

# The Traveling Pulpit

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## God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church Part II

**“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 part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**

### Introduction

The church of Jesus Christ is not a building made of brick and wood. Neither is it an organization, but an organism. The blood bought church of Jesus Christ is comprised of people that have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and birthed into the household of faith. The actual physical structure wherein a congregation meets is perhaps one of the least important aspects of the church. It's nice to have good meeting facilities, but that doesn't make a church. The church is people, redeemed people, who are on mission for Christ in proclaiming the good news of the Gospel to a lost world and helping to make disciples of those who are saved.

All kinds of excuses are given for not sharing the claims of the Gospel. Some church members believe that's only the "preachers" job and that it's nothing more than a form of manipulation. Others think that it's in bad taste to confront a lost person about Christ. More than anything else, it's probably the fear of rejection that keeps many Christians from bearing a verbal witness. There are literally multitudes of people that need to be told about Jesus Christ beginning in our own communities and unless

someone tells them, they'll never hear. We need to always remember that as we go forth, it is the Holy Spirit Who is the divine agent in evangelism. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we ever become an effective witness for Christ. There is no one single way to present the Gospel, but there is only ONE WAY to be saved and Jesus said that He was the "way" (Jh. 14:6).

The Institute for American Church Growth asked 10,000 people, "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and to the church they attend?" This was how they replied. 2% said they had a special need. 3% said they just walked in. 6% said they liked the pastor. 1% said they visited there. 5% said they liked the Sunday School. 3% said they liked the programs. Only ½ to 1% said they attended a Revival Effort. But, listen to this! 79% said that a friend or relative invited them. Personal witnessing should be a top priority in the life of every Christian. We need to become willing vessels for the Holy Spirit to use in encouraging people to turn to Christ in repentance and faith. Then, invite them to the local assembly where they can learn of Christ.

The church has changed a great deal over the centuries. It has become very complex and businesslike and for the most part, functions more like a business than a body, more like a factory than a family, and more like a corporation than a community. Many local churches have become nothing more than entertainment centers, giving performances to unproductive churchgoers.

God has given us a blueprint on how to "build" His "church" and He will "build" it through us if we will only follow His plan. What Jesus said to Peter, He is saying to us today, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). If we follow God's plan, the "gates of Hell" cannot overpower it, but if we depart from His plan, the guarantee is no longer valid. If the "church" is to be built God's way, it will not only be redeemed, but empowered by the "Holy Spirit." Self-will, personal agendas, and sin must be set aside so that the "Holy Spirit" can rule in our assembly. Christ never intended for His "church" to be a spectator sport or an amusement center.

If a local church is doing what it ought to be doing, she will reproduce herself (so to speak) as God calls out His elect, births lost sinners into the family of God, and sees sinners growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, many Christians come to church services regularly, sitting in lonely isolation, and never intending to get involved in serving the Lord. As a result, they never discover the joy of serving Jesus. Don't ever forget that if you are saved, you are saved to serve your Master. It ought to be our desire to see spiritual growth, growth in ourselves, in other believers, and in the congregation where we serve. There will be church growth and spiritual growth if we're committed in following God's blueprint. We need to be busy doing that which is most important. We need to remain faithful to the call of God and get the Gospel out into the highways and hedges. As we do this, keep trusting the Lord to "build" His "church" His way (Acts 2:47). When Jesus comes again, may He find us waiting, watching, and working for His glory.

Before closing this particular study, I call your attention to three specific doctrines that will be extremely helpful in helping us to properly understand our role in personal witnessing.

## **The Doctrine of Election**

First of all, there is the doctrine of election. Every person born into this world is totally depraved (Rom. 3:11). A man is saved because God has chosen him out of this world, breaks his heart in repentance, grants faith to believe, and gives him a desire for salvation from sin (Jh. 15:16). If left to himself, man would never choose God (I Jh. 4:19). Salvation begins and ends with God. Man can make no contribution to his salvation simply because it is totally of God. In our culture, I can use marriage to illustrate my point because every man has the right to choose his bride. To put it simply, divine election is the choosing (selecting) of a certain people by God to be the bride of Christ (Eph. 1:4-5).

## **The Doctrine of Predestination**

Secondly, I call your attention to the doctrine of predestination. This is a word that literally scares some people half to death and many within the church try to side-step it. However, it is a lovely biblical truth that must not be overlooked nor avoided. Predestination means to determine beforehand what is to be brought to pass. To illustrate a good example of this, all we have to do is look at biblical prophecy. Prophecy is nothing more than the predetermined will of God written in advance. God is sovereign, which means that absolutely nothing takes Him by surprise (Isa. 46:9-10). There is no Scripture which says that God predestinates lost people to Hell. To begin with, everybody born into this world is lost and on their way to Hell. If it were not for God's GRACE, He could send the entire human race into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). Although, we cannot fully understand or explain it, the Bible teaches that God's "elect" (I Pet. 1:2) are foreknown and predestined (Rom. 8:28-30).

## **The Doctrine of Evangelism**

Thirdly, we now come to the doctrine of evangelism. I want to make it perfectly clear that evangelism is not just winning souls to Christ or getting people saved, baptized, or joining a church. Pay close attention to what I'm about to say. SALVATION is the result of evangelism. Matters such as baptism and church membership should be the result of salvation. Evangelism is taking the message of God's saving grace, that is made possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, to lost souls (Rom. 10:9-21). The Bible says that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), but only the sinner who believes by God-given "faith" (Eph. 2:8) in Christ alone is truly saved. Those who trust Christ alone in repentance of their sin are those who bear evidence of being the called, chosen, elected of God. As we rub shoulders with the everyday work-a-day world, we don't know who the elect are; therefore, we must take the Gospel to the entire world in order for the elect to hear and believe (I Cor. 3:5-7). The divine plan of New Testament evangelism is given in Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." It's not our job to figure out who's going

to get saved, but it's our job to "daily" lift up Christ in such a way so that sinners can learn of God's saving grace.

The average congregation of today thinks that it's only the pastor's job to tell people about Jesus. If you are a redeemed child of God, then it's the privilege and responsibility of every believer to be telling the story of God's redeeming love. You don't have to schedule an appointment or visit to do this kind of witnessing. Lifestyle evangelism is a way of life. Wherever we go and whatever we do as blood washed believers, God has called us to be His witnesses. It's our job to do the telling, but it's the work of the Holy Spirit to do the saving. I close with the words of an old hymn that was written by B.B. McKinney,

"While passing thro' this world of sin, And others your life shall view,  
Be clean and pure without, within, Let Others see Jesus in you.  
Your life's a book before their eyes, They're reading it thro' and thro',  
Say, does it point them to the skies, Do others see Jesus in you?  
Then live for Christ both day and night, Be faithful, be brave and true,  
And lead the lost to life and life; Let others see Jesus in you.  
Let others see Jesus in you ... Let others see Jesus in you;  
Keep telling the story, be faithful and true, Let others see Jesus in you."

### **A Word From The Ministry**

As we enter the month of April, we celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is indeed a wonderful time of year when we remember the price He paid for us in his sacrificial atonement on the cross in payment for our sins. Then, three days later, He proved his deity by coming out of the grave to do what no other has ever done. Because He lives, we have hope beyond the grave and the Christian is assured that the best is yet to come. Praise His Holy Name!

By God's grace, I'm glad to report that we are now on five radio stations with the Wilkins Radio Network that you will find listed in the heading of this quarterly edition. We began the year broadcasting over Huntsville, AL, and Greenville, SC, and then added Pensacola, FL, and Asheville, NC. Just recently, we were able to return to the Richmond, VA, station with which we originally began on the Wilkins Network.

Last year (2014) we had a total of 21,781 "hits" on our web page. As of the writing of this quarter's publication, we have had a total of 7,873 "hits" thus far this year. If this continues the rest of the year, we'll have the most ever with continual increases in "hits." Also, the most recent report shows for the first time that I can remember, more "hits" are coming from outside the USA. As of March, so far, we've had 396 in the USA and 532 from Brazil. These are not outstanding figures for a large ministry, but for us, its praise worthy unto the Lord. Thank you for being a part of this little ministry through prayer and your financial support.

Because of his Sovereign Grace.....BWM