

**Subject: *The Church's Purpose – Evangelizing the Lost***

**Scripture: Acts 5:27-42**

What's going on here? The church of Jesus Christ was under attack. The Jewish religious leaders (the Sanhedrin council and the high priest) told them to stop preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. They would not stop, and as a result they suffered persecution. The first church of Jerusalem is an example and inspiration to all churches. When Billy Graham came onto the national scene they said, "Mr. Graham, you're going to set evangelism and the church back 50 years." He responded, "I want to set it back 2,000 years."

The church has a 3-fold purpose:

- The church's upward purpose – exalting the Lord
- The church's inward purpose – edifying believers
- The church's outward purpose – evangelizing the lost

If we are going to evangelize the lost we must do it God's way. The church in Acts shows us the right way to evangelize lost people.

**1. The church's message in evangelism (vs. 28)**

They had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine (teaching).

We know what they were preaching and teaching (vs. 30-32). They stressed two things:

- The truth about Christ (vs. 30-31)

They told people about Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation. That is the Gospel. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** <sup>3</sup> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures

- The truth about conversion (vs. 31)

They told people about repentance and forgiveness of sins. You can't have one without the other. **Luke 24:46-47** <sup>46</sup> And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: <sup>47</sup> And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

**2. The church's motivation in evangelism (vs. 29-32)**

In the Bible we find four reasons why we must reach the lost with the gospel.

- The motivation from above

The Lord told us to do it. Evangelism is a matter of obeying God (vs. 29).

**Matthew 28:18-20** <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

In verse 32, the apostles said they were “witnesses” along with the Holy Spirit.

***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 weren't trying to cause trouble. They were just committed to obeying the Lord, and they would not stop. Gamaliel, a Pharisee and one of the Sanhedrin members, made a speech in which he said “If this is a work of God, you can't stop it.” He got it. And the church got it. They knew they were doing the work of God. How can you stop a group of people who count it a blessing to suffer for Christ? They weren't fair-weather Christians. They were sold-out Christians. That ought to put us to shame. We let the least little things stop us.

- The motivation from within

The church is compelled by the love of Christ. ***2 Corinthians 5:14-15**<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:<sup>15</sup> And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* This is not our love for Christ, but His love for us. His love compels us to tell others how they can be saved.

- The motivation from without

The church is motivated by the need of lost people around us. They are lost, and lost people can't find their way. They need someone to help them and guide them. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian reveals what all people need.

***Acts 8:30-31**<sup>30</sup> And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?<sup>31</sup> And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.* Like all people, the Ethiopian was a needy person. He was a religious man, a responsible man, and he even had a copy of the Scripture (which was rare in those days). But he needed someone to guide him and help him understand the Gospel.

- The motivation from beneath

There is a story in Luke 16 about two men who died, a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man went to hell and Lazarus went to heaven. The rich man was in torments and begged for someone to go talk to his five brothers so they wouldn't end up in hell. If we could see the reality of hell we would be motivated to share the gospel.

### **3. The church's method in evangelism (vs. 42)**

They met publicly and privately. They did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. They weren't interested in gimmicks and fads. They weren't interested in decisions. They were only interested in making disciples. That was the commission Jesus had given. This was the same method Paul used later in the Book of Acts.

***Acts 20:20-21**<sup>20</sup> And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,<sup>21</sup> Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul taught them what they needed to know and he left nothing out. He taught them in public groups and in private homes. He taught both Jews and Gentiles. He taught the same message wherever he went—repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The church's assignment has not changed. The message hasn't changed. The need hasn't changed. The urgency hasn't changed. Someone said: "The gospel is good news, but only if it arrives in time."