

Paul's Missions Philosophy

Text: Romans 15:20-24 “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company...”

Purpose: The purpose of this section of the letter was to communicate Paul's philosophy of ministry both to the unreached and within established local churches.

Proposition: God wants us to have a healthy well established philosophy of missions.

Interrogative: What facts from this chapter should form the framework for our philosophy of missions?

Fact 1: Missions involves taking the gospel where it is currently unknown: “I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation...”

Three steps to understanding God's program:

- **Step 1: We need to understand Christ's commission Acts 1:8:** “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth...”
 - **Jerusalem:** The first local assembly of Christians
 - **Judea:** The communities that church could effectively reach into
 - **Samaria:** The communities that were close but if a different culture
 - **Uttermost Parts of the earth:** Places that require a sent out witness
- **Step 2: We need to understand the unique roles within Christ program: Ephesians 4:11-14** “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive...”
 - **Prophets and Apostles:** These were God's instruments to give us His word, Old and New Testaments
 - **Evangelists:** These are God's instruments to preach the gospel calling people to repentance and faith.
 - **Pastors and teachers:** These are God instruments to disciple Christians bringing them up into spiritual maturity
- **Step 3: We need to understand the constant need to reintroduce the gospel and doctrinal soundness: 1 Timothy 1:3** As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine...
 - **Three phases of Missions in the cycle of Christian witness:**

- **The pioneer:** Spiritual blindness without a witness
- **The reformer:** Spiritual apathy and loss of doctrinal soundness
- **The pioneer:** Spiritual apostasy and the decline of Christian witness

Four practical thoughts flow from this section:

- In every generation there will be places that need pioneering works, because of the cyclical nature of Christian witness.
- The church is under God's mandate to play a constant role in His program to reach the nations.
- Each individual in the church should recognize they have a role to play which will be unique to them but within the boundaries of God's program.
- We need to be joyfully faithful in that unique role that God has fitted us to play in His program.

Fact 2: Missions finds comfort in the power of the gospel: "As it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand..."

Paul found His motivation to bring the gospel to the lost by God's promise to save people from every kindred tribe and nation:

- **Paul knew that humanly speaking, the task was daunting: 1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned...**1 Corinthians 1:18** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness...²³But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.
- **Paul believed the God would fulfill His promise to the save the lost in the uttermost parts of the earth: Isaiah 42:1-12** Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: **he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles...**⁴He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and **the isles shall wait for his law.** Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein...⁷**To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.** I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth...¹²**Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands...**
- **Paul knew that God brings people to repentance and faith through the preaching of the gospel: Romans 10:10-20** With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth

on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

Four practical thoughts that flow from this section:

- Mission's is difficult, because people are not naturally searching for the truth, nor are they naturally inclined to embrace it.
- Though humanly speaking, the preaching of the gospel is foolishness to the lost, God uses to it bring people opposed to Him to repentance, faith, and radical transformation.
- When we proclaim the gospel, we have the wonderful blessing of seeing God's love, grace, and power displayed through our feeble witness.
- God will save people from every kindred tribe and nation because He has promised to do so; therefore we should go out with confidence in His power to save.

Fact 3: Missions involves both a temporary and long-term relationship to local churches:

“But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you...”

Four Important Marks of a Health Approach to Missions

- Indigenous: The church reflects the demographics and culture of the community in which it is planted
- Self-supported: It is not dependent upon outside source of income
- Self-governing: It does not look to churches or organizations outside of itself for decision making
- Self-propogating: It has the maturity to reproduce itself from within.

There is a significant distinction between the nature of a missionary and pastor's ministry:

Acts 20:16-32 Paul sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ...²⁷For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to

draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified...

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ...⁴ To Titus, mine own son after the common faith...⁵ For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee...

1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock...

- **Paul's role as apostle: foundational**
 - Witness of the life and ministry of Christ
 - Representative of Christ's authority
 - Pioneer to nations
- **Paul, Timothy, and Titus. role as church planters: Formative**
 - Temporary: Preach Christ, baptize new converts, make disciples, lay a foundation, get out of the way when there is a reasonably equipped presence of local leadership.
 - Long-term: Mutual encouragement
- **The Ephesians' Elders role of pastors: Examples**
 - Local: He understands the culture and community as a member of the society within he ministers
 - Responsible to shepherd: Personally involved in people's lives over the course of many years
 - Long-term: Plants themselves to plod faithfully for many years

Six practical implications:

- Missionaries must be willing to live constantly as outsiders.
- Missionaries must learn to be extremely flexible, because they are constantly dealing with change.
- Missionaries must be willing to let go over their authority in the church.
- Missionaries must be forward thinking people.
- Missionaries need to work hard to establish a good foundation.
- Missionaries enjoy the blessings of many mentoring relationships.

Fact 4: Mission's is accomplished through sweet local church partnerships: "I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company..."

Three Aspects of Missionary Partnership:

- **Aspect 1: Christian Fellowship:** "Filled with your company..."
- **Aspect 2: Mutual edification Romans 1:8-13** "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I

might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.”

- **Aspect 3: Financial partnership** “Be brought on my way thitherward by you...” 2 **Corinthians 11:2-9** “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: ⁷Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.”

Practical thoughts that flow from this section:

- Partnership with missionaries is one of the greatest blessings we are able to enjoy as a local church.
- Through our partnership, we are able to actively participate in the advance of the gospel into parts of the world we could never go or be effective.
- One of the best ways we can, minister to our missionaries is to invest in being encouragers to them personally.
- Missionaries are uniquely positioned to edify God’s people, because of the broad scope of their experiences, and ministry.
- We should be good stewards of the money entrusted to our care as well as good stewards of the time of those working to establish financial partnerships for the advance of God’s Kingdom.

Conclusion: Like Paul and those whom he mentored, we must have a healthy well established philosophy of missions.

- We must partner with missionaries who are involved in taking the gospel where it is currently unknown.
- We must partner with missionaries who rather than relying on pragmatic methods to build a mission have a firm conviction in the power of the gospel.
- We must partner with missionaries who have a well established conviction in the temporary nature of their leadership within the local churches they plant.
- We must partner with missionaries that we can with confidence say, “this is a faithful stewardship of the funds entrusted to our care.”