

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

by Elder Forrest Keener

I want you to open your Bibles to some of those verses of Scriptures which we have used over and over during this conference. But even though they have been used repeatedly, I don't know of any Scripture that will better define the subject we are dealing with tonight. Notice Matthew 16:16-18, *"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee,"* I believe that the conjunction there ties back to what Peter said to the Lord, *"Thou art the Christ"* and He said, *"that thou art Peter."* Some of you brethren may know that there are only two times, if I remember rightly, that He ever called Peter by that name, from this point forward. Did you know that? He did not call him Peter normally. He normally called him Simon or Cephas, not Peter. He called him Peter only two times, and those times were times when He marked out the weakness of Peter. This man is not a rock at all. You will notice, in the Bible, they never throw rocks, because rocks are big bodies of stone. They throw stones, that means little pieces of rock, like Peter. And, like Peter, they are unstable, and easy to move about. And he said to Peter, *"I say unto thee the cock shall not crow..."* Remember where Peter was at this time. He was in the upper room claiming superior strength. Times when he was in such a condition, were the only times our Lord ever called him Peter. So as He says *"upon this rock I will build my church,"* obviously He's speaking of Himself, and not of Peter, which name means a little piece of stone. And He goes on to say, *"and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* This has already been said. But may I repeat, right there is all the evidence you need, and the best evidence you have, of church perpetuity. It is the best! And it works. There is nothing wrong with it.

Now, Matthew 28:18, *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth..."* As I pointed out this morning, that involves

both authority and ability. That's the only reason they could go into all nations, and succeed. He had the right to send them. He had the ability to sustain them. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,"* now listen to this, *"go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing 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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* And then notice Mark 16:15, *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*

A few years ago my wife said, I am going to have a garage sale, and I wish you would look out in the garage on those shelves, go through some of that stuff, and if you have items that you don't need, maybe you can put some of them on a table and sell them. So I started opening boxes, and I found a brand new fuel pump. It had never been installed. I purchased that fuel pump, I believe, in Clayton, New Mexico, some years ago, while driving across country in a motor home. I found very soon that the fuel pump was not what I needed. I had a filter that I had not been able to find up to that point, it was up in the front part of the carburetor, and I just could not find it. The filter was the problem, not the fuel pump. But I didn't want to drive back to return it and when I came back through there, it was the middle of the night. So I had forgotten that right in my garage, was a fuel pump for a four hundred Chevrolet engine. Now, how many of you folks know what a four hundred engine is? They are in one ton trucks, and that's about all they were used for. I knew that unless somebody happened to have a four hundred Chevrolet engine, this treasure was a dud. I didn't even know what else this pump might fit. It might fit other engines, but I don't think so. I would be very surprised if it would fit very much except a four hundred Chevrolet engine. So, I priced it at a couple of bucks, hoping that somebody would come along who could use it, or think they could use it. I may have taken \$2.00 or maybe 50 cents for it, I can't remember. The point is this, that a fuel pump for a four hundred Chevrolet engine is not worth very much, unless you have a four hundred Chevrolet engine to put it on. That is to say, it is made for a particular purpose, and unless you are using it for the right purpose, it's basically worthless. It's not even a good book end. It's too clumsy for a fishing weight, and it's not heavy enough. It's too ugly for a conversation piece in

the middle of your coffee table. It just isn't any good for anything, unless you can use it for the purpose to which it was designed. That's all it is good for. Things with limited purpose are essentially worthless when they lose that purpose.

Many people, for this very reason, have found the church to be worthless. A lady called me a few months back and said, could you help me out with a plane ticket? Now I get about 20 or 30 calls like that every week, not all for plane tickets, but they are frequent enough. I am asked for rent, and about everything you could imagine. And I said, "No we don't," and she used an expletive, and said, then what are you good for? She was quite sincere. As far as she was concerned, unless our church has cash for her, we are not good for anything. There is no reason for us to exist. She would probably prefer that we did not, unless she felt she could get some money the next time. May I say something else? If ministers and members of a church do not remember what the church is established for, if they forget what the purpose of it is, it will soon become worthless to them. Brother Dan Cozart brought an outstanding message in Oklahoma City, last month, on the churches trying to provide for the people, what they want, what they are looking for. They seek amusement, entertainment, anything that will make them feel good. I believe that is because of a totally wrong philosophy that the average church today has and conveys about their ministry. I've said this over and over again, and I repeat, it is because they have become success oriented, and not commission oriented. In other words, their question is what can be done to bring in more people. "What can we do to please more people?" One brother said of his church and of his pastor, we just love our pastor, the church is growing. And that's all he had to say. Now, it's wonderful when a church is growing for the right reasons, but I have news for you, that's no reason to love a pastor. Cancer grows! And I don't mean to be nasty. I'm just saying that the vision of what the church is about has been lost. That's the very reason why churches today are so prostituted that they are becoming, "faith-based" organizations for the government. I'm not out to step on anybody's toes, but I want to tell you something, if you're messing around with garbage like that, be ashamed of yourself, and get right with God. That's not what we are for. That is not our purpose, and that is prostitution of the Lord's church.

My statement in this message is, that outside of the purpose for which the Lord ordained it, what we refer to as the church today, is as worthless as it can be. It is not worthy of our time. You are a thief, preacher, to take an offering, if you are not involved in the purpose to which the Lord has called and appointed you. You have no business taking people's money, to do something that is not the fulfillment of this commission that I have read to you tonight, that is going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. But on the other hand, the church which is dedicated to this purpose is just as valuable as it ever was. And believe it or not, just as successful as it ever was. That may be hard for us to grasp at first, I hope I can persuade you of that.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

First of all, let's be sure that we get straight in our mind what the purpose of the church is. Now listen, there are a lot of good side effects from churches. For instance, it may well be that a Christian lady in a particular church influences her unsaved husband morally, and he may be a better worker on the job, a better neighbor, and other good things. There are multitudes of social benefits of good churches in neighborhoods around this nation, but that's not the purpose of the church. There is nothing wrong with that, but it's just a side effect. If you were to go throughout Kansas City, Missouri, or St. Louis, Missouri, or Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, or Lawton, Oklahoma, or anywhere else you want to go, and take a door to door poll of the people, as to what the church's purpose is, you would get all kinds of perplexing and varying answers. But, if we go to the Scripture, we won't have any trouble knowing what the purpose is. It's clear, it is consistent, and it is really quite simple. Believe it or not. It is very simple. The purpose of the church, as Brother Cozart said this morning, is to evangelize. What does evangelizing mean? Does that mean to get everybody saved? Of course not. That's not what that's talking about. It is to preach the gospel to every creature. That's what evangelism is. It's preaching the gospel to every creature. It's wonderful if multitudes are saved, but if no one is saved but you preach the gospel to every creature, that is basic evangelism. Now, that's not going to happen, but theoretically, if that were to happen, you're still carrying out that first leg

of the purpose of the church. Brother Bill Lee said that the purpose is to glorify the Lord. Amen. Let me tell you something, preachers, I haven't got there yet, but we ought to be gratified in preaching the gospel if we never see any outward results. Now, I like results. But it is a wonderful thing to be able to proclaim Christ's gospel, for the sake of proclaiming Christ's gospel, because it glorifies God.

And we are to be commission oriented. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We must not be so much response oriented, as commission oriented. Let us do what He told us, because the moment we begin to say, we have to find a method that people will relate to, then we become like John Wesley. You know John Wesley was not a Methodist. In case you don't know it, he died as an Episcopalian. As far as I know, he never was a Methodist, but he started the Methodist movement. Well, they didn't call it Methodism because they drew that name out of a hat. They called it that because they felt they had to invent methods. Charles Finney was the same way. Now he was a Presbyterian lawyer, if I remember rightly. And he had all of these methods, plans, tricks, etc. But these men were result oriented. And I want to tell you something, in the eyes of the average religious leader today, I am a fool, because I say we ought not to be result oriented, but commission oriented. My question should not be am I getting the results that I would like to get, not am I competing with the world around me in that result, but am I doing what God commissioned me to do? That needs to be our direction, first and foremost.

He says go and disciple all nations. What is a disciple? Well a disciple is a follower, someone who follows, not for the loaves and fishes, not for the promise of riches, as the people follow the shysters of our day. Disciples follow for teaching. Christ's disciples are not people that like excitement or physical healing, but people who follow Christ because in their hearts they are persuaded by the grace of God, that He has the words of life. To whom else could they go? They are persuaded that they have no real choice. They must follow Christ. We are to teach them to observe. Teach them to observe what? All things whatsoever I have commanded you. That's what we are supposed to be doing. Let me say this, discipleship without regeneration is probably the most common passageway to hell of our day. Not too long ago, I heard a Baptist

missionary say, "I am really not so much involved in just going out and presenting the gospel to people, as I am discipling people." He is off the field now and I do not lament that fact. I don't mean to be mean here, but I'm going to tell you something. If you are a good salesman, you can teach a certain number of people to act like Christians. But that won't help them to get to heaven one bit. Men do not get to heaven by practicing Christianity. I don't care how good it is. I don't care how biblical it is. They must be born again, they must be believers in Christ. And we are not commissioned to preach Christianity. That's not what He is talking about, when He gives us this order to go and disciple. We are commissioned to preach Christ. Now here's something else, you should remember. You will not make strong Christians by preaching Christianity. You will make strong Christians by preaching Christ. As they become more and more acquainted with Him, as beholding the face in a glass, they will be changed toward His image from glory to glory. They need Christ!

Our church members need the gospel, over, and over, and over again, until our souls are thrilled with the gospel of Christ. When the gospel of Christ is preached, I don't care if it's preached to a half dozen preachers, God is glorified, Christ is glorified. I'll tell you this, I can love men just because of their preaching of the pure Gospel, even when they have all kinds of other problems. I hear a man get up and preach a good gospel message, and my soul is thrilled, and I say thank God for him. This is what we are all about. That's what we're supposed to be doing. Teaching unsaved men to act like Christians is like inoculating them against salvation. Because they will never be saved, without repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. And if you can get them to act enough like Christians, to change their ways, they will come to think they are Christians.

The Holiness used to say, I'm going to hell if I don't change my ways. Well, the world actually thinks that way. That's the basic natural Armenian thought. And if you get them to do that, you've made the mistake of all time. Preach Christ, let them be what they are until God changes their heart, and preach Christ to them as lost sinners. No other purpose rivals this. Paul said in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that*

believeth..." He says in Matthew 24:14, *"And this gospel of the kingdom must be preached..."* Now somebody says, "Well, that's not the gospel." Oh yes it is. Read the last chapter of Acts and see what Paul says. Oh yes it is. It's the same gospel. It's the same gospel John the Baptist preached. It's what Christ preached. And I know that we have unfolding revelation that is progressive in that area, I know all of that, but I am just simply saying that we are to give preeminence to the Gospel. But instead of preaching the Gospel, we have a ministry today that is result oriented. How many tracts do you suppose have been written, entitled, "The Plan of Salvation"? I don't even pretend to know. But the one thing all of them have in common is that they're full of error. The true plan of salvation is in a Man, not in a series of human instructions. All of these so-called plans of salvation, with very few exceptions, do one thing. They give you instruction as to what actions you must take in order to be saved. That is not the business God has appointed to you. That is not my business. We're not sent out to give men a formula of activity by which they are to be saved. We're sent to preach Christ. God's plan of salvation is found in 1 Cor. 15:1-4 and John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "That He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures."* If you leave that out you've missed it all. *"How that He was buried, and how that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* Expound that, it glorifies God! And if men are not saved by that message, they can never be saved any other way. Don't try to relate some kind of a sales pitch, that will get people to profess Christ.

We are not sent to get professions. I was talking to Brother John Kohler earlier, and I mentioned that for some years now, and I make no apology to anybody for this, I never ask for a profession. Not ever. If I go and sit down in someone's home and witness to them, and give them the gospel, I do not ask them to make a profession. You'd be surprised how many people today will not accept the Gospel, because of something they have been taught in their own dear independent Baptist Church. The gospel is mockery to them, and I seem like one that mocks, if I simply give them the gospel. After all, they already knew God had done His part, and now they expect to be told about their part. Do you understand what I am talking about? Instruction for human action for salvation is the worst offense against the Gospel ministry there is.

THIS PURPOSE IS SUPERNATURALLY BLESSED

Secondly, this simple purpose, of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature, is supernaturally blessed of God. The worst enemy to it is the "Do something religious" evangelism. Paul said to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Do you know what this drives into the mind of the natural man? He thinks, "That is the only act that I have to perform. How easy!" That is not instructing the jailer to perform an act. Faith is not an action. It produces actions, but it is not an act. It is a state of the soul that is created by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the transformation is performed by God. Repentance is not a natural act, or series of actions. It too, is the state of the soul that is wrought by God. It is a condition, an attitude of the soul, that is created through the work of God, and we are instrumental in these elements of salvation, by preaching the gospel. We are to do the preaching of the gospel. Plans of salvation teach men how, and they 're all counter productive. This country has been raped by plans of that sort, that tend to confuse the gospel. You can go up and down the streets where I live, and only about seven or eight percent of the people of the city of Lawton, Oklahoma go to church anywhere. It is not like Oklahoma City or Tulsa, it is very different. People in Oklahoma City and Tulsa are more of a church-going people. Lawton is very non-church oriented. It doesn't seem like anybody has been able to do anything about it. You can change the church goes around from one church to another, but basically the people of the city do not go to church. But I'll tell you something, you can go up and down those same streets, and knock on the doors, and almost everyone of those people has been "won to the Lord" once or twice. I'm not joking. It's a terrible mess. And it's almost impossible to deal with people like that.

But on the other hand, when the gospel goes out in its clarity, God places it here and there, and people are saved. In Hollo City on the island of Panay, in the Philippines, I was taken at 10:30 each night to preach on the radio. We traveled during the day, preached in various places and at 10:30 each night I was taken to a radio station. And on that radio station I preach by way of cassette tape, every day,

seven days a week. We now have broadcasts like that on three stations in the Philippines, where they are playing my tapes on a regular basis. I was taken there to preach the gospel, live, and I preached a simple message from Acts 8. My text was where Phillip turned to that same place in the Scriptures and preached unto him Jesus. So I went over to Isa.53, and I showed where the gospel of Christ is. And preached it from there. I just preached the message, probably not very well, tired as I was, and went on my way. In another city, three or four days later, we were getting ready to go where I would preach, in a certain church, that night. We had gone downtown, and gone through enough red tape to move the Pentagon, just to cash a few traveler's checks. By that time, I was tired and worn out, and didn't like Filipinos. I didn't like anybody very much, right about then, except my wife. I wanted to go home to her, but I couldn't. Anyhow, when we got ready to leave the bank, Brother Jun Delfin spoke to the lady, who had been my hostess in the bank. Yes, believe it or not, she had to lead me around to the various places where I had to go to cash travelers checks.

But Brother Delfin said, this is Brother Forrest Keener. He is going to be preaching tonight, in that particular church, of which I have forgotten the name. Would you please come and be our guest? And she said, "I may come." I thought, yea, right! Of course, you will. And that evening, as we were driving back from the bank, to my hotel, Brother Delfin said, Pastor Keener, I've been thinking about this, and praying about it, and he said, if it could please the Lord, would you consider preaching the message you preached the other night over in Hollo on the Ethiopian eunuch. I thought about it, and didn't see any reason why not, so I preached that night on that same subject from the same texts. The building was so full, you couldn't really recognize anybody. The whole building would not have been more than maybe two thirds the size of this side of this auditorium. I estimate it to have been twenty by thirty feet all together. There was no aisle left. The aisles were completely filled. I don't mean you could walk up between the chairs. They were all full. There was no place to seat anyone. Even behind me, the people were sitting so close, if I had backed up two steps, I would have been standing on somebody's feet. They were just all around me. When we stood at the end of the service, some of the chairs which had filled the isle were folded, and here came the woman from the bank, making her way to the pastor. I hadn't

personally given an invitation. I just preached the message, and turned the services over to Brother Delfin. And here came this woman from the back, spontaneously making her way up the aisle. She came to the pastor and addressed him, very simply, "Sir," he recognized her, and she said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He died for my sins. She wanted to profess Christ as her Savior. She was a Roman Catholic. She had never heard that message before in her life. It didn't come because of me. It came from what God had sent me there to do.

In Zambangua City, just a few nights later, it was almost midnight. I had to preach in another radio station, late at night. I was tired. Again, I didn't like the Filipinos. I'm teasing about that, of course. I love them with all my heart, even when I am exhausted. You know what I mean. I had gone to the station to preach that night, and 17 people went with me to the radio station at 11:00 o'clock that night. And you really do love the Filipino people when it's like that. Only 14 could get inside the studio, and 3 stood outside in the little access room, and looked through the window as I spoke. And I just preached and we got up and left. I preached that night on the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Those people need to hear that. We got up and went downstairs, ten flights I believe, and lo and behold, Pastor Delfin was not with us. He had told me just a few nights before, when I reached Zamboanga City that the people at the radio station were very angry with him. Why is that, I asked? He said, because I told them that if God were to drop all of these islands in the sea, and send all of them into hell, it would be a very good thing, because of their idolatry. You need to understand how the Filipino says things, especially if he doesn't know the English language too well. And he said they have been very mad at me for the last two or three days. I thought to myself, I hope some of them didn't decide to throw him down the stairs instead of letting him come down. But in just a couple of minutes he came down, and he was extremely excited. And he said, Pastor Keener, that engineer stopped me as I was leaving. He drew me back, and he said, sir, sir, I understood the gospel for the first time in my life. He said, God saved that man tonight! There is no thrill like that, and he said, he wants to present himself for scriptural baptism. Do you see, just the simple gospel of Christ is what God blesses. Now listen, you may be here tonight and be thinking, but preacher, there are not as many as there ought to be. May I make an observation? I expect there

are just exactly that many. Now I don't understand that, and it isn't my business to understand it. May I tell you something? I've been preaching the doctrines of sovereign grace probably as long as, or probably longer than, anyone in this congregation tonight, unless it's Brother Wayne Camp. I don't know about Brother Justice. He might have preached them all his ministerial life. But I started preaching the doctrines of grace in early 1963. And I've gone through some deep waters for preaching them. But I am not going around looking for God's elect. That's not my business. I don't know how. I have no Scripture that tells me how, or tells me to learn how. I have never been involved with that.

My business is to preach the gospel to every creature, and that is the business of the church I pastor, and if I say "my church," and you are offended, please forgive me, because I expect every member in that congregation to say, my church, with the very same emphasis with which I call it my church. It is my church. It is their church. Not in the sense that we own it, but it's the church where we serve. I have been rebuked for that, and I know I don't own that church. And I can guarantee you, I don't want the responsibility of that. I've got enough as it is. But God blesses in those things. Some years ago, there was a response to a message on the same text, I had preached on "The Jesus of Isaiah." I printed it in the Baptist Watchman, and mailed it out just like I do. A lady from Montana wrote me a letter, and she said, Pastor Keener, I've been going to church for years. I was a lost church member. And as I read in the Baptist Watchman this month, the message on "The Jesus of Isaiah," God opened my eyes, and my heart, and He saved me. She had no fancy words, she just said, "God saved me through the preaching of the message." Why? Because that's what we are here for. Let us obey God. Let's trust His commission. Let's trust the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It will do the job.

THE PROBLEM WHEN WE VARY FROM THIS PURPOSE

Thirdly, let's look at the problem when we vary from this purpose. We err, if we become success oriented, as opposed to commission oriented, if we become result oriented, or try to become contemporary, or we try to make our message a little bit

more appealing, to the young people's group, or to the high school crowd, or to the people on the street. You see, we're looking out at the world, and we ask, how can I relate to them? Now we are not non-progressive. We have three computers in our church offices, that are all networked together, and they're busy all the time. We have three laser printers and a color printer. We have all kinds of modern equipment, and I believe we ought to have that. I'm not one who is sitting in a corner and saying, well, God's going to do it. I know God's going to do it, but I also know that we have a job to do, and we should use all proper means. But listen, we must not, we may not, ever rightly change the message to suit the populace of the world, because if it is changed, it will not be used as an instrument of conversion. "Baptists" have to a great extent, become far too "Methodist."

I'm not picking on anybody, but through men like John R. Rice and Jack Hyles, and some men who meant well, we have turned to methods, and forgotten God's method. Roman road evangelism is probably the greatest enemy to true gospel evangelism in the world today. Let me tell you a secret. The Bible says in Romans 10:13, *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Now I believe that. But I want to tell you, those men I'm talking about do not believe that. Say what you will, they do not really believe that, because they will interpret what "Calling upon the Lord" means by instructing people as to how to do it, that is to bow their heads and say a prayer. And they themselves, will tell you that not everybody that does what they asked them to do is genuinely saved. Will they not? They surely will. If in your life time, you can get one single person, just one, not two, just one, to do what you instruct them to do, and they are not saved, then what you are instructing them to do is not what Romans 10:13 is talking about. Because the Bible says that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and it means exactly that. Most of the children in this congregation understand what that means. And it means exactly that. We need to be careful, because when we begin to take methods that appeal to men, as opposed to trusting God's method, we will do two or three counterproductive things. First of all, we will bring about the preaching of a strange or new gospel. Galatians 1:8-9 says, *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,*

let him be accursed." You may think I'm a little bit hard? Listen to this fellow. Listen to Paul. *"Let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."* What gospel is Paul insisting upon? He is talking about what he said in 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

Don't frustrate it. Don't try to hone it. Don't try to make it contemporary. Don't try to make it fit the people. Preach it as it is. God blesses that. And when we do not preach it just as Scripture reveals it, we are going to frustrate it. Paul said I do not frustrate, I do not dilute the gospel, for if salvation comes by works, what kind of works, any kinds of works, it doesn't matter, if salvation comes by a formula of human activity, what kind of human activity, any kind of human activity, Christ died in vain. Faith and repentance do not constitute a combination of religious activity by which men appropriate Salvation. Faith is a state of the soul wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, and the Word of God, by which they rest in the finished work of Christ. They cease from all of their own works. They cease from any hope in anything that they have done, or ever can do. And they rest in what Jesus Christ has done for them. It is the purpose of the church to turn the eyes of men away from any hope in what they can do, and cause them to look to Christ. The religious world says pray the prayer. You've heard that, haven't you? Pray the prayer. Be baptized, that's what the Campbellites say. I want to tell you a secret, folks. You don't have to like this, it is free. Getting people to repeat a prayer for salvation is not one bit better than, in essence, it's not any different from, getting them to be baptized for salvation. It is the same issue. It is salvation by human activity. Oh, listen, people will pray when they come to God. When they are regenerated, they will pray. But you let them take care of that, so that they don't think that praying is what saved them. Do you understand what I'm talking about? Don't instruct people to do something for their salvation. The gospel is what Christ did for sinners, plus nothing, minus nothing. Men say, God did His part, now you need to do your part. That prostitutes the gospel. When you start talking about making God's work effective by your work, you have absolutely prostituted the whole thing. What we've spoken of tonight, is the purpose of the church.

THE RESULT WHEN THIS PURPOSE IS FAITHFULLY CARRIED OUT

Just a couple of statements of exhortation and I'm through. What is the result when this is faithfully done? Isa.55:11 says, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* Do you believe the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth? If you do, you can go into a home and sit down and witness to people, you can give them the gospel, you can preach Christ to them, and get up and have prayer with them and go home. That doesn't bother me one bit. But you ask, what if they want to be saved? Hey listen, I'm not a midwife. God's not going to be absent if they look for Him. He's going to be right there. He's available to them. But, by doing what I just described, I can also go back a couple of weeks later and say, I've been praying that God would have saved you. I'm sorry, but I haven't heard anything from you yet. Are there any questions that I might answer for you? Ah, but when I get that profession, I have cut the cord of evangelism between that person and myself. Wrestling a profession from them is the most foolish thing I can do. Now, if I just want a show of results, I mean just apparent results, that's the way to get it. But when we do it according to the biblical pattern, souls will be saved, as God pleases, God's people will be taught, and new churches will arise. It is God's method and it pleases God.

I think I've got about another four or five minutes, haven't I preacher? I'd like to say something, indeed, I feel like I must. I am troubled by what I often see today in young men, and I am not just complaining about the young men, I'm talking about some of the traditional ways we do "mission work." We take a young man and send him out to a certain city, or we teach him to decide what city "God has led him to," to build a true "New Testament church." He goes there and we finance him to stay year, after year, after year, after year, and nothing happens. Now I'm not talking about being result oriented. I'm saying, have we wandered away from what God has told us to do? Do you know what I'd like to see? I would like to see some of our most

experienced gospel preachers going into some of these towns, able to rent a place, and preach the gospel. You know, the old time preachers used to use a method much like that. Across Kentucky and Tennessee, many of the churches were started because some old farmer, who was a gospel preacher, when his crop was laid by, got on his horse, and he rode out into an area that was not evangelized, and he preached the gospel of Christ, and people were saved, and they constituted churches out of those who were saved. What if nobody was saved? He went somewhere else. Doesn't this seem kind of like what Paul did? What a copy cat those old preachers were, to do things like the apostles did them. I think we really ought to pray about putting the preaching of the gospel out in front, rather than being so result oriented that we say, what we have to do is to build a church. And whatever we have to do to do that, we do it. No, no, no! We preach the gospel. We baptize the believers. We teach them to observe. And when we complete that, a church has been built, because observing all things will involve that. I believe we really, really ought to pray, brethren, about getting our conduct in line with the church's purpose. God still blesses the preaching of the gospel. But whether He blesses our ministries, if we are the ones who figure out the method to use, I'm just not too sure.

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