

How does the church operate in faith? How does the church avoid self-preservation that would keep it from proclaiming the Gospel in boldness and with faith?

What does it mean for the church to live by faith?

In our personal life it means we rely upon the Lord for “daily bread,” Matt. 6:9-11. It means planning for the future while acknowledging God’s sovereignty over our lives and future, James 4:13-17. There are approximately 34 churches mentioned in the NT. This sermon will look at how they used their funds for the Gospel ministry.

Part 1: 10 Principles from Faithful Churches

- 1) **Jerusalem Church: Loving One Another:** Acts 2:42, the church is born, the only church in the world was in Jerusalem. V44-45, they had all things in common. V46-47, hearing the Word of God preached and continuing daily in one accord. Acts 8:1, persecution was coming and would scatter them by the hands of Saul.
- 2) **Antioch (Syria) Church: Member Initiated Efforts:** Acts 11:22-25: Barnabas was sent to Tarsus to seek for Saul and preach to those scattered after Stephen’s death. Barnabas and Saul stayed a year in Antioch and taught believers there. Agabus was shown by the Spirit that a famine was coming and the disciples in Antioch sent relief to the church in Judea, Acts 11:28-29.
- 3) **Antioch (Syria) Church: Elder Initiated Efforts:** Acts 13:1-3, the church sponsored mission work. Saul and Barnabas were sent (13:3) on Paul’s 1st missionary journey. The church sent 2 of their 5 leaders in their local body for the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations.
- 4) **Puteoli (Italy) Church: Spontaneous Gospel Opportunities:** Acts 28:13, Paul’s soldier-guard companions stayed in the house of the believers there for 7 days and heard the Gospel. Paul refers to the guard assigned to him in Philippians 4:22, as those who greeted the brethren in Philippi.
- 5) **Roman Church: Extraordinary Efforts:** Acts 28:14-15, those from Appii Forum (43 miles away) and Three Inns (33 miles away) came to see Paul and encouraged him that they knew of his labor of love and faithfulness to the Gospel and his imprisonment.
- 6) **Philippian, Thessalonian & Berean Church: Sacrificial and Risky Giving:** 2 Cor. 8:1-5, they prepared an offering in: affliction (v2), abundance of joy (v2), deep poverty (v2), beyond their ability (v3), giving voluntarily (v3), begging to help (v4), total submission to the Lord (v5). The example of Epaphroditus who got sick (Phil. 2:25-30) on his travel to bring support to Paul (Phil. 4:18).
- 7) **Corinth Church: Promise of Giving:** 2 Cor. 9:1-5, Paul desired to collect, and for the church to have ready, the offering for the church in Judea. Our giving brings thanks to God through those that receive the gifts we give for the service of the Lord, 2 Cor. 9: 10-11.
- 8) **Thessalonian Church: Regional Evangelism:** 1 Thess. 1:6-10, the young church in Thessalonica spread the Gospel through two Roman provinces, Macedonia and Achaia. Funds would have been needed to sustain those who were doing the work. Who was their example: Acts 16:23, 17:1-4, beaten and battered Paul and Silas from Philippi.

- 9) **Ephesian Church: Generous Support:** 1 Tim. 5: 17-18, honor to those who labor in preaching and teaching the word of God. Ascribing justice and value to the work and care of men who labor to proclaim God's Word to us. In the same way as someone who borrows an ox from their neighbor to tread grain, the small loss of grain by the ox who is eating while working, believers must value the labor and work of those who proclaim the Gospel to the body and who should live from the members who receive the preaching of the word of the Lord.
- 10) **Smyrna and Philadelphian Church: Faithfulness to the Extreme:** Rev. 2:8-11, although in poverty, they are rich in spiritual things. Satan will test them, but their lack of provision will not prevent them from proclaiming Christ during their persecution. The church in Philadelphia in Rev. 3:8-9, though having little strength, God will grant them an open door to proclaim Christ and see the enemies of Christ come and kneel and worship the Lord before them.
- 11) **Laodicean Church: Warning: Don't Arrive:** don't get smug and hang on to money, finish well to the end, Rev. 3:15-17, Col. 4: 12-15 (began well).

Part 2: Observation and Overview of What was Missing in the Churches: in all of them:

1) Never seem to be concerned with self-protection. 2) Worry or anxiety to provide for ministry (2 Cor. 9:7-11, Phil. 4:19). 3) Fear to do the work. 4) Bashfulness to use money for ministry (See 2 Cor. Ch. 8 & 9).

Part 3: Observation and Overview of What was Present in the Churches: 1) Care for one

another. 2) Great sacrifice from non-professionals. 3) Great value put on the Gospel. 4) Gospel workers giving their time beyond their normal lives. 5) No limits on how far they should spread the Gospel. 6) An expectation of God's power to work in spreading the Gospel, faithful with what they had received regardless of how large or small it was.

Further Discussion and Application

Considering all the different ways that the local church can do the work of spreading the Gospel, what can you do as a member of the local church to do your part to see that it happens?

In what areas could you serve the body and disciple others so that the Gospel is proclaimed and spread to those who haven't heard it?

How can the money God provides us be used to further the Gospel ministry at Grace Bible Church?