

**Pastor Robert Rutta**

## **The Purpose and Importance of the Church**

1 Timothy 3:15

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Jesus established the church; it is His institution for this present age to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20).

The church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The truth is what this dark world needs, and Jesus created the church to be the foundation of the truth and to lift it up so the world can see it.

It is the church's job to guard the truth, to train God's people in it, and to proclaim it throughout the earth.

From Acts to Revelation, the church is a central theme.

The word "church" is mentioned about 110 times.

The Greek word is ecclesia, which means "a called out assembly."

It is the group of people that assemble in the Lord's name.

In the book of Acts we see the establishment of the first churches.

Most of the New Testament is addressed to specific churches, such as the church at Rome and the church at Corinth.

The book of Revelation is addressed to seven specific churches (Rev. 1:4).

Even those epistles that are not addressed to a specific church, have the church in view.

For example, the book of Hebrews is addressed to Jewish believers in general, but it contains some of the most powerful exhortations about church life (Heb. 10:25; 13:7, 17).

The same is true for James (James 5:14), Peter (1 Pet 5:1-4), and for John's epistles (3 John 9-11).

The example in Scripture is for Christians to be committed to the church and to be faithful to its services and functions.

This is God's will.

Every believer needs the church, and the church needs every believer.

### **Why does the church exist?**

The main purpose for the church's existence is to evangelize the world and build up believers.

Why did Jesus Christ institute the church?

Answer: Jesus said, 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (Matthew 16:18).

This tells us that local churches are to attack the gates of hell, and take captive hell's prisoners.

### **1. The Church Exists to Preach the Gospel and Make Disciples (teach) of All Nations.**

God wants us to evangelize the world with the message of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission is stated five times by Jesus Christ,

Matthew 28:18-20 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'

Mark 16:15 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'.

Luke 24:47 'And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'

John 20:21 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.'

Acts 1:8 'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'

The main reason God leaves His church in the world is to save people from hell by preaching the gospel.

Illus

One day Dr Wilfred Grenfell, medical missionary to Labrador, was guest at a dinner in London, together with a number of socially prominent British men and women. During the course of the dinner the lady seated next to him turned and said, "Is it true, Dr Grenfell, that you are a Missionary?"

Dr Grenfell looked at her for a moment before replying. Then he said, "Is it true, madam, that you are not?"

## **2. The Church Exists to Edify Believers**

Edify means to build up believers in their spiritual life.

Most of the New Testament was written for the edification of believers. Letters were sent to churches to be read and studied for their spiritual growth and development.

The following verses teach us about edification:

a) I Corinthians 14:26, 'Let all things be done unto edifying.'

Every believer should seek to build up each other, rather than to pull each other down.

b) I Thessalonians 5:11, 'Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.'

Strive to build up each other, and to establish each other in Bible truths.

c) II Peter 3:18, 'But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.

Christlike character needs to be cultivated.

Growth in grace may begin as a grain of mustard seed, and will increase as it is cultivated.

To know Jesus Christ means to possess correct views of His person as fully God and fully man, His character, teachings & work.

d) Jude 20, 'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.'

We should establish ourselves most firmly in sound doctrine and in fulfilling our Christian duties such as prayer.

e) Ephesians 4:11-16, Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were given to:

Perfect the saints, Fulfil the work of the ministry, Edify the body of Christ (v.12,16).

Their job is to build up believers in knowledge, in truth and in godliness.

## **3. The Church Exists to Glorify God**

As Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, his prayer for them was:

'That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him ..' (II Thessalonians 1:12).

Psalm 50:23 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.'

Hebrews 13:15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

#### **4. The Church Exists to Obey the Ordinances That God Has Given – Baptism of Believers and the Lord’s Supper.**

‘Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’ Matt.28:19.

God gave us the two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as memorials.

#### **5. The Church Exists to Teach Believers God’s Ways – Feed the Flock**

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

‘And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.’ (II Timothy 2:2) .

‘The servant of the Lord must . . . be apt to teach.’ (II Timothy 2:24).

‘These things command and teach.’ (I Timothy 4:11).

‘For when for the time ye ought to be teachers . . .’ (Hebrews 5:12).

God wants us to pass our Bible knowledge on to others.

We meet together to be taught the truths of God’s Word – sound doctrine.

A radio or television program or an internet preacher is not a church, and a preacher that you listen to there is not your pastor.

#### **6. The Church Exists to Provide Fellowship For Believers.**

‘They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ **doctrine** and **fellowship** . . .’ (Acts 2:42). (both are needed)

God designed people for fellowship, not for isolation.

This is best achieved in a local church.

a) The basis of Christian fellowship – the person of Christ.

1 John 1:3

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

b) The responsibilities of Christian fellowship are to:

Bear one another’s burdens;

Gently restore one another (Galatians 6:1);

Comfort and exhort one another;

Edify one another;

Pray for one another;

Forgive one another;

Rebuke sin in each other. (Ephesians 5:11).

#### **7. The Church Exists to Provoke Each Other to Love and Good Works.**

‘And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is . . .’ (Hebrews 10:24,25).

‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith’. (Galatians 6:10).

By coming to church, we can do good to those attending.

We can provoke them to do good works and to show love to others. If we forsake church, we can’t encourage any fellow believers, and we are saying that we don’t care about them.

**8. The Church Exists to Act as a Restraining and Enlightening Influence in This World.**

‘Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world.’ (Matthew 5:13-16).

If we work together in church we can have a bigger impact on the world for Christ.

**9. The Church Exists to Prepare Rulers For the Future Millennial Kingdom.**

‘If we suffer, we shall also reign with him . . .’ (II Timothy 2:12).

‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ (Matthew 25:21,23).

Conclusion:

The task of a local church is to make as many people like Jesus Christ in the time God has given us.

We need to be faithful to our church and work to build it – to give God more glory.

There is nothing quite as sweet as a New Testament church that is like it should be.