

Our Supreme Task
Matt. 28:18-20 and Rom. 10:8-15

INTRODUCTION

I. What the Supreme Task of the church is NOT:

- A. It is NOT correcting all the social evils of our civilization by applying the golden rule and other principles of Jesus.
- B. It is NOT ending wars and bringing a peaceful Utopia on earth.
- C. It is NOT making Christians better citizens.
- D. It is NOT making our churches into social clubs.
- E. not eliminating poverty
- F. not promoting a social program
- G. not spreading Western civilization.

II. The Supreme Task of the church is MISSIONS.

In one word, that is our task as given to us by our Master.

It is synonymous with the Great Commission.

Yes, we could say it in different ways, or look at it from different points of view.

A. But whatever it is, it is not arbitrary or "take it, or leave it."

This is according to Jesus' plain command, as recorded by each of the four gospel writers.

1. Matthew (28:18-20) emphasizes Christ's AUTHORITY in the Great Commission, "All power is given unto me.... Go ye therefore."

2. Mark (16:15) emphasizes the universality in scope & result of missions: "Preach the gospel to every creature."

3. Luke (24:47) and in Acts 1:8 outlines the order and procedure of missions: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth."

Here we have the pattern of local missions, State missions, Home missions, and Foreign Missions. When a Christian witnesses with his or her lips or life and wins one or a dozen new converts to Christ, whether at home or across the ocean, this Christian missions in action.

But the point is that it is to be done by every Christian and by every church at home and abroad **AT THE SAME TIME**. And **THE ONLY WAY** we can do this is through an organized and cooperative missionary endeavor.

4. John (20:21) states the spiritual qualifications and demands of the Great Missionary Commission: **"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."** Jesus is saying, "As I have been and am my Father's missionary, just so are you to be **MY** commissioned missionaries."

B. The **supremacy** of the **missionary task** is indicated in the **basic conditions** of the **way of salvation**: **Rom. 10:13-15:**

1. Before **sinners** can be saved, they must **BELIEVE** in Jesus.
2. Before they can **BELIEVE**, they must **HEAR** the gospel.
3. In **order** for them to **hear and believe**, some Christian messenger must go and tell the **lost** about Jesus.
4. And most of the time, before missionaries can go out to the foreign fields to proclaim the gospel, believers back home must join in **SENDING** them out and **SUPPORTING** them.

III, Every Christian believer and every local church have the responsibility to carry out this Great Missionary Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every church member must see to it that his or her **church not only HAS a ~~missionary~~** **missionary society**, but **IS a missionary society**, from top to bottom and from the least to the greatest ministry in it. **Missionary speakers should have just as much priority and attendance as revival speakers have.**

A. There is a legend which someone has imagined about Jesus returning to heaven after his ascension, and he is met by a band of angels who ask him, **"What is your plan now to reach all of mankind with your saving power?"** He answers, **"I have told my disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel message to every creature."**

"But what if they fail; what other plan do you have?"

The Savior answers, "I have no other plan."

B. There are those who ask, "Isn't this a stupendous responsibility to be placed in the hands of weak and sinful men and women?"

C. This is certainly true, but this responsibility is like that which God DOES as a matter of fact commit to us in many other ways--

for example, the responsibility of the parent for the child.

The parent has power to mar the soul as well as the body of the child.

That responsibility is terrible, but it unquestionably exists.

D. Missions should be the greatest burden of the Christian believer, and missions should be the greatest concern and priority of every church.

E. The church must be true to its mission.

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little lifesaving station....

....This is a parable of how churches can forget that missions is their one supreme task. Other lesser functions and achievements that don't contribute to this one supreme task are unworthy of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Of course, missions as it is understood comprehensively in the Bible, includes not only making disciples, but training and teaching them to become mature, intelligent, and faithful Christians, able to read and understand the Bible and think and interpret it responsibly for themselves. Missions means gathering believers into congregations of new churches that will promote and support missions at home and to the "uttermost parts of the earth." Not all Christians can go to foreign mission fields; but some can go.

Not all have the wealth to support a missionary or a missionary couple on the mission field;

THE CHURCH MUST BE TRUE TO ITS MISSION

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous.

Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work.

New boats were bought and new crews trained.

The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with beds

and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely, because they used it as sort of a club.

Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work.

The lifesaving motif still prevailed in this club's decoration, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club initiations were held.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin.

The beautiful new club was in chaos.

So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

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At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club.

Some of the members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station.

But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. And they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old one. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded.

History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore.

Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown!

(This parable was quoted by Howard Clinebell in Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling, which was taken from an article by Richard Wheatcroft in Letters to Laymen, May-June, 1962, p.1, which was a paraphrase from the original parable in an article by Theodore O. Wedel, "Evangelism--the Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life", The Ecumenical Review, October, 1953, p. 24.)

The mission of the church is to keep on proclaiming the gospel of the Crucified Christ. It may seem like nonsense to some to do so in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and in a modern space age, but this is our mandate from our Master, and love for him and for a lost world leaves us no other choice.

but some do, and others can join with other Christians in their church to do this. Not all have the training or education to become a career missionary, but some do, or they can yet get the required training and go out and spend the greater part of their working lives serving the Lord in some mission field. I believe that all young Christians who can possibly consider missionary service personally, should pray earnestly about it and ask God to show them definitely one way or another whether they should or should not prepare and plan to serve Him in some missionary ministry. And other Christians, for whom it is impossible and not God's will for them to go personally, are responsible to pray and give and support in every way those who can and will go out in Jesus name with His gospel to distant lands.

Will you pray? Will you give?
Will you send? Will you support missions?
Will you go if God so leads you?
Will you promise the Lord, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord;
I'll say what you want me to say,
I'll do what you want me to do,
I'll be what you want me to be."

12-2-90, Azalea B.C. D#105, "Supreme, TSK"