



## Missions and the Church in the Light of Genesis 3:9

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**Abstract:** According to Sumner Wemp C. (1982:149) “We are stewards of the Gospel. The power to proclaim the greatest news in heaven and earth was not given to the angels; it was given to the redeemed men. Every Christian is to be a witness; every follower of Christ is to preach the Gospel.” We can preach by sharing our experiences with others. We can preach by exalting Christ in our daily lives. Sermons which are seen are often more effective than those which are heard. The truth is, the best sermons are both heard and seen. Jesus told the apostles to “. . . preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15, NKJV). If we are to be Disciples of Christ, we must obey this command. Jesus’ last words on earth were, “. . . you shall be witnesses unto me. . .” (Acts 1:8, NKJV). The Book of Acts is replete with evidence and examples of evangelism. In it we learn that witnessing played a significant role in New Testament Christianity. Just as evangelism played an important role in the life of the early church, so it must play an important role in the life of the church today.

Sumner (1982:149) stresses, in witnessing, example is essential; our lives must reflect our profession. By our example we establish credibility and build confidence and trust, which prepare the way for presenting Christ. There is no substitute for the witness who verbalizes the facts of the Gospel:

- a.) “That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5: 19, NKJV)
- b.) “I declare to you the gospel which I preach to you, . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15: 1, 3-4, NKJV)
- c.) “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, NIV).
- d.) Matthew D. Green (2005:106) affirms, “Wherever there is persecution and hostility toward the gospel, the church is growing faster because of it.”

### 1. DEFINITION OF MISSION

In *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:458) the term “Mission” formed from *missio*, the Latin word for “sending,” this term is used both of the Father’s sending of the Son into the world to become its Savior and of the Son’s sending the Church into the world to spread the Gospel, perform works of love and justice, and seek to disciple everyone to Himself.

### 2. THE OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON MISSIONS

Roger E. Hedlund (1985:169) gives us an idea of the nature of missions in the Old Testament. That the activity of God revealed His missionary nature. There He acted in a particular way in and through Israel. As we pass from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is to stand “in the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4, NKJV). And according to John Corrie (2007:269), he alludes that “In Luke 24 we would come to see how he twice surveys the whole canon of Old Testament Scripture and claims that ‘this is what is written’: both that the Messiah would come, suffer and rise again; and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to the nations (vv. 45-47, NIV).”

According to Lois K. Fuller (1993:5) the word “centripetal is a missions’ term. Looking at missions in the Old Testament, the emphasis and focus was on people who did not know the Lord as Savior; they were to come to Jerusalem the center of worship. It was expected that when they people came to Jerusalem, they would meet with those believers who had accepted the Messiah to be their Savior, then altogether they would worship God in Jerusalem. One of the ways the unbelievers who had come to Jerusalem to know God was for them to adopt the culture of Christianity, then they could find God easily. George W. Peters (1972:21) affirms:

The nation of Israel was called by God to enjoy the presence and blessings of God but if they feared and lived their lives for God. The understanding about centripetal missions is, God expected the nation of Israel to stimulate, challenge, encourage, and cause the rest of the nations to inquire about the living God. It was meant to draw those nations and people to Jerusalem and to the Lord. This aspect of Missions in the Old Testament was meant to draw the people to the Lord instead of taking time to recruit dedicated and committed men and women and to send them out with the word of God to go and preach it among the unreached people groups round the world. A quick example of people who went to Jerusalem were first, the queen of Sheba, she went to see and hear the word. Second, the Ethiopia eunuch, he went to search for the truth in the word. This was the reason why Jonah in the Old Testament refused and became unwilling to go to Nineveh to preach. Also, the disciples did not see any reason why they must leave Jerusalem to go and look for a man. The command Christ gave in Matthew 28:18-20 and many other passages were not understood by the disciples because of the theology of centripetal missions. Therefore, the general understanding of centripetal missions by people was that every people, nation, tribe, and tongue were expected to go to Jerusalem, they were to learn the way of the Lord and how to worship God.

### 3. THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON MISSIONS

Roger E. (1985:169) assert, “In Jesus God disclosed Himself. So it is to Jesus that we look to understand mission in the New Testament. In the New Testament God acts in and through Jesus in a climactic way. The New Testament discloses God in action in Jesus Christ. The God who acts has now acted in the Person of His Son (Heb. 1:2, NIV).” To understand mission in the New Testament we must understand Jesus Christ. Roger E. (1985:170) stress, because the distinctive character of mission in the New Testament relates to this person. “Mission is based on the whole of the very person, life and work of Jesus Christ”. And according to Dennis J. Mock (1989:20, 264-265):

The “mission” of the church is to glorify God by bringing people to God and building them up in Christ. Christian mission in the New Testament is both unique and distinctive. The new, unique element is Jesus Christ, and the distinctiveness of mission is the call to people of all nations to become his disciples. The New Testament concept of mission is not unrelated to that of the Old Testament, as Chris Wright has argued in his article on Old Testament mission. They are not identical, but there is both continuity and discontinuity. In the Old Testament, Yahweh, though Lord of the earth, establishes his primary relationship with the people of Israel, not however for their own sake, but so that they may be a ‘light to the nations’.

Ralph Mahoney and Robert Frost (eds.) (1961:151) assert, Jesus told His disciples that at the end of the age the world would face a time of great distress, wickedness of all kinds, hatred, envy, lack of the fear of God will increase, men will be lovers of self instead of God, and difficulty will increase. God made it very cleared that fear, hatred and greed would cause the nations of the world to war against one another. The “last days” will be dark days indeed, (Matthew 24; Luke 21, NIV). While Donald G. Bloesch (2007:97) affirm therefore, in evangelical perspective the highest service is sharing the good news of what God has done for us in Christ. It is winning souls for the kingdom, conferring the blessings of peace and salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Count Zinzendorf confessed that his greatest joy was “to win souls for the Lamp.”

Donald G. Bloesch (2007:97) has stress, there is a bright hope, however, for the Christian Church. The Scriptures also state that in the last days God will “pour out His Spirit upon all people everywhere . . . And whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2: 18, 21, NIV). This teaches us that more people are going to hear the gospel and be saved in that dark hour than at any other time in history. There is going to be a great end-time revival as the light of the

gospel shines into the darkness of a dying world. God always brings a “warning” and a “witness” before times of great judgment. For this reason, God desires to unify the Church in Her worship, work, warfare and witness. Revival will come only as Christ’s power and glory are revealed by His Body throughout the world.

*“Father, I pray that they all may be one . . . that the world might believe that You sent Me... For this gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations. Then the end shall come”* (John 17: 21; Matt. 24: 14, NKJV, NIV).

Therefore, Lois K. Fuller (1993:5) still alludes, the focus of the New Testament mission’s emphasis is centrifugal in nature. It is the contrast of Old Testament mission’s emphasis. The command of Christ in the New Testament for missions was that, the disciples were to go out in order to witness and won the lost wherever they were within their own cultures. The centripetal missions emphasized that people went to Jerusalem to find and worship God. But the New Testament missions’ emphasis is centrifugal which encourages the disciples to go out into the world in order to bring the nations without Christ back to God (Matthew 28:19, NIV).

George W. Peters (1972:23) states that the purpose why God called the nation of Israel was for her to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth but she failed. Therefore, God decided to set aside Israel as his chosen servant and called the Church of Jesus Christ to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him who hath called believers out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Peter 2:9, NKJV). The intention God had for Israel was for her to be a witness, the priesthood, the servant, the light and the salt but this function or intention has been temporary transferred to the Church.

According to John R. W. Stott (1975:21-22), there are examples and instances of men whom God used to accomplish both the evangelistic and cultural mandate of missionary activities. God called Joseph and sent him to Egypt in order to preserve a godly remnant on earth during the famine (Genesis 45:4 – 8, NKJV). Also, he sent Moses to Egypt in order to deliver God’s children who were under the oppressions of the wicked king Pharaoh. Moses went with good news of liberating God’s children (Exodus 3:10, NIV). After this time, God raised prophets with words of warning and of promise to the people if they obeyed God (Jeremiah 7:25, 26 cf. 2 Chronicles 36:15 – 16, NIV). It was at last ‘when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son;’ and after the Father and the Son sent forth the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Galatians 4:4 –6; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33, NKJV).

#### **4. THE GOAL OF MISSIONS IN LIGHT OF GENESIS 3:9**

Elijah Maswanganyi and Bruce Britten (1996:84) observed, the immediate thought that comes to mind when one thinks of the goal of missions is evangelism as its priority. Thinking and talking about the goal of missions, the focus should be geared towards meeting the spiritual, physical and material needs of the poor and helpless people. Terry C. (1979:31) affirms “After man’s needs are met, it is then that he will make himself available to God for use in meeting the needs of others”. George W. Peters (1972:16) stress man became a willful and rebellious sinner. He learned to live a disobedient life continually. This affected the plan of God toward man. Man is guilty before God. He is lost and life becomes meaningless and empty as he became an enemy of God.

Therefore, Carson D. A. (1994:63) explain that the goal of missions in light of Genesis 3:9 is clear. Looking critically, one would come to agree that the primary reason why God came looking for man was so that man may confess his sin of disobedience to God’s command. God did not come into the garden to seek for any information from Adam and Eve about what had happened. God knew perfectly well what they had done before they went into hiding. God expected that after Adam and Eve had confessed their sins he would restore them back into fellowship with him and get them established again. However, Wade T. Coggins (1975:12) affirms, “the goal of missions is evangelism. But it must also be added that the act of proclaiming the salvation of Christ must be done in a meaningful way to the understanding of every man and woman on earth”.

#### **5. THE TASK OF MISSIONS IN LIGHT OF GENESIS 3:9**

J. Herbert Kane (1976:165) states the task before the Church. It is to proclaim the good-news of the Lord Jesus Christ to the whole world. Simply that, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can go to the father except through him (John 14:6NIV).Graham Cheesman (1997:19) alludes that

“The foundation for this task is rooted in the Lordship of Christ himself. One of the benefits of Christ’s resurrection is that he was given authority by God the Father over the world and the Church.” This is why Jesus gave the command based on this authority to do missionary work – Matthew 28:18; John 9:4; 17:2; Philippians 2:10 – 11; Revelation 15:3-4. There are quite a number of scriptural passages that refer the Church to her biblical responsibilities in regards to the task of missions. One of those passages says “... peace be with you! As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21NIV). This challenge is directly to the Church.

According to Stephen O. Asonibare (2002:6) “To enable the Church, face her task very well, she must demonstrate care and love to the nonbelievers whom they are going to reach with the gospel. The cost the Church must pay is for her to give her total self and be more committed to God.” The message they shall proclaim to the people must be demonstrated through their lives and characters. Stephen (2002:6) quoted Spurgeon as saying:

Adam, where are you? I am come to find you, wherever you may be. I will look for you, till the eyes of my pity see you. I will follow you till the hand of my mercy reaches you; and I will still hold you till I bring you back.

F. Davidson and Co. (1959:80) affirms what the Bible says, it shows that Adam, as a sinner, was running away from God his Maker. Yet, God came into the garden looking for Adam not because he felt that Adam was lost from his knowledge, but that Adam was lost from having communion and fellowship with him as usual. God wanted Adam to come back to him for the communion (Genesis 3:9, NIV). The attempt Adam and Eve made to hide from the presence of God became useless because he still called them out of their hiding place – “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9, NIV) and Adam had to respond to God’s call “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; So, I hid.” This was an expression of their sense of guilt. The consciousness of their nakedness as something unacceptable resulting from their awareness that their original harmonious relationship had been disturbed.

According to Aalders G. Charles (1981:104) “Adam and Eve were afraid of God because of their current condition of life. They realized that they could not stand in God’s holy presence because of their sinful state.” Since Adam and Eve, the parents of all mankind, sinned against God and this made them distant from God, Christians have these specific tasks to accomplish before Christ comes.

First, Christians are to preach the Gospel to nonbelievers. The knowledge about the person and salvation of Christ should be introduced to the nonbelievers so that they will invite Christ into their lives as Savior and Lord (Mark 16:15). Second, they should give a clear invitation to the nonbelievers. This is a good opportunity for the Church to bridge the gap in the relationship between man and God. Man needs to know that Jesus is the Son of God and that he loved the world therefore he took the sins of mankind to the cross. Christ died and was buried. He also resurrected the third day. The nonbelievers need to know that they can be reconciled back to God on the basis of their faith in Christ (Galatians 1:6 – 10, NIV). Those without Christ need to admit that they are sinners who need a Savior.

Billy Graham (2001:27-28) reminds the church of the third task, the new believers need to know that conversion is the beginning of discipleship. The moment someone surrenders his life to Christ, this is the way forward. The person should be encouraged to grow spiritually. The development will not end until Jesus is seen in his glory. It is expected that as a disciple of Christ, he needs to share his faith with nonbelievers so that they will also come to the knowledge of Christ (Matthew 28:18 –20; Revelation 7:9 – 10). Lois K. (1993:11) gives the fourth task, that older believers are to teach the new believers the Word of God. There were so many spiritual truths Jesus taught his disciples while he was on earth. He expects believers to teach the same to the new disciples. The disciples were expected to observe all that Christ taught them so that they can also pass on the same teaching to others. The outcome should be spiritual growth. George W. Peters (1972:213) explain the fifth task, Christians are to train the new converts in a life of the Holy Spirit. The converts need to know and be taught that they cannot survive this life on their own strength. They must learn to trust on the Holy Spirit for strength, guidance and growth. Wade T. Coggins (1975:12) says:

The primary visible task of mission is to call out the Messianic, saved community from among all people. Mission proclamation should lead everywhere to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ, which exhibits a new, defined reality as salt and light in its social environment.

Roger S. Greenway (1999:109-110) explained the rest of the tasks, sixth, believers are to pray that God will develop the qualities of true leaders among the new believers. Seventh, believers are still to pray to God to recognize these qualities in new converts when they appear, and train and develop those who possess them. Eighth, believers are to teach the new converts what to expect and require from those who will become their spiritual leaders. The yardstick for evaluating the character of Christian leaders should not be the standard they use in the world but the word of God.

John R. W. (175:23) stress, after Jesus resurrected from the dead, the specific task he gave to the Church was to preach, convert, and disciple new converts. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, it was God who took the step to look for them in order to reconcile them back to himself. The Church must go out in search of the sinner to invite him to Jesus for the salvation of his soul. This was the reason why God gave the invitation to man as he said: “Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1: 18, NIV). H. L. Wilmington (1984:8) stresses again what the scriptures say about Jesus, he came to seek and to save the lost – Luke 19:10, NIV).

In Summary, Paul has described the nature and what the task of missions is all about in Romans 10:11 – 15, NKJV:

Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon him; for “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.

Also, Paul committed himself to some specifics of the task Christ expected his disciples to accomplish. Some of the aspects of the task are revealed in Acts 26:18...to open their eyes so that they may turn from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.

## **6. THE MESSAGE OF MISSIONS IN LIGHT OF GENESIS 3:9**

S. O. Asonibare (2002:9) gives the nature of the message the missionary, pastor, evangelist, and teacher of the Word are supposed to carry to the lost souls is about the Kingdom of God, and about the life without end that can only be found in Jesus. The lost sinner needs to know that Jesus has to be invited into his life so that Christ will have authority to rule as the Sovereign King. The question God asked Adam and Eve was “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9, NIV). This demonstrated the love of God to Adam and Eve. While he was still in his sins God went looking for the lost man who was in guilt and shame. God did not want Adam and Eve to continue to live in their fear, sin, and hiding.

Anne Graham Lotz (1999:84) observed, since God knew the exact hiding place of Adam and Eve, he called them not to get information but confession. God wanted them to face and confront the sin they had committed so that they could set it right and be restored in fellowship with God. Matthew Henry (1991:13) in his commentary has this to say about the message of missions in Light of Genesis 3:9:

Those who by sin have gone astray from God should seriously consider where they are; they are afar off from all good, in the midst of their enemies, in bondage to Satan, and in the high road to utter ruin. The enquiry made by God about Adam should be seen as a gracious pursuit, in kindness to Adam, and in order to bring him back to the right place. If God did not care to look for Adam where he was in order to reclaim him, his condition would have been as desperate as that of fallen angels; this lost sheep would have wandered endlessly, if the good shepherd had not sought after him, to bring him back, and, in order to that, reminded him where he was, where he should not be, and where he could not be either happy or easy. If sinners will but consider where they are, they will not rest till they return to God.

Billy (2001:106) has stress also that, “The kind of message Christians are supposed to carry and preach to the lost humanity is not different from what the twelve disciples proclaimed. The good message is about the atoning, redemptive, substitutionary, once –and-for-all work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, upon the cross 2000 years ago.” J. Herbert (1976:119) affirm, the message to be proclaimed to the man who is still running away from God’s presence is the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18, NIV). The man needs to know that the penalty for his sin is death. If he repents, then he will have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Therefore, man needs to know that truth can only be seen and found in Christ alone (Ephesians 4:21). He can only be set free from the bondage of sin and Satan if he accepts the truth of the gospel (John 8:32; Galatians 2:5). This is the only way by which man can be sure of his total deliverance from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13).

Therefore, Marian Schindler and Robert(1984:19) alludes, “The heart of the message is that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. He overcame death by rising victoriously from death. He is now at the right hand of God interceding for his children.” The fact still remains, Jesus died for the world because he loved the world, this was the reason he gave himself as a sacrifice in order to give peace, joy, happiness, hope, restored friendship and fellowship, and eternal life back to man. Man needs to know that he is separated from God, and it is only Christ, because of his death and resurrection, who can save man for eternity. Paul summaries the message of missions this way in I Corinthians 15:3, 4, NKJV; “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ... he was buried, ... he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.”

## 7. CONCLUSION

Missions is a dynamic and glorious movement of God’s grace. It finds its origin in the very heart and nature of God Himself in eternity past. The missionary movement is in a real sense the extension of the love of God, throbbing, moving and motivating His children to carry His message of love to all people. Missions have a solid Biblical basis both in the Old Testament, and then more fully developed in the New Testament record. The local Church as the visible, tangible manifestation of the body of Christ to the world is God’s responsible agent for missions. The mission of the Church is missions, and the mission of missions is the Church.

The task and challenges before the Church are very great and urgent. The Church must do all it can to meet these challenges. The challenges are spiritual, physical and material. The Church must use every machinery made available by the grace of God to make her presence felt in the lives of individuals, families, communities, and nations of the world. Man must be brought back into fellowship with God. This is the more reason why the Church must go out to preach about the kingdom of God. The nature of the message is Jesus died; he was buried and has been resurrected from the dead. The one and only Son of God who gives eternal life to all those who believe in Him.

The reasons and the burden God had in looking for man after his fall should be the same concern for the Church today. The challenge is before the Church. The Church must multiply. God is counting on individuals, families, groups, Church denominations and mission agencies to pick-up the challenge of Genesis 3:9. According to Ralph Mahoney and Robert Frost(1961:158-159, there are still about 90 percent of the world is still open to the gospel. In some places, closed doors have even reopened. Sadly, we have not made the most of these open doors. There are over 2.8 billion non-Christians in the world today. Some 2.4 billion have never heard the good news of God’s love. To reach them, cultural barriers will have to be crossed. It will take both a love for the lost and a well-directed effort to reach these “hidden people” for whom Christ died. This is why we need to be informed. Information is necessary to channel the power of God’s love into those parts of the world which need it most. Only in this way can the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ be obeyed and the task completed in this century. It can be done-if we will look, listen, pray and obey.

- 1.) The church must no longer wait for nonbelievers to find their way to the church, rather, members of the church must go and look for them and bring them to Christ
- 2.) The challenge of Great Commission is the Church responsibility to get involved, I mean as individual and as a body of Christ

- 3.) It is not enough for us to think that we can pray or give. We can also go to the people; I mean the unreached people yet to embrace Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior
- 4.) Nobody should be satisfied in his or her comfort zone when many are still under the dominion of Satan. God will hold us accountable for not responding to the needs of the dying communities without Jesus Christ
- 5.) The question before the Church today is, are we willing and ready to share our lives and resources for the redemption of the souls of men and women without Christ?

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