



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
www.anchoredminot.com



The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

In this last section of Romans, the Apostle Paul shifts to the subject of missions. The theme of missions is not a miscellaneous note that Paul includes at the end of Romans but a subject that is a part of the power of the Gospel.

But precisely what is the relationship between the church and missions? What exactly is missions?

Perhaps it is helpful to define what missions is not. Missions: is NOT primarily fellowship; it is NOT primarily prayer, it is NOT primarily worship, it is NOT primarily mission trips, and it is NOT primarily the great commission. Very simply put, it is all too easy for Christians to believe that missions is something that we do. Rather, missions does not belong to men, but it is something that belongs to God. God is the one that is at work seeking to restore His creation to Himself! Missions is what God has done by sending Jesus to restore mankind to Himself. The mission began back in Genesis 3:15 (i.e., sometimes called the pro-evangelium or the first Gospel) and continued all through the Old Testament scriptures until the arrival of Jesus in the manger some 2000 years ago.

So, if God is the one who does the mission, what is our role? For the church, we evangelize!

Romans 15:14-33

So, what is evangelism? Again, it is helpful to define what it is not. Evangelism: is NOT manipulation, it is NOT the presentation of legal or moral demands, it is NOT a legalistic response to law, it is NOT the fulfillment of self, it is NOT restricted exclusively to the pastoral office, it is NOT a mechanical method, and it is NOT a slick sales technique. But instead, evangelism is simply sharing or telling the Gospel to those who do not yet confess Jesus.

But how do Christians share? The most simplistic way is through simple confession – telling others about the hope and assurance that one has in Christ, and how Christ is for our neighbor too. But in an even more straightforward way, to evangelize is to invite a neighbor to a place where they can hear about Christ. And where is a place that a person can hear about Christ? The answer, the church.

It is important at this point to understand exactly how simple evangelism is. I have long appreciated understanding evangelism in the realm of a news announcer and a used car salesman comparison. Seeing evangelism through the lens of a used car salesman, we bring the Gospel out, let people test drive it, kick the tires, tell them of all the benefits & perks and then see if we can get them to sign off on the dotted line. Once they have

signed on the dotted line then we hand over the keys to the kingdom! This is a very man-centered way of viewing evangelism because the emphasis and pressure is on us to close the deal. In contrast, the idea of a news announcer captures the original intent of evangelism. Seeing evangelism through the lens of a news announcer, we: simply report what happened, what occurred, and what took place in an event such as the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The original Greek word euaggelizomai was used as an announcer/herald who traveled from city to city announcing the good news that war was over, that victory had been achieved. The news announcer view of evangelism is not only biblical, but it sees evangelism as a herald! "Christ finished it all on the cross!" That is the good news.

And so, regarding missionaries, they are individuals who go to announce to people that their war with death, God's wrath towards their sin, and the power of the devil have been won and finished by Jesus. No kicking the tires, no having to use slick sales techniques, simply reporting what God has done in His mission towards fallen humanity through Christ, so that people may receive the good news by faith. Michael Green, in his book titled *Evangelism in the Early Church*, supports this idea of a news announcer, saying, "The early preachers did not enter into dialogue with the world, except to understand it and to present their life-changing message in terms comprehensible to their contemporaries."

So, concerning the Apostle Paul, he was a missionary. He was one who went to new places and new cultures to joyfully announce the news and freedom of the Gospel! But in so doing, Paul never did this as a lone Christian. He saw himself in fellowship with the Christian church - needing prayers, financial support, and encouragement. And so, as pastors evangelize through their preaching and teaching, and parishioners evangelize by inviting their neighbors to hear the good news of the Gospel in the church, missionaries are sent to the ends of the earth (still being connected to the local church) to evangelize/announce the Gospel.

Now, whether the pastor is preaching Jesus or the Christian is confessing Jesus, or the missionary is announcing Jesus, they all do this with gratitude. Too often, gratitude is lost with evangelism. Too often, ruthless preachers beat their flocks up with harsh sermons on Matthew 28. No! In the early church, Matthew 28 (*i.e., go make disciples of all nations*) did not play a great part in the motive for evangelism. The early church evangelized because of gratitude and joy! Why wouldn't you share 'good news'? Evangelism historically is motivated and rooted in joy and love, not threats and commands to grow the church or increase the church budget! It is the love of Christ that compels!

