

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
ECCLESIOLOGY
THE STUDY OF THE CHURCH
PART 5

In our series Foundation of Faith we have been looking at the church and what the church is all about. Our focus over the last few weeks has been the mission of the church and we have seen that the mission of the church is to glorify God, to worship the One who has given to us life. That just makes sense. We are not to worship anyone else but God.

Last time we looked at the second mission you might say of the church and that is to edify itself or edify the body of Christ. What I mean by this is that the church is to teach sound doctrine, healthy doctrine. It is not about what you think or what I think or what this person thinks, it is about what God says! Once you move away from the Word of God, once you add the philosophies of this world, you are bringing to the people unhealthy doctrine!

Thus, as the Word of God is taught, as sound doctrine, healthy doctrine is given to the people, they will grow, they will be edified, they will be complete for every good work! The reason the church is so unhealthy, the reason there are so many problems is that either sound doctrine, healthy doctrine is not being taught, or the person is rejecting it in their lives. Thus, they will not be edified; they will not be built up in the faith. It is as simple as that!

This morning we will be finishing up this section on the mission of the church as we look at three other aspects. We will be looking at the mission of the church being: *To Purify Itself, To Evangelize The World*, and to *Act As A Restraining And Enlightening Force In The World*. Before we dig into that let me share this with you that will help set the stage for what we will be talking about. We are told,

In the Greek Islands, one can seek out the home of Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine. In the area, one can also find an olive tree, supposedly dating from his time. If this is so, this tree would then be some 2400 years old. The trunk of this tree is very large but completely hollow. The tree is little more than thick bark. There are a few long, straggling branches, but they are supported by sturdy wooden poles every few feet. It has an occasional leaf here and there and might produce a few olives each year.

In the fields around, however, are olive groves in many directions. The strong, healthy, young trees with narrow trunks are covered with a thick canopy of leaves, under which masses of olives can be found each year. The tree of Hippocrates can still be called an olive by nature, in that it still shows the essential unique characteristics, but it has long since ceased to fulfill an olive's function.

Tourists file up to inspect this ancient relic, having some link to a dim history, but the job of the olive tree passed long ago to many successions of replanted trees. Do you know any churches (or even people) like the tree of Hippocrates? The form is there, but the function is not. They have stopped reproducing and are satisfied just being big, or having a noble history.

- Keith Copley

The reason churches become dead is that they stopped functioning in the missions work that it is called to do. If you are not worshipping the true and living God, of course you are dead! If you are not presenting healthy, sound doctrine, the people will starve to death! And, as you will see, if we negate any of these others we will look at this morning we will become dead in our faith. We may have a form of a church, but there is no life in it and thus, this is very important for us to understand! So let's finish up looking at the Mission of the Church.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

3. TO PURIFY ITSELF

Now some may not feel that this is that important, that the church is to purify itself, but it is. Think about it. If we allowed sin to run rampant in the church it would destroy the church. The church would rot away! Imagine having a sore on your arm, it is a small sore and you really don't think much of it. In fact, you just ignore it, it will go away, it is not that big of a deal.

Then, a week later the sore is red, there is drainage from it, it just does not look good. But you think to yourself, "Hey, I don't want to be fanatical about this. It is just a little sore and 99% of my body is healthy. It will be fine, what can this little sore do to my body!"

Then, within another week or so you begin to spike a high temperature. You are getting the chills. This little infection on your arm has now spread to your entire body; it is in your blood! Your blood pressure drops to dangerous levels. Your kidneys are shutting down. You are having a hard time breathing. And by the time you go to the hospital it is too late. The infection has killed you! Yes it was small and it did not seem important but underneath the skin those bacteria were working and spreading until it finally took control of your entire body and you died!

Now you may think that this is far fetched, that I am exaggerating to make a point, I am not! Working in Critical Care Units of hospitals for almost 30 years I have seen small infections almost kill people and also kill them. It is serious and it needs to be dealt with not ignored.

Several weeks back Andrew was bit by his cat on his leg; do you still have that cat? If you do, I can make that cat a deal he can't refuse! Anyway, he got a terrible infection from it, not the cat, but Andrew and he was on antibiotics and that leg was red and swore for a long time. If he ignored that bit, he would be dead now because that infection would have spread to his entire body. You see, I am not kidding about this!

Listen to this story and you will see how destructive sin can be in our lives and in our church. We are told,

After a violent storm one night, a large tree, which over the years had become a stately giant, was found lying across the pathway in a park. Nothing but a splintered stump was left. Closer examination showed that it was rotten at the core because thousands of tiny insects had eaten away at its heart.

The weakness of that tree was not brought on by the sudden storm; it began the very moment the first insect nested within its bark. With the Holy Spirit's help, let's be very careful to guard our purity.

- Our Daily Bread

Let me show you what I mean from the Scriptures. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 5:1-8, **“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”**

Here was the problem with the Corinthian church, it was sin that was not dealt with and Paul hits them hard for not dealing with this sin in their church. You see, a man in the church was having sexual relations with his father's wife, his stepmother! The Greek word that is used for "**sexual immorality**" is PORNEIA (por-ni'-ah) and it speaks of any kind of extra-marital sex. Folks, this was not a one-night-stand, as wrong as that was, but this was an affair that continued on and he continued going to church. First of all the Old Testament says this is wrong, (Leviticus 18:7-8, 29; Deuteronomy 22:30). Also, even the unsaved saw this kind of behavior, this kind of relationship as being wrong, Roman law forbid it! But for the Corinthians, they were proud of their tolerance, their liberty they had in Christ!

The solution to this problem, Paul tells them, is to excommunicate this man, remove him from their fellowship, and hand him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh! Folks, there is a protection within the body of believers and when someone is excommunicated, they are out there on their own in Satan's dominion. The destruction of the flesh can mean the attacks of the enemy against their lives and as he gets beat up, you might say, that he would then come to his senses and repent and get right with God, stop the sin he was in. You see, the idea is not damnation but restoration for God is interested in a person's spirit for all flesh will eventually go back to the dust of the earth.

Now it is interesting that Paul does not rebuke the woman or say that this woman should be turned over to Satan for the destruction of her flesh, why doesn't he? I believe it is because she was not saved and thus she is not held to the same standards as those that are saved. You don't turn an unbeliever over to Satan because they are already blinded by him! So this man was not only involved in this sexual sin, but he united himself to a woman who was not saved!

And for the Corinthian church, they were proud of their tolerance but Paul shows them the foolishness of such behavior. It would be like ignoring a tumor in your body, not getting it treated and boasting about your tolerance towards that cancer. By doing that it will eventually grow and consume your body, destroying it! That is what was happening in the Corinthian church and why it needed to be dealt with now! You don't let sin grow because as soon as you do it will affect the entire body of believers and not for good! If dealing with sin means we are being fanatical about it, then we must be fanatical about it!

The problem is that we are afraid to deal with sin today because people will be offended by what we have to say. First of all you do it in love but you need to do it, you need to deal with it or it will grow, and grow and it will affect others in the church as I have said. And if you still don't deal with it the church will be consumed with sin! So this purity within the church is not being fanatical, it is really just being holy!

So let's look at a few verses and see what the Lord says about the church, about how it is to be pure. The first verse I want to look at is found in Ephesians 5:25-27 where Paul tells us, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”**

Now you may be thinking that this is just relating to husbands and wives but there is more to it than that. You see, the bride is the church and the bridegroom is Jesus and thus, notice how the church is washed, by the Word of God. You see, as the Word of God is taught, as people grow in the Lord, it will expose any sin and that sin then can be given to the Lord, removed from our lives. The problem for many in the church today is that when you confront sin you lose people and thus, we can't confront anyone's sin because we can't afford to lose people. That is a dangerous and non-biblical practice.

And even false doctrine, unhealthy doctrine is likened to leaven that can destroy. Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:9, **“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”** Again, keep in mind that Paul is dealing with false doctrine in the church and he is saying how deadly it can be. Let me give you this vivid illustration on how just a little leaven can consume the whole lump. Several years ago, on January 19, 2004 my dad died from cancer. Back in April of 2003 he was diagnosed with colon cancer and had part of his colon removed. The idea here is that they got all the cancer and no further treatment was needed, and how wrong they were. I am not sure why they did nothing more but that was the case.

And the problem is that if there is just one little stray cancer cell that one cell can metastasize and travel throughout the body and that is exactly what happened with my dad. Within less than 1 year the cancer spread to his brain, his lungs, his liver and he died. Paul's point is this, a single false doctrine can spread, it can multiply throughout a multitude of believers and it can cause great destruction in their spiritual lives. These cancers must be excised completely or look out; it will be like a spark in a dry forest and devour many lives! Don't be misled!

Maybe you are having a hard time with this one, but look at it like this. Churches that allow homosexuality into the church, allow homosexuals into the pulpit, they don't see it as a sin. Then, that sin can be multiplied to many other sins that the people can get into and where do you draw the line. In other words, "If that sin is okay then why not this one?" And thus, a little leaven has leavened the whole lump. We are to be pure, we are to be holy. We are not perfect, but that is what we are striving for, that is what we are to be!

And as the Word of God is being spoken, as it is being taught, as people are sharing the Word of God with others, ministering to them there is that correction that will take place in the heart and life of the person in sin, at least there should be!

Paul, in Hebrews 12:7-11 tells us, **“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”**

Why does God chasten us? It is not to punish us but He chastens us for correction. Now we don't always like this but God does what is best for our lives not always because we are going to like it. Think about it. I can honestly say that when my dad was disciplining me, I never said, “Thanks dad, I needed that!” But looking back I see the wisdom of his actions, and we see that even more with God as He disciplines us, obviously. Paul wants us to look beyond the process of chastening and look to the results of the chastening.

Now why don't some see the **“peaceable fruit of righteousness”** in their lives? Because they are not trained, they either are rejecting what God is saying or they are not listening to what He is saying to them. Thus, they will go through the trial, the chastening until they learn the lesson! God wants us to be holy as He is holy, to be **“partakers of His holiness”** and that is only going to happen as we surrender to His will, listen to His direction and not walk in sin!

Listen to what C. H. Spurgeon had to say. We are told:

I am afraid that all the grace I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows and pains and grief's is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the hammer and the anvil, the fire and the file? Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house.

- C. H. Spurgeon

And it truly comes down to this when you think of purity. Purity is that state of being pure or free from mixtures, from pollution, from things not of God. You see, if you add anything to your life that is contrary to God, then you are impure. Our desire is to **“be partakers of His holiness.”** To do that, don't let the world contaminate you! And that goes for the church. The church needs to purify itself by the washing of the Word of God and not just hear the Word of God but apply it to their lives. To remove those things that are not of God because, as I have said, a little leaven leavens the whole lump! The mission of the church is to purify itself!

4. TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD

The mission of the church is to evangelize the world and yet, how often today do we miss the mark of bringing the Gospel message to the lost! With the re-release of the Titanic I will share this with you. As the Titanic hit that iceberg and started to sink, an old preacher was thrown into the freezing cold waters of the Atlantic. He swam to one lifeboat and did not get in but shared the Gospel Message. From one lifeboat to the next lifeboat, from one raft to the next raft, from one piece of the ship that was floating in the water to the next he cried out to the people, “Trust Christ. Take Him as Savior. Receive Him into your heart. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you will be saved.”

How could he do that? Because it was not about him, it was about the Lord and those that did not know Jesus. He knew where he was going but he did not know where those that were floating in lifeboats, rafts, pieces of debris were going and thus, he gave to them Jesus!

Let me show you the problem within the church, how we think we are to grow a church. We are told,

In a recent article entitled “The Myth of church Growth,” Published in Current Thoughts and Trends, David Dunlap cites some troubling statistics. For example, at the very time Megachurches have sprouted across the landscape, the proportion of Americans who claim to be “born again” has remained a constant 32 percent.

According to Dunlap, growth isn't coming from conversions but from transfers; they account for up to 80 percent of all growth taking place today. He goes on to quote C. Peter Wagner, one of the leading spokesmen for the movement, who admits, "I don't think there is anything intrinsically wrong with the church growth principles we've developed . . . yet somehow they don't seem to work."

I would suggest that one reason they don't work is that they tend to approach church as if it were a business. But a business-driven response may only make things worse. In the long run, if we train people to be consumers instead of communers, we'll end up with customers instead of disciples. It might fill up an auditorium, but it'll never turn the world upside down for Christ.

- Greg Laurie, *The Upside Down church*, pp. 41-42

I hate to say it but you do not feed the goats, the unsaved, you feed the sheep and Lord willing the goats will become sheep. If we are not seeing the church grow in totality but only locally, then something is wrong and there truly is. We have become consumers instead of communers and thus, we are not disciples but customers who want what we want when we want it!

If you doubt that then listen to the results of this survey of one thousand church attendees. They were asked this question, “Why does the church exist?” We might say, as we have seen in this study, “What is the mission of the church?” Among the people polled, 89 percent said the church’s purpose was, and I am quoting, “to take care of my families and my spiritual needs.” Tragically only 11 percent said the purpose of the church was “to win the world for Jesus Christ.” In other words, we truly have become consumers and I believe it is the pastors and leaders that have promoted this and now they are reaping what they have sown!

What do the Scriptures tell us in regards to the mission of the church or part of the mission of the church being to evangelize the world? Look at what Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, **“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

Here is the Great Commission that Jesus has given to us and notice that He tells us to go out into the world and not come into the church to evangelize. I am not saying that people don’t get saved coming to church, they do, but our focus is to go out into the world with the good news, the highways and byways and compel people to come into the Kingdom of God!

Now let's look at this word "**go**" because it is important, the Lord is calling for us to do this. This word "**go**" is a participle and should really be translated, "**As you are going . . .**" to work, to school, to the store, to the neighbors, wherever you are going you are to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News, with others. We are to be going out, not staying in but it truly speaks of just everyday living, wherever you go share the light of Jesus!

And in this Great Commission that Jesus has given to us He gives us three things to do and they are all important or the Lord would not have given them to us! First of all we are to make disciples; it speaks of salvation, coming to know the Lord. Many see this as the beginning and the ending of evangelism, but it truly is only the beginning! As you share the Word of God with people, the Gospel message and they come to know the Lord, they ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives, it is not over yet!

You see, next comes baptism which is an outward showing of an inward reality, you are telling the world that you are a Christian, the old life is buried in the waters of baptism and you have come up new in Christ. Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20, "**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**" Baptism is not necessary for salvation but the Lord tells us that we should be baptized. Think of it like this. Baptism does not save us, it is not intended to but it is for identification. As we are baptized we identify ourselves with Christ! And we still are not done!

Lastly, we are not to just leave these new believers to grow on their own, but we are to teach them the things of God, the Word of God, helping them to apply it to their lives. Start disciplining them, sharing the Word of God with them. Here at Calvary Chapel we have a New Believer's packet you can take them through. They have to do the work, answer the questions that are related to the verses so that they can see what the Bible says about God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, about the Bible and-so-on, and you can help them as they do.

Why don't people share their faith today? Many are afraid, they don't know how, and there are all kinds of excuses and I think the reason is we don't really believe what the end result of not knowing Jesus will be for people. General William Booth, who was the founder of the Salvation Army once said that if he could have his wish, part of the final training for preachers and evangelists would be to have them hang over the open fires of hell for twenty-four hours "so those that were sharing this gospel message would recognize the urgency of it." We need to look at people with the backdrop of eternity in mind! It is as Spurgeon said, "Winners of souls must first be weepers of souls." Are you broken over the lost? You need to be and if not, ask the Lord to help you so you can see them as they are so that you may lead them to Jesus!

Paul, in II Corinthians 5:20-21 wrote regarding our work, **“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** Because all that Christ has done for us, reconciling us back to God, we, as His ambassadors need to bring that message of reconciliation to the world. Keep in mind that an ambassador doesn’t speak for himself but for the one who sent him, and for us it is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ! Thus, as we go out we implore people; we come alongside people urging them to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, to not allow the terror of the Lord to come upon them, the wrath of God for their rejection of Jesus!

Now, in knowing this, what are you doing to carry out His last command to us, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”**? Matthew 28:19-20. May we not only hear those words, but apply them to our lives!

Jesus, prior to His Ascension, said to His men in Acts 1:8, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

These men were given the power to be witnesses of Jesus and to spread that Gospel message throughout the world! And please understand that they were not welcomed in these places. Jerusalem was the place they crucified the Lord. Then spreading outward to Judea and Samaria, they were not welcomed there either. Judah rejected His ministry and Samaria was considered a wasteland of impure half-breeds. And then to the uttermost parts of the world and that truly is speaking of Gentiles and for the Jews, they were seen as fuel for the fires of Hell and yet, they were to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel message! We are to be a witness in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our work places, in our communities, in our state, in our nation and even in this world! That is what God has called us to do and He has given us the power to do it!

And I know, some of you feel that you can't make an impact, who are you? You are just one person. But you can make a difference, you can make an impact. I will give you a couple of Scriptures to show you what I mean and then I will share with you what has happened in our recent past in regards to impacting people for Jesus!

In Acts 17:5-6, as Paul, Silas and Timothy are in Thessalonica and they preached the Gospel message and things did not go too well! We are told, "**But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.'**"

So as some of the Jews heard what Paul had to say, many rejected it, they rejected Jesus. Because of that there was this huge uproar in this city. Now a group of these rejecters of Christ went to the house of Jason, where Paul, Silas and Timothy were probably staying, to arrest them or cause them trouble, but they were not there. Thus, they dragged Jason, a Jewish believer, out of the house. Now what is the charge? Listen carefully, **“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king - Jesus.”**

Now that is not exactly correct. The world is upside down now, sin has distorted what God has created, sin has turned things upside down and now Jesus, through His disciples are turning this world right side up! Then why do people fight against this so strongly? Think about what happens when the light is turned on, it dispels the darkness and thus, they don't like that and they try to put out or extinguish the light!

And the result of the preaching of the Gospel message is given to us by Paul in Colossians 1:4-6, **“since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”**

Within some 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Gospel message was brought to the whole known world! It was not done with radio reports, television reports, newspaper reports, cell phones, computers, text messaging but by word of mouth. It was done by the power of God working in and through individuals and look at the results and then look at the results today. We should be ashamed that we rely on our own power, our own ideas instead of the power of God. I am not saying that radio, television, newspapers, computers and-so-on can't help to bring the Gospel message to people, it can. But make no mistake about it, one on one conversion's I believe do more good than filling a stadium with people and speaking to them! Again, there is nothing wrong with that, but how were you saved, in a stadium filled with people or someone sharing their faith one on one? I bet most of you it was one on one! You see, show them you care for them before you share the Gospel message. Show them that they are important to you before you share the Gospel message!

Have you ever heard of Edward Kimball before? He was a shoes salesman, does that help? Not yet, well let me explain and hopefully this will encourage you as you share your faith and disciple people. We are told,

Edward Kimball was an ordinary Christian who taught Sunday school in his church and made a living down at the shoe store. But his real passion was sharing the gospel. One day Edward determined that he was going to look for an opportunity to explain the gospel to a salesman named Dwight, who had just joined the staff.

Edward was really nervous. He hemmed and hawed and paced back and forth. Dwight was in the back room putting shoes away. Finally Edward mustered up his courage and launched into the story of Jesus' birth and death and resurrection. That day young Dwight gave his life to Christ.

Maybe you've already guessed. Dwight's last name was Moody. You may know him as D. L. Moody. So Edward Kimball, a shoe salesman, led to Christ one who would be one of the greatest evangelists in church history. This is the great commission in action. It's not just about what pastors and evangelists do from the pulpit. It's about what you do and say while you're selling shoes or programming computers or shuttling neighbor kids to soccer practice.

If the story stopped here, that would be amazing. But it continues. One day Dwight L. Moody was preaching, and a pastor named Frederick Meyer was listening. He was deeply stirred by Moody's message and went on to establish a nationwide preaching ministry. Later, while he was preaching, a young man in the audience named Wilbur Chapman accepted Christ.

Eventually Chapman felt called to evangelism. As he was proclaiming the gospel in various places, he decided he needed some help. He knew a young former baseball player named Billy Sunday, who was looking for a job, and Chapman hired him. Billy asked if he could preach every now and then. Billy Sunday ultimately emerged as the greatest preacher of the early 1900s.

One day Billy Sunday preached in Charlotte, North Carolina, where a great movement of God was taking place. Many people believed. They were so stirred up in their new faith that they invited a relatively unknown preacher, Mordecai Ham, to set up his gospel tent in Charlotte and keep preaching. On one of the final nights a tall, lanky farm boy walked down the aisle. His name was Billy Frank, but more of us know him today as Billy Graham. And he has personally delivered the gospel message to more people than any other man in human history.

- Greg Laurie, The Upside Down church, pp. 65-66

The key is this. It is not about you it is about the Lord and what He has called you to do. May we all heed the call and go out into this world with the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel message for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe! The mission of the church is to evangelize the world!

5. TO ACT AS A RESTRAINING AND ENLIGHTENING FORCE IN THE WORLD

The last or final mission you might say for the church is that we are to act as a restraining and enlightening force in the world. In other words, we are to help stop the decay process in this world, we are to be a light in this world to expel the darkness! The problem here is that when you do stand up and stand out people don't like it and thus, what the church has done is conform to this world. We don't want to rock the boat; we don't want to tip the boat over baby! Sorry, but that is all the singing I will do and don't say, "Praise the Lord!"

Not only does the church not want to speak of sin, calling sin “sin” but they are refusing to shine, they are hiding their light under a basket. Charles Colson nails it when he wrote,

This myth [that mankind is basically good] deludes people into thinking that they are always victims, never villains; always deprived, never depraved. It dismisses responsibility as the teaching of a darker age. It can excuse any crime, because it can always blame something else – a sickness of our society or a sickness of the mind.

One writer called the modern age “the golden age of exoneration.” When guilt is dismissed as the illusion of narrow minds, then no one is accountable, even to his conscience.

The Irony is that this should come alive in this century, of all centuries, with its gulags and death camps and killing fields. As G. K. Chesterton once said, the doctrine of original sin is the only philosophy empirically validated by centuries of recorded human history.

- John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, p. 55

Listen to this article and it is just one but let’s see how you feel about this. This is from The Animal Liberation Front and it is an article about Peter Singer who they say “is arguably the most influential philosopher in the world today.” They wrote,

Singer's qualifications here foreshadowed his later attempt to distinguish between two different classes of life, not humans and nonhumans, but persons and nonpersons. Defining personhood as the possession of traits like the capacity to feel and reason, self-awareness and autonomy, and the ability to imagine a future, Singer finds cases of humans who are not, by this definition, persons (e.g., the comatose) and nonhumans who are persons (e.g., great apes and possibly all mammals). While all "persons" have (roughly) equal moral status (whether they are animals or humans), Singer values persons over nonpersons. It is this distinction that Singer's critics find so objectionable, not so much because he brings animals into the realm of personhood, but because he reads some humans out of it. . . .

But there is another case in which Singer supports infanticide that raises the blood pressure of his critics, one where he brings an impaired newborn into a cold calculation of pain and pleasure and concludes one life-form is exchangeable for another. "When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed . . . killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often it is not wrong at all." . . . [Notice he is not talking about abortion, but the killing of a child after he is born and from what I gather, under 2 is the cut off for him!].

A recent article in *The New Yorker* shrewdly identified a key contradiction in Singer's approach to ethics. Confronting him with the fact that his own mother was dying of Alzheimer's disease, which rendered her, in Singer's scheme, a "nonperson," but that he had not euthanized her, Singer responded by saying it was "different" in the case of someone he knew and loved, and that he choose to care for her as long as possible, spending copious amounts on health care, albeit on someone doomed to die, rather than giving the money to aid those who could live. "I think this has made me see how the issues of someone with these kinds of problems are really very difficult." Betraying the abstract viewpoint that is an occupational hazard of the academic, Singer had no problem of prescribing euthanasia to imaginary others, but found it impossible to do in his own case with someone all-too concrete.

The Peter Singer controversy unfolds. Apparently ensconced [settled in] at Princeton, it will be interesting to watch how he exerts his newly found prominence and infamy here in the United States, and whether or not constructive debates stem from his work and presence. For better or worse, Singer is now one of America's few public intellectuals. May his work help change the moral barriers in the way of ameliorating [making better] the suffering of human beings and animals.

- Philosophy Under Fire: The
Peter Singer controversy, by
Dr. Steven Best

Can you even imagine and as many may be outraged today, how about in 5 years or 10 years, will they still feel the same way? Where there is no moral compass, the Word of God, people will do what is right in their own eyes! And where is the church today? Are we influencing the society for the better? Are we shinning for Jesus? Jesus told us in Matthew 5:13-16, **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Salt was and is a preserving substance, and Jesus is saying that as we live out our faith, it should have a preserving force for our families, community, and-so-on. It should keep things from rotting away! But if we lose our flavor, if we are not adding anything to our homes, our communities, our workplaces and-so-on, what good are we? And Paul tells us in II Thessalonians 2:6, **“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.”** That restraining force is the Holy Spirit working through the church and one day, during the Rapture, we will be removed. But until that time, may we be that preserving force in our nation as well as our homes.

Not only that but our faith should shine brightly and cause the darkness to flee, lighting the way for others to see the Lord. And not only are people drawn to God by it, but God the Father is glorified by what we do!

And think about this for a minute. Jude wrote, **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”** The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Beloved, my whole concern was to write to you in regard to our common salvation. [But] I found it necessary and was impelled to write you and urgently appeal to and exhort [you] to contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints [the faith which is that sum of Christian belief which was delivered verbally to the holy people of God].”**

Think about that. In Jude’s day he was concerned, he was compelled to write to them to earnestly contend for the faith that has been entrusted to them. What do you think we need to do today? We need to earnestly contend for the faith that has been entrusted to us. We need to stand strong upon God’s Word and not man’s opinion. We need to act as a restraining and enlightening force in the world so that people can see Jesus!

Next week we are going to be looking at what the church is not and we will focus on the statement of Jesus, who said in Matthew 16:18, **“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”** What or who is the church built upon, a very important and controversial subject and yet one that we truly need to understand.

As I close this morning let me leave you with these five points regarding the mission of the church. ***THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS TO:***

- ***TO GLORIFY GOD:*** That truly has to be our focus. It is not about us, it is about our Lord and we are to come before Him and give to Him the glory that is due His holy name!

- ***TO EDIFY ITSELF:*** We are to build each other up in the faith and the church is to teach sound doctrine, healthy doctrine so that the church can grow and go out and do the work of the ministry!

- ***TO PURIFY ITSELF:*** We are to keep ourselves clean by the washing of the Word of God. We are to not only hear and learn God's Word but we are to apply it to our lives!

- ***TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD:*** That is the Great Commission that Jesus has given to us, that we go into ***ALL*** the world with the Gospel message. And that is what we try to do here at Calvary Chapel. We are working with missionaries in India and Africa. Our radio station, via live streaming reaches into all the world. Our web page with all our notes reaches into all the world, and-so-on.

- ***TO ACT AS A RESTRAINING AND ENLIGHTENING FORCE IN THE WORLD:*** Make no mistake about it, we are to influence this world for Jesus and because of the way we live out our faith, we should be that preserving force against immorality and a light that expels the darkness!

Let me close with these words from Frances Schaeffer. He wrote,
“These are the things that the world should see when they look upon the church – something that they cannot possibly explain away. . . . The church of the Lord Jesus Christ should be functioning moment by moment on a supernatural plane. This is the church living by faith, and not an unfaith. This is the church living practically under Christ’s leadership, rather than thinking of Christ being far off and building the invisible church, while we build that which is at hand with our own wisdom and power.” Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, pp. 172, 174.

May all we do be under the direction of our Lord, may it be done to bring glory to Him and see people come into the Kingdom of God, may it be done to build up the body of believers and affect them in such a way that they influence the societies that they are living in. ***WE ARE THE CHURCH!***