

Grace Redeemer Fellowship

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

With Scriptural Proofs and Applications

By Pastor Michael J. Beasley

1. The Eternal God:

The church must view her God for who He is as He has revealed Himself in His Word. His nature and His characteristics are clearly presented in Scripture:

1.1. His Transcendence: In light of doctrine of the innerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture,¹ the church must see to it that that she beholds the Lord through the spectacles of Holy Writ alone. Through this commitment, the body of Christ will see the Lord for who He is: Glorious, majestic, holy and transcendent. The Word of God consistently presents God as a high and holy God hence, through the church's meditation of Scripture, she must obtain a *high view of God*. Scripture frequently attests to this high, lofty and exultant view of Him. The highness of God's character is a repeated theme throughout Scripture. His names denote such loftiness: 1) As the Almighty,² 2) as Yahweh,³ 3) as Holy, Holy, Holy,⁴ 4) as King,⁵ 5) as the Holy one of Israel⁶ and 6) as the Most High⁷ etc. The creature must understand that God's ways are unfathomable and His limits are unsearchable.⁸ God's high ways are not our ways, nor are His high thoughts our thoughts.⁹ The natural man tends to think

¹ See section 2 for the doctrine and implications of God's Revelation.

² God calls Himself *šaday* in Genesis 17, from *šadaq*, lit. a destroyer. God is the most authoritative being in all of the Universe who possesses the sole right to destroy whom He wills.

³ God revealed Himself to Moses as *'ehyeh* (I Am). This tetragrammiton has been revered greatly by Jews as being the most holy name of God. It denotes God's transcendent existence as one who is not constrained by the finitudes of time, which He created.

⁴ Isaiah 6:2-4 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. (NKJV)

⁵ Ps. 5:2; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3.

⁶ Ps. 71:22.

⁷ 2 Sam. 22:14, Ps. 7:17; 9:2; 21:7.

⁸ Job 11:7-9.

⁹ Isaiah 55:8 " For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. (NKJV)

of God in a humanizing capacity and this is evil.¹⁰ Man is but a grasshopper in the sight of this high and majestic God and the nations are but a "drop in the bucket" to Him.¹¹ The highness and loftiness of God's own character is also the theme of heaven. The focus of praise and adoration in glory is the Most High. The failure to understand and recognize the true character of God is the beginning of every spiritual problem imaginable to man.¹² This God, who is one in substance, is yet distinct in His subsistence¹³ as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This triune God is most high and holy, and He should be feared and glorified.¹⁴ The unbeliever fears God with the terror of judgment,¹⁵ while the believer fears God with a filial fear that leads to wisdom and righteousness.¹⁶ Without a proper understanding of the God of the Bible, there is no true Christianity.

1.2. His Immanence: Though our God is a High and Holy God, He is not unknowable or incomprehensible with respect to His creation, rather our God and King has sufficiently and intimately revealed Himself to His creation. In the midst of the high and exultant declaration of God in Isaiah 40 is this tender picture of the immanence of God:

Isaiah 40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, *And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.* (NASB)

In His mercy God has condescended Himself to His creation in such a way that His excellencies, purity, righteousness and goodness can be clearly seen¹⁷ and for His own children He extends Himself graciously so as to protect and lead them as their great and only Shepherd. God is typically portrayed as the Shepherd of His people and such a portrait depicts a caring, tender leader and caretaker. No activity of His children takes place apart from His sovereign wisdom and love.¹⁸ So desirous is God of His children that the climax of His immanence will come when the new heavens, the new earth and the New Jerusalem will be established and His glory will no longer be veiled at all.¹⁹

¹⁰Ps. 50:16 - But unto the wicked God saith....²¹ These things you have done, and I kept silent; *You thought that I was altogether like you;* But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes. (NKJV, italics mine)

¹¹Is. 40, cf. v. 22.

¹²Ps. 53.

¹³The once veiled plurality of the Godhead is briefly seen in Gen. 1:26: And God said *let Us make.*

¹⁴Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Thy due! For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like Thee. (NASB)

¹⁵Psalm 130:3 If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

¹⁶Prov. 9:10

¹⁷Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

¹⁸Matt. 6:30-32.

¹⁹Rev. 21:1-22: - In verse 22 we see that the temple walls and veil that once protected the children of God are now no longer needed as He offers in heaven the greatest degree of immanence possible: Himself, absolutely unveiled - Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple in it [the new Jerusalem], for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. (NASB, brackets mine)

1.3. Implications For Ministry: The very centerpiece of true ministry in the church is the worship of God. God's command to His people is to "be still and know that I am God."²⁰ *True ministry is not defined by the amount of activity that can be produced by a local church, but by the depth of spirituality and true godliness that stands behind a real, Biblical ministry. As the church engages in ministry and worship she must recall perpetually that God alone is to be glorified, not His servants. It is God who seeks worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and truth, therefore He is the seeker that the church must be most concerned about and therefore it is His pleasure that should be sought and not our own:*

- **Colossians 1:10** ...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- **Ephesians 5:8-10** ...walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
- **1 Thessalonians 4:1** 1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

2. God's Revelation:

The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament comprise the foundation upon which the Church of God must be built. These 66 books of the Bible were written not by mere men but "holy men of God [who]spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit".²¹ The authority of Holy Writ comes not from men, but from God who "spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets".²² The Bible is the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God, verbally inspired in each word, inerrant in the original documents, God breathed and utterly infallible.

Implications For Ministry: It is the primary duty of the pastor, as he shepherds and tends the flock of God, to nurture the flock with God's Holy Writ. Any other diet will surely bring anemia and ultimate death to the local church. This authoritative Word provides the only foundation for the Church of God, hence any other foundations will only support structures which face the condemnation of God.²³ The foundation of divine revelation has been given to the church for her stability and unity²⁴ and she cannot be the pillar of truth in this world without it.²⁵

²⁰Psalm 46:10.

²¹2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

²²Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (NKJV)

²³Revelation 22:18-19 18 If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (NKJV)

²⁴Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself

The Word of God is that which leads men to repentance²⁶ and it is the Word of God which leads saved men to maturity and the sanctification of their souls.²⁷ The Word of God is that cleansing medium which Christ uses to wash and cleanse His bride.²⁸ Even into glory, the redeemed will use God's own Word to praise and extol His name forever.²⁹ Without a strong adherence to Biblical truth, the local church will fall prey to worldly imports. The Word of God is that defining element which makes the church "not of the world" in the same way in which Christ is not of the world.³⁰ Men have always tried to run the church on their own merit and authority and this always leads to ruin and judgment.³¹ ***The Word of God must govern all of the duties of the church. Every ministry of the church should therefore be rooted and grounded in the principal goal of worshipping God through His Word. The ministry of the Word must remain the central focus of the church's labors so that its every endeavor is directed by truth. The motive for growing in Biblical wisdom should always remain founded upon the fact that God delights in the sanctification of His people in truth,³² that His Word provides His children with the very wisdom to worship Him and serve their neighbor and that for the believer, the act of acquiring wisdom is of itself a prize and a crown.***³³

3. Man's Total Depravity:

Man was created by God, as recorded in Gen. 1-2, that he might know and commune with God in the intimacy of worship. Man was ordered by God to have dominion over the earth and to subdue it as a means of exalting the Creator.³⁴ But mankind rebelled against God, denying the authority of His Word, and thus heaping upon himself the penalty of his sin: Separation from and enmity with God. God cursed the ground and committed these rebels to the consequences of their sin. As a result, all of the descendents of Adam and Eve have been the inheritors of a damnable, sinful nature.³⁵ The Scriptures remind us that none have escaped this fate for there are none who do good in the sight of God.³⁶ The core of man is wickedness, for his heart is full of deceit.³⁷ The testimony of the godless man is that there is

being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (NKJV)

²⁵1 Timothy 3:15 I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth.* (NKJV, italics mine).

²⁶1 Cor. 14:24.

²⁷2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

²⁸Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, (NKJV)

²⁹Rev. 15:4-5.

³⁰John 17:16.

³¹Jude 4-11.

³²John 17:17

³³ Proverbs 4:5-9 5 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 "Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you. 7 "The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. 8 "Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her. 9 "She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty."

³⁴ Psalm 8.

³⁵Rom. 5:14.

³⁶Psalm 53:3 Every one of them has turned aside; They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.(NKJV)

³⁷Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (NKJV)

no true God to whom he must answer.³⁸ Because all are in this continual state of sin³⁹ and because the wages of such sin are death and separation from God,⁴⁰ man's state is utterly hopeless. The unregenerate man is dead and he thus walks in the way of death.⁴¹

Implications for Ministry: Man's problem is not a lack of education, or of self esteem; in fact it is usually these false idols that mankind tends to put his hope in. Mankind, in his hopeless state, must be saved by the only one who can forever remove and cancel the sin that entangles humanity. Man's only hope is Jesus Christ. *With this understanding of the nature of man the local church must remain convinced that she cannot rely on human strength, but on the Holy Spirit of God.⁴² She must also remember that her warfare is not fleshly, but spiritual and that she is armed with divinely powerful weapons of warfare, found principally in the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.⁴³ She must place her full confidence, not in the wisdom of man, nor in the ability of human flesh, but in the God of all grace.*

4. Christ's Redemption

God, according to His eternal decree, subjected the whole of creation to futility and condemnation in order that He would save His elect through the Redeemer.⁴⁴ The only sufficient sacrifice that could be offered on behalf of Christ's sheep is the Good Shepherd Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ No other sacrifice would do, for the sacrificial system of the old covenant could not cleanse the conscience of men.⁴⁶ Christ came to His own creation, as a complete man and as complete deity.⁴⁷ He bore the light of the gospel truth concerning the Kingdom of God and was crucified for this. Though He was sinless, He bore our sins on the cross and received the wrath of God on behalf of men.⁴⁸ Through the blood of Christ men can have their consciences cleansed in order to serve the living God.⁴⁹ Christ was raised from the dead on the third day and this is the basis of hope for the resurrection of the saints to heaven.⁵⁰ Those who believe in the Son have life, but those who do not obey

³⁸Ps. 53:1.

³⁹Rom. 3:23

⁴⁰Rom. 6:28.

⁴¹Eph. 2

⁴² Zechariah 4:6 Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts."

⁴³ 2 Cor. 10:4, Eph 6:10-18.

⁴⁴Rom. 8:20. Creation was subjected to the curse, not by its own will, but by the will of the One who subjected it. Rev. 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

⁴⁵John 10, 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, (NKJV)

⁴⁶Heb. 9:9-14

⁴⁷John 1:1-14.

⁴⁸2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:21-25.

⁴⁹Heb 9:12-14.

⁵⁰1 Cor. 15:12-17. 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (NASB)

the Son, the wrath of God abides on them.⁵¹ Those who have been caused to be born again are protected by the power of God, through faith, and will ultimately experience the glory of heaven.⁵² The true believer will evidence the riches of his salvation⁵³ since visible growth is the clearest evidence of the new life.⁵⁴

Implications for Ministry: So sufficient is Christ's salvation that the believer possesses all that he needs for life and godliness.⁵⁵ So sufficient is the believer in Christ that he has been lavished with all of the bountiful gifts of God's grace.⁵⁶ *From this it must be understood that the church need not drink from the broken cisterns of the world, but to encourage its members to seek out the all sufficient Christ who alone saves and sanctifies the believer. When believers are counseled within the church they must receive the Word of God so that they might be transformed by the renewing of their minds through Holy Writ.⁵⁷ All hardships, sorrows, emotional difficulties and depressions should be cast unto the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He loves us⁵⁸ and that He is faithful and able to draw and sanctify us to the experience of true joy and peace.⁵⁹*

5. The Eternal Gospel

There is only one gospel that men must obey in faith.⁶⁰ It is the gospel that God fashioned according to His eternal plan.⁶¹ It is the gospel that Christ promised will be preached until the end of the age.⁶² It is that gospel which is, as all His words are, *eternal*.⁶³

Revelation 14:6-7 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory,

⁵¹John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. (ASV)

⁵²1 Pet. 1:3-5.

⁵³1 John 2:4-5 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: (NASB)

⁵⁴Phil. 1:6.

⁵⁵2 Pet. 1:3.

⁵⁶Eph. 1:7, 8; 3:16.

⁵⁷Rom. 12:1-2.

⁵⁸1 Pet. 5:6-8.

⁵⁹John 17:13, Phil 4:6-7, James 5:7-20, 2 Pet. 1:2-11.

⁶⁰Gal 1:6-8, John 6:29 respectively.

⁶¹The dispensation of grace is that economy in which God has chosen to bring salvation to His elect, to the Jew first and also to the Greek: Eph 3:1-11, Titus 1:1. This is God's eternal purpose. God's purpose has been revealed to be the redemption of His elect whom He chose before the foundation of the world (Eph 1) that they would, by His foreknowledge and predestination, become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren (Rom 8:28-29).

⁶²Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (NASB)

⁶³Is. 40:6-8 Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, *But the word of our God stands forever.* (NASB)

because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (NASB) ⁶⁴

The above gospel presentation is given, paradigmatically,⁶⁵ with the three imperatives to Fear God, Give Him glory and to worship Him. Consider the substance of these three imperatives: **1. Fear God:** The first imperative given concerns the matter of fearing God.⁶⁶ As stated before, God is holy and therefore He is utterly unlike His creatures and utterly sanctified and set apart in purity and perfection. God's expectation of mankind is perfection and holiness,⁶⁷ a standard that renders mankind utterly impotent and incapable of pleasing God. It is this contrast of man's violent wickedness and God's eternal Holiness that should make humanity melt in fearful contrition in the presence of God.⁶⁸ Men are not spiritually neutral with respect to God, rather they are enemies of Him.⁶⁹ Rebellious man owes God a fear⁷⁰ leading to repentance, it is His due.⁷¹ **2. Give Him Glory:** The second imperative concerns the need of men to give God glory: God is eternally glorious⁷² and hence He is the most praise-worthy, honorable and glorious being of all.⁷³ All of humanity owes God a declaration concerning His glory (or a *good confession concerning His nature*⁷⁴). All of humanity will eventually make this good confession, but for many it will be too late.⁷⁵ The good news proclaimed by the angel of God is that God graciously extends the opportunity to mankind to repent and turn from his self-honor and glory in order to give God honor and glory.⁷⁶ The good news of the Gospel is that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is sufficient for the sinner's atonement and that men can be saved by turning to Him in faith. Men are thus commanded by God to fear Him and give Him glory *because* His final judgment of mankind

⁶⁴The Greek word for gospel simply means good news or glad tidings. The good news presented to mankind is that there remains the opportunity to repent: To fear God, give Him glory and worship Him. This is the gospel of faith in Jesus Christ: Rev. 14:12.

⁶⁵This gospel presentation focuses on the response of man. It, no doubt, summarizes what the angel said since faith in Christ and obedience to His commands are the components of the gospel obeyed by some: Revelation 14:12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who *keep the commandments of God* and their *faith in Jesus*. (NASB). This is the same combination of faith in Christ and obedience to His commands that is common to all true believers, cf. John 3:16, 36 & John 14:21 .

⁶⁶Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Thy due! For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like Thee.

⁶⁷Lev 20:7.

⁶⁸Hebrews 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (NASB)

⁶⁹Rom 5:9 & 10. 10. For if *while we were enemies*, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (NASB)

⁷⁰Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (NASB)

⁷¹Jer. 10:6-10.

⁷²Psalms 72:19 And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen. (NASB)

⁷³Rev 15:3,4.

⁷⁴doxa (glory), denotes a judgment, opinion or expectation that is good about someone. (G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of The New Testament, (St. Edmundsbury Press Ltd., Bury St. Edmunds United Kingdom), p.121.) What mankind owes God is the testimony of His goodness as God. Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; (NASB)

⁷⁵Rom. 14:11 & Philippians 2:10-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NASB)

⁷⁶Heb. 4:12.

is pending.⁷⁷ Men come to salvation through the hearing of the gospel of Christ (the *good confession or glory* of Christ⁷⁸) and believing in Him.⁷⁹ Giving God glory is the act of rightly declaring the nature of His being and declaring that He alone is the Lord and Savior of men. **3. Worship Him:** The third imperative given commands men to worship God.⁸⁰ The idea of worship⁸¹ denotes a humble surrender of self to the one worshipped, and this is the core of Christ's gospel.⁸² Man is commanded to worship God as the Creator, and this is the clearest manner in which man can, from the heart, express his trust in God. Man's unwillingness to trust and believe in God is the reason why he sinfully refuses to give Him honor, glory and worship.⁸³ These three imperatives embody the essence of a true faith response of men to Christ's salvation, without which, there is no justification before God.⁸⁴ Men everywhere are called upon by God to turn from their unbelief to belief in Christ⁸⁵ and their response to this command, therefore, comes not from the works of man but by the work of God.⁸⁶

Implications for Ministry: *This gospel call is characteristically both an invitation and a command. It is an invitation because God's offer is gracious and merciful.⁸⁷ It is a command because all men owe homage to the Son.⁸⁸ The presentation of the Gospel should then reflect this truth - It should be presented graciously as the merciful invitation of God and it should be delivered forthrightly as the imperative of Scripture for all men to obey.⁸⁹ The church, in boldness, must proclaim Gospel truth without any shame, apology, compromise or any attenuation made by means of a man-centered focus. It is not the work of any individual or church to convert a sinner, for this is the work of God, therefore all attempts of psychological manipulation, coercion or negotiation must be absolutely forsaken. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that power is not to be trifled with. However, the recognition of God's sovereignty in salvation should never allow the church to become passive in its pursuit of the lost. With joy and urgency, the church must be regularly dispatched in the*

⁷⁷John 3:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (NASB). This, along with Rev. 14:7 refers to the judicial indictment of humanity, in time, prior to the exercise of that indictment in the last judgment of mankind (Rev. 20).

⁷⁸2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the *gospel of the glory* of Christ, who is the image of God. (NASB) The gospel of the glory of Christ denotes a *good confession* concerning the glorious Christ.

⁷⁹John 5:24.

⁸⁰Psalms 99:5 Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. (NASB)

⁸¹proskuneo (lit. to bow down and kiss). This is a clear picture of submission and surrender on the part of the worshiper.

⁸²Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. (NASB)

⁸³Ps. 2:1-3 & 10-12.

⁸⁴Eph. 2:8-9.

⁸⁵John 20:27,28, John 6:28-29.

⁸⁶Titus 3:3-7.

⁸⁷Matt. 11:28.

⁸⁸Ps. 2:12, Acts 16:31.

⁸⁹1 John 3:23 And this is His **commandment**, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

proclamation of the Gospel knowing that it is the central body of truth that all men must hear.

6. The Church

The church was instituted by the will of God, for His good pleasure and glory.⁹⁰ God saw fit, according to His perfect will, to elect individuals out of the mass of fallen humanity, not based upon their merits, but based upon the kind intention of His will.⁹¹ The certainty of the elect is dependent upon the eternal decree of God.⁹² So certain is the election of the church of God that it is spoken of as a completed reality in Scripture.⁹³ The elect church is God's institution of redemption here on earth,⁹⁴ purchased by His own blood. God's promise to build His church has been realized through the work of the Spirit⁹⁵ as He has empowered the saints of God to perform the work of the ministry. As the church has served in her role here on earth, she has embraced the same commission given to the disciples to preach the gospel and make disciples.⁹⁶ Within this universal body of true believers there resides a positional unity that is utterly foreign to the world and this unity comes by the Spirit of God, grounded in the truth of God.⁹⁷ The universal church is endowed with gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit of God⁹⁸ and these gifts are to be used for the edification of the church and for ministering to her local community.⁹⁹ This universal (true) church is numerically a subset of the visible/local church. Christ promised that the pure fields of wheat (the true church) would be surrounded by false imitations (the tares),¹⁰⁰ hence the visible church must never assume purity¹⁰¹ but she must always evaluate her individual members knowing that false sons may reside in her pale.¹⁰² God demands purity and order in His church¹⁰³ and that the exercise of gifts within the church must be evaluated by the church to encourage proper placement of the individual members.¹⁰⁴ Christ's leadership of His church is to be mediated through the application of His Word by the teaching and prayers of the Pastors/Elders. Other services of the church are to be tended to by qualified Deacons. The church is to be governed by Christ alone who is the chief Shepherd and Apostle.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁰ Ephesians 5:6-10.

⁹¹ Eph. 2:1 & 1:5 respectively.

⁹² Jer. 1:5., 1 Pet 1:3.

⁹³ Romans 8:29-30, Jude 1:1 - The saints of God are called beloved, called and kept in Christ Jesus. All three verbal adjectives here are perfect passive participles denoting completed action generated by an external source.

⁹⁴ Matt 16:18.

⁹⁵ Acts 1:8.

⁹⁶ Matt. 28:18-20.

⁹⁷ Eph. 2:13-22.

⁹⁸ Rom. 12; Eph. 4:1-16.

⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:12 So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound unto the edifying of the church. (ASV) & 1 Cor. 12:7.

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 13.

¹⁰¹ Matt. 18.

¹⁰² Jude 4, 2 Pet. 2, Acts 20:28-30.

¹⁰³ Acts 5:1-11.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Cor. 12:12-31.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Pet. 5:4, Heb. 3:1, respectively.

Implications for Ministry: The first priority of the ecclesiastical assembly is that of the worship of God by means of the edification of the saints and the evangelization of the lost. Through the observation of these priorities the body of Christ is brought to maturity through the internal workings of the Spirit of God as He ministers His gifts through the members of Christ's body. *The church's mission is not that of entertainment or the artificial act of luring unbelievers and nominal Christians to services that minimize the offensive realities of the Gospel. As well, it is not the focus of the local church to satisfy the preferences of the masses, but to learn, as children of light, what it is that pleases the Lord and to act on that knowledge.*¹⁰⁶

1. The Elder/Pastor: The elder/pastor is a man who has been recognized within the local church as one who meets the Biblical character qualifications.¹⁰⁷ The primary task of the elders is to be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word. The "ministry of the Word" would include all opportunities in which God's Word is taught to any of God's people. *The overseer, therefore, is to be absorbed with the responsibility of feeding the flock of God and proving to be a godly example among the members of the fold.*¹⁰⁸ *It is this ministry of the Word that is the most essential foundation of Biblical teaching within the church. The flock must receive the direction of its overseers,¹⁰⁹ provided that their leadership is of Christ.*¹¹⁰

2. Deacons: Deacons are to fulfill their Biblical requirements¹¹¹ and provide the services that the overseers/elders cannot attend to.¹¹² They too establish a godly example for piety within the local assembly as they seek to remove any possible hindrances to the ministry of the elders. *From this it is understood that the principal servitude that the Deacons provide to the body is accomplished through the Deacon's act of freeing the elders to the task of the ministry of the Word and*

¹⁰⁶ Eph. 5:8-10.

¹⁰⁷ Titus 1:5-9 ... appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (NASB), 1 Timothy 3:1-7 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?; 6 and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (NASB)

¹⁰⁸ 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

¹⁰⁹ Heb. 13:17.

¹¹⁰ 1 Cor. 11:1, Gal 1:8.

¹¹¹ 1 Timothy 3:8-12 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. (NASB)

¹¹² Acts 6:2-3.

prayer. The church must avoid the appointment of men to ecclesiastical offices based upon their popularity, personality, business savvy, blood ties, wealth or any other extra-Biblical standard. The church should never have any more elders or deacons than whom God has actually called to that sacred office, and with this principle intact, the church should never feel externally pressured, concerning its number of appointed servants, since that number is ordained by God and not by men.

3. The Family: As the elders are to eagerly bear the weighty responsibility of shepherding and tending the flock, so too must the microcosm of the family bear the responsibility of teaching and shepherding its individual members. Husbands are to bear the leadership of their homes as Christ is head of the Church,¹¹³ by carefully nurturing, loving, and teaching his family. Parents are to raise their children up in the fear and love of the Lord.¹¹⁴ The parents, through the headship of the father, are the God-ordained sources of primary teaching, instruction and discipleship in their home. *No ministry within the church should ever substitute the primary responsibility of the parents. The Church's ministry to young people should support, not supplant, the primary ministry of the home.*

4. The Fellowship of the Saints: The church bears a reflection of the family order. Older women are to *encourage*¹¹⁵ the younger women and older men are to set an example of piety to younger men.¹¹⁶ Whatever forms of ministry there might be within the church, there must always be the presence of relationships that reflect the image of the family, which God created. As stated previously, men are given the task to pastor and feed the flock. Older women are called to encourage other women, but women are not to teach or to exercise authority over a man.¹¹⁷ *Whatever forms of ministry there might be within the church, there must always be the presence of relationships that reflect the image of the family, which God created. Texts of Scripture that speak of the general reciprocity of servitude within the church¹¹⁸ must not be misinterpreted so as to eradicate the role distinctions within the church and family.¹¹⁹ As the family of God, believers are enabled by God's precious grace to grow in an un-hypocritical love for and devotion to one another¹²⁰ and the body of Christ must labor well for the preservation and growth of this God honoring unity.*

¹¹³Eph. 5:25-28.

¹¹⁴Deut. 6:1-13.

¹¹⁵ In Titus 2:4 the *hina* clause sets the stage for the primary verb *sophronizosin* - "encourage." Paul is calling older women to be encouragers of younger women in the matters of domestic life and ministry (vs. 4-5). The younger women are to *love* their children and husbands (G. *Philos* - The practical love of a friend or family member) in such a way that they minister to them in their labors in the home. This high calling of women should never be underestimated in light of the fact that the honor of the Word is at stake, in view of the woman's worship.

¹¹⁶Titus 2:1-8.

¹¹⁷1 Tim. 2:12

¹¹⁸ Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:21.

¹¹⁹ 1 Tim. 2, Col 3:12-25, Eph. 5:21-33.

¹²⁰ Rom. 12:10, Eph. 2:19, Galatians 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

5. The Assembly of the Saints: The church is commanded to not only feed on God's word, but to sing from the heart hymns, psalms and spiritual songs to God.¹²¹ Since such songs bear theological content and doctrinal messages, such a ministry must be considered as an extension of the teaching ministry. Corporate worship would also include the observance of the Lord's table, baptism and church discipline.¹²² All these elements constitute God's vehicle of disciple making. *The church's corporate assembly on the Lord's Day is to be considered as a unique and precious event, not to be treated with indifference nor to be forsaken easily.*¹²³ *This principle should be upheld, not as a matter of negative legalism, but as a positive and joyful reality that cherishes Christ's endowment upon the Church, God's valuation of corporate worship and the believer's unique privilege to uphold the first and second greatest commandments.*¹²⁴

6. Evangelistic Worship: Saints are called to worship God within the assembly of the saints, and as well, they are called to worship the Lord through the proclamation of the Gospel. The church is commissioned with the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel to all men without distinction. This ministry of the church to the world comes from the very authority of Christ who commanded the disciples to *go and make disciples of all the nations*. We find in Scripture that *the primary discharge of the authority of Christ is in the building of His church*: A building made by His hands through His people. The disciples were to preach the gospel to all creation¹²⁵ calling sinners to repentance for the forgiveness of their sins.¹²⁶ There are two immediate applications concerning this command of Christ's to go to the nations: 1) The church cannot be satisfied with an un-evangelized world where unreached peoples and tribes remain. She must remain compelled and committed to reaching all peoples in the earth and 2) The church must also be committed to reaching all peoples within her own community. In both cases, nationalistic, ethnic, cultural and economic distinctions between peoples should not prevent the local church from reaching *all creation* with the gospel. *One of the greatest testimonies of the church to the world is her unity despite her internal distinctions whether they are ethnic, cultural or socio-economic.*¹²⁷ *To falsely cater to any useless distinctions among the brethren renders sin.*¹²⁸ *The church must have an interest in reaching her local community if she is going to consider herself to be a mission-minded church. A church which emphasizes overseas missions without having a significant gospel testimony in the local community should reconsider*

¹²¹Eph. 4:19.

¹²²1 Cor. 11, Rom. 6 and Matt. 18 respectively.

¹²³ Heb. 10:23-25; Hebrews 10:25 ...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

¹²⁴ Mark 12:29-31.

¹²⁵Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. (NASB)

¹²⁶Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name *to all the nations*, beginning from Jerusalem. (NASB)

¹²⁷Colossians 3:11 --a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. (NASB)

¹²⁸James 2:4-9

her understanding of Christ's command to go and make disciples.¹²⁹ When the church is committed to reaching the world around her with the gospel, she is truly committed to disciple making.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the church is the glory of God.¹³⁰ All of the aforementioned philosophy would only generate a directionless energy if there were no ultimate goal established by God. The Apostle Paul gives us a very simple priority of life as individuals and as a church:

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, ***do all to the glory of God.***

All of the facets of church ministry must serve the greater goal of being the blameless, prepared bride of Christ to be presented to Him in heaven.¹³¹ The elect of God who will be presented to Christ, will be a magnificent expression of the Father's love for the Son, and this prize will be cherished within the Trinity overall.¹³² This is the high hope of the church¹³³ and it is the greatest privilege ever bestowed on a mere creature. As the church operates within these Biblical standards for ministry, she will discover the wonder and majesty of her God. God has sufficiently revealed Himself through His word, in order to redeem His children throughout the world and utterly bring glory to Himself. This is the will of God. This is the privilege of the church. And as the church obeys God in these matters, she will witness the power and work of God, for it is He who ultimately produces the growth of His church for His name's sake.¹³⁴ ***Soli Deo Gloria***

¹²⁹Acts 1:4-8 Acts 1:8 ...and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (NASB) The disciples were commanded to begin with their local community before extending out to the world.

¹³⁰1 Cor. 10:21.

¹³¹Revelation 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (ASV)

¹³²1 Corinthians 15:28 And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all. (ASV)

¹³³Col. 1:3-5.

¹³⁴1 Cor. 3:7, Matt. 16:18.