

# The Mission Of The Church

In Jesus Christ, we have the fullness of the Godhead summed up (Ephesians 1:15-23). Jesus is able to supply every spiritual need of man. The church is composed of those who have been “called out” of the world by the gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Christians have assembled themselves under His authority to do His will. Because of the preciousness of the church, we need to have a full knowledge of the church. Ephesians 4:12 says, “*For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.*” This verse presents a threefold work for the church. This article will discuss the divine arrangement for the church and its work.

First, the church engages in the work of “perfecting of the saints.” The word “perfecting” means “to place the parts of any machine or body in their proper order and to unite them in such a manner as to render the machine or body complete.” This indicates then what we call the work of edifying the body; the work of educating or training Christians in righteous living and acceptable service to God. The church is edified by the development of its members (1 Corinthians 14:26; Romans 14:19). The proper objective of its members is not numerical growth alone but also spiritual strength (Ephesians 6:10-18; 4:14-15; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 17-23; James 4:7-10). The congregation may edify its members through worship (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 2:5; Colossians 3:16), faithful teaching (Acts 18:23), discipline (Titus 3:10; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Romans 16:17-18), and proper love of the members (Ephesians 4:29-32; Philippians 2:3-4; 4:2; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 12:25).

Second, the church engages in “the work of the ministry.” Here “ministry” comes from the Greek *diakonia*. It is the word translated “deacon.” This includes ministering to the poor saints and it also includes any service rendered in behalf of anyone needing help physically or spiritually. The work of benevolence was never used as a means of enticing people with the gospel. Food and clothing were never offered by the early church as a means of getting people to listen and accept the gospel. Churches of Christ should be benevolent, but they must do so in harmony with God’s will. Congregations can provide for those among their number who are needy saints (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; 11:27-29; Romans 15:31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12-13). The church never set up a benevolent institution to care for the needy. Secular agencies engage in benevolent work with God’s approval while only the church is to preach the gospel.

Third, the church engages in “the edifying of the body of Christ.” This is the

same word used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 (*oikodomeo*) when He promised to “build my church.” Paul uses the word here in the sense of enlarging the church by the preaching of the gospel. It has been God’s plan from eternity to save the world by the preaching of the gospel because all mankind is in need of salvation (Romans 3:23). The gospel is God’s power to save (Romans 1:16; James 1:21). Although we have many examples of individual teaching (Acts 5:42; 8:5; 18:24-26; 20:20), local congregations were the only organization through which this work was done (1 Thessalonians 1:3-8; Philippians 1:3-5; 2:25-30; 4:14-20). Any additional order for such work arranged by the wisdom and will of man would be a rejection of God’s ways.

Finally, it would be beneficial for us to consider what the mission of the church is not. First, the mission of the church is not social. Second, the mission of the church is not to provide and serve as a guide in recreational activity. Third, the mission of the church is not to make money. Fourth, the mission of the church is not to serve as a counseling center. Fifth, the mission of the church is not to teach secular subjects such as science, mathematics, history, literature, etc. Sixth, the mission of the church is not political.

No one has the right to take away from the resources of the church to serve human aims or purposes. The church should be kept faithful to God’s divine mission. It is the all-sufficient instrument of God to carry out His purpose. If we deny the adequacy of the church to do the work God has assigned, we deal the wisdom of God a serious blow.

Adapted From Roy Cogdill