

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**C0832 – September 24, 2008 – Doctrine Of Missions - Part 7**

Alright, we're working with the Doctrine of Missions. And we're in the period of Church History. We're spending so much time on this period because this is our period and we need to know what the divine instructions are, what has happened and where we are, how we've done over the last 2,000 years, how this is all connected to your basic theology. So last time we worked with the divine instruction in the Great Commission. There we said there's a dual emphasis; divine sovereignty on the one hand and human responsibility on the other. Take the Matthean record "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." "make disciples" is the imperative, the command, the human responsibility, the "Go" is an attendant circumstance, their going out occurs by God's sovereignty, somehow He works that out, that's what's happening in the Book of Acts. So both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are involved in fulfilling the Great Commission.

One of the activities of church history has been to find out just what our responsibilities are in a more detailed analysis. I call these means; means God has decreed by His sovereignty to be involved in the conversion of men. Now this is a point of contention, what means if any are to be used. There have been many throughout history who have denied means. God will just zap people, you stay out of it. I gave you the example of William Carey and his superior John Ryland, now I give you an example from the Baptist tradition, a man named John Peck and he wanted to take the gospel out but, "He met pastors who strongly opposed missions. They were obstinate and did not recognize individual responsibility. In consequence of their views they were prayerless, objected to the use of means in the conversion of men, and denied the necessity of sending the Gospel to the destitute." You think, what in the world was wrong with these pastors? What was wrong was their theology. Their theology denied the use of means; their theology had God

sovereignly doing everything independent of means. So that's why we went into the various means that God has sovereignly decreed.

We found in the Scriptures several; first there is *prayer*, the harvest is great but the workers are few, prayer is necessary but the Scriptures say there is more we can and should do. Second we should *send* workers out, men who are well-trained in the Scriptures, men who are able to articulate the biblical narrative, men who are clear on the gospel, men of caliber and truth. Third, they have to *preach* the message of judgment/salvation, it's not enough to give your testimony, testimonies don't convert people to the living God, they convert people to your experience. So these men must do whatever is necessary to communicate the saving message to people. It may involve studying their language, their customs to learn how these people think. It may include translating the Holy Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into their native tongue, all this is involved in preaching the message. This is a lot of work, this is not easy. Fourth, the people have to *hear* the message and by that we mean they have to understand it, they have to get it, they have to grasp the content of the gospel and that may require years of working with these people. The gospel isn't a magic formula. You've got to find the right word for God, sin, righteousness and so forth otherwise you lose the meaning. You have to give them the historical background of the gospel. If you preach the gospel in a vacuum then people will automatically re-interpret it, this goes on and on and Christians never seem to get it. You simply cannot say the name Jesus and expect people to fall down and start worshipping the God of Scripture, most people do not have the proper categories for understanding the gospel. Our own American culture does not have the context for understanding the gospel. If you say God or Jesus or the resurrection and you think you've communicated to these people you're fooling yourself. Satan blinds the minds of the unbelieving and he does that deep down in the linguistic structure of a society. You have to work with people just like Paul did in Athens, and it's hard work, I assure you. But people have to understand basics like who God is, who man is what sin is and so forth if they are ever going to understand the gospel. This is where the astute missionary and evangelist spend about 99% of their time. A fifth thing we brought in is the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, John 16:8-11, notice in those verses Jesus says, "the Holy Spirit *will convict* of sin, righteousness and judgment." It's a future tense, so we know this is not for all time, this is not for all people, it refers only to the day of Pentecost forward and then it is further

limited by the fact that it occurs only to those who get the Scriptures. Some men never hear the Scriptures, people in our own country, I've had people in my office and I start explaining the Scriptures and they've told me, "I've never heard the Scriptures, I wasn't raised that way." They don't have a clue and you can't assume people have your upbringing, they don't, and these people are right outside these walls. And if someone never hears the word then they never come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, these specific and very definite convictions, they may feel guilty, that's not what we're talking about. So we are already limiting this ministry away from all men. The death of Christ was for all men but this ministry of the Spirit is not. So let's look at His essential work, it is absolutely essential, He must convict people of sin, righteousness and judgment. These are three things people suppress so the Holy Spirit is going to, so to speak, lift the suppression, cut to the heart of the issue, but only in connection with the word of God. Always the word of God is involved, He never works independently of the word of God. Alright, so let's see how that word of God is used with some philosophers in Acts 17.

Last time I left you with this assignment, this will be our example of what we've just said. I asked you to take the three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit; sin, righteousness and judgment and compare those three things with the basic material in Paul's apologia at Athens. And keep in mind that Paul is dealing with a pagan people, they are Gentiles so they don't have a basic framework of the OT Scriptures, they don't have right categories in their thinking and yet Paul comes to these people preaching Jesus and the resurrection. You can imagine, Paul must have been a very clear preacher, the guy wrote half the NT. And in v 17 he's out talking to these philosophers and how do they interpret him in v 18? He's an "idle babblers," what this Greek word means is someone who lacks sophistication. He's just a newspaper exegete, he picks up a few scraps of information and strings them together into some incoherent gobbledygook. That's one interpretation of Paul. Then you have some others in v 18 who think they figured Paul out, "Oh, he's a proclaimer of strange deities—Jesus and the resurrection. Paul's introducing two new gods to the Parthenon." Now, if you were Paul you'd be a bit frustrated here? What happened? I was so clear about Jesus and the resurrection and you interpret me to be expanding the Parthenon? This is the kind of thing the missionary faces, this is the thing the evangelist faces, this is the thing the pastor-teacher faces. You think you've been crystal clear and

someone comes up and you can hardly tell it was the same subject. Why does this happen? Why this happens is the pagan mind suppresses the truth, suppresses the truth for years and years to the point that the mind is darkened, and everything you say is re-interpreted in his own framework. His unbelief has just strategically enveloped your bible verse, you haven't touched him, just like water off a ducks back, you haven't penetrated. So Paul thought about this, "I don't ever want to be misinterpreted like that, it happened to me at Lystra, it happened to me here at Athens, I'm tired of this happening." So what he does is very interesting. He reverses their strategy. They interpreted him in their framework so what he's going to do is re-interpret them in his framework. He's giving us a technique when we talk to people; a strategy of encircling an unbeliever and re-interpreting Him in terms of the word of God. He's giving them a dose of their own medicine. So the first thing he does is make sure the whole defense is in the context of creation, "Look guys, the God I'm talking about is the God who made the world and all things in it." And by doing that they can't misinterpret him. So we want to see, in the context of the Creator God what three fundamental elements can he now talk about?

See if you can relate what Paul says to the three things the Holy Spirit convicts of in John 16. In v 22 Paul begins the indictment. Now look at the charges in v 22, 23 and 29? Just scan through those verses. If you could sum up those verses what word would you use? Idolatry. What's idolatry? It's sin. So here's our first element from John 16. The Holy Spirit will convict of sin. Therefore Paul preaches sin. What's he indicting them on in v 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28? That series of verses, what's the subject? Who God is, He's made Himself known to you, you know Him, why are you worshipping idols, things you made with your own hands, why are you suppressing this righteous God, you think you're going to get away with it, c'mon guys, you know Who I'm talking about. So there's our second element from John 16, the Holy Spirit will convict of righteousness, God is righteous, that's His character. And then the indictment comes to a head in v 31 what's the key truth there. That this righteous God is going to judge on a particular day, already set from time immemorial, and what's the standard here? His righteousness which you guys have not met. So get with the program, it's time to repent, have a change of mind. So there's your three fold-ministry of the Holy Spirit right there in Paul's missions to these people. Paul says, "Hey, I know what the Spirit is up to so I'm going to gear my message to His program because that's

how He works.” This is not coming out of Paul’s brilliance, this is coming out of Paul’s submission to the word of God. So Paul says to himself, “My responsibility is to preach these truths in the biblical context and through preaching them the Holy Spirit will convict these people.”

Now what was the result? Did he get some conversions? Verse 34, some believed, not many, just some. Did Paul do something wrong? No, not at all. Just because the word is preached, just because the Spirit convicts, does that guarantee a positive response? No. Only some believed. It’s like one of my seminary professors told me, look, you get four different responses when you preach the word; 1) No hearing, these are you’re people who are asleep, konked out, trust me, we have some of those, week in week out people come here to get a nap, they’re not interested in the word of God, I don’t know why they are here, stay in bed. 2) Hear but are not convicted. Why? Because they’ve so hardened themselves, like Pharaoh they have rejected the word, rejected the word, rejected the word to the point that they are so hard it wouldn’t matter if they’re whole family resurrected they wouldn’t believe, they’re hardened to the word of God. 3) Hear and are convicted but reject, the word gets to them but they quickly forget it, they walk out without any change of mind, just go on with life. And 4) hear, get convicted and respond positively, they believe. Now, Jesus got those four responses, Peter got those four responses, Philip got those four responses, Paul got those four responses, I get those four responses, you get those four responses. To confirm from a scholar here I quote Dr John Walvoord. *“The fact is that the Spirit of God brings conviction and understanding to many who never believe, who turn from the gospel even after the way of salvation is made plain to them.”* Why do some people respond positively and others don’t? I don’t know ultimately but I attribute it to something God is doing, God is at work with people. But it’s our job to pray, send and preach, if we don’t do that people can’t hear, be convicted and believe. And so we emphasize both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, there are means involved and once you recognize that it’s an impetus for missions.

Now we want to start in the Book of Acts and move through church history very rapidly. We want to see how the Great Commission has worked out. How men’s theology has affected missions. What kind of missions agencies have developed. The church’s role in missions and where we are today.

Now, the Book of Acts is our first church history book. It covers the first thirty years of church history. And it records the outworking of the Great Commission over those first thirty years in three stages, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, the remotest parts of the earth. That's the geographic movement. God worked the circumstances, when men found themselves in those regions they witnessed to the gospel. We just want to make one observation about this period related to missions. In Acts 2-7 where was the witness? Jerusalem? Who was running the show? The apostles. Why didn't they go out? Hadn't Jesus told them about global evangelism? Of course He had. What was wrong with them? Their theology again. Same problem. Every time you have a problem it goes back somewhere to your theology. What was their theology? That God's program is for Israel only. Now the Hellenists they didn't agree on this point. Stephen and Philip, their focus is much broader. How did that affect their view of missions? Weren't they the first ones to go out? You can say they got forced out but nevertheless you can see that the reason Stephen got murdered was precisely because he saw the bigger picture. He was not confining ministry to the holy city Jerusalem. But the apostles hesitated, they hesitated to cross cultural boundaries, they hesitated to break geographical boundaries, and all this despite the fact that Jesus had paved the way in the gospels by evangelizing a Gentile centurion and a Samaritan village. So the Hellenists were the ones who went out in connection with the persecution of Stephen, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

Now, let's pause here for a minute, because Acts 2-7 is an interesting case study. It shows how your theology affects missions. Isn't the apostles theology similar to limited atonement, particular redemption? They think the plan of God has only to do with Israel. The limited atonement people think the cross is only for the elect. And therefore both theologies hinder missions. They're not interested in anyone else. This is very interesting because it shows that there is a definite link between your theology and missions. If you in any way limit what Christ did on the cross you will tend to limit missions. I'm setting you up for later in church history that we'll come to. We could turn to Acts 10 and see how Peter struggled with going to Gentiles. He had to see a vision of unclean animals three times to get the point that the way is open to Gentiles too. He was very narrow and provincial in his views and thus he wasn't going out to those people.

Now, in Acts 8 we have Philip the evangelist, he's a Hellenistic Jew, he's not a native, so he's thinking outside the box of Jerusalem, he's thinking more universal, he's a lot like Stephen, he thinks on a much larger scale about what Jesus Christ did the plan of God, and in v 5 he goes out to the Samaritans and he preaches the word to them and in verse 12 they "believe the good news about the kingdom and the Lord Jesus." To confirm this event as a bonafide movement of God the apostles Peter and John are sent to Samaria, there is a manifestation of tongues, so it's confirmed, we call this the Samaritan Pentecost and after all this they go back to Jerusalem *quote*, verse 25, "preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans." This is their first preaching to non-Jews and it is significant, it's apparent that God accepts Samaritans and they went along with this to a degree but they didn't continue in Samaria, they went back to headquarters. Philip on the other hand, in v 26 receives a revelation from the Lord to go to the road toward Gaza, so here we see the Lord orchestrating the circumstances outside Jerusalem and Philip obediently hops over to Gaza, this man had been up in Jerusalem and he was going back to Africa and providentially Philip runs into an Ethiopian eunuch, the treasurer of Ethiopia and he leads him to Christ. This is an example of God making sure the gospel gets to a person who has responded positively to the light he has received and will respond positively to saving revelation. So Philip is operating in the plan of God, this deacon from chapter 6, but the apostles are still staying in Jerusalem. It is tough to get them to budge. Turn to chapter 10 we'll see what it took to get Peter to budge. This is just a quick overview, we're not concerned with the details, we just want to get the big picture of how the apostles responded to the Great Commission. In chapter 10 verse 9 here's Peter, he's in the coastal city of Joppa, an old port city on the Mediterranean and he was staying with a man named Simon who was a tanner, he worked with leather, and he was up on the rooftop and in verse 10 Peter was really hungry and they're making some food downstairs and he goes into a trance and he sees this sheet coming down out of heaven with all these unclean animals on it, it's a loose quote of Gen 9:2-3, Peter's being shown something significant. After the Flood God said men could eat animals but in the Mosaic Law there you couldn't eat unclean animals so what this vision is doing is getting him out of the Mosaic Law, Christ fulfilled that, so Peter, "God's going back to a prior order, an order where you can eat anything and there's nothing wrong with that." And so the voice says in v 13, "Rise Peter, kill and eat!" And Peter's disgusted. He's never violated the Mosaic Law in the food department. Of course, if this

was you and I we'd be immediately go get our rifle and go kill a pig and cut a nice slab of bacon. But not Peter and then v 15 the voice comes again, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy!" there's been a dietary change Peter, we're reverting back to a prior era, the era of Abraham. Abraham was called when he was a Jew or a Gentile? Gentile, he was an uncircumcised Gentile and God is saying we're going back to that. And how many times does Peter have to get hammered with this? Three times. Now you'd think after seeing Jesus minister to Samaritans and Gentiles, after being charged with the Great Commission Peter would have been ready and roaring to go. But he wasn't, he was not excited to cross his boundaries because his theology at the time hadn't grown to accommodate these things. But after three repeat visions he gets it and he goes and he preaches in a Gentile house, and in 10:43 here's his message about Jesus, "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." <sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message." So this is the Gentile Pentecost, they go on and speak in tongues and look at the Jews reaction in v 45. "All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed." This just rocked their world. They were shocked at this. And we look back and we think, what is wrong with you guys, why are you shocked, didn't Jesus tell you all this, why are you having a hard time believing the word of God. But c'mon, most of us know we're exactly the same, we're not going to go preach to the heathen, they're not going to believe anyway. But they did believe. Now after this you get Saul, Saul turns into Paul and we know where that goes, this man, wherever he goes he is a powerful Bible teacher and he takes the word of God all the way to Rome and that's where Acts leaves off.

In the war of AD66-73 Jerusalem is surrounded by the Roman armies, the believing Jews leave and the city is destroyed. Israel goes into Exile, Christianity becomes predominantly Gentile. It grows in the Roman Empire under persecution of many Emperors and is finally made the official state religion of Rome by Constantine in the early 300'sAD. Then we move into the period of Roman Catholicism, a state-church, we won't go into that period except to say this was a spiritual dark ages, we're talking 300-1500AD, 1200 years. Early on the Bible was translated into Latin, what is called the Old Latin Vulgate, it was just the vulgar tongue at the time but it became the scholastic language, nobody spoke it and so the word of God became inaccessible to the common man. The Roman Catholic church-state system



controlled the Scriptures and would not permit it to be translated into other languages. But the Reformation changed all that, earlier men like John Hus, John Wycliffe, the “morning star of the Reformation,” these men took steps to get the Bible in the languages of the common man. The major breakthrough’s came with Martin Luther’s German translation in 1522, William Tyndale’s English translation in 1525 and others. So the Reformation is a critical piece of the puzzle because the Roman Church had basically kept the word of God in chains for 1200 years. I’m not saying there were no missionaries for 1200 years, the Catholics certainly spread their empire, but very little is known about genuine missionaries in this period until the Waldensians, the Huguenots, the Hussites, small groups that preceded and paved the way for the Protestant Reformation. When the Protestant Reformation happened the Bible was translated into languages the common man could read and this opened up the missionary enterprise.

However, what startles you when you read church history is that for two hundred years after the Reformation there was no missions, none. It was so absent that this period became known as the Great Omission. As Dr George W. Peters, past professor of world missions at Dallas Theological Seminary said, *“While we respect the Reformers as truly great men of God...The churches which resulted from their labor were not missionary churches...A negative theology did dominate the official Protestant church following the Reformation for some two centuries.”*<sup>7</sup> So why this Great Omission? Why no missions? We want to investigate why and how the modern missions movement came out of this and where that leaves us today.

To start, I think we have to say in all seriousness that these people were deeply involved in working out a theology based on the biblical text and not on papal tradition which in its various decisions rests upon some admixture of the Bible and Greek philosophy. You can’t fault these first Reformers because they were working with the biblical text and not really prepared for full-fledged missions.

A second thing was that out of the Reformation four major groups developed, five if you count the continuing tradition of Roman Catholicism. If you look at the top right of this diagram notice the Doctrinal Wall that separates the four protestant groups on the left from Roman Catholicism on the right.

## DOCTRINAL HERITAGE OF THE REFORMATION

*By Ron Merryman ©*

	← for reforming <i>status quo</i> ←				<b>Doctrinal Wall</b>
<b>Doctrine</b>	<b>“Anabaptists”—Radicals</b>	<b>Reformed</b>	<b>Lutheran</b>	<b>Anglican</b>	<b>Roman Catholic</b>
<b>Soteriology (Salvation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salvation is free to all but only applicable to believers</li> <li>- Personal faith also means that one becomes a disciple in the sense used in the 4 Gospels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salvation is for the Elect alone.</li> <li>- 5 Point Calvinism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salvation is for anyone who believes the Gospel.</li> <li>- Infant baptism confuses the issue of justification by faith alone.</li> </ul>	<p style="margin: 0;">Vasclates</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Calvin ← → Arminian</p> <p style="margin: 0;">↑ ↓</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Catholic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salvation mediated through the 7 sacraments solely by R.C.</li> <li>- No salvation outside Roman Church</li> </ul>
<b>Ecclesiology (The Church)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pastor / Elders: Spiritually gifted men</li> <li>- Congregational Emphasis</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">STATE CHURCH Yes – No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presbyterian: Pastors and Elected Elders Or</li> <li>- Congregational</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">STATE CHURCH Yes – No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synodical Bishops</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">STATE CHURCH Yes – No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Episcopal Bishops</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">STATE CHURCH Yes – No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Episcopal Supremacy</li> <li>- Pope</li> <li>- Cardinal</li> <li>- Papal Curia</li> <li>- Diplomacy</li> <li>- Archdiocese</li> <li>- Secular State</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Yes</p>
<b>Eschatology (End Times)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Millennialists</li> <li>- Some Premillennialists</li> </ul>	Amillennial	Amillennial	Amillennial	Amillennial
<b>Infant Baptism</b>	Yes - No	Yes – No	Yes – No	Yes – No	Yes
<b>Geographic Areas of Influence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Switzerland, 16<sup>th</sup> C.</li> <li>- Moravia, 17<sup>th</sup> C.</li> <li>- England, 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> C.</li> <li>- America, 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> C.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Switzerland</li> <li>- Fr. Huguenots</li> <li>- Holland</li> <li>- England</li> <li>- America</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No. Europe</li> <li>- Scandinavia</li> <li>- America</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- England</li> <li>- America</li> <li>- Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- So. Europe</li> <li>- America</li> <li>- 20<sup>th</sup> C.</li> </ul>

Now, the farther you move to the left of that Doctrinal Wall the farther you get from the doctrines of Roman Catholicism. I just want to look at one issue here next to and that's the State-Church issue in the middle of the diagram. If you are a state church then a lot of your finances come from the state. The state is funding your projects, the state is supporting your church, the state is paying your bishops and so forth. So when it came to the question of funds for doing missions in other territories outside the state what do you think the answer was? Of course it was no, so in almost all cases you had this state block on missions. Now, if you look at these groups from the right to the left guess what you find, the Roman Catholic Church, state church? Yes or no? Yes. What about the Anglican Church? State church. Yes or no? Yes. The Lutheran Church? Yes. The Reformed Church? Yes. See, all of those are state churches. Then at the far left you have the Anabaptists, these were the most radical in the sense they were reforming everything, they rejected everything that was Roman Catholic. These people were so far out there they weren't only burned and pillaged by the Roman Catholics, they were persecuted by other Protestant groups. And this is your heritage, if you agree with the doctrines of this church, these are your theological ancestors. And notice another thing about all these state churches, what was their eschatology?

They were amillennial. What's the key to amillennialism? The kingdom is now and since a kingdom is political in nature what do you think a kingdom church will gravitate too? Centralizing their authority in the state. But the Anabaptists are reforming everything, they reject this kingdom issue and as a result can you guess their views on church and state. They rejected the state church. They, of all the groups that came out of the Reformation, went independent. So they didn't get any state funds they had to raise their own funds and administer their own organization. And so you had this small group, not very well funded, and the conclusion is no one is getting funded to do missions. This went on for two hundred years.

A third problem was the theology because most of these groups held to a limited atonement and rejected all human means in the conversion of men. For example, the mentor of William Carey, Andrew Fuller said this, "*With respect to the system of doctrine which I had been used to hear from my youth, it was in the high Calvinistic, or rather hyperCalvinistic strain, admitting...nothing to be addressed to them by way of exhortation...nothing was said to them from the pulpit, in the way of warning them to flee from the wrath to come, or inviting them to apply to Christ for salvation...*"<sup>1</sup> See, this is why I spent so much time going over the unlimited atonement passages and showing that Christ died for everybody and indeed human means are involved. It is more than just sitting on the couch waiting for God to convert the heathen. If Christ didn't die for all men but only the elect and God is going to get His elect no matter what then I can sit on the couch and be lazy. If however, Christ died for all men and He has decreed that men be saved through the hearing of the word of God then I can't sit on my couch and do nothing, I have a responsibility. And that poor theology drowned out missions for the first two Reformation centuries. The missionaries who did go out from the Calvinistic traditions, disagreed with the limited atonement and denial of means.

A fourth reason they didn't do missions relates to Col 1:23. Many of the Reformers interpreted this to be saying that the Great Commission was only for the apostles and had been fulfilled by the apostles. Therefore it no longer applied. Notice the phrase middle of verse 23, "...the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which *was proclaimed* in all creation under heaven," "Aha," they said, "see, the gospel was already proclaimed in all creation, therefore the Great Commission was fulfilled, therefore no missions." Now, wait a

minute, for one, it's historically naïve to say that the gospel had been proclaimed across the entire globe at that time. There were people in North America, who went to North America, South America, Australia? For two, after Paul wrote this he continued to fulfill the Great Commission so whatever this means it can't mean there was no need to keep on witnessing. And finally, look at the verb "was proclaimed." The way the translators put that sounds like what the Reformers argued. It's an aorist tense and that can mean past completed action but it can also be an ingressive aorist and if that's the case then it should be translated this way, "the gospel...which has begun to be proclaimed in all creation..." it's not finished being proclaimed but it had begun. That seems to fit with historical reality of the situation. So this verse has no merit in the original Reformers argument.

But what it does force us to look at is how the Great Commission was passed on. They're right in that it was given to the apostles but after the apostles died it did continue, the question is, "In what individual or body? How did it continue? Who has the responsibility to carry out the Great Commission?" And I think this question has to be answered by saying that it was not passed on to any single individual but to the Church, it's the responsibility of the body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. By saying this I'm not denying that individuals are involved, it's just that the responsibility rests with no single individual that was authorized by the apostles and so forth, it's the responsibility of the Church and when I say Church I'm primarily referring to the local church. The word for Church is used 115 times in the NT and most of those refer to the local church. But, the problem was that after the Reformation for 200 years the church didn't do a thing. At the most they sat around and prayed, but they didn't send anyone out. There were individuals who wanted to be sent out, wanted to be supported by prayer and finances by their church or denomination but in every case the churches wouldn't do it. So what happened is these people got fed up with them and said, "Fine, if you won't send us out we'll create our own missions societies that will send out." So they started forming autonomous missions' societies.

The problems here, and I'm not faulting everyone, this is just a historical sketch, but there are problems that resulted from this that are current. What happened was men like Hudson Taylor started their own missions agencies to send them to China or wherever. Now what happened was when they organized these agencies they set them up like corporations. For example

they'd require annual dues contributed by voting members, so it wasn't supported by grace giving. And they began to organize themselves autonomously after the patterns of companies rather than after the governing order of the church. And this is still a problem today, I've talked to people in missions agencies about this, they struggle with this question because many of them want to be biblical but here you are trying to work together, you've got people from all over the world involved in your mission, you can't feasibly work together from different countries, you're all from different churches around the world, you come together in one central location to do missions, a central base, but then how do you organize yourselves, you're all connected to local churches back home that have church government but you're not there. What do you do? Well, they typically end up organizing around worldly models and running autonomously alongside churches or a denomination. Now, we're still dealing with this today and I want to give three negative consequences of this. First, this left a lot of large churches totally uninvolved in missions when the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ created the church to be His instrument of ministry. The church is called the "house of God" and "the pillar and ground of truth." But these agencies were totally disconnected from the house of God and organizing themselves after the world system. This didn't rub with churches at first, the churches were against missions; but that has changed today. A second problem with this was that with missions agencies as autonomous there was a separation on the home base. These people in missions had their church but then they had their missions agency, and then they would try to work together and you have these two different kinds of organizations, one organized after the world the other after Scripture, obviously it was problematic. Third, and this is the easiest to see, when a missionary society went out and evangelized some people group and got a church started among these foreign people those foreign people were not associated with any other church, they were associated with a missions society. So they were disconnected from the local church.

I'm not positing any answers to these problems I just want to mark out some elements of a strong Doctrine of Missions. First, the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth and needs to be the sending agency. The Church is the only divinely authorized body in the NT. How you incorporate missions societies into that has to be worked out. Second, the candidate for missions needs to be well-trained in the word of God, able to articulate Scriptural

truths. Third, he needs to understand that his basic work is one of finding links between the people's traditions, folklore, legends and the substance of Gen 1-9. He is not interfering in a tribe or people group who have not biblical background. He's there to remind them of their ancient roots and fill in the rest of the story. Fourth, he needs to be convinced that the Holy Spirit has already laid out the basic order of doctrine that needs to be learned and it starts with Creation, who's God, who's man, the Fall, what sin is, the Flood, judgment/salvation and so forth. These are essential building blocks that lead to and contextualize the gospel. I don't think I could ever sign off on a person who wanted to go out and start with Jesus and the gospels. That is a mistake of gargantuan proportions. Fifth, if the Bible is not in that people's language he needs to be prepared linguistically and have great patience and discernment in very carefully choosing words for God, sin, salvation and so forth. Sixth, he needs to convert and train locals, start working with those who have believed so they can go do ministry. Seventh, he needs to be well-trained in the art of persuading men to believe the message of judgment/salvation. Eighth, he needs to be formally sent out by the laying on of hands by the church leadership. Ninth, he needs to remember that as a missionary he is not only the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ but of the local sending church and therefore needs to operate within the doctrinal framework of the church. If these criteria are met then the Church is being a lighthouse to the world. Yes, there are others that support and don't have all these qualifications, I understand that, I'm not addressing that. But I think one of the greatest problems, and I'm sure missionaries on the field struggle with this all the time, is that they are so disconnected from their churches, they are connected with a missions agency and I think that if the churches were more involved in direct ways with missionaries they train and send out then I think it would be very beneficial to both the missionary and the church. I think the ideal goal and what I see in the NT missionary model laid down by Paul himself is that a missionary goes, converts locals and plants a church. Then he establishes local leadership like a pastor-teacher and elders and leaves to go do the same thing elsewhere. He checks back with them later. The plan is that the church he leaves behind will train up missionaries who will go out from that church and convert locals and plant another church, set up leadership and so forth. This is how the thing is designed to propagate. And in the future I would like to see this church duplicate itself. Disciple from the inside a man or men to go and plant a church so we have

sister churches and so forth. This is ambitious but I think this is the model of a true lighthouse. I think this is the plan of God.

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<sup>i</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 215.

<sup>ii</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, 382.

[Back To The Top](#)

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