

The Church — No. 5

Its Work

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If a church dare claim to follow the New Testament pattern in every respect, it must do the work Christ gave it to do. Perhaps modern religious movements have ignored or forsaken the pattern at this point as much as at any other. Doubtless, many have given up on religion altogether because they see little of the original purpose for the church being accomplished by modern churches. Some thrive as sort of a social club for their members. Others seem to exist to make money and stockpile it and will do anything from investing billions in real estate to operating wineries to do so. Others conceive of the mission of the church as totally related to man's physical needs and social improvement. There are those who use religion as a base for political pressure. These are all gross departures from the work and mission given to the New Testament church.

Paul often speaks of the church as the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, etc.). It follows that whatever the mission of Christ was in His physical body is also His mission in His spiritual body, the church. He clearly states His mission in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Christ healed many people, but His primary aim was not to heal their bodies but their souls.

The church has one primary aim, if it be the church of Christ: to preach the Gospel so that souls may believe, obey, and be saved. This is the significance of the great commission: Jesus' disciples are to go preaching and teaching the Gospel to everyone. The early Christians understood this, and they blanketed the world with the saving message, often at the hazard of their lives. True, the church is to help the helpless (Gal. 6:10) and build itself up (Eph. 4:16), but these are subordinate to its real work: preaching the Gospel to the world.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the "Bible Thoughts" Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, February 20, 1977.]

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