

## Is the Church In the World as Much as the World is In the Church? (Part 2)

In part one of this series of articles, we considered the fact that the Lord's church is to be a Godly influence as we walk through this life. People should be able to look at any one of us and see a living, breathing example of what a Christian is to be according to God's written Word. It is indeed a daunting task and a serious responsibility that Christians have to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), yet if we don't wield a holy influence on our fellowman, who will?

As important as our influence is in this world, another significant role that the church must play is that of teaching God's truth. We're all familiar with the Great Commission that was originally entrusted to the apostles (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Was that the end of the responsibility of taking God's Word to the lost? Were those men the only members of the church of Christ who were to spread the Gospel? In answer to that, consider Paul's exhortation to Timothy, a brother who was not an apostle, in II Timothy 2:2. "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." Not only was Timothy to teach what he had been taught by faithful brethren such as Paul, he was to instruct other Christians to teach as well. In Acts 8:4 we find the church doing just that. Having been scattered from Jerusalem as the result of Jewish persecution led by Saul, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Romans 10:18 says, "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Colossians 1:23 speaks of the Gospel "which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." This achievement was not accomplished solely by twelve men. The church in the first century was evangelistic. The mission of evangelism is inherent in the establishment of the church for its founder Himself "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It is the privilege and mission of every member of the church for which Jesus died to do what we can to lead souls to Christ through the teaching of the Gospel.

Even though our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and our hearts are to be on "things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2), we nonetheless walk in the land of the living (Psalm 116:9). If we are in good health, there's not a day that goes by that we do not have an opportunity to teach the Gospel. (Actually, I have known some who refused to let poor health stand in their way of spreading God's Word.) Whether through face-to-face contact, conversation by phone, written correspondence or interaction via the internet, we are constantly presented with open doors to speak God's Word. The question is, are we looking for the doors? Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that he was planning to come and visit them. "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me..." (I Corinthians 16:8-9). He constantly had his eyes open for opportunities to teach the Gospel. Consequently, he constantly found those opportunities.

The Bible stands alone as God's inspired written Word (II Timothy 3:16-17). The New Testament in particular is our authority today (Hebrews 1:1-2). Were one to pick up the Bible and read it, having never heard it or read it before, he could learn the truth about God, about himself, his separation from God due to sin, the way back to God through Jesus Christ and eternity in heaven or hell. The Gospel is inherently powerful (Romans 1:16) because its author is the omnipotent God (I Corinthians 2:7ff). In spite of this inherent power, the Bible was not meant to be hidden away on a shelf. Christians are not instructed to just sit back and hope that people will discover the Bible on their own. This holy book is "the sword of the Spirit." (Ephesians 6:16). It is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). It is to be used, not laid aside. There is abundant evidence throughout the New Testament that the church is to be aggressive with the Gospel. Read just the book of Acts and see for yourself how diligent the church then was in getting God's message to the lost. As they went out into the world, they taught God's truth. Their mission is our mission. Their zeal should be our zeal.

Is the church in the world? Yes, we are. What are we doing while we are in the world? If we are not influencing others for Christ and teaching the Gospel of Christ, then we are not fulfilling the mission that the Lord gave us.