

12. God Has Stated the Mission of the Church Regarding His Mystery

God gave us the church as the institution that should carry forth with the gospel after the ascension of Christ, calling the church the pillar and foundation of truth in 1 Tim 3:14-15:

14 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Jesus embedded this mission for the church in his great commission in Matt 28:18-20:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The early church carried out this command from its very beginning after Pentecost in Acts 2:42-43:

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

The Church Is Now Responsible for Preaching the Gospel

Eph 3:10-11

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That the church should make known the manifold wisdom of God was his eternal purpose. In order for the church to fulfill this mission, God placed in the church those offices and functions necessary to enable it for all generations. Eph 4:11-13 outlines these functions and duties:

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The apostles and prophets were those inspired men who wrote down God's revelation, during the first century, according to Eph 3:4-5:

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The offices of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, remain in effect across centuries to this very day. And they will continue until “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.”

The Church Is to Support Preachers of the Gospel

Phil 4:15-16

15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

Here one finds the apostolic example for churches supporting preachers—an example complemented by the command in Gal 6:6: “6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

1 Cor 9:3-12

3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don't we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

By command, example, and analogy, we must support evangelists to preach to all nations

Conclusion

There is no other way.