts 13:1-4 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

4So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they

sailed to Cyprus.

The church expanded from that first missionary trip of Paul into Europe and has been going full force since then. The history of missionary movements to really reach the world came to full bloom in the 19th century. The church in the decaying community and the church that celebrates itself both have the same mission: to reach the world. Even though we have taken some hits in this last year because of the lockdown, we have maintained our missions financial obligations. But we need to make sure to reinforce the perspective of being part of a larger picture.

4. The beautiful feet of the church

We have that same commission and that same call. Paul describes this in

Rom 10:12-17 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Wouldn't it be interesting if we had a special day for blessing people's shoes?

Churches do special blessings some times. They have days for blessing animals. I have done boat blessings, house blessings, stuck car blessings, and even a computer blessing. This is not odd, all things ought to be offered up for the glory of the Lord. We need to bless our shoes to carry us out so that as we go we can preach the Gospel. That is how Paul presented the Roman's shoes as part of our Christian armor:

Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

That piece of armor was meant to drive the soldier forward into battle: so may also your Gospel shoes.

1. The commission of the church Rev 2:1-5, Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21-22, Acts 1:8
2. The miss-step of the church Acts 11:1-18
3. The blossoming of the church Acts 8:1-4, Acts 13:1-4
4. The beautiful feet of the church Rom 10:12-17