

Title: Paul's Mission

Date: 3-2-14

Text: Acts 13:1-12

Place: DCOG

[Have charts available that present the New Testament books in chronological order, i.e., James is first, Galatians second, etc. Matthew's Gospel is actually the 11th book written according to the chart]

Introduction: A little boy was asked by his Sunday School teacher why is it important for us to be quiet in church. The little guy answered, "Because people are sleeping."

We are pursuing The Story and we don't want to lose anyone to sleep.

- † God used Israel in the Old Testament to win people back to himself, even though Israel failed in many ways.
- † In the Gospels we read of God sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to win us back by dying on the cross for us, solving the big problem called sin.
- † In the Book of Acts and the New Testament epistles (or letters), we see God using the church—us—to find his lost children and to bring them home.
- † We are the church—the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

I. The church is the body of Christ in the world. (1 Corinthians 12)

A. Assembled together the church is Jesus, and we are to think like Jesus, act like Jesus and love others like Jesus loves them.

* This does not allow us to be side-tracked by our petty differences, or our pre-selected preferences. God's holiness

proclaimed and His love lived out in the Church is the name of the game.

B. The church is commissioned to go into all the world as witnesses to Jesus.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

* (consult the map in the back of The Story to see the regions)

* Which part does God allow us to ignore? Which people group has God pre-selected for damnation? Which one of your neighbors, which one of your family members have you already decided should go to Hell?

C. God wants all people in the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:16

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

II. God raised up a point leader to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth: Paul.

A. Saul of Tarsus was an unlikely candidate to become the world's first and most renowned missionary. (Acts 9)

1. Saul, the Osama ben Laden of his day, hated Jesus and the church and hunted down and voted to kill Christians.

2. Even Saul who became Paul was amazed that Jesus chose him as a missionary to the ends of the earth.

1 Cor. 15:9

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

* [consult map to see Paul's three missionary journeys]

3. Paul planted 10 churches and wrote 13 of the 27 New Testament books.

III. According to The Story, the Book of Galatians was written in correlation with the great Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

A. The Jerusalem Council dealt with the question: Do Gentiles have to become Jews (in practice) to be true Christians.

1. Some Jewish leaders said Gentiles had to do two things to become true Christians: 1) believe in Jesus Christ, and 2) be circumcised (i.e., practice Jewish laws).

* When I was younger, I would have added that they must:

- † Go to church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evenings.
- † Refrain from smoking, drinking, going to movies, and playing cards.
- † Guys would keep their hair short, and girls would keep their skirts and dresses long.

2. The Jerusalem Council reached the conclusion the Gentiles did not submit to Jewish laws.

3. Paul's book of Galatians argues for the reasons behind the strategic decision.

Galatians 3:1-2

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. [2] I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

Galatians 3:7

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

* A few weeks ago I saw about 45 minutes of an old World War II movie about Allied prisoners in a German prisoner of war camp, "The Great Escape." After great preparation 75 prisoners escape from the camp and begin to make their way to freedom.

Some of them had re-worked their regular uniforms to create replicas of the German soldiers. Did that make them German soldiers? No, not at all.

In the same way, putting on the appearance of Christianity does not make one a Christian.

Another way of looking at it would be like believing that sitting in your garage makes you a car.

Becoming a Christian stems from our faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Are we followers of the Son of God? Can we stake our lives on the truth of the Bible? A real Christ-follower says yes!

Application: We have just spent 30 minutes talking about Paul's mission. Why do you think that mission to the ends of the earth is important to us?

1. Most of us are Gentiles and it is because of Paul's mission that we are invited into salvation.
2. The Book of Acts is our story. The acts of the apostles are to be the acts of our local church.

3. The mission of the church is our mission: to be Jesus to our Jerusalem, to our Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

At a huge baptism service at the Oak Hills Church over 300 people were baptized. When the Barientas family was baptized, the grandparents who were watching jumped into the river fully clothed, desiring to identify with the family of God.

Are you so in love with Christ and His Church that others would desire to “jump in the water.”

Max Lucado was in Honduras speaking to over 65,000 in a conference and being broadcast to 62 Spanish-speaking countries. To the ends of the earth!

How far are you willing to go to reach the world for Jesus?

The church needs “all hands on deck” to get the mission accomplished.