

**RESTORING AN
EVANGELISTIC
PHENOMENON**

**An Examination
of
New Testament Mission
Methods**

by

Roger E. Dickson

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The Publisher's Statement

One of the great needs today is for the church to return to the Bible plan for world evangelism. As things are, there is little emphasis on taking the Gospel to the masses of the world. Few churches are sending and few missionaries are going. Many of those who are going get bogged down in supporting local preachers and sending nationals back to the States to get their education. The result of all of this is that the church does not grow and brethren back home get discouraged and pull in their support.

After the years that we have been involved in mission work, and with all of the mistakes that we have made, and the lack of solid progress that has resulted from it, you would think by now that we would have learned some lessons and that we would have begun to mend our ways. But alas, we never seem to learn, and with each new wave of missionaries that go out, the same mistakes are repeated again and again.

The question then that we must come face to face with is this: When are we ever going to begin to get serious about mission work? Furthermore, when are we going to unite in our efforts, decide that we are going to follow the methods that are outlined in the scripture, put forth a co-operative effort based on those principles, and go out and do the job that the Lord has asked us to do? Surely that is possible even among the churches of Christ.

Bro. Roger E. Dickson returns with another book on mission work. More than that, he shows how the church evangelized the world in New Testament times and the conclusion is that if we today will follow those same methods and principles that we can likewise evangelize the

world. If not, why not? You are invited to read through this book and see for yourself if what he says doesn't make sense. I think you will find that it does make sense because it is based on the scripture itself.

Where do you see yourself in mission work? Are you doing your part? How can you follow Christ and not do your part? How can we as God's people continue to ignore the world? What kind of future can we expect if we go on like we are going? Again, here is a book to help open our eyes, to inform us, to change us, to enable us to return to the Lord's plan, and to challenge us to take the Gospel to the world. May the Lord help us to do it before it is too late for us and for untold others.

J.C. Choate
Singapore
Sept. 9, 1986

Preface

One of the greatest advantages of being a New Testament Christian is the fact that you can go to the New Testament for religious authority without wringing your mind through the endless traditions of ecclesiastical religions. Restoration of New Testament principles will always be a valid plea of those who guide their consciences by the Word of God. It is great to be able to trust in God's Word and not human tradition.

As in the doctrine of the church, we must also let our minds be led to the New Testament attitudes of the first century Christians. We have so diligently – and rightly so – striven to restore in the twentieth century the teachings of the early church. When one asks, "What lack we yet?", it might be answered, "The zeal of the early Christians to evangelize their generation." Here is both an attitude and action we have yet to restore to the fullest in the twentieth century.

It is the purpose of this book to make a brief survey of methods used by the early missionaries to accomplish their goal. What motivated them? How did they move? Why were they successful? Could the phenomenal growth of the early church be duplicated in the latter part of the twentieth century? Certainly these are questions every concerned Christian has asked. Every student of church history has been awed by the growth of the church in the first century. But we must be moved beyond awe to an active participation in re-establishing first century church growth. Therefore, it is my purpose in this book to at least bring us to a greater sensitivity of the first century method of world evangelism.

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Introduction

Mission books which try to investigate the "first century phenomenon" of church growth concentrate upon the New Testament text in order to give us some answers to the perplexing wonder of first century world evangelism. Well, this is meant to be one of those books. It is my intention to add this book to the very few books which have been written on this subject in the brotherhood. I am not saying that this is the best book or the most complete book on the subject. It is at least an effort to find practical methods of evangelism in the New Testament and apply those methods today.

It is only reasonable that the Bible should be our primary guide for mission methods. "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God ..." (I Pet. 4:11). The New Testament should be our first sourcebook for missionary methods. It should be, not only because it is the inspired Word of God, but also because those first Christians did what we seem *not* to be doing: evangelizing the world in our generation. They did it, and the fact that they did, gives credit to their methods. So let's see their methods. I would rather read the account of a success story than a collection of blunders and failures. And the New Testament is a success story in missions.

New Testament mission methods are good examples. Evangelism in the first century was carried out by some very wise men. Such men as Paul and Barnabas and Luke were mature, well-trained men. They knew geography, history and cultures. The fact that they were very wise men justifies our serious consideration of how they worked.

The New Testament is the inspired Word of God. Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit on more than one occasion as to where he must preach. This should encourage us to investigate how the Holy Spirit worked with these early Christians to carry out the command of Christ to evangelize. We must, though, be careful here. It is true that the Holy Spirit guided Paul upon occasions in a direct way. That's why we should be careful. The New Testament evangelists were also allowed to exercise their own judgment. The Holy Spirit then inspired a New Testament writer to record both the direct guidance given to a first century evangelist as well as those activities the early evangelist did on his own initiative. This could be understood in the sense that the Holy Spirit was condoning by which the early evangelist did his work. Or, it could be understood in the sense that the Holy Spirit was just inspiring the New Testament writer to accurately record historical events of the early church. Whatever the situation, we must be careful in saying that what a particular evangelist did was an inspired action we must follow today.

An example of the above would be when Peter withdrew from the Gentiles in Antioch when the Jewish Christians came up from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11-15). Certainly, this was not an inspired act on Peter's part, to withdraw from a class of people when under pressure. Peter stood condemned by doing such (Gal. 2:11). But the Holy Spirit had this particular action recorded for history. The Holy Spirit inspired the recording of the event; he did not inspire Peter to make such a move. Therefore, we must approach the New Testament with a little "horse sense" in our investigation of mission methods.

I am confident that the Holy Spirit allowed a great amount of leeway for methods in first century evangelism.

He allowed these early Christians to make decisions and plans for themselves. He allowed them to carry out those plans. Only upon certain occasions and for good reason, did the Holy Spirit step in and "suffer them not to go into Bithynia."

This is what makes the first century method so powerful and so relevant for us today. Those were ordinary men with ordinary minds just like us. And if "nothing would be withholden from them which they purposed to do," then nothing will be withholden from us which we purpose to do today. They made their plans, selected their method and God blessed their efforts. And the fact that they accomplished their feat says that we can do it today if we would follow their example. Therefore, we must earnestly search their attitudes, motives and methods. For in them lies the secret: "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word."

The rest of this book will be directed to the methods used by the early missionaries. You may add more. But these are the ones I consider important and the ones we must investigate and apply in some way to our work today.

Contents

The Publisher's Statement	iii
Preface	v
Introduction	vi
Contents	ix
1 Recognized The Imperative	1
2 Had The Right Motive	4
3 Had The Right Commitment	8
4 Planned Their Work	10
5 Sent Out By Churches	14
6 Did Not Seek Support	17
7 Supported By Churches Collectively	19
8 Supported By Individuals	23
9 Supported By Themselves	25
10 Sent Letters Of Recommendation	29
11 Went In Company	30
12 Lodged In Homes	32
13 Identified With Cultures	34
14 Emphasized Provinces	35
15 Evangelized Key Cities	36
16 Evangelized Religious Centers	38
17 Concentrated On Receptivity	40
18 Preached To Every Class	43
19 Preached The Simple Gospel	45
20 Considered Preaching As Primary	49
21 Appealed To Spiritual And Intellectual Needs	52
22 Used Every Opportunity To Preach	53
23 Preached Publically	55
24 Taught House To House	57
25 Emphasized Household Conversions	58

26	Labored Day And Night	59
27	Had Quiet Time.	61
28	Studied The Word	62
29	Went On Furlough.	63
30	Used Legal Rights	64
31	Organized Churches Quickly	67
32	Encouraged Group Decision-Making	70
33	Established Financially Independent Churches	73
34	Established Growth Churches	76
35	Taught The Concept Of Struggle	78
36	Tarried And Taught.	80
37	Trained On-The-Job	82
38	Met In Houses	85
39	Wrote Inspired Materials To Churches.	87
40	Sent Personal Messengers	88
41	Reported To Churches	89
42	Revisited Churches	90
43	Depended Upon God Alone	91
Other Books by Roger E. Dickson.		93

Recognized The Imperative

The first Christians recognized that it was their job to evangelize the world. Some may not think that this is a method. But let me assure you that the first task in accomplishing anything is to understand why you are going to do it in the first place. Those first Christians, therefore, had a clear understanding of what had to be done. Let's notice what the divine plan was that moved them to victory.

It was Jesus' work to evangelize. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). That was His mission. Jesus was "existing in the form of God," Paul proclaimed, "but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant ..." (Phil. 2:6,7). If Philippians 2: 5-8 teaches anything, it clearly shows that Jesus, as a missionary from heaven, came to identify and save the lost. Thus, Jesus gave a living example for those early disciples. He essentially said to them in Matthew 28:19, "Go and do thou likewise."

It was Jesus' command that His disciples take up His mantle of evangelism. And thus, we have the great passage - command - of Matthew 28:19. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations ..." Unfortunately, many English translations bring out the imperative nature of this verse with emphasis on the wrong word. The verb "go" is an aorist participle in the Greek text. Therefore, its action is contingent upon the action of the main verb "teach" which is aorist active. The translation of the verb "go", therefore, could justly be rendered "having gone." The em-

phasis of the command is the imperative mood of the aorist verb translated “teach” in the *King James Version* and “make disciples” in the *American Standard Version*. I believe Jesus was not so much commanding them to go as He was assuming that they would go. And in their going they would make disciples. The emphasis is upon making the disciples. The disciples already knew that they had to go. This understanding of the verse strengthens the evangelistic zeal which must be characteristic of Christians.

But that is not all. “All the nations” would better be translated “every ethnic group.” Somehow, when we start thinking about “nations” we start thinking about geography and borders and limitations. But Jesus is more specific than that. He is thinking about the tens of thousands of cultural ethnic groups throughout the world. Jesus wanted to disciple these ethnic groups.

So what was Jesus’ commandment? Literally, He was placing upon the shoulders of that small group of disciples a divine method. “Having gone into the world, DISCIPLE every ethnic group.” It was/is an imperative command to make followers in every ethnic group of the world. The nations of the world contain thousands of cultural, ethnic groups. Jesus says to disciple every one.

So it is the nature of the Gospel – good news – that it should be broadcast abroad. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the GOOD NEWS to the whole creation.” I don’t think Jesus had to really tell His disciples that. They knew it. The nature of the news was expressed by the angel to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus. “I bring you GOOD TIDINGS of GREAT JOY which shall be to all the people” (Luke 2:10). The news was GOOD news and GREAT joy. Any prospective missionary that doesn’t feel that about the message should stay home.

I believe that those churches which are stagnate on evangelism are those churches which do not recognize the hopelessness of the peoples of the world. I have been to dirt floor huts in Brazil, roofless houses in Peru and sin-pits in many of the major cities of the world. In all, there is a sense of futility, uselessness, despair. People struggle for a small morsel of food in Samolia just to live another day. Orphan children dig from garbage cans in Venezuela. Life each day becomes only an endless effort to survive one more day. After that, maybe another. But there is no hope. Jesus is hope and churches need to see the need of sowing the seed of hope in the hearts of these desperate people.

It is the nature of the Word of God, which is the SEED of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), to be sown. It is the nature of the Gospel, the GOOD NEWS, to be heralded throughout the world. The situation of the world is that "all have sinned." And it is the nature of SERVANTS – which we are if we claim to be Christians – to SERVE the bread of life to those hungering and thirsting after righteousness. There is an urgency about this which says "now is the acceptable time."

Any successful mission effort will begin with a soul search. Those going must endeavor to thoroughly know Jesus, His purpose, His mission. The evangelist who fails to "see" Jesus before he goes, will walk blindly among the peoples to whom he goes. We must know our Lord before we can know His mission. We must know God before we can know how to explain Him to others. This must always be the first method of any mission work.

Had The Right Motive

Motivation is the key to the success of any project. It is true that knowledge must precede action, else we continually stumble around with a "zeal without knowledge." But unmotivated knowledge is useless. The *Simple English Bible* translates James 4:17, "A person sins when he knows he should do something good, but doesn't do it." We must know what to do. That's necessary. But we must get our knowledge into action. This requires motivation.

To say the least, the early Christians were highly motivated people. God knew that they needed the education of the facts. Jesus, therefore, "sat daily in the temple teaching" (Matt. 26:55). He "went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom ..." (Matt. 4:23). But God also knew that the disciples needed motivation. He provided that motivation. In fact, it could be said that the primary method of God in getting the message to all the world was to highly motivate the disciples.

God's prime motivation was LOVE. John wrote, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Paul explained it in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us ..." He who is not moved by love is indeed moving on a mechanical motivation. Good and righteous men will always be moved by the love of God.

God moved Christians by FEAR. Was this a scare tactic? Possibly. It goes without question that one source of motivation always lies in what will happen to us if we are not moved to action. I do believe God used this aspect of motivation to get the early disciples out into the fields,

not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of those to whom they went. Paul wrote, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men ..." (2 Cor. 5:11). There is a certain stimulation in knowing that "we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). When Paul "reasoned of ... the judgment to come, Felix was terrified ..." (Acts 24:25). Surely this was a motivating factor to stimulate the early disciples to evangelize as well as to stimulate a response from their preaching.

God motivated by explaining the URGENCY of the matter of preaching the gospel. Evangelization is not a "yet-four-months-and-then-cometh-the-harvest" operation. It is as Jesus explains, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest" (John 4:35). Paul urged, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). There is an urgency about evangelizing the world which is typical of the work of Jesus while on earth. "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day," Jesus exhorted, "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). As disciples of Christ we must realize the urgency of our work.

God also moved men by paying their DEBT. All have sinned by rebelling against God. But "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men ..." (Tit. 2:11). Jesus suffered for us, "who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:21,24). Because of these facts Paul wrote, "I am debtor. ... So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach ..." (Rom. 1:14,15). Every missionary must

realize that he is a debtor, a debtor with a great price to repay.

God motivated the early Christians by explaining the **HOPELESSNESS OF THE LOST WORLD**. Judgment was to come upon those who “know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1: 8). And being that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and that “in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), the early Christians were moved by the gospel of hope to save the souls of men.

We must not under-estimate the extent to which these early disciples were moved. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Previous to that statement Paul had written that he could wish that he himself “were anathema from Christ” for his fellow Jews (Rom. 9:3). The first Christians were moved to go about preaching because they wanted men saved. Those missionaries were highly motivated.

But it seems that God’s work has often been hindered by those who become evangelists or missionaries for the wrong motives. Some have sought the glory of being a missionary. They have seen the “glorified position” of the missionary in the home church and have thus sought for such recognition. But let our glorying be of Christ, not of the flesh. Peter stated, “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: **THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, WHOSE IS THE GLORY AND THE DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER**” (1 Pet. 4:11).

And then there are those who might become missionaries because of GUILT. Feeling guilty about not being a missionary is not a pure motive to become a missionary. Paul felt himself a debtor, and thus was compelled to preach to those in Rome (Rom. 1:14,15). But he was not moved to do such because of guilt.

Some are moved by ADVENTURE. I would not say that this motive is entirely wrong. I would say there is a little adventure in every missionary. Those who do not admit it, should. If we define adventure as a desire to reach out into the unknown and a willingness to tackle the hard, then I would say that every missionary is adventurous to some extent. I haven't seen a missionary yet in which I haven't seen some adventure. But I would caution the prospective missionary here. If adventure is one of our top priorities, we are headed for a great disappointment. Remember, adventure is usually for those on safaris and expeditions. For the individual who plans on going to a specific location to make a home, the adventure of the matter soon passes.

Well, there are those who are so *ineffective at home* that the receptivity of the foreign fields gives a certain call to their ears. They are sure that their ineffectiveness will be turned into success somewhere else. Such is definitely a wrong motive. If one is not effective with people at home, he will not be effective with them somewhere else.

So being moved with Biblical motivations is important. Before one goes he or she must thoroughly search his or her soul. Ask yourself, "Why do I want to be a missionary?" Consider the motives of the early Christians. Would they have been effective if they were moved by the same motives which move you?

Had The Right Commitment

It is one thing to recognize an imperative. It is another thing to have a commitment to it. We must have a commitment to our cause and a commitment to use what is in our hand to accomplish that cause. The archives of Christianity are loaded with a lot of good ideas and intentions that were relegated there because no one was committed to their use.

One thing that has always amazed me concerning the evangelists of the New Testament is the extent of their commitment. I believe that the modern church in general has lost to some extent the true spirit of commitment. In a society of indifference and mediocrity, what would one expect? "Perfect attendance" and "Good contribution" have been used so long as signals for commitment that they have become mechanical signs of an inward death. Our responsibility as Christians is to attend and contribute. But the Sacred Scriptures place a far greater signal of commitment on the shoulders of Christians than this. We must restore first century commitment. In capturing the spirit of first century commitment we will captivate souls for our Savior.

The first evangelists were "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26). They were men who knew that all who "would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). But it seemed that that fact made little difference concerning their "going forth." Paul walked in the shadow of death. And He walked not there ignorantly, for the Holy Spirit, he said, "testifieth unto me in every city, saying that

bonds and afflictions abide me.” “But,” said he, “I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD” (Acts 20:23,24). On another occasion Paul told the Ceasearean church, “What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). This is the epitome of commitment.

The Lord had signified the above result of commitment unto those first disciples. The world would hate them because Jesus chose them out of the world (John 15:19, 17:14). Their choice to serve the Lord with commitment meant that being a living sermon they would condemn the wickedness of the wicked. That’s what would bring the persecution. But that was the type of commitment for which Jesus was calling. “If any man would come after me,” Jesus warned, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). That was a general statement, but Jesus was more specific in Mark 12:30. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” This was the type of commitment for which Jesus was asking.

Paul is an excellent example. “I have been crucified with Christ,” he wrote, “and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith ...” (Gal. 2:20). Paul believed in commitment. He practiced it. And he taught it. He commanded the Romans to present their “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service” (Rom. 12:1). It is no wonder that the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to write the following to the Corinthians, “I beseech

you therefore, BE YE IMITATORS OF ME” (1 Cor. 4: 16). “Be ye imitators of me,” he added, “even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Does this not give us a divine directive to look to Paul as an example of commitment? If we answer the above question in the affirmative then we must be prepared to live the cost. “Anywhere with Jesus” was not a song that Paul would just sing at the yearly Vacation Bible School. It was something he lived for. And unless we are ready to take that first step with Jesus, we should be careful what we sing lest we sing in hypocrisy.

4

Planned Their Work

Failing to plan is planning to fail. Those first century evangelists evidently knew the meaning of this most vital precept to successful missions. At least, it is evident from what we read in the New Testament. There is a definite indication of them developing a strategy to accomplish a definite work.

Jesus emphasized forethought. “For which of you,” He said, “desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it” (Luke 14:28; cf. vs. 28–32). The context of this passage is counting the cost for service to our Lord. But isn’t that what an evangelist should do? I have seen some missionaries go to the field and later find out that the cost of self-denial and sacrifice were too great. After a few months on the field they were headed home.

Paul seems to have always had a fore-vision of just where he wanted to go. Acts 19:21 reads, "Paul **PURPOSED** in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, then I must also see Rome." After he and Barnabas had accomplished a mission effort in Asia Minor, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word and see how they fare" (Acts 15:36).

It appears that Paul also planned his work in going to Corinth and Macedonia. To the Corinthians he wrote, "And in this confidence I was minded to come first unto you, that ye might have a second benefit; and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you ..." (2 Cor. 1:15,16). There was also the time when Paul had made plans to go to Spain (Rom. 15:24, 29). Whether or not he made this particular trip is left to question. What is important, though, is that he made the plans.

From the foregoing it can at least be concluded that Paul made plans to go to specific areas of work. It can also be concluded that he was going to do a specific work. The work was to preach the gospel. It seems, though, from reading Paul's activities in Acts that how he was going to approach a certain situation was left undetermined until he arrived on the scene. At least, there are enough spontaneous events in the life of Paul to draw this conclusion. There were times he was moved in the spirit to preach to Athenian philosophers. There was also a time when he went to the river to pray, found some people there, then taught and converted them. It may have been his plan, therefore, to be "urgent in season and out of season" in any given situation. But I cannot but believe that Paul had at least a basic idea of how he was going to present the gospel at any given location.

But again, there is another factor to be considered here. Paul traversed almost always into virgin territory. He, therefore, didn't know what to expect. And truly, it is hard to make definite plans on how to accomplish a specific mission effort if you do not know what you are going to face. Thus, sending churches should be a little lenient with evangelists who are going into unknown areas. Plans can be formulated, but those plans shouldn't be so iron-clad that they cannot be changed. How many missionaries have had their plans all on paper, convinced a group of elders that their plans would work, but later had to change them all within six months on the field?

Here again, I see flexibility in Paul. There was the time he wanted to make an excursion over into Bithynia (Acts 16:2). But the Holy Spirit had other plans. So, Paul changed his plans. Flexibility is a necessity. Woe is unto the evangelist that cannot change his plans when the situation demands it. Such an evangelist is headed for frustrating times.

Here is a good place to place a warning concerning pet strategies. Missionaries must always be on guard against the ever present danger of making certain methods of doing things the law. The longer a particular way of doing something is continued the harder it is to change. Too often a missionary will be doing his thing when the need of the thing has long passed. We must keep in mind that methods are usually expedients, and as expedients they can be changed to fit the needs of the day. **REMEMBER, THERE ARE FEW EXPEDIENT METHODS IN MISSION WORK THAT PERMEATE ALL CULTURES OF THE WORLD.** This is why I believe Paul had **GENERAL** plans and saved the specifics until he arrived on the field and saw the needs. It was then that he planned his specific plan of attack.

What is important is that we must GO TO "THE WORK." "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for THE WORK." So said the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). John Mark, though, turned back at Pamphylia and "went not with them to THE WORK" (Acts 15:38). But Paul and Barnabas fulfilled THE WORK which has been committed unto them (Acts 14:26). There is a definite work that must be carried out. Acts 14:26 indicates that Paul and Barnabas "fulfilled" the special work for which they had been sent out from Antioch to do. Such indicates the need for strategy and planning. Such also indicates a recognition of the job to be done and a getting on with doing it.

This is where I believe those who have the truth have an edge over those who are waiting around feeling for that direct nudge from the Holy Spirit to go. I do not believe and have never believed that the Holy Spirit gives one the nudge to go to this or that field or this or that point. All Jesus said was, "Go into ALL THE WORLD." That's all that is needed. God gave us horse sense to take care of the rest. If we say that God directly leads us to such and such field, then we are saddled with the theology that God leads us to unproductive fields. After all, we must admit that there are missionaries this day in fields that are producing little or nothing. Missionaries in the past have gone to such unproductive fields. And, missionaries will go to unproductive fields in the future. We will continue to make bad judgments. Let's not blame it on the Holy Spirit.

The problem is not that the Holy Spirit has guided one to an unproductive field. The problem is that someone didn't use his horse sense or make his plans. But again, after we use all possible common sense, there is still much room for mistakes on the part of us fallible humans.

The truth is, we must do our research and surveys, make

our plans, and get down on our knees and ask God to bless our feeble efforts. "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). It may give some confidence to feel that their mission was directly generated by the Holy Spirit. It gives me confidence to know that the Lord is working to bless something which He told me to do in the first place two thousand years ago.

5

Sent Out By Churches

The early evangelists were sent forth by churches, though the evidence for this is weak. In fact, the "sponsoring church" would be a concept hard to prove by use of the Scriptures. In examining first-century missions one is hard pressed to identify this type of mission method. But this does not say, though, that it is not a good EXPEDIENT. In fact, it is probably the best expedient. Let us examine this point in the scriptures.

Acts 13 is a good starting point. Keep in mind that it was the Holy Spirit who said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (vs. 2). Verse 3 states, "Then, when THEY had fasted and prayed and laid THEIR hands on them, THEY sent THEM away." We would justly assume that "they" and "their" in this verse refers to the church in Antioch. "Them" refers to Barnabas, Saul and John Mark. It is interesting to note, though, that verse 4 gives credit to the Holy Spirit for sending them forth. The church "laid their hands on them." This signifies that the church had fellowship with Barnabas, Saul and John Mark. But does it signify more than that?

We could assume that the church in Antioch financially supported Paul, Barnabas and John Mark. And it was to this church they returned to report after the first mission journey. But again, we must be very careful about tagging on to the relationship between those evangelists and the Antioch church some twentieth-century mission concept. We may be more guilty of *exegesis* than we want to admit.

If Acts 13:1–3 is evidence for the concept of “church sponsorship” of evangelists in the context of twentieth-century missions, then 3 John could be used for INDIVIDUAL Christian sponsorship of evangelists. Gaius was a faithful Christian whom John encouraged to “set forward” missionaries on their journey. Maybe this is a concept of missions we have not yet restored.

Paul also had a close relationship with the church in Philippi. But a close examination of Philippians 4 seems to indicate that their relationship was in the area of common cause and finances. They had fellowship with Paul “in the matter of giving and receiving ...” (vs. 15). And they “sent once and again” unto Paul (vs. 16). But again, one would be stretching the Scriptures to get the idea from Philippians that there was an eldership in Philippi running by remote control Paul’s mission efforts in Rome. In fact, if I am understanding Philippians 4:10 properly, the Philippian church didn’t even know where Paul was located until someone finally brought word that he was in prison in Rome.

From a detailed reading of the New Testament, one definitely gets the impression that evangelists were allowed a great amount of freedom in the area of decision making concerning their work. Unless I am missing something, I fail to see the idea and practice of elderships “sending in plays” from the sidelines from back home. Evangelists are

on the scene and know the situation better than those back home will ever know it. The Holy Spirit evidently recognized this, and thus gave no revelation concerning what elders should do in “sponsoring” a mission. The lack of revelation in this area certainly opens up the area of expediency. Where we need to be careful is not to form law in the area of opinion.

It might be helpful here to notice the case of Apollos in Acts 18:24–28. Apollos arrived in Ephesus a mighty man in the Scriptures. After spending some time in Ephesus and going to Aquila and Priscilla’s “tutorial school,” “he was minded to PASS OVER INTO ACHAIA” (vs. 27). Thus, it was Apollos’ initiative to go to Achaia. And “the brethren encouraged him” to do such, sending a letter to the brethren in Achaia (vs. 27). This is at least one example of the evangelist taking the initiative to go and where to go. The brethren allowed such. And they gave him “encouragement.” Now we can surmise all we want about what “encouragement” here may mean.

I have seen in the past some elders who may have overstepped their realm of “overship.” In their zeal to oversee every step of their missionary they have violated the autonomy of a local church on the mission field. Let’s observe a case study here. Ask yourself the question, Is the mission church – the church established on the mission field – an autonomous congregation? Your answer should be yes. (If your answer is no, then you need to stop here and study church autonomy.) If a local church, no matter where it is located – even outside the U.S. – is autonomous, then we must honor its autonomous existence. But a church in a far off land (U.S.A.) is “sponsoring” – overseeing – the evangelist who is working with the mission church? If the missionary becomes ineffective, or lazy, or liberal, or whatever, can the mission church ask him to

leave? What if the far-away-sponsoring-church gives money for the construction of a church building for the mission church. Does the mission church have the autonomy to delegate the use of these funds for the building of the building? Who should hold the deed to the property? There are a dozen questions that could be asked here that would probably open up a pandora's box of violations of congregational autonomy. I would advise my Stateside brethren to observe with utmost care the congregational autonomy of mission churches throughout the world. I haven't found any scriptural principle yet which says that financial support means legislative control.

Back to church sponsorship. I believe this is the wisest expedient method of missions. We have had too many filmflam missionaries roving from one church to another making large their budget. A good eldership overseeing a man and his work is a good safeguard against such abuses and a good guarantee that a mission effort will be effective. This is especially true when a young family is sent into the field. It is always wise to have the maturity of good elders behind the work. When great decisions need to be made I would trust in the decisions of a great eldership more than one man's decision. This is why I believe every evangelist should labor with the advice of a good sponsoring eldership.

6

Did Not Seek Support

The next few points will deal with finances. Everybody should perk their ears up at this point because everyone is usually interested in money. To begin our thoughts here I

believe we should first consider a peculiarity of New Testament missions. In view of today's atmosphere of church missions this point is almost an oddity. This is at least one practice we have not restored to the first-century church.

As far as I can see, **THERE IS NO PRACTICE OF THE FIRST EVANGELISTS GOING FROM CHURCH TO CHURCH TO RAISE FUNDS IN ORDER TO GO TO THE MISSION FIELD.** To raise funds for benevolence, yes. But to raise funds to go to a mission field, no. This should make us stop and think.

Paul had a very close relationship with the church in Philippi. Thus, I will be referring to this relationship several times in the following pages. What is interesting is a statement that Paul made to this church in Philippians 4, verses 11 and 17. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to Paul with funds for his physical well-being. Paul received their contribution with great joy. But in verse 11 he said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." In verse 17 he said that he did not "seek for the gift." There is no indication in the New Testament where Jesus or His disciples went "raising funds." They did not ask for the gifts. The gifts came naturally as brethren realized that evangelists must be sent out to evangelize.

This is a phenomenon in view of our present-day situation. Common talk among missionaries today is that we must learn to get brethren to give over funds before we can have an opportunity to ask the unbelievers to give over their lives to Jesus. In fact, it is almost a norm that if a man does not have the ability to raise funds he cannot be a missionary. Somehow, I do not see this pattern in the New Testament. Have we developed a monster in the church which is killing our mission outreach?

The solution to this problem of fund-raising is not easy to find. It is easy to suggest that churches should become more concerned about missions. It is easy to suggest that churches should seek mission efforts to which they can contribute. But motivating churches to be the type of church as the Philippian church is another thing. The following point(s) will give an idea of support which seemed to be characteristic of the early churches.

7

Supported By Churches Collectively

This point and the following can be introduced by 3 John 7 and 8. John told Gaius that we support evangelists for three reasons: (1) They have gone forth for the sake of the Name. Evangelists go into the world for the purpose of spreading the precious name of Jesus. (2) They take nothing of the Gentiles, that is, they don't preach for money. At least, on their initial venture they should be supported from home. They take nothing from the nationals to whom they go lest they be accused of preaching for financial gain. (3) We should support evangelists that we might be considered "fellow-workers for the truth." Under these three points could be placed almost any other reason why we should support evangelists.

Paul said in reference to financial support of elders that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (1 Tim. 5:17). Not too many missionaries would like to be referred to as oxen but Paul still said "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." (1 Tim. 5:17). In Galatians 6:6

Paul wrote, "But let him that is taught in the word communicate (pay) unto him that teacheth in all good things." In other words, let the student pay the teacher. Jesus also indicated that the travelling evangelist had a right to receive support (cf. Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7). Paul concluded a section of 1 Corinthians 9 with an admonition that the Corinthian church should support those who minister in the word. "Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (vs. 14).

Therefore, from the above scriptures it is easy to recognize that there is a scriptural responsibility of Christians to pay those who labor in preaching and teaching the word. Now then, let's notice some examples of the early Christians supporting missionaries in particular.

Acts 13:3 is a good example. Though the record does not explicitly make the actual statement, we would be just to assume that the Antioch church gave Paul and Barnabas money for their first mission journey. When Paul, Silas, Barnabas and John Mark left on their second journey, it could also be assumed that the Antioch church again supported the work financially (Acts 15:39-41).

Philippians 4:10-20 is the most definite passage in the New Testament which substantiates congregational support of missionaries. In verse 14 Paul said to the Philippians, "Howbeit ye did well that ye had FELLOWSHIP with my affliction." The Greek word translated fellowship in this passage is *koinonia*. The general meaning of this word is to be a joint partaker. In this context, as well as Galatians 6:6, the emphasis is upon being a joint partaker

by financially sacrificing for another. And according to verse 18 this is what the Philippian church was doing. While Paul was in Thessalonica they "sent once and again" unto his need. At the time of the writing of the letter to the Philippians, Paul had received all necessary things from them by the hand of Epaproditus (vs. 18). The Philippian church was a faithful financial supporter of Paul.

Another definite passage of congregational support of missionaries is 2 Corinthians 11:8 and 9. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "I **ROBBED OTHER CHURCHES, TAKING WAGES OF THEM** that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, **WHEN THEY CAME FROM MACEDONIA, SUPPLIED THE MEASURE OF MY WANT**: and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." Paul made this statement in the tenor of being a rebuke to the Corinthians. According to Galatians 6:6 the Corinthians should have offered to pay Paul. But it seems that Paul did not emphasize that teaching while at Corinth lest he be accused by the Corinthians of preaching for money. The important thing to remember here is that Paul received pay from the Macedonia churches while being a missionary in Corinth and the surrounding regions.

The Greek work **PROPEMPO** is interesting. According to Mr. Thayer it means to "set forward," or "bring on the way." Another meaning, according to Thayer, is to "fit him out with the prerequisites for his journey." Arndt and Gingrich agree with this meaning. They define it also as to "help on one's journey with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc." This is most interesting in view of how this word is used in the New Testament.

Notice how Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 16. He was hoping to stay the winter in Corinth on one of his journeys, "that ye may," said he, "SET ME FORWARD (PROPEMPO) on my journey whithersoever I go" (1 Cor. 16:6; Read 2 Cor. 1:16). He commanded the Corinthians concerning Timothy, "... SET HIM FORWARD (PROPEMPO) on his journey in peace" (1 Cor. 16:11). Thus, we could conclude from this that it is the duty of churches to set evangelists forward on their journeys, and by this make sure all necessary preparations are in order for the journey.

There is a very important point here with which to conclude. This point is brought out by Paul in Philippians 4: 17. To this supporting church Paul wrote, "Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for THE FRUIT THAT INCREASETH TO YOUR ACCOUNT." Supporting churches need to be taught this most valuable, spiritual principle. THE FRUIT OF PAUL'S LABORS WENT TO THE ACCOUNT OF THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH. Thus, it is not the church supporting a missionary in order that he might do "his thing." Neither is support to be given because churches are wanting to relieve their consciences of guilt about missions. The principle is the third reason of 3 John, "that we may be FELLOW-WORKERS for the truth" (vs. 8). It is the church working through the hands of those that it sends forward. It is a joint effort between supporter and supported, the senders and the ones sent. The local Christian factory-worker is the one who receives the fruit from the labors of the evangelist he helps support. He is just as much a missionary as the one who is sent. This is a most important Biblical principle that must be taught to supporting brethren. They need to take courage that their contributions are "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:8).

Supported By Individuals

Here is another area that would do churches of Christ good to restore. When reading the New Testament one receives the definite impression that a great amount of the burden of financial support of missionaries was laid upon the shoulders of individual Christians, not just the church collectively. In other words, individual Christians took an initiative to financially help an evangelist evangelize. I believe there are just as many mentionings in the New Testament where individuals were either exhorted or actually did support the travelling evangelists as incidences where the church as a whole did the same. Let's examine some cases.

Gaius has come down through history as a rich and generous Christian. Gaius was a member of a church which had its share of problems. There was a man in the church, Diotrephes by name, who refused to support missionaries. Not only that, he forbid anyone else from doing such (3 John 9,10). (Isn't this a picture of some twentieth-century churches.) Nevertheless, John exhorted Gaius to continue his practice of **SETTING FORWARD** – this includes financial support, remember – evangelists on their journey (3 John 6). Thus, here is an individual who is encouraged to support the travelling evangelist, apart from the church as a collective body.

Aquila and Priscilla were tent-makers by trade. Claudius gave all Jews an exit visa to leave Rome, and so Aquila and Priscilla took up residence in Corinth. When Paul came to Corinth "he abode with them" (Acts 18:3). Paul was also a tent-maker. The indication is that Paul helped them

in their trade but they made it possible for him to reason in the synagogue every sabbath and persuade Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4). This would be an example of a Christian couple working so as to aid a missionary and his work on the mission field.

Paul seems to have done the reverse of the above while in Ephesus. "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." He later wrote, "Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, AND TO THEM THAT WERE WITH ME" (Acts 20:33,34). Paul and his company labored in Ephesus for some time (Acts 19:10). Acts 20:34 indicates that Paul worked to support those who were with him. Again, this is an example of one laboring in secular work on the mission field to support others who are on the same field.

Paul exhorted Titus to SET FORWARD (PROPEMPO) Zenas and Apollos on their journey in Titus 3:13. Titus was to be sure that "nothing be wanting unto them." Paul is here commanding an individual (Titus) to financially provide for two people who undoubtedly were about to make a mission journey.

Individual Christians should feel a great responsibility to support mission efforts. Whether or not the local church does, the responsibility is still upon the individual Christian to send forth the gospel. Sometimes those who are against evangelism can block those who know they should be evangelizing. I once received a letter from a "Gaius" who had been hindered from doing his Christian responsibility. There may have been a Diotrephes in the church where he was a member who was preventing the support of mission work. I want to quote a portion of his letter because it typifies a situation that can and has developed in more than one church.

Much to our shame, it has become the custom in this area of the world (middle) for many elderships to be content to allow the Lord's money to sit in banks, either in savings or checking accounts, drawing various types of interest. Because of the inactivity of that which is rightfully His, and the lack of concern for world evangelism, myself and a small group of other Christians have decided to see a part of our contribution actively furthering the course of the Kingdom of the Lord. We hope in the near future to begin contributing on a monthly basis to a fund which would go towards the purchase of Bibles which we would like to donate and send to various parts of the world to those (especially missionaries) who are in need of Bibles.

I commend this group for determining to do what the New Testament teaches them to do. There are too many Diotrepheses in the church trying to shut up the kingdom of heaven. More emphasis needs to be placed upon individual support of missionaries. This is a New Testament method that needs to be restored in the twentieth century.

9

Supported By Themselves

The apostle Paul was careful not to be accused of preaching for money. He wrote, "... we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:12). He wanted to escape the common accusation of preaching for money. In his second letter to the Corinthian church, he stated, "But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an oc-

casion ..." (11:12). He wrote later to the Thessalonians concerning his first visits with them. "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a CLOAK OF COVETOUSNESS" (1 Thess. 2:5). And then he recalled the Thessalonians remembrance of how he supported himself while there. "For ye remember, brethren," said he, "our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (1 Thess. 2:9). It seems that some had been accusing Paul of that which he tried to avoid in Thessalonica. In the second letter to this church he restates that he had worked "night and day" that he "might not burden" any of them (2 Thess. 3:8).

At times, therefore, Paul was what we would refer to as a "vocational missionary." "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel," he wrote to the Ephesian elders. "Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:33, 34). This was Paul's work as a vocational missionary.

One of the first accusations the unbeliever usually makes against the travelling evangelist is that he is preaching for money. It has been my experience that in countries where colonial influence has been the greatest in years past this accusation is more common. Such would only be a logical response of such countries to those who have for years come and exploited peoples and lands for gain.

Paul made tents to support himself and those with him. Acts 18:1-3 states that he was a tent-maker by trade. Though Paul did receive support from churches at times - probably most of his time in preaching was under support of churches - the receiving of this support did not determine whether he would or would not preach the gospel. In fact, the emphasis in the New Testament seems to be that

the first missionaries went forth WITH PLANS TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES. "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). I find it hard to believe that all these who were scattered abroad from Jerusalem had spent six months to a year raising their support from the churches of Judea.

Shouldn't an emphasis in the church on sending out evangelists be changed a little here? I believe we have concentrated so much on the fully supported missionary that the New Testament concept for vocational workers has almost been forgotten. In fact, we almost consider the preacher or missionary who is supporting himself a second rate preacher.

But let me say a word here concerning Paul's attitude toward his secular work of tent-making. I fail to see anywhere in the New Testament the preacher running from problems in the church to do secular work. Unless I have overlooked something, I do not see any situation where Paul became so frustrated with the church that he decided to make tents.

Paul's attitude toward preaching is clearly seen in Romans 1:15. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel ..." This seems to explain his determination and, thus, explain his feeling that he was going to preach the gospel to the world, whether churches supported him or not. Thus, the tent-making became a necessity to accomplish his goal, not to retreat from discouragement and church problems.

I believe the tent-making of Paul has been used to justify some actions of some preaching brethren who were looking for a Biblical reason to excuse a weakness of the spirit. Paul's tent-making was used to advance his work. It

was not used to deter his work. I believe we need to be careful in wrongfully applying what Paul did to something we may do in retreat from fighting Satan.

Let me also say something here concerning the nature of one's vocation for mission work. Paul was a tent-maker. To me this indicates that he had the type of work that allowed him to be self-employed. He was his own boss. He didn't have to punch a time clock. When he wanted to take Monday afternoons off to teach a Bible class, he did. While making tents, visitors could freely come and visit with him. When enough money was earned to spend a week or two in travelling, he took off and travelled and preached. At least, this is how I see the type of self-employed occupation he had and the freedom that went along with it.

The person who is employed by someone other than a dedicated Christian would have difficulty here. The indication of Acts 18:2 is that Paul WENT TO Aquila and Priscilla to work with them; "and because he was of the same trade, HE ABODE WITH THEM, and they wrought" (vs. 3). Thus, Paul worked with them, but he was at least able to "reason in the synagogue every sabbath" (vs. 4). One who is employed in a company work, though, would be greatly hindered in doing his work as an evangelist.

While living in Brazil I was acquainted with several Christians who were employed by companies. Their great frustration was that the company demanded almost all of their time. There was no time left for teaching classes in the homes of non-Christians at night. And while on the job there was no time or environment to do teaching. Such led some dedicated Christians to a lot of frustration.

Before one went forth as a vocational missionary it would be good for him to carefully choose the trade which

he purposed to use to support himself. And he should carefully select the field in which he intended to use his trade. It would be a shame to go to the field with a plow when actually the crop was ready for harvest and needed a combine. In Paul's day tent-making was a trade that could be used almost universally. I would pick a similar trade.

10

Sent Letters Of Recommendation

It evidently was a custom in the first century to write a letter to recommend a person to another person or group. Paul, before his conversion, had asked letters of the high priests to go unto Damascus to persecute Christians (Acts 8:2; 22:5). With such letters went forth both authority and recommendation.

Acts 18:27 is a case in point here. When Apollos "was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren (in Ephesus) encouraged him, AND WROTE TO THE DISCIPLES TO RECEIVE HIM ..." This was a letter of recommendation that the brethren in Achaia have fellowship with Apollos. Such letters also carried the authority of the sending church. In other words, the brethren in Ephesus were authorizing Apollos as a true messenger of the faith.

When Paul arrived in Rome he did not have this advantage. Paul had called together the chief of the Jews. He explained why he was there but they said, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm

of thee" (Acts 28:21). "But," they said, "we desire to hear thee what thou thinkest" (Acts 28:22). It would have been good for Paul to have had a letter sent from some Jewish Christians to the Jews in Rome. He may have had a better reception. But, under the circumstances, Paul would probably have arrived in Rome before the letters.

If there is an established church at the location to which a missionary is being sent, it would be advisable for the sending brethren to write a letter of recommendation concerning the missionary. It must be noted that the letter to see if Apollos could come, or a letter asking for support. Apollos had determined to go forth. The church only wrote — as far as we know — to the brethren on the other end that he was coming and that they would do well in advancing the truth if they accepted him.

11

Went In Company

Here is a most common mission method used by the first-century Christians. In fact, it was almost understood that if one planned to go to the mission field, he went with someone.

A few of the numerous examples will prove the point. The norm seems to have been set by Jesus in Luke 10. In verse 11 of this limited commission He sent His disciples on their first missionary journey two-by-two. After the establishment of the church in Acts 2, one has to look fervently to find the first missionaries going on their own. Peter and John were teamed together to go to Samaria (Acts 8:14). Peter and certain other Jews went to the

house of Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:23). Paul, Barnabas and John Mark went on what is commonly referred to as Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement concerning John Mark when they began their second journey. As a result the two separated. This would be a situation where the two missionaries would be going back to churches where they had been before. But, the imperative to go together as a team was so strong that both Paul and Barnabas teamed up with other men. Paul took Silas (Acts 15:40). Barnabas took John Mark (Acts 15:39).

While Paul was on his journeys he seems to have always had someone with him. Silvanus and Timothy were with him in Acts 15:40. Silas, Timothy and Luke were with him in Acts 16:11. Seven different brethren were with Paul in Acts 20:4. Team evangelism was undoubtedly Paul's way of doing it.

Until about the middle of the 1960's, going alone generally characterized the normal method of sending out missionaries of the church. Thankfully, this trend is rapidly changing. Our Lord and the inspired Paul knew that we should not go alone. We should follow their example.

Churches need to understand that there is no overlapping with organized team work. Some brethren want to claim a mission field and a missionary may take pride that they have made such claims. Such is certainly not a New Testament concept and does contradict a spirit of cooperation and common sense. What is important is getting the gospel into all the world and unto every heart. We must work together to do this.

There are those few times that missionaries went on their own to the mission field. Apollos seems to have tra-

velled alone. Philip also made a few journeys by himself. But the occasions are rare. The norm was to go together. How they worked together is open to discussion. Team evangelism is definitely a common sense method which we must continue to restore and to practice in our mission efforts today.

12

Lodged In Homes

New Testament Christians excelled in hospitality. It is little wonder why the Holy Spirit made hospitality one of the requirements for being an elder, and for being a good Christian in general.

It was a common practice, therefore, that missionaries should lodge in the homes of Christians, not in the local Holiday Inn. Luke records that when Lydia was baptized, "she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there" (Acts 16:15,40). This was the custom of Gaius who regularly received missionaries and set them forward on their journey (3 John 1-6). Peter lodged with Simon the Tanner and I am sure this was not Simon's "Travel Lodge." (Acts 10:5,6). Lodging with Christians was a common practice with missionaries. In fact, John warns that false teachers should not be received "into your house" (2 John 10,11).

But again, this is exactly what Jesus taught the disciples during His ministry. In Luke 10 he encouraged the 70 who were sent to stay in the homes of the people to whom

they went (vs. 6,7). He exhorted that they “go not from house to house” but to eat and drink at one house. The context of this imperative, though, is a little different from that of Christians staying with Christians. Evidently the 70 were going to stay with non-disciples, whereas Paul and the first evangelists stayed with Christians. But the idea is the same. Hospitality was something that was certainly practiced.

That this is a mission method could be left to debate. Christian hospitality, though, seems to demand that evangelists not be “put up” in some local hotel. If we truly desire to be “fellow-workers for the truth”, then how can we put the missionary up in some secluded hotel across town until he leaves. Now I realize that there may be some exceptions to this. Some brethren feel this is the way to show hospitality. Some missionaries may want a rest away from the run and rush of fund raising or whatever. I would at least say that if the missionary stays in a hotel that the church should pay the expenses. At least, the church is maintaining its responsibility to “send forward” the evangelists.

But personally, I have never felt comfortable cooped up in some hotel away from the brethren. While conducting the extension program in the Caribbean I thought it imperative to educate the brethren there to allow the travelling evangelist to stay with the brethren. In some places of the world this means that the missionary must resign himself to sleeping in some pretty unique places. But that's great. I wouldn't be a missionary if I didn't enjoy sleeping in those unique places for Jesus. We must turn again unto the hospitality of the first century.

Identified With Cultures

The following statement of Paul is quoted in about every book of missions I have read. And rightly so. It deals with the heart of the missionary's effectiveness. "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Believe it or not, I sat in a restaurant in one of those far off lands with a missionary that didn't even know that that statement was in the New Testament. It goes without saying that this missionary didn't stay on the field more than a year.

Identification with local peoples seems to be a principle practice of Paul. Such led him to have a sense for culture and a respect for the ways of other peoples. To Greek philosophers he spoke of things that were familiar to them (Acts 17:22ff). One of the principle steps toward identification is learning the language of the peoples to whom one goes. Knowing Hebrew certainly helped Paul in Acts 22:2. "And when they heard that he spoke unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet." One can understand why there was the gift of languages when the church was first established. Such added greatly to the rapidity in spreading the gospel to all cultures. Such possibly indicates also that the Holy Spirit is saying that we should learn the language of the people to whom we go to convert. Nothing else does any more benefit in identifying with culture than to learn the language of that culture.

I do not have the space here to deal with how one should identify. You can learn that in other books. What is important to notice here is that the early missionaries

made an intense effort to communicate the gospel by learning their audiences. And to learn the audience one must learn the language of the audience.

To the American missionary, economic identification is a key factor. In this context it is noteworthy to examine Paul's attitude toward economics. "... I HAVE LEARNED, IN WHATSOEVER STATE I AM, THEREIN TO BE CONTENT. I know how to be abased ..." (Phil 4:11, 12). One must keep in mind that Paul is here discussing finances. The American missionary must learn to do as Paul instructed in Romans 12:16. "Mind not high things, but CONDESCEND TO MEN OF LOW ESTATE. Be not wise in your own conceits."

The first thing some prospective missionaries think when going to the fields is how much they will have to give up when they get there. Remember, the context of "I-have-learned-in-whatsoever-state-I-am-therein-to-be-content" was written in the area of finances. Our attitude, as was Paul's, should be to willingly sacrifice all that should be sacrificed in order to get the gospel to every creature. And assuredly, taking the gospel to those tribes in the Amazon will require more sacrifice in standard of living than taking the gospel to those living in the heart of London. But those in the heart of the Amazon do need the gospel.

14

Emphasized Provinces

Luke and Paul seem to have emphasized the evangelization of provinces. Acts 16:16 reads, "And they went through the region of PHRYGIA and GALATIA, having

been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in ASIA.” And it is interesting to note that though Paul went to the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia, he was actually called to “come over into MACEDONIA ...” (Acts 16:9). In planning to go to the city of Corinth, Paul first wrote to the Corinthians the following: “I was minded to come first unto you ... and by you to pass into MACEDONIA, and again from MACEDONIA to come unto you, and of you to be set forward on my journey unto JUDEA” (2 Cor. 1: 16). In this same epistle Paul wrote, “ ... I glory on your behalf to them of MACEDONIA, and ACHAIA ...” (2 Cor. 9:2; Read also Acts 18:5; 19:22; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5; Phil. 4: 15).

The implication from the above is that Luke and Paul viewed the entire area as needing evangelization. In other words, it was an area which needed to be evangelized, not just a specific city.

This view of world evangelism is healthy for us today. Our emphasis should be on taking the gospel to countries, provinces and states. This leaves us, though, with the burden of determining a strategy for evangelizing a specific country or region in a country. How are we to reach the masses? This brings us to the following point and the method Paul used to reach the large provincial regions.

15

Evangelized Key Cities

Was this Paul’s method? Yes, it seems that he evangelized the provinces by concentrating upon the heart of the province. The key cities of those days were usually the cen-

ters of the Roman administration of Roman law for the area. They were also the centers of religion for the provinces. Whether Jewish or Pagan religions, people of the rural areas looked to the religion of the cities for guidance. The cities were also the developing point of culture. In Paul's case, the culture was usually Greek. Then, as now, the city usually determines the direction of cultural expansion. And then, these key cities were always the centers of commerce. The strategic network of Roman roads penetrated the principle cities of Paul's day. So naturally, world trade would thrive around such harbor cities as Ephesus. Thus, because of their strategic importance, the cities offered the mechanism from which the provinces could be evangelized.

It is interesting to notice a statement Jesus made when He sent out the seventy in Luke 10. The *Simple English New Testament* reads, "Don't stop to talk with people along the road" (vs. 4). This is a peculiar statement in view of the fact that their purpose for going forth was to announce the coming kingdom of God. My understanding of this statement stems from verse one where it is said that Jesus "sent them two and two before his face into every CITY and PLACE, whither He himself was about to come." In view of the urgency of the matter, it seems that Jesus did not want His disciples to get bogged down on the road. Considering the time factor, it appears that Jesus wanted His disciples to hurry from one city to another. If they would have stopped at every house along the way, they would never have accomplished their mission.

This seems to have been the pattern of Paul's travels. Paul placed great emphasis on cities as Ephesus, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Berea, and Antioch. For two years he stayed in Ephesus teaching in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). And, "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the

word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). Paul's strategy was to evangelize the provinces by evangelizing the centers of the most influence of the provinces. And the center of influence was the city.

In developing strategy for evangelism it would be good to consider this example. The general rule is that the cities are the heart of activity and existence of the countries of the world. The United States has a strong rural population. But this is not necessarily true of the rest of the world. The rural areas of Brazil Venezuela and Mexico, etc. look to the cities for direction. It is imperative, therefore, that we focus our attention on the cities. And from the cities we can reach out to the rural areas. It is easier for the city dweller to influence the farmer than it is for the farmer to influence the city dweller.

16

Evangelized Religious Centers

Here again it seems that Paul was even more selective. Not only did he concentrate upon key cities to reach the provinces, but he concentrated upon the particular cities which were key religious centers. It was in these cities that he could find those who had religious inclinations.

The Jewish synagogues were located in the cities. When Paul arrived in Berea the first thing he did was to go to the synagogue of the Jews (Acts 17:10). The first place he preached in Athens was the synagogue of the Jews (17:17). In Corinth, "he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4). "Now

when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, WHERE WAS A SYNAGOGUE: and Paul, AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, went in unto them ..." (Acts 17:1,2; See also 9:20; 13:5,14; 18:26; 19:8).

One of Paul's first places to preach when he entered a city was not the street. It was not to rent a building and pass out brochures. The first place to preach was where the religious people were assembled. That was the synagogue.

To those who did not have his common Jewish background, he approached where they met for religious ideas. In Athens "Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus" and preached (Acts 17:22). This was where the Greek philosophers assembled. Paul perceived that they were "very religious" and thus approached them as religious people searching for truth.

This is one possible approach to evangelism that evangelists should seriously consider. Not only could we enter into the cities of religious influence, but we must also enter into the temples of religious influence. Paul went to the cities of the synagogues, but he also went to the synagogues and temples. We enter the cities. But we fail to enter the synagogues. It would appear to me that evangelists should at least make an effort to preach in the churches of the religious of a particular area. The people who worship in these places are misguided. They need the truth as the Jews who worshipped in the synagogues. Instead of letting our religious prejudices drive us away from denominational churches, we should be approaching these people, asking for invitations to preach. It was Paul's CUSTOM to do this. He knew that they would not come to him, so he made an effort to go to them.

We need to take people from where they are on to victory through truth. So often we neglect an opportunity here that is wide open. I have found that it is easier to get into the churches of denominations which are independent. Those which are tied up in ecclesiastical orders often reject you. But those which operate on an autonomous, independent basis will frequently allow you to enter their premises if approached properly. But often it is their religious prejudice that keeps you away. Satan has a way of getting people satisfied with a false teaching and keeping the truth out. But we must at least make an effort to penetrate his wiles that we might be able to reach those who are religious.

17

Concentrated On Receptivity

Paul preached to those whom he considered receptive to the gospel. In finding the receptive he had to approach the masses. But there seems to be an emphasis in his life and work on receptivity. This is also true of the work of Jesus. Let's examine this point.

It is interesting to note that Jesus had little receptivity in Nazareth. Mark even records that Jesus " marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:6). Consequently, He did little work in that area. It is not known exactly how much time apostle Paul spent in Tarsus from the time between Acts 9:30 and Acts 11:25. But in comparison to his time spent in evangelizing other areas it was significantly small. What Jesus said of Himself also applied to Paul and others, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country"

(Mark 6:4). This brings us again to the concept of receptivity. Neither Jesus nor Paul spent much time where the message was not readily accepted.

Jesus said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). Jesus was concerned about receptivity. I do not see anywhere in His teachings the concept of continuing efforts to convert the unreceptive. "But into whatsoever city he shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we wipe off against you ..." (Luke 10:10,11). In these instructions to the 70 who were sent out by Jesus in Luke 10, the clear implication is that they were not to waste time on non-receptive peoples. Their mission was too urgent. So is ours.

Paul practiced this principle taught by Jesus. In Antioch of Pisidia Paul and Barnabas were severely persecuted. "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium" (Acts 13:51). He had told these Jews in Antioch, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). A similar incident happened in Macedonia concerning Paul and the Jews. "And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

This did not mean that Paul did not want his fellow Jews to be saved. A reading of Romans 9:1-3 and 10:11 clearly shows that he did. Paul's turning to the Gentiles does show that he was not going to waste time on those

who were openly hostile to the gospel. His practice was to take advantage of open doors. To the Corinthians he wrote, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me ..." (1 Cor. 16: 8,9). A great door was opened for him at Troas (2 Cor. 2: 12) and he asked for one to be opened while in prison in Rome (Col. 4:3). When he reviewed his work in Asia before the church in Antioch of Syria he emphasized the great open door that had been opened unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). So, Paul concentrated upon receptivity.

The problem in applying this practice of Paul to our mission efforts today is that such is highly subjective. Just how can we determine when a door of receptivity is opened? This is the whole problem with determining receptivity. Some fields demand the planting and nurturing of the seed for some time before fruit is brought forth. Other fields produce fruit almost immediately upon the arrival of the evangelist. But how can we determine when we should stay and when we should go in relation to receptivity?

To solve this problem we could first notice Paul's situation with the Jews. The cases of Acts 13 and 18 are easy to determine. In both cases Paul and company turned from the Jews. In Acts 13:50 the Jews "stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders." In Acts 18 the Jews "opposed themselves and blasphemed" (vs. 6). Thus, Paul's decision to turn from the Jews in at least these two cases was based upon OPEN hostility toward him and his message. He therefore judged these particular peoples non-receptive. We could therefore conclude that any people that are openly hostile toward the preaching of the gospel are not receptive.

But what about those situations where a great amount

of time is spent to produce fruit? First, I would suggest that we investigate the methods that are being used to reach these people. I would secondly suggest that the ones doing the preaching be investigated. (There could possibly be a missionary not doing his job.) I would then consider the receptivity of the people. It is a grave responsibility to determine whether or not we should continue an effort in an area where little fruit is produced when at the same time one could be working in an area which would produce much more fruit on a short-term basis.

Let's be careful about two things here. First, we missionaries need to be sure we do not stay in a field that is unreceptive just because we like it there and that's where we are going to stay. And secondly, let us not think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. In other words, let's move when we should, but don't when we shouldn't, letting the receptivity be the judge. I realize this doesn't help much in determining whether a field is receptive. Probably the best thing to do is to consider each individual situation, being highly sensitive to the fact that God does not want us to cast our pearls before the swine.

18 Preached To Every Class

A brief survey of the preaching of Paul indicates that he did not limit himself to preaching to any particular class or people. At least, Luke gives the picture that Paul presented the gospel to priest, prince and pauper.

The church of Macedonia was poor economically. Out of their poverty Paul says that they contributed bountifully (2 Cor. 8:1,2). Whether Paul approached the economically poor of Macedonia on his first visit is uncertain. But by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians the indication was that they were poor.

Acts 17 indicates that Paul and Silas reached the upper class in Berea. "Many of them therefore believed: also of the Greeks women of honorable estate, and of men" (vs. 12). In Thessalonica he had reached some of the "chief women" (Acts 17:4).

In Athens Paul encountered and preached to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17:18). He also preached to and converted them "that are of Caesar's household" in Rome (Phil. 4:22). He also, though in bonds, was able to stand before great rulers. Paul was a preacher to all classes of people.

If Paul tried to reach any particular class, it would have been a religious class and not an economic or social class. He was persistent about entering into the synagogues on the sabbath day in order to reach his fellow Jews. Luke mentions this enough times in Acts that we must conclude that Paul was specifically interested in converting those of this religious group (Read Acts 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:1,10,17; 18:4,19; 19:5). His prayer and supplication to God was for them, that they might be saved (Rom. 10:1; cf. 9:1-3).

But social and economic classes did not seem to have influenced Paul's direction of evangelism. Jesus had said that few who are in high places are called. But He did not say we should not approach these people with the gospel. On the other hand, we do not get the picture that Paul made it

a special effort to preach to the outcast of society, the beggars, ignorant and loafers. And we do not receive the impression that he made it a point to preach on the streets to the curious, though his preaching sparked the curiosity of all.

Those who quickly accept the truth are often those who quickly give it up. And those who obey the truth with motives of receiving gain or position are also those who quickly give it up. It has been my observation in establishing churches that the ones to approach first are those who are indigenous in life. Those who are stable in their cultures and leaders in their cultures will produce a stable and leading church in their culture. This may be why Paul took so much time to reach the Jews and Greeks of the synagogues. And this may explain why he could establish elders in the churches of Asia so soon after their establishment (Acts 14:23). Those he had converted were leaders in religion. They were stable in their cultures. Therefore, Paul took them from where they were and brought them to the truth.

We could conclude this point by saying that Paul's emphasis was upon all classes. He did not concentrate upon just one class in order to produce a congregation of people in a particular area. If he did approach a particular class, it was a religious class and not an economic or social class.

19 Preached The Simple Gospel

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said, "For I de-

livered unto you **FIRST OF ALL** that which also I received: that **CHRIST DIED** for our sins according to the scriptures; and that **HE WAS BURIED**: and that **HE HATH BEEN RAISED** on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The first thing Paul discussed with the Corinthians upon his arrival in Corinth was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This was the simple gospel.

What was unique with Paul's preaching when compared with much of what is heard today in the church is that Paul kept it **Biblical and simple**. Luke recorded speeches that would indicate that Paul delivered no "after-dinner" type speeches when he went into a particular city. Nor do we have a picture of Paul's sermons being a toaster's club entertainment to tickle the ears of the lost. Luke certainly did not record all of Paul's preaching, especially sermons that were delivered to a mature church. But we must assume that he recorded the ones that give an accurate picture of Paul's style and content when dealing with the lost.

Paul probably explained the context and thrust of his preaching in Acts 20:21. He stated to the Ephesians elders that he had testified "both to Jews and to Greeks **REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**" The content of Paul's preaching can also be seen in his address to Felix and Drusilla. As Paul "reasoned of **RIGHTEOUSNESS, and SELF-CONTROL, and the JUDGMENT to come,** Felix was terrified ..." (Acts 24:25). In 1 Corinthians 2:1,2 he stated, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "We preach Christ crucified," he continued, "unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). Therefore, as far as Paul was concerned, it was to be

preaching that centered on Calvary and it was to be presented in a simple manner.

Peter directed his preaching to the heart of the gospel. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly," he proclaimed in Jerusalem, "that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). On another occasion Peter preached that Jesus was "the Holy and Righteous One ... whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3:14,15). In conjunction with these facts he urged faith and repentance (Acts 3:16-19).

Philip went on a short mission trip to Samaria. He had some good results, for "when they believed Philip preaching GOOD TIDINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, they were baptized ..." (Acts 8:12). Philip stayed with preaching the facts of the gospel.

In Acts 10 Peter went on an evangelistic trip to Caesarea, after a little nudging from the Holy Spirit by means of a vision. It is interesting to note the context of his message to the household of Cornelius. He preached that Jesus is "Lord of all" (vs. 36). He preached that God anointed Jesus with power; that he raised Him from the dead (vs. 38-40). And it is interesting to note what he said in verse 42. "And he (Jesus) charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." Would be good that our missionaries remain with this plan of attack in the area of preaching.

In Acts 17 Paul began his sermon by appealing to the religious nature of the Greek philosophers. He then turned to the quotation of a philosopher (vs. 28). But then he went to the central reference point of New Testament

preaching. The resurrection (vs. 32), the judgment to come (vs. 31) and a call to repentance (vs. 30) concluded his message.

To summarize the context of all the addresses given in the New Testament we could say that the New Testament evangelists consistently preached the following: (1) There is only one God, (2) Jesus, who was crucified, hath been raised, (3) God's wrath is ready to be released upon sin, (4) The judgment is coming, (5) Jesus, whom God hath made Lord of all, will judge those who reject the gospel, (6) Those who believe should repent and obey God's will in order to become a part of God's present kingdom.

How can we apply this message today to our mission efforts? Here's some suggestions. Undoubtedly, the recorded messages we have in the book of Acts were sermons which were preached upon the missionaries' initial contact with the audience. Thus, it would be advisable that our first messages to the people to whom we go should get to the facts of the gospel. Those early missionaries seemed to sense an urgency in preaching. They placed the initial facts of salvation before the people as soon as possible.

Paul taught for two years in the school of Tyrannus. I do not believe that he preached solely on the six points above. In being a resident for two years I believe he spent time in teaching the Old Testament. I believe he taught Christian ethics, family principles, etc. We must study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15). This covers a wide range of subjects. So in resident work the missionary must feed the local church in all areas of Christian living.

Therefore, it appears that the early evangelists presented first of all the vital essentials of the gospel, then went on

to perfection with them as they grew. But their first messages were simple and to the point.

20

Considered Preaching As Primary

In conjunction with the above point it must also be noted that the early missionaries viewed the preaching of the facts of the gospel as their primary task. They went forth to preach, not make money or anything else.

I doubt that James 4:13 is discussing the work of missionaries in the first century. But it is a good warning to those who would be missionaries. "Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain." James rebuked these money seekers in verses 14–16. Our going forth either as a fully supported missionary or as a vocational missionary must always be motivated by a desire first to preach the gospel.

Paul did work as a tent-maker when there was no other means of support. To the Ephesian elders he said, "Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34). But from the first day Paul was with the Ephesians he was teaching in public (Acts 20:18–20). His primary purpose for going to Ephesus was to preach. Philip's primary purpose for going to Samaria was to preach. Peter's primary purpose for going to Caesarea was to preach. Acts 8:14 could easily be the theme of those early disciples' work:

“They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.”

Vocational missionaries need to be careful here. One can have the correct motives for going forth at the beginning of his mission effort but later be beguiled by the love of money and then drawn away from his first desires. I see this as a constant danger for the vocational missionary. I believe Paul was very careful that he did not leave the impression that he was “there to get gain.” He was there for the love of souls, not money. His tent-making was for survival, not to acquire riches from the people.

In the Third World today there is a general rebellion against colonialism. American businesses have in the past operated on a basis of exploitation. The basic interest of the nationals of the country in which they set up business was not that important. They were more concerned about tin, than tempers. A cultural reaction to colonial exploitation is almost a Third World paranoia. Any American coming to work in a job in a foreign country is seen often as one who has come to exploit the people. In fact, many countries have laws that say a foreigner cannot take any job that could in any way be filled by a national. The vocational missionary needs to be cautious concerning this matter. He must work extra hard to convince the people that he has them at heart and not himself.

A fulltime evangelist needs to be careful about seeking employment after arriving in a country. Some missionaries have gone into a country on a missionary visa and later gone into secular work. This is just fine if everything is done in a legal manner. Usually one has to change his visa status. This has been done in the past without notifying the authorities. When I arrived in Antigua in 1980 this

was the first thing I was hit with while coming from the airport. Such a practice had been done by one or two denominational missionaries and it had repercussion to all missionaries. When I arrived in Brazil the same problem had developed.

Preaching the gospel must be our primary work, whether we go as a fulltime missionary or as a vocational missionary. I would suggest, though, that one initially enter a country as one or the other to escape legal problems later. Vocational missionaries need to work extra hard to let the national know that he is not there to exploit, but to explain the good news. Even if you do, though, I would forewarn you that there will always be those accusations of colonialism coming from those in the Third World. All missionaries who are working in Third World countries usually receive such at one time or other. Therefore, just strive on in proclaiming Jesus. People can make accusations about what they think you are doing, but they cannot deny what they see you doing.

Another thing to remember here is that preaching was primary to those first evangelists, benevolence was secondary. Jesus was compassionate. But he stated that the "poor are always with you" (John 12:8). Paul commanded us to do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10). And he took up a collection for the "poor saints of Judea". He said, though, that he was sent to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17). In doing such he was zealous also to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10). Missionaries must not let benevolence take the place of evangelism. By this I mean we must be benevolent, but we must not let our benevolence bog us down to where we are not evangelizing. We must remember that the lost need that which will save their souls.

Appealed To Spiritual And Intellectual Needs

As previously stated, the first evangelists proclaimed first of all to their listeners the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In presenting this message there seems to have been an emphasis upon approaching the spiritual and intellectual needs of the audience.

In Acts 2 Peter preached to the house of Israel, the Jews (vs. 37). But specifically, he preached to those who had encouraged and actually participated in the crucifixion of Jesus (vs. 23). It is not surprising, therefore, to understand why Peter quoted much from the Old Testament and appealed to the conscience of the Jews who had crucified Jesus. His appeal for response was directed specifically to the Jews who were present for the promise was unto them (vs. 39). Thus, Peter made his sermon applicable to the felt needs of the people.

Stephen was also faced with a Jewish audience, one that was quite hostile to him and his message. But what is important to note is that his sermon in Acts 7 is a step-by-step journey through Jewish history to Jesus Christ. He used those illustrations and concepts that his audience thoroughly understood.

Paul's sermon on Mars Hill in Acts 17 is an example of preaching to the needs of the people. Paul undoubtedly knew the philosophies of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. It is interesting to note that he quoted one of their fellow philosophers in his appeal to their interest. This is a

good example of one perceiving the thinking of the audience and approaching them on their ground.

Application of this method of preaching today on the mission field is without question of utmost importance. To communicate the gospel across cultural barriers is indeed the supreme task of the messenger of Jesus. To be effective the missionary must make God's love story appealing to the hearts and minds of the hearers. To do this one must be sensitive to culture, understanding the values and world view of the peoples to which the evangelist goes to learn how and what his hearers think.

All learning of culture goes back again to the idea of identification. Usually, the missionary who does not identify with the people to whom he goes is less effective than the missionary who does. In identifying with people we can better understand how they think and what they think. And in understanding how and what they think we can better understand their needs.

22

Used Every Opportunity To Preach

One often wonders why the early church spread like wild fire across the plains and mountains of the Roman Empire. The answer to this phenomenal growth lies partly in how the early Christians seized every opportunity to proclaim their faith. They had an attitude of "redeeming the time" and being "urgent in season, out of season" (Eph. 5:16; 2 Tim. 4:2). Paul preached, "... now is the ac-

ceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation". And it seems that from Calvary to the crown the early missionaries caught the fervor of evangelizing the world in their own generation. And they did it, too.

Acts 5:42 is introductory here. Luke recorded, "And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ." They could not but speak the things which they saw and heard (Acts 4:20). No persecution, no matter how severe, was able to deter their intense efforts to proclaim the Prince. Counsels accused them, Romans beat them, and Herods beheaded them. But nothing would stop them from obeying God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

The early missionaries were highly motivated people. Such motivation stimulated their dogged determination to evangelize. And because of that motivation they took every opportunity to preach and teach in every environment. Therefore, we find them preaching to kings (Acts 25). They preached to people who were about to offer sacrifice to them (Acts 14). And they preached to mobs which were about to stone them (Acts 21:27-22:29). They preached by the riverside (Acts 16:13,14); in courts (Acts 25) and in jails (Acts 16:23-34). They preached to philosophers on the streets (Acts 17:22-31) and to sailors on a sinking ship (Acts 27). One can read the New Testament and find scores of locations and situations in which the early disciples preached and taught.

Such teaching in every place was only following the example of their Lord. Jesus "sat daily in the temple teaching" (Matt 26:55). He "went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them ..." (Matt. 5:1,2). Jesus and the early disciples had no school house. School was in

session as they trudged along the Canaan pathways. The school bell rang the first moment one became a disciple and classes were not dismissed until that disciple was called to glory to await in Paradise for the great final exam.

Our evangelistic work today would be much more effective if every saint would catch the motivation of being a student-teacher for Jesus. The problem with much of our education in the church is that it is confined only to the classroom. Such confinement has de-educated the church to a danger of "being destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Our preaching has been echoing within the walls of our white-church buildings so long that ears have become numb to its appeal. Worse yet, our preachers spend most of their energy preaching from a varnished pulpit to a vanity-minded people. We must get the majority of our preaching and teaching directed to the heathen world. Disciples need continual edification, but the unsaved must be saved. And how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they hear the preacher unless he goes to the lost? Let us rise up and "go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in " that the Lord's house be full (Luke 14:23).

23

Preached Publically

This is in conjunction with the preceding point. But to emphasize the nature of this method we must mention it specifically.

"Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus" and preached in public to unbelievers (Acts 17:22). He "powerfully

confuted the Jews" in public (Acts 18:28). And he related to the Ephesian elders that he had preached to them in public (Acts 20:20).

Thus, it goes without question that the early disciples proclaimed the gospel to public gatherings of people. This seemed to afford them the opportunity to reach the most people possible in the shortest time. It also afforded them the opportunity to be public with what they believed and taught. No one could accuse them of being some secret "Jim Jones" cult.

We would do well to be just as public. Street preaching in the West Indies has been an accepted method of preaching. But this method would not be all that accepted in other cultures. Street preaching in New York city would not produce much results. Preaching over radio and television is a most effective way to go public. When eight American missionaries, of which I was one, moved into Antigua the people became no little concerned, especially the religious leaders. We had come in after the wake of the Jim Jones tragedy in Guyana and people were very suspicious of white Americans. And we were as white as we could be. What took away most of the suspicions was our public proclamation by crusades, radio and television. At one time we were broadcasting 39 different times during the week over the mass media. When people came to realize that we were a Bible-based people then their suspicions of us decreased.

Missionaries moving into any area should be as public as possible in their proclamation of the gospel. Newspaper, radio, TV, campaigns, street preaching and literature distribution are a few ways we can reach the masses in a public manner. We must use these public methods to get the gospel to the most people in the shortest time.

Taught House To House

Not only did Paul teach in public, but he also taught "house to house" (Acts 20:20). Peter also taught small groups in a "house location" (Acts 10:25). Jesus taught on several occasions in houses to a more selected group of listeners (cf. Luke 10:30; 19:9). This was a method of evangelism which seems to have been a common thing.

The advantages of the small group were many. There was the more personal atmosphere. The teacher could deal one-on-one with questions the hearers might have had. And the hearers would feel free to ask questions. When teaching in a private home with one or two listeners one can become more personal. Problems can be dealt with directly. On several occasions Jesus taught small groups, undoubtedly ranging in number from ten to thirty. In the West Indies one effective method of evangelism is small groups as this in a house situation. People were timid and shy. But in a small group they were more likely to ask questions and not feel so inferior in the presence of a white, "educated," "rich," American. Of course, after they knew that you were not all these things, except white and American, they became more comfortable in your presence.

Public proclamation will produce contacts, and often converts. But at some time in one's evangelistic outreach he must face individuals on a one-to-one basis. If any personal relationship is to be established one must get personal with people. And you can do that only by talking with them "from house to house."

Emphasized Household Conversions

This is indeed a remarkable method of personal evangelism in view of our common approach today. In view of the preceding point I would emphasize the fact here that the early missionaries made an effort to convert an entire family, or household, not just one unit of that family.

The first such conversion was unique. Cornelius and his family were assembled together when Peter preached unto them. After the Holy Spirit had fallen on them, proving that God had accepted the Gentiles, Peter commanded that they all be baptized (Acts 10:48). In Acts 16:14,15 Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke taught and converted the entire household of Lydia. In Acts 16:31-34 the entire household of the Jailor was converted. Crispus and all his house believed in Acts 18:8. And then Paul baptized the household of Stephanas in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:16).

Now obviously others were converted individually. But I do believe that the conversion of households was a method the early missionaries incorporated as often as possible.

The reasons for this approach are many. First of all, when we convert one of the mates of a family or a son or daughter, immediately that convert is placed in a strenuous position spiritually. Though many have survived and remained faithful after being converted in such a manner, many have fallen by the wayside. Family pressures can be hard and sometimes cruel. But if emphasis is placed on teaching and converting the entire family things are different.

Household conversions are advantageous when the con-

version takes place in an isolated location. This may explain why there are so many household conversions in the New Testament. In Brazil there were several household conversions in very remote places. As a result, a "family" church was begun. These families remained faithful, but had to worship together as a family for several months before anyone else was added to the church. The fact is, though, that they did continue to worship together. The church survived simply because they were converted as a family unit.

In teaching the entire household as a group, all members of that household know what is being taught. If only one or two members are converted, at least the others know what they were converted to. And if the head of the household is converted, then usually the entire family will be brought to Christ. Therefore, I would emphasize teaching an entire family at first. If rejected, I would then go to the individual members. One or more of them may be receptive. In other words, I wouldn't set family member against family member spiritually until I had first approached the entire family.

26

Labored Day And Night

Paul "ceased not to admonish every one night and day" (Acts 20:31). To the Thessalonians he wrote, "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (1 Thess. 2:9; cf. 2 Thess. 3:8). In 1 Thessalonians 3:9 Paul related that he prayed "night and day" for the Thessalonians (Read 2 Tim. 1:3).

The implication of Paul's work as an evangelist is that he did not punch the time clock. This is a good missionary method of work.

I once knew a good eight-to-five member of the church who asked me how many hours a week I worked for the church. I knew the context in which he was asking but I did not know how to answer the question so as to make him understand the work schedule of an evangelist. Preachers don't – at least they shouldn't – punch a time clock. A doctor is on a twenty-four hour call. So is the effective evangelist.

A missionary may be ineffective if he does not put the necessary time into his work. I once knew a missionary that played golf at least four times a week. Playing golf isn't bad, but too much golf adds up to goofing off. Paul had his time to play – we'll discuss this later. But Paul's example to us would be total dedication to this work. We must literally work like slaves. "Servants," Paul wrote, "be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, AS UNTO CHRIST" (Eph. 6:5). We might expect Paul to exhort Christians to work as slaves work for a physical master. But here, the exhortation is that slaves work for their physical masters as one would serve Christ. The definite implication is that one is a diligent slave for Christ, or at least he should be.

Let me post a warning here to those who are married and have children. Remember, Paul was single and his schedule of work would be a little different from a married missionary. Wives and children need attention. But isn't this part of one's work as a missionary? Total dedication to one's work includes the social status which one is in at that time. We must be dedicated to being a Chris-

tian mate and parent. That is part of the work of a married missionary. Missionaries can become so involved with work outside the house until they forget the work of a missionary inside the house. Both places are mission fields. Remember, the Lord did not call Peter with a calling that would demand that Peter forsake his duties as a husband.

27

Had Quiet Time

Paul was an evangelist that labored day and night, but he was also an evangelist that took time off. This is a most essential method of effective missions.

Acts 16:13 indicates that Timothy, Silas, Luke and Paul had a regular time of prayer. "And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer ..." Jesus often prayed alone. "He rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). "And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray ..." (Matt 14:23). "But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed" (Luke 5:16). "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, WITHDREW AGAIN into the mountain HIMSELF ALONE" (John 6:15). The way the text reads in John 6:15 indicates that it was Jesus' custom to withdraw alone into a mountain place, (Read Matt. 14:22,23; 26:36-39; Mark 6:31,32).

From the city of Troas to Assos it is but a few miles. In Acts 16:13 Paul wanted to walk those few miles alone. The men who were travelling with him rejoined him in

Assos (Acts 16:14). The record does not explain why Paul wanted to walk alone from Troas to Assos. We can only assume that he wanted to be alone. This was his "mountain top time." Every evangelist that does not take his "mountain top time" is headed for trouble.

Every missionary must go to the mountain top. It is there that he can lay his burdens down before the throne. If I were an elder of a church which was sponsoring a missionary I would make sure that the missionary made a worn path to the top of the mountain. I would also make sure that the missionary escape the load of his work periodically. A mentally healthy missionary will succeed. But if one is worn to the bone, he is going to become discouraged.

28

Studied The Word

The early missionaries were good students of the Word of God. Timothy had been taught the Scriptures since he was a babe (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul exhorted him to continue his studies of the Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Paul himself was a continual student. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was an inspired man. But late in his years he never ceased to study. He made a most interesting request in 2 Timothy which was probably his last epistle. In prison he requested that Timothy bring to him "the books, especially the parchments" (4:13). Paul was inspired but continued to study. I, as an uninspired man, should be at least that diligent to present myself approved unto God through study.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Evangelists who continually put out but never bring in are going to run out of faith. I see an evangelist who is in danger when I see an evangelist who does not give diligence to apply himself to a deep study of the Sacred Scriptures.

Too often missionaries are so involved in teaching first principles that they never investigate the deep principles of the Word. The missionary hurts not only himself but also those to whom he ministers. The spiritual growth of disciples is hindered when their leaders have reached a plateau of growth in the Scriptures. I believe disciples must see an example of love for the Word before they will strive to obtain nobility of searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). It is a deception of Satan to feel that spiritual growth is apart from diligent study of God's Word.

29

Went On Furlough

You might say that Paul and Barnabas went on an extended "quiet time" at the end of Acts 14. They returned to the church from which they had been sent out (Acts 14:27). In Acts 18:22 and 23 we read of another return to the church of Antioch. We could call this furlough time. It was a time they took a rest from their intense contact with the unbelieving world.

A furlough is simply a time when a missionary, as Paul, returns home to familiar culture and environments. After struggling hard with opposition, Paul undoubtedly felt the need to escape to an area of rest and Christian fellowship.

We would do well to encourage this method in our mis-

sions today. Any church that sends out a young family without any intentions of allowing that family to come home on furlough is just not using good judgment. Sometimes churches let dollar signs distort their good judgment. Spending money to bring a tired family home for a rest is not wasted money.

30

Used Legal Rights

Whether the following is a mission method would be subject to much debate. But Paul's resorting to his Roman citizenship in times of trouble is worth noting. At least, the missionary should be knowledgeable of the laws of the land in which he lives and resort to those laws if he is unjustly treated.

Under Roman law it was not lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who was uncondemned. Paul was about to be scourged in Jerusalem when he kindly reminded the chief captain that he was a Roman. In Philippi Paul and Silas were beaten without trial and cast into prison (Acts 16:22, 23). It caused no little stir among the officials when they learned that Paul and Silas were Romans. Paul resorted to this citizenship when he answered the officials' pleas for them to leave the city quietly. He said, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out" (Acts 16:37). Paul was here standing for his human rights as a legal citizen of the Roman Empire.

It was also a Roman citizen's right to appeal his case

unto Caesar, though Caesar didn't let too many cases go unpunished. Nevertheless, Paul appealed unto Caesar in Acts 25:11. This began his long journey toward Rome and delivered him from the unjust judges and false witnesses of Judea.

The force of Paul's example here is in the principle that a missionary should appeal to his lawful civil rights. To allow oneself to go unjustly prosecuted in a court of law would certainly be unwise. Paul was not unknowledgeable in these matters and neither should we be. Missionaries would do well to familiarize themselves with the laws of the land.

One of the signs of culture shock is an almost paranoia that the officials are out to get you. I have seen new missionaries on the field who felt that the officials were wetting their pens just waiting for a chance to kick the missionary out of the country. True, there may be a prejudiced official here and there who has stopped visas and entrances into countries. But a missionary would do good to keep his nose clean. Do the work of an evangelist. Know your rights. If your visa is terminated there may be legal grounds of appeal. If the missionary hasn't kept his nose clean, then he should be asked to leave the host country.

Just a word of advice on this point. The surest way to get a ticket out of a country is to get involved in the politics of that country. Getting involved in political issues in your home country may be ok, especially in those issues which affect the morality of the nation. But getting into such as a foreigner in a foreign country is a no-no for missionaries. You have a right to disagree with me on this point. But again, I don't have to pay for shipping you back home.

Let me add something here concerning American citizenship. Being a Roman citizen during the first century was a definite advantage to the missionary work of Paul and others. It allowed them a number of great privileges. They could travel freely. They had the protection of the Roman law, which saved Paul's skin on a few occasions. Though the Jews despised Roman control, being a Roman citizen did enhance Paul's missionary work.

There is almost a parallel today with American citizenship. Sure, there are those who resent Americans, usually because of a materialistic envy. But Americans can travel freely in and out of their own country. They can take as much money out of their country as they want. The American government has embassies all over the world which have helped missionaries on a number of occasions. These and a host of other advantages cannot be paralleled by other countries of the world.

Americans enjoy a freedom that is far above most nations of the world. It is almost, if not, a providential working of God that Americans enjoy so many freedoms and rights. American missionaries have tremendous legal rights on their side.

One can criticize Uncle Sam on many issues while viewing the U.S. system from the inside. But put an American in a foreign country and immediately America becomes the land of the free. And she takes care of those who are hers. I have seen her do it. I have seen Uncle Sam send a medical plane from Virginia to Brazil to pick up a missionary who had a heart attack. She has dispatched search parties to look for lost missionaries in jungles. As a hen hovering over her chicks she has gone to the United Nations to vehemently protest the maltreatment of missionaries on foreign soil. Listen, I don't see other nations

caring for their own as that. It's great to be an American. As a missionary, American citizenship is one of my greatest tools. God gave it to me. I will never give it up.

31

Organized Churches Quickly

On Paul's first journey he established the church in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Undoubtedly, he converted several from Judaism and other religions. Acts 14:21-23 says that they, Paul and Barnabas, returned to these churches on their return to Antioch. Verse 23 says, "And when they had appointed for them **ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH**, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed." Less than six months probably had transpired from the day these men were converted to the time they were appointed elders.

In Acts 16:10 Paul, Timothy and Luke went into Macedonia. They established the church in Thessalonica. They probably stayed there about six months and then went on to Achaia. This church was not revisited for about five to six years. It was left on its own.

The same could be said of the church which was established in Corinth, or Athens, or Ephesus. How could these infant churches be left on their own to govern and instruct themselves? There seems to be this practice of the early missionaries throughout the book of Acts.

One answer to the above phenomenon was the aid of

the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul desired to go to Rome that he might impart to them some miraculous gift (Rom. 1:11). By the laying on of the apostle's hands, the gifts were spread wherever the apostles went (Acts 8:18). These gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were undoubtedly given to more people in the first century than we have traditionally believed. The gifts of prophecy, faith, wisdom, and word of knowledge were evidently used for the building up of the body of Christ. Thus, the apostles could leave infant churches in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Through the gift of prophecy (inspired preaching) the church could be continually edified and instructed. They didn't have the New Testament but they did have the gifts.

But the above still does not answer all of the questions concerning the leaving of the infant churches on their own. The Holy Spirit, through the miraculous gifts, did not operate with any subjective power over the ones who had the gifts. Notice that Peter, an apostle, stood condemned in Antioch because of his discrimination (Gal. 2:11ff). In other words, the early Christians could exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit but the Spirit did not force them to do what they knew they should do. They were in control of the Holy Spirit's gifts, the Holy Spirit was not in control of them.

Therefore, we must conclude that the early missionaries practiced the method of giving much responsibility to converts as soon as possible. After conversion they were taught that the missionary was leaving; they had to get organized.

We do not have the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit today, but we do have the knowledge of His work recorded in the New Testament. The gifts nurtured the church then; the Word does it today. It is interesting to note,

though, what Luke recorded in Acts 20. Paul was leaving the church there, never to return again. In verse 32 he said, "And now I commend you to God, *and to the word of his grace ...*". The implication is clear. We must intrust to our converts the Word of God. We must teach them to be their own students of the Word, for God will build them up through His Word (1 Thess. 2:13).

No few converts have been lost to the world because they were not educated in the Word of God. What we learn from the New Testament example, though, is that new converts must be given responsibility, responsibility to govern themselves as a church and responsibility to be their own interpreters of the Word. Only through responsibility can there be growth. The attitude that the missionary is the only one who can be trusted to interpret the Word is not only ethnocentric but also damaging to the spiritual growth of new churches. It would be good that new converts be taught that the missionary will soon be moving on. When he moves on is debatable. Too often, though, nationals are not given any responsibility and trust until a paternalistic missionary does move on.

One concept we incorporated in Antigua was to stress the priesthood of the believers. Nationals were taught immediately after conversion that they were priests of God and should function as such. That meant that the men had to preach, teach, read scriptures, or anything they could begin doing, including interpreting the Bible for themselves. I believe missionaries should follow this principle. Instead of seeing themselves as permanent fixtures and "authoritative" interpreters, they would do well to realize that a church needs to be planted and they need to be going to plant others. How long it takes to get it planted and on its way is your decision.

Encouraged Group Decision-Making

In establishing churches, it appears that the apostles allowed churches to make their own decisions. Of course the apostles were inspired of God and thus taught divine truth in an authoritative manner to the churches. They were unique messengers sent out by Jesus to evangelize the world but also to deliver to the world "all the truth" in all their uniqueness as authoritative representatives of the churches which they established. They delivered the the divine Trinity, they did not function as directorates of the churches which they established. They delivered the truth. And they commanded churches to obey the truth. But it appears that they stayed away from legislating the internal affairs of autonomous congregations.

The apostles encouraged the group decision-making process in the affairs of congregational function. In Acts 6 a problem developed within the church in Jerusalem. The apostles first recognized the problem and they "called the multitude of the disciples unto them" (vs. 2). Undoubtedly the neglecting of care for the Grecian widows had fallen upon the shoulders of the apostles. Admittedly, the apostles here take the initiative to correct the problem. But their leadership was needed in this matter. Notice, though, that they laid as much responsibility as possible for resolving the problem upon the shoulders of the church. "Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you ..." (vs. 3). The idea of a solution originated with the apostles. But "the saying pleased the whole multitude ..." (vs. 5). The church thus agreed with the apostles and the plan was activated by the church. What is important to notice is that the apostles motivated the church to do what it knew

must be done. The church then took the initiative and did the rest of the organization concerning the matter.

Acts 15 is an example of **group** decision. The background problem surrounding this example of decision making was that certain men were teaching things for which they had no divine authority (vs. 1,5,24). In reading the entirety of Acts 15 one can see that the matter was brought before the apostles *and elders* (vs. 2). James (not the apostle) made a suggestion in verses 19,20. The suggestion "seemed good to the apostles *and the elders, with the whole church*" (vs. 22). A letter was written from the apostles, elders and brethren in Jerusalem to the churches of Galatia (vs. 23-29). It should be understood that doctrinal matters in this situation were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Verse 28 firmly states this. This particular decision concerning doctrine of the church was not the result of some dictate handed down by an uninspired ecumenical council. The decision to write the letter was a decision of the group.

In every New Testament congregation a plurality of elders was appointed, if there were such men who were qualified to fulfill this congregational work (Acts 14:23). This church was to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them ..." (Heb. 13:17). But what is interesting is the fact that the Holy Spirit wanted a plurality of elders in each church. Would this not indicate that God never intended any church to be ruled by just one man? If there is such a thing as "evangelistic authority" would this not negate the necessity for the plurality of elders in every church? If an evangelist has such authority in a congregation that has no elders, then why should elders be appointed?

In Acts 15:36-41 Paul and Barnabas had a disagree-

ment concerning John Mark. In the context, though, Paul does not fall back on any “evangelistic authority” or “apostolic dictatorship” to overrule the decision of Barnabas, though he firmly disagreed with Barnabas on the matter. Barnabas had just as much say-so in the matter as Paul. The same situation is found in 1 Corinthians 16:12 where Paul firmly besought Apollos to go to Corinth. Paul did not resort to any dictatorial authority. He could not command Apollos with divine authority to go to Corinth, for he had no such authority.

In view of the above examples and the fact that not even the elders as a group are to “lord over the church” (1 Pet. 5:3), one would be hard pressed to find any teaching in the New Testament concerning decision-making which was not group oriented. The idea of one-man rule in churches was not even practiced by the apostles of Jesus. God never left any of his churches to the rule of one man. No preacher should assume such a position. Neither should an elder assume such a position in his relationship with his fellow elders.

Titus was left in Crete to “set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city ...” (Tit. 1:5). This cannot mean that Titus was made a one-man ruler over several churches in several cities. Not even Paul exercised such lordship. What it did mean was that Titus was to direct the order of churches by preaching the Word of God. When this was done the churches would take the initiative to carry out the Word of God. This is the example of Acts 15. It should be our example today in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given the divine directives in the New Testament concerning the doctrinal aspects of what must be done to live the Christian life. This is undoubtedly one reason why first century churches

grew. Self initiative of the leaders was stimulated by the preaching of God's penetrating Word.

33

Established Financially Independent Churches

I have previously discussed the method of supporting the missionaries who were sent out. Churches supported them in order to send them out. And they supported themselves. Paul went to lengths to escape the criticism of being a hireling. For this reason he did not accept financial support from the infant church in Corinth. But there is another aspect to finances which must be considered. What about the practice of taking money to the churches that are established?

Concerning this question, another important practice was sustained by those first missionaries. In reading the New Testament one looks in vain to find an example where the missionaries took money to the mission churches. In other words, one can find no example where Paul carried a big bank account for the purpose of supporting national preachers and building national church buildings. Of course, this is most peculiar in view of our present day practices. But, let us examine it with caution.

Paul came with the gospel of salvation. Other than that he could say as Peter, "Silver and gold have I none." He taught his converts that they should support their teachers (Gal. 6:6). They were taught to support their elders (1 Tim. 5:17). Paul worked to support himself and those who

travelled with him (Acts 20:34). But he did not bring money from sending churches to do what the nationals should do on their own.

This is indeed a mission method to be considered. Some good common sense should be used here, too. If the nationals are taught to look either to the States or to the missionary in times of financial need, what will happen to their self-dependency? If Stateside churches support the national evangelist, will the local brethren be hindered in accepting their responsibility to do such?

I suppose these principles have been violated in every mission field. In an effort to get a cheap missionary, Stateside churches have picked up nationals throughout the world and put them in their budgets and on their bulletins. In a few cases such has proved beneficial. But it has been my experience that in the majority of situations U.S. support of national preachers, especially in the Third World countries, has been a detriment to the growth of the church.

Let me give an example. In the Caribbean islands several nationals have been put on U.S. support. Most of the islands are considered Third World countries. Beginning with Barbados and Trinidad, these small islands have one by one acquired independence. For hundreds of years they have been under the control of colonialism. Now they are wanting to call their own shots.

So the cry of these Third World countries is, "Hands off, colonials." And I suppose this could be said of most Third World countries today. But what a U.S. church does is put a local national preacher on the "payroll." Now what do you think the people he is trying to convert think of him? They think he is a colonial pulpit preacher. His

effectiveness is greatly hindered because of the outside "influence" (support). His respectability in the community deteriorates. Doesn't this work against what we are trying to accomplish?

I recently received a letter from a church that was supporting a preacher here in the Caribbean. They had supported him for about three years, and yet had never visited him or his country. This preacher could have joined some cult and they would never have known it. Some brethren in the States let their misguided zeal allow them to support what could become the work of Satan because they are eager to get a "cheap" missionary. I personally know of situations where this has happened.

I know of another situation where a U.S. church was supporting a national preacher, a case here in the West Indies. They had supported this man for several years, but had paid little attention to his works. What the national preacher was doing was destroying the church and writing letters of lies about his fellow preachers. And the Stateside church knew nothing about it. This has been going on, believe it or not, for ten years. The U.S. eldership didn't take the time to visit the national worker; they just called on the telephone every so often to check up. Well, you know what the national worker would say over the telephone in order not to lose his life support.

Somehow, we must dispose of this American idea that money is might. It may be in the business world, but it isn't in the true church. Pouring more money into a mission field does not necessarily ensure growth. In fact, the general rule is that the more money that is fed directly into a mission field (supporting nationals or building national church buildings) the slower the growth. Somehow I believe Paul recognized this and refused to take money

with him to either support national preachers or build national church buildings.

Let me close this point with a defense for those nationals who are supported by U.S. churches and are doing a great job. I personally know some national brethren who are on U.S. support and are doing a fantastic job. But they are doing a good job because some U.S. brethren have taken the time to cautiously work with them and the national church in this matter of foreign support. This is a very delicate thing to do in missions and must be handled very wisely.

There is also the matter of church buildings. Whether to build a building for a national church is another one of those touchy situations. The "house church" practice of the first century is a good idea, but we must remember that house churches do not work in some cultures. Buildings must be built if the church is going to grow. But too often the national church is so poor that it cannot possibly build a building completely on its own. At least, that is what I am often led to believe. Funds or loans must be acquired from somewhere. This is a situation that needs special care. U.S. churches just need to exercise some wisdom before jumping into a building program for a national church.

34

Established Growth Churches

Though Paul and the other first century missionaries left the churches they established on their own, those

churches grew. They evidently motivated those churches to be highly evangelistic.

The Thessalonian church is a good example here. Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke stayed only a few months to establish this church. But when Paul wrote to this church later, he said, "for from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything" (1 Thess. 1:8).

Luke, Timothy, Silas and Paul evidently did a good job in establishing this church. The Thessalonian church was truly a planted church. It became a 2 Timothy 2:2 church which evangelized its own area.

The church in Ephesus was unquestionably of the same tenor. Through Paul's motivation and teaching in the school of Tyrannus "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:19,20). Thus evangelism was the trademark of the church in Ephesus also.

Disciples must be taught and motivated to evangelize. Their motto must be, "The things which thou has heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Any disciple who has not been taught and motivated to disciple is not an advantage to the church. The goal of the evangelist must be to train the disciples to disciple.

A good evangelist is one who knows how to make disciples, not just get baptisms. He knows how to invest his life in the lives of others. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "... we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the

gospel of God only, **BUT ALSO OUR OWN SOULS ...**" (1 Thess. 2:8).

A good missionary is one who is conscious of the day when he will leave the mission church. In view of such he should sow with planning and caution, lest his labors be in vain. Paul was concerned about the church in Philippi. He exhorted them to hold "forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain" (Phil. 2:16). He was concerned for the Thessalonian church, being fearful that the "tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain" (1 Thess. 3:5; Read also Gal. 4:11).

Therefore, churches must not be built of wood, stubble or hay. Only those of gold, silver and costly stones will endure the judgment. Missionaries should build those churches which are churches of disciples. If they are true disciples, then the planted church will organize to reach out to teach others also. The method is to plant a church that will disciple, not a church that is content with simply "holding its own."

35

Taught The Concept Of Struggle

Throughout the New Testament there seems to be a major teaching of Christianity which deals with struggle. This one teaching is one reason why the early churches grew. This concept was taught not only by Jesus but it was also a founding principle upon which early churches were

constructed. It was not a persecution complex. It was a persevering climate that was drilled into the minds of every convert.

Jesus defined the principle as follows: "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). Thus, Jesus places a condition on discipleship. This condition is struggle. For this cause He stated in verse 28 of Luke 14, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and *count the cost* ..." The cost of Christianity was the enduring struggle one would have to undergo to receive the crown. Paul stated this principle in every church he established. In Acts 14 he went through the churches of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch "confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, *and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*" (vs. 22). Paul had "fought the good fight" as every Christian must do (2 Tim. 4:8). Whoever said it was easy to be a Christian has never been engaged in a cross-bearing struggle to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

The very nature of the Christian life and work will bring struggle. He is in the world but not of the world. And because of this Jesus said that the world would hate His disciples as it hated Him. The Christian life is of such a nature that Satan will just not remain silent while his kingdom is torn to ribbons by the active labors of the saints of God. Paul wrote, "For our *wrestling* is not against flesh and blood ..." (Eph. 6:12). "We do not *war* according to the flesh (for the weapons of our *warfare* are not of the flesh ..." (2 Cor. 10:3,4).

The Christian is therefore involved in a struggling war. Because of the intensity of the battle, Peter wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial

among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happen to you" (1 Pet. 4:12). Struggle should not be something strange to the established churches. It is a principle that proves the faith of the disciple (1 Pet. 1:6,7). Therefore, Peter said, "... if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ..." (1 Pet. 4:16). Thus, young Christians must be taught to do as Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5. After being beaten and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus by an unbelieving council, "they therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were *counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name*" (41).

The early church recognized that through struggle there was the purification of faith. And with such purification came true growth. That growth can never really spring to life without the Christian truly letting his light shine. But in shining light there are always shadows. The shadows of struggle will always fight against the light. But again the intensity of the light is exemplified by the darkness of the shadows. And too, the greater the light, the darker the shadows. But it is through many struggles that we enter into the kingdom. This is a most vital concept of Christianity.

36

Tarried And Taught

Though the early evangelists stayed a short time in one specific location on their initial trip, they placed a great amount of emphasis upon teaching. In fact, it seems that a small band of disciples were initially converted and then a great amount of emphasis was placed upon teaching this

small group of Christians in an effort to truly make disciples out of them.

Paul “reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus” for two years (Acts 19:9). He taught the Ephesians from house to house (Acts 20:20). He taught the Thessalonians by word of mouth and epistle (2 Thess. 2:15). He delivered the inspired traditions unto the Corinthians on a personal basis (1 Cor. 11:2; Read 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 3:14; Tit. 1:9). Acts 5:42 explains the teaching activity of these early disciples. “And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.”

Teaching is the work of a missionary. But to be effective, one must teach the disciples how to disciple, not just the facts. Jesus said, “ ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you ...” (Matt. 28:20). How many mission churches have gone down the tubes because a missionary was so concerned about getting the quantity that he failed to produce the quality. Just baptizing people does not plant churches. Paul seems to have focused his attention on the first few converts in order to produce the quality that would eventually lead to the quantity in years to come.

“Finally, then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus,” Paul wrote, “that as ye received of us HOW ye ought to walk ... ” (1 Thess. 4:1). Paul taught the Thessalonians the facts of the gospel, but he also gave them the “how to” that they might commit unto others those things which they had been taught (2 Tim. 2:2). Thus it is imperative that missionaries spend enough time with converts to teach them how to be teachers. If they are not taught how to be teachers and motivated to teach, then the newly established church will soon die.

Trained On-The-Job

The questions to be asked concerning leadership in the early church are not whether they trained leaders. The questions must all be focused on HOW they trained leaders. In this context of inquiry it appears that the type of training was patterned after that of Jesus.

Jesus called His disciples by saying, "Follow me" (John 1:54). The implication is that Jesus was saying, "Come follow me and I will show you what to say and how to do the job." Training His disciples to be fishers of men was a three-year strategy of Jesus that put His life and work of His disciples. The validity of His method is shown in the fact of His disciples' success in evangelizing the world.

The true teacher has not completed his task until he has invested his life in the lives of those he leads. Leadership is the science of leading the multitudes by leading only a few. And through a few chosen disciples Jesus has been able to conquer a phenomenal victory throughout history. Thus, a leader must see his immediate students, but see through them to the work he is ultimately trying to accomplish with the masses. This Jesus did.

To accomplish His work, Jesus was with His disciples. He ate with them. He slept with them. He rejoiced and prayed and laughed with them. The disciples could see His vision because they could see Him in action. Any lasting leadership training must capture this principle.

It is not enough just to impart facts to the student. The student must get more than that. He must SEE his teacher

in action. He must FEEL his teacher in action. What the teacher does always communicates more than what he says.

As we examine the ministry of Paul we can instantly see that Paul's method of training was patterned after that of our Lord. I do not think this was an accident. Neither do I believe it was just the system of education which was acceptable in that day. Paul said, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul imitated Jesus in teaching and in how He taught.

Jesus said to the apostles that they should teach disciples to "observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). The same concept, yet in different words, is also found in 2 Timothy 2:2. But Jesus had also commanded His apostles to go into all the world "and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). So how could they both go into all the world to make disciples and at the same time teach those disciples all that Jesus had instructed them? Simple. They would have to take some of the key disciples with them on their journeys and instruct them on the road. These could later be left at churches to continue to edify the disciples (Read Tit. 1:5). That's at least the way several of the key leaders of the early church were trained. This was how Jesus did it and it worked. I cannot but believe that this is one reason why they trained so many and why the world was evangelized by Colossians (1:23) approximately thirty years after the beginning of the church.

Notice that the early evangelists always had someone with them on their journeys. It was Paul and Barnabas together (Acts 13:1-3), Peter and certain other brethren (Acts 10:23), Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 15:39), Paul and Silas (Acts 15:39), Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke

(Acts 16:11), Paul, Gaius, Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus (Acts 20:4). This list could go on. The point is that Paul had a travelling school. One cannot but conclude that when Barnabas, Silas, Timothy or the others finally graduated from Paul's care they also took men and followed the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things which thou has heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Now Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus for about two years (Acts 19:9). This school has been called everything from a Christian University to a trade school. We'll never know exactly what it was until we all get to heaven. Whatever type of school it was, the result of Paul's being there led to all Asia hearing the Word (Acts 19:10). We could rightly assume that this was a "resident" type work of teaching Paul did, though he stayed here only two years before he moved on. One wonders why the good brethren did not say, "Paul, you know too much and have too much experience to travel around the country doing missionary work. Why don't you just stay here and teach other people that they may go." I believe Paul would have answered, "Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. I'll take some of the students with me."

There was no compromise of the two commands – to go and train. They went and trained. Again, this must be one of the reasons why they were so effective. Their best teachers and leaders were on the move, that meant that the students must move with them. It is my personal conviction that this is one method of preacher training we must restore in order to evangelize the world in this generation.

Met In Houses

“... to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house” (Phile. 2; cf Rom. 16:3-5). Without question the early church met in the homes of members. In Acts 2 about 3000 were converted. There was no “church building” in which these could assemble. By the time of Acts 4:4 over 5000 men were members of the church. The number continued to grow, for “believers were the more added to the Lord” (Acts 5: 14).

The dilemma faced by all missionaries is, “Where are we going to meet?” In Jerusalem, the Christians met “in the temple and at home” (Acts 5:42). Their answer to the “meeting house dilemma” was to meet in their homes or in the temple as long as they could. The common place of meeting wherever the gospel went was in the houses of members or wherever “the place of prayer” might be located (Acts 16:16). It is interesting to note, though, that there is not that much concern given to this matter in the Scriptures. Either the early Christians did not see this as a great problem, or the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us that we shouldn’t get as concerned about it as much as we do.

Historically speaking, the church began meeting generally in the houses of members. As the churches grew, the synagogue became a place of common meeting. (This, by the way, might be a good historical method to acquire a meeting place. Just convert all those who meet in the “synagogue” and continue to use the synagogue in which to meet.)

The attitude in the Scriptures seems to be that whatever

was convenient was suitable for a meeting place. The propagation of Christianity was in no way hindered by the obstacles of meeting houses, neither was its propagation dependent upon such.

To those who are so zealous to keep the church in the house of the members, let me propose some possible problems. There are some cultural considerations that must not be overlooked. In Brazil people did not cherish the idea of having a tribe of kids trample into their castles. This caused some irritation on the part of some members, especially on the part of those in whose house the church was meeting. And then in practice the churches in particular areas seemed to grow to a certain point and then cease growth as long as the church continued to meet in a house. The people in the community of the West Indian islands would not consider a church "established" until it had its own meeting place. Thus, evangelization of the middle and low-upper classes was difficult. And then, many Caribbean houses of members were about 10 feet by 20 feet. Such small houses made it most difficult to assemble any large group of people together. And then, if you broke the group up into smaller groups to meet in different houses, one could not exhort them effectively in their infancy. (I'm talking about the first year or year and a half of work, here.) The problems and frustrations in meeting in houses are not few. One should not be all that dogmatic about applying this method. Just because the early church did not seem to place much emphasis on this – at least, we have no record of such – does not mean that they did not have their problems:

But let me say something here also about getting into a building program. No few missionaries have made the mistake of rushing into a foreign country with dollars falling out of their pockets. The dollars go to building a building

immediately on the field. The initiative of the nationals is hindered. And often, the feelings of the nationals are hurt because they had no part in the decision making concerning the building.

Missionaries have argued the “house-church” or “build building” problem for years. What one must do is to look carefully at the culture into which he is going. Don’t go with your mind made up on this matter before you have a good understanding of the people. Of course, to begin a work the church will either have to meet in a house – usually the missionary’s house – or in a rented building. But move slowly and wisely.

39

Wrote Inspired Materials To Churches

“These things we write, that your joy may be made full” (1 John 1:4, KJV). The apostle John wrote to those who knew him in order to give them instruction and encouragement. Paul wrote to Timothy, to the church in Corinth, and to a host of others. The Holy Spirit directed these men to first write and then what to write. The Holy Spirit does not inspire men today to write Scripture. But could this not be an example for us today – to write? This is especially true concerning our sons and daughters in the faith. Communication from the ones who converted them can be a great encouragement to them.

I am positive that the Holy Spirit did not inspire Jude and James and the other New Testament writers to write

with the intention that their letters were meant just for the immediate readers. I believe such letters were to be circulated among the churches that existed then (Col. 4:16) and now. I am thankful for these inspired letters. It is upon this Word that churches are strengthened and built up today.

We could conclude that a part of the work of the first-century apostles and prophets was to write instruction to newly established churches. At least, some form of communication was to be made to these churches.

Today we have the blessing of all sorts of communicative equipment. We have printing presses, and most of the time a good mail service. We need to use these blessings to keep infant churches alive and thriving.

40

Sent Personal Messengers

In conjunction with the above, it was a common practice in the first century to send a messenger with a letter of instruction. Epaphroditus took the Philippian letter to the church in Philippi (Phil. 2:25–30). Onesimus undoubtedly took Paul's letter of Philemon to Philemon (Phile. 10,11). The need for this was probably because there was no real postal service.

Because there was no U.S. Postal Service back then it was necessary to send a messenger with the letters. But the messenger usually filled in the gaps, at least, that is what Tychicus did when Paul sent him to the church in Ephesus with the Ephesian epistle (Eph. 6:21). The reason I say

this is because I have seen the results of some churches working with a mission by "long distance," long distance telephone calls, that is. The only thing the national mission knew of the church in the States was that it came through a telephone receiver. There is nothing like sending a personal messenger with official communication of love from a sister congregation. When encouragement needs to be given, it can effectively be given by a letter taken by a messenger.

This would be a good method of missions to maintain. I know of several churches which make it their practice to send a representative of the church to visit a mission effort every year. I believe one of the reasons for the success of the Sao Paulo Mission Team work in Brazil was that in the first ten years of that work over fifty elders and 300 members of supporting churches visited that particular work. Churches would do well to visit their mission works on a regular basis.

41

Reported To Churches

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey into Asia Minor the first thing they did was to assemble the church together in Antioch to tell them of their work. "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together," wrote Luke, "they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). Paul also reported his work to the churches of Jerusalem in Acts 21:17-20. (See also Acts 15:12,13).

This would be a logical thing to do for any travelling evangelist. Brethren who sent out evangelists have a right to receive reports concerning the work they are supporting. They have a right to know the productivity of their sacrifices.

When sending churches do not receive reports concerning the work they are supporting they become disinterested. Thus, it is a good practice that a missionary send reports to his supporting churches. Though I fail to see where Paul wrote a monthly newsletter I do feel strongly that some type of newsletter is beneficial in informing senders concerning the activities of the evangelist.

The point to emphasize here is that evangelists should keep churches well informed on the activities of the church wherever they go.

42

Revisited Churches

In Acts 16:36 Paul said, "Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of God, and see how they fare." On several occasions Paul returned to churches he had previously established. His purpose was to "see how they fare," and to exhort them to continue in the faith. In fact, there almost seems to be a hidden method of Paul in this. I have always wondered why Paul did not make any trips to the Gentiles in Egypt and Africa. Could it have been because he planned to establish works that would allow him the opportunity to revisit occasionally? This is at least what we see him doing with the works he did establish. The method could be that

we establish churches in such a locality that would allow us the opportunity to revisit those churches on our way to establish other churches.

“Revisiting churches” would be a good method for missionaries to keep in mind today. We want to establish indigenous churches, but this does not mean that we should forsake them. Indigenous does not mean desert.

Revisiting churches one has established may not always be possible. But where it can be done, it would be good to make the effort. As far as encouragement for the missionary I can personally say that there is nothing more encouraging than to revisit brethren you converted in years past. To see their growth and faithfulness is a joy unsurpassable (cf. 3 John 4). It is even a greater encouragement for the brethren. Their faith can be revived by your visit.

43 Depended Upon God Alone

“I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). These are the words of a missionary who put his trust in God. The Psalmist wrote, “O my God, in thee have I trusted” (Psa. 25:2). This Psalm, as well as a host of others, thoroughly encourages us to put our trust in God.

I can think of no better way to conclude a book on New

Testament mission methods. I am personally amazed at the character of Paul. Here is a man who constantly walked in the shadow of death. But he said, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). These are the words of a man who had been thrown into prisons, thrown to beasts, beaten several times, stoned, shipwrecked three times, lost at sea, robbed, been naked and gone without food. And yet he would write, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

The world called him mad. The convicted called him faithful. He trusted not in man for his finances; he learned to be content in whatsoever state he found himself. He trusted not in man to stand by him in times of trouble; the Lord stood by him. He trusted not in his own personal abilities or reputation; he counted such things as refuse. His trust was in God and God alone.

Any missionary who pretends to go forth must be his own judge. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed. If we judge that we trust in our abilities, our finances, our fellow-workers or our meticulous strategies, then let us take heed to the sandy foundation upon which we have constructed our mission house. If we judge that we have built on faith in the Almighty God who is able to do exceedingly above all that we can imagine, then let us go forth.