

The Mission of the Church

Acts 13:1-12

What is the church's mission?

Something has been really bugging me lately. And the Holy Spirit has convicted me to bring it to you at first opportunity. That opportunity is today in the context of Acts 13. So here's what's been bugging me—the answer to the introductory question...

I was recently reminded of how easy it is even for *biblical believers* to accept in addition to our *biblical mission that which is not at all biblical*. So let's begin by re-identifying **the biblical mission for the church**. It's the **G_____ Commission**. Before His earthly exit, Jesus made it crystal clear: "Go, make disciples, then baptize disciples, and teach disciples all that I taught you" (Matthew 28:19-20). It's not at all hidden from us.

It's given again at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, and then it's demonstrated to us throughout this Spirit-inspired book:

In **Acts 1:8** Jesus prophesied to His disciples: "When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses [first] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

In **Acts 2-7** the church is born in Jerusalem and grows like crazy.

In **Acts 8** the church is scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

In **Acts 9** Saul is called to become the apostle to the Gentiles.

In **Acts 10** God targeted the Gentile Cornelius and his household.

In **Acts 11** the church, for the first time, targets Gentiles in Antioch.

In **Acts 12** in spite of severe persecution the church multiplies.

In **Acts 13-28** the church _____ out missionaries with the gospel into the then known world, and it's still sent to the end of the earth.

The early church progressively understood their mission: *Make disciples and then grow them up in Christ so the new disciples can make more disciples*, and just stay in that great cycle. It's not that hard: **Build the church by building churches!**

However, since we *Biblical Christians* are also *American Christians*, I'm amazed at how easy it is to **drift off our biblical mission**. And that's my beef. The *American Church* within the *Biblical Church* gets fooled into thinking that **our mission** is to _____ America. *Americans*, yes. *America*, no. The early church wasn't into **nation building**. They were into **church building**, which began with the preaching the gospel.

What is the church's true mission toward the world? God help us! For the last thing FBC wants to give ourselves to is an **unbiblical mission**! So, let's continue to make sure **we stay on mission**. There are in today's Bible passage **five characteristics of an on-mission church**.

What does an on-_____ church look like?

1. It is led in _____ (1-2a).

The leaders of the Antioch church are identified here by their ministry functions. The prophets are the *fore-tellers*, needed at the time when they had only the OT Scriptures. The teachers are the _____-tellers, those who taught the Scriptures to the church. This is what **on-mission** church leaders do: they guide the church into truth, they lead the church in worship, and these early leaders sought the Lord's will through fasting, so they'll be **on-mission**!

2. It sends out the _____ (2-3).

The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul on a **gospel-preaching, church-planting mission**, so it was **their mission** to go, and it was **the church's mission** to send them off. But notice that the **biblical church** discovered their **biblical mission** while it was in **biblical worship**. Both are essential to the biblical church: **worship** here and **mission** out there.

Henry Martyn: "The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become," even to the point of delighting to send out our best!

The year is AD 47, and *the gospel is on the move*, and this mission will take two years (AD 47-48).

3. It proclaims the _____ (4-7).

And once they arrived at Salamis, in keeping with the divine directive to take the gospel of Israel's Messiah to the Jews first, they proclaimed it in the city's Jewish synagogues. But preaching in the synagogues was also the best way to reach the Gentiles, because the God-fearing Gentiles regularly attended the synagogue. And having already turned from their pagan idol worship, they were sincere Yahweh-seekers.

Paphos, the Roman capital on the island, was 100 miles west of Salamis. Once in Paphos, they meet a Jewish false prophet with demonic power, "Bar-Jesus," meaning "the Son of Jesus," "Jesus," meaning "Yahweh _____." He's the personal magician of the Roman governor.

There's only one reason the missionaries are in Paphos: *to build the church of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the gospel*. But, of course, like all missionaries of all times, and like us today, Barnabas and Saul are ministering in enemy territory.

4. It experiences _____ (8-11).

Elymas was a *seeker—the seeker of evil*. When he saw that his boss was interested in the gospel, he *sought* to turn him away from faith in Jesus. How ironic is this: the so-called *Son of Jesus*, powerfully opposed *the Servants of Jesus*, because Sergius Paulus was a *Seeker of Jesus*. If the proconsul came to faith in Jesus, this magician would be out of a job.

Side note: For the first time in Acts *Saul* is called *Paul*. He has two names: Saul is his Jewish name, and Paul [Paulus] is his Roman [or Gentile/Greek] name. Now that the apostle to the Gentiles is actively preaching to the Gentiles, he now goes by his Gentile name.

The truth about this “Son of Jesus...” We ought not to ever be surprised that this “son of the devil” opposed the work of God, doing his very best to keep the governor from the faith. And we ought not to be surprised when other sons and daughters of the devil oppose us. The church that’s **on-mission** *does not* get a pass. We will be opposed, ridiculed, laughed at, persecuted, even martyred. And we’re _____ with that, because in this worldly world, we are only here **to be on-mission!** And if we’re persecuted or killed in the process, so be it.

5. It leads seekers to _____ (7 & 12).

What “astonished” Sergius Paulus was the power and wonder of the Word that could save a wretched Roman like himself! That’s the power of the gospel—it’s the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes it. Because of its awesome power, and because it’s why a **biblical church** is here, rather than be ashamed of our message and afraid to share it with others, *we are most privileged to share it with others.*

The mission on Cyprus is a huge success! But how ironic: while the opposing Jew is physically blind, the Gentile seeker has spiritual sight. This foreshadows what this missionary journey will be like. Jews will mostly reject their Messiah and His gospel, while Gentiles will increasingly receive Christ by receiving His gospel.

And seekers of the Lord will be led to the Lord by us, also, *if we...*

Stay on mission!

And necessary to **staying on mission**, we must guard against being deceived by *the well-intentioned* into believing that our **biblical mission** is anything other than to **build Christ’s church**. For example, to attempt to **build this nation**, to try to **save America**, is to be _____ mission.

Duane Moyer: At the first communion, “When Jesus lifted a glass in blessing and passed it around to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, *He was vowing* before witnesses to accomplish *the Mission* on which He had been sent, whatever the cost. It was a Warriors Pledge to yield to nothing until He had made a public spectacle of [His enemies], triumphing over them by the cross.” **His Mission Accomplished!** Now it’s our turn. Let us not disappoint Him.