

## The Church – Part 11 The Book of Acts

We continue today with our study of the purpose of the local church. Last time, we looked at the fact that God has placed the local church here. He has sanctioned the local church to do certain things. He sanctioned and He has told the people in that local church that they are there for a certain purpose, and the pastor is there to feed the flock. That's what a local church is for. It's to train, to teach, to indoctrinate, to teach thoroughly the Word of God to the saints.

If you remember last time in John 21:15-17, Jesus said... and He asked Peter certain things. He said, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.* <sup>16</sup>He saith to him again the second time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.* <sup>17</sup>He saith unto him the third time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

In I Peter 5:2, it says, *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind.* The pastor is to preach the whole counsel of God, and as we've seen, the pastor is to preach, and as he preaches through the Word of God and leaves nothing out, the saints will be edified, that people will get saved. But the prime goal of the local church is so the saint of God, so that person who knows Jesus Christ as Savior, the member of the body of Christ, can be

strengthened and encouraged and ready to do what God has for him or her to do. Once, again, I'm not opposed to the Gospel message going forth in the regular services of a local church, and once again, I certainly rejoice over every sinner who is willing to accept Jesus. The problem comes when evangelism becomes the main focus and the believers do not get the spiritual nourishment that they need to be effective servants and soul winners for Christ throughout the week.

The goal of the local church... the saved people should be Christ-like. In other words, the goal of the local church is that saved people might be Christ-like. Salvation is just the first step. We often miss the mark. We often miss that as we look at someone's life. We often miss the fact that that person – we criticize a person because they're not growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and one of the reasons they're not growing could be they're not a member of a local church. Maybe they're not a member of a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching local church, or maybe they're not in the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:13-15 says, <sup>13</sup>*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man...* That doesn't mean we're going to be perfect; it's talking about maturing... *unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* <sup>14</sup>*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;* <sup>15</sup>*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*

We should be grieved when God's people are undernourished, spiritually sick, and ineffective witnesses for Christ. A church that is faithfully teaching the Bible from Genesis to Revelation will not neglect the lost who come through the doors, so the unsaved are not neglected either.

Once again, we can't blame someone else for our lack of maturity. We need to step up. We need to take responsibility to learn and study the Word of God. We need to be in a good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching local church. The first way you do that and the first step is to ask Jesus to save you, to come into your heart. The Bible says that you as an unsaved person are not going to receive the things of God. You're not going to understand completely the Word of God until you get saved, and then when you get saved, the Bible says that we can understand the Spirit and the things of God because the things of God are spiritually discerned. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, according to the Word of God.

If you don't understand the Word of God, maybe you've never been saved. Maybe you've never asked Jesus into your heart. On the other hand, maybe you've done that. Maybe you're saved and you're on your way to Heaven, but you're not stepping up and taking advantage of the teaching that God gives you through His Word, or maybe you're not taking advantage of being in a good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching local church that stands on the Word of God, not teaching fables or fairy tales, but teaching "thus saith the Word of God."

You say, "Well, how do I know?" You open your Bible and you follow along. If that preacher preaches anything else other than Jesus crucified, buried, and resurrected, teaching and preaching anything else other than the growing up of a saint of God, to help that saint of God to grow in the grace and

knowledge... if that preacher is not preaching all the truth that you see in the Word of God, you need to get out of there. You need to find a good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching local church. They're still around, and you need to open your eyes, your spiritual mind, your spiritual heart, your spiritualness. You need to trust Jesus Christ to lead you into all truth, and He also says He will do that.

What happens when an unbeliever comes into a soul-building station where believers are being edified and where God's Word is being rightly taught? That's the local church. First Corinthians 14:24-25 says, *<sup>24</sup>But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: <sup>25</sup>And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

If things are done according to the Word of God in a local church, you will see people saved. You will see people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and I'm convinced that one of the problems in our world today and especially in our country is that the Word of God is not being preached. We're not preaching; we're not leading; we're not teaching the Word of God the way God wants us to do. And once again, that is from His Word. And that is from people who know the Word of God and they don't pay attention to fairy tales. They're not concerned with a big crowd; they're concerned with souls being saved.

A pastor should give the people information on how to live, in other words, how to be Christian or Christ-like. Second Timothy 3:17 says, *That the man of God may be perfect... that means mature... thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Once again, the word used here "perfect" means new or fresh. It means to grow

up, which most expositors interpret as complete. Of course, complete perfection for the saved person will not be complete until we're with the Lord. First John 3:2 says, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be...* In other words, we don't understand everything, but we know this... *we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Salvation is only the beginning. It is but the first step of a lifelong process of growing to be more like Jesus Christ. Second Peter :18 says, *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

The pastor's job is to give the saints the best possible training from the Word so that they might be able to minister effectively and represent Christ rightly in the world, bringing others to the Savior.

Let's look at the responsibility of the local church member now. And this may shock you. The saints are to do the work of the ministry. In Acts 2:4, it says: *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues... other languages... as the Spirit gave them utterance.* You know what they were speaking? They were speaking the plan of salvation, the Word of God. They were telling people how to be saved in their own language.

In Acts 2:42, it says, *And they... that's the people... continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* In many churches today, the pastor bears the great bulk of the ministry load along with perhaps a few others. There was not in the early church such a thing. The great majority of people today are content to sit in the pews, hear a nice message and perhaps come back on the following Sunday.

The genius of New Testament Christianity was that the saints, the believers, were to be fully equipped and well-trained to go forth every day of the week and do the work of the ministry. Instead of one man or a few people trying to bear the burden, God's intent was to have a whole army of believers going forth, trained and well-equipped to serve the Lord at work, at home, in town, and in local neighborhoods. In whatever they did, they were to serve God and give out the Word of God so that people would be saved. We're not seeing that in our world today.

I want you to note this... the progression of the early church at Jerusalem. In the book of Acts, starting with chapter 2 and verse 1, it says, *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Verse 4, And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues... other languages... as the Spirit gave them utterance. Verse 6, Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. That's the tongues spoken of. Verse 8 says, And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*

After the people, the 120 from the upper room, Acts 1:15, witnessed to those at Jerusalem, Peter preached. Verses 14-16 of Acts chapter 2 says, *14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.* The prophet Joel said people would be saved, and whosoever would call upon the Lord would be saved.

Next time, I want to pick up here and look at some other things about Peter. Peter preached Jesus crucified, buried, and resurrected. Do you know Him today as your Savior? You need to ask Him to come into your heart. If you do know Him as your Savior, you need to be busy. You need to be telling others about Jesus Christ. Get into the Word of God.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this time we've had, and I pray that you would take these words, not my words but Yours, as we've looked at Your Word, I pray You would take those words and place it within the heart of each of us that we would serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

---

You've been listening to It's a Good Life Radio. To request a free transcript of this program, you can write to Dr. Woodard at 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Visit our Websites, [www.LRWM.org](http://www.LRWM.org) or [www.ItsAGoodLifeRadio.com](http://www.ItsAGoodLifeRadio.com). We know you will be blessed.

This program is listener-supported. Support your local church first. Any gifts to support this ministry can be sent to:

LRWM  
497 Judith Avenue  
Fruitland Park, FL 34731

Until next time, this is Doug Anderson reminding you it's a good life living for the Lord. May the Lord bless you richly is our prayer.