

A dirt road stretches from the bottom center towards the horizon, flanked by dry, scrubby vegetation. The sky is filled with heavy, dark, layered clouds, with a hint of blue and light at the horizon. The overall mood is one of vastness and journey.

WORLD EVANGELISM

Biblical Research Library
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Cover theme: *ON THE ROAD WITH JESUS* (Central southern Namibia - R.E.D.)

WORLD EVANGELISM

Every disciple of Jesus should consider himself a John the Baptist to his generation. We are *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”* We cry out, **“Save yourselves from this perverse generation”** (At 2:40). We proclaim, *“And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name [than Jesus] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (At 4:12). We cry out that the world is lost in sin, but we also announce that our Creator has provided a solution for the sin of the world. We can say the same as the angel who announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds in a field, **“I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all the people”** (Lk 2:10). It is great news, *“For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord”* (Lk 2:11).

We live in a generation where most of our preachers of the great news of Jesus have been held up in the cocoon of four walls, preaching the message of salvation to the saved, “singing to the choir,” Sunday after Sunday. Being intimidated by a guaranteed pay check, a world of unbelievers goes without a messenger to cry out that *“a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.”*

When churches move away from Jesus, they change the church from an offensive voice to the lost, to a defensive body of those who “look after themselves.” Being shut up in the confines of buildings and institutions, we become defensive in order to guard our support

in order to perpetuate a cocooned heritage. We turn to “feel good” sermons that sink the disciples further into a narcissistic religiosity, thinking that we are the primary object of the one who should be sent forth to cry in the wilderness.

We thus call for a restoration, a restoration to the nature of true discipleship. We need to be reminded that the church is not a fort, and its preachers watchmen on the walls. The church is God’s dynamic army of spiritual soldiers who should be continually challenged to leave the barracks in order to engage the enemy. We must remind our preachers that the enemy is not coming to sit comfortably on pews before pulpits throughout the land. “Church-house Christianity” will never evangelize the world. Church houses have often become dead zones wherein fruitless spectators have gathered to be reassured that they are “in the ark,” and thus, by the sound of smooth and fair speech, are deceived into thinking that we are headed for eternal glory. We must remember that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tm 3:15). But who are those who do not know the truth and must be told the truth? They are certainly not those who huddle before the preacher Sunday after Sunday. **It is the world! These are they for whom the church is the pillar and ground of the truth!** If there is no proclamation of truth from the church, then the church has lost the meaning of the metaphor “pillar.”

We would follow Jesus. On one occasion during His ministry, Jesus “*departed and went into a desert place*” (Lk 4:42). The people did what all churches seek to do with their preachers, that is, steal them away from the lost. “***And the people sought Him, and came to Him. And they tried to keep Him from leaving them***” (Lk 4:42). Does this sound familiar? How many people who sign the paycheck of their preacher seek to send out the recipient? Jesus would have none of this clergyism. So He reminded the people, “*I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because for this purpose I was sent*” (Lk 4:43). Jesus would not be hijacked by the church and a pay check.

Paul knew this very well. Right in the middle of a context where he exhorted the Corinthians, “*You will not muzzle the ox while he is threshing*” (1 Co 9:9), he made this intriguing statement: “*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a bondservant to all, so that I might gain the more*” (1 Co 9:19). Paul was free from the necessity of being supported by the disciples. He worked with his hands as a tentmaker (At 20:34,35). He wanted to remain free of a pay check in order that he “might gain the more.” Pay checks often confine. Tentmaking makes one free.

Must the church be reminded of the work of an evangelist in order to set them free? It is only natural that the church would covet her evangelists, turning them from being evangelists to being pastors. But Jesus did not fall for this detour in His purpose. The last verse of Luke 4

historically reads, “*And He preached in the synagogues of Galilee*” (Lk 4:44). Jesus would not be turned from His destiny. He came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). When preachers lose sight of that mission, they have forgotten their purpose. They have allowed those who have sought them “to keep them from leaving them.”

When we see how far Jesus came to seek us and save us from sin (Ph 2:5-11), then we are beginning to understand His purpose in calling disciples to come after Him. His disciples are His continued spiritual incarnation in the world in order to take the message of the gospel to the lost throughout the world.

If this world is to be won for Jesus, then, as someone said, “Responsibility must be taught ... enthusiasm must be caught ... recruits must be sought.” If we would be a true disciple of Christ, we can never say, “I’m gonna teach the gospel to somebody, someday.” “Gonna” is not in the dictionary. “Somebody” is not in the phone book. “Someday” is not on any calendar. We need disciples who know how to get excited about sowing the seed of the kingdom because they are excited about the need to take the gospel to all the world. We need convictions that lead to conversions. Evangelism is simply one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. A Christian is a beggar who has found the bread of life. Personal evangelism gets “personal” when we find starving souls without bread. Personal evangelism is the work of a disciple who has found the bread of life, and thus, is telling others who are

hungering and thirsting after righteousness where to find the Bread of Life.

Too many Christians are like the boy who observed a blind man coming down a pathway. The blind man stumbled over rocks and limbs. The boy did nothing. Finally the blind man stumbled into the ditch, injuring himself grievously. A man rushed up and said to the boy, "Why did you not help the blind man?" The boy responded, "He wasn't my responsibility." Reminds us of what Cain said in response to God asking him where Abel was. "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Gn 4:9).

As disciples of Jesus, we must never forget that every lost person is a mission field and every disciple is a missionary. We are responsible for this lost world. We are our brother's keeper. It is as a poet once wrote:

*Is there anything else that is better worth,
As along life's way we plod,
Than to find some wandering soul of earth,
And bring him home to God?*

*I would rather find a soul that is lost,
And bring him home again,
Than to sing what all earth's acres cost,
Or all the wealth of men.*

*Wouldn't I be glad when the day is done,
In breathing my last breath,
To know some word of mine had won,
And saved a soul from death.*

Once after a dynamic preacher delivered a soul-searching sermon, a young

man came up to the preacher immediately after the lesson was over and asked, "What can I do to evangelize the world." The preacher responded, "Is your best friend a Christian." When we light a candle in a room or switch on a light, we expect the darkness around us to go away immediately.

Jesus needs our immediate help. He needs it now, for tomorrow will never do. Another poet wrote,

*Christ has no hands but our hands,
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet,
To lead men in His way.
He has no tongue but our tongue,
To tell men how He died.
He has no help but our help,
To bring them to His side.*

*We are the only Bible,
The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's gospel,
We are the scoffer's creed.
We are the Lord's last message,
Given in deed and word;
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?*

*What if our hands are busy,
With other work than His?
What if our feet are walking,
Where sin's allurements is?*

*What if our tongues are speaking,
Of things that lips should spurn?
Would we be glad to meet Him?
Would we welcome His return?*

Chapter 1

Israel's Evangelistic Responsibilities

It was not only because the land of Palestine flowed with milk and honey that God gave the Israelites the land. The location of Palestine was strategic to world evangelism, that is, to the preaching of the one true and living God of heaven to the constant flow of world traders who passed through the land.

One of the "travel laws" of the Old Testament referred to one who was traveling through another's field. The traveler could pick and eat grapes until he was full (Dt 23:24). He could pick with his hand and take of the standing corn and eat (Dt 23:25). This is an interesting law when one considers the strategic location of Palestine.

Take a good look at a map of the area. On the west of Palestine is the Mediterranean Sea. On the east is the Arabian Desert. Trade between the countries to the north and south of Palestine had to pass through Palestine. Remember in the story of Joseph when "*some Midianite traders passed by*" (Gn 37:28)? When these traders passed through Palestine, the incident of Joseph being sold to them happened over four hundred years before Israel possessed the land. There were traders passing through Palestine even at that time. Palestine, therefore, was a strategic land on which much of the ancient world depended for trade.

Now we can only imagine the opportunity that God laid at the doorstep of

Israel when He gave them this most strategic trading route of ancient history. Those who sought to trade throughout the Mediterranean basin could bring their goods to the sea port of Tyre and Sidon, port cities that fell within the boundaries of Palestine. So from north to south, east to west, Palestine was the focal point of trade in the ancient world. Solomon capitalized on this opportunity, making Israel a very wealthy nation during his reign.

Now consider the tremendous responsibility that Israel had in reference to influencing the world for good. They had the opportunity to change a polytheistic world into a monotheistic world that believed in the one true and living God. But instead of assuming their responsibilities to teach passing traders the good news of the God of heaven, they adopted the gods of the nations around them for the sake of business. Solomon began this fall into material prosperity when he signed contracts (married foreign women) for the sake of money. From the time of Solomon, Israel started her fall from God. She subsequently forsook her responsibility to seize the opportunity of her location in order to change the world. We often consider what the world would be like today if Israel had not forsaken the tremendous opportunity that God gave her by positioning the Israelites at the hub of world trade. We too become frustrated, as God, with the apostasy of Israel. We can understand why God was

so infuriated with them when they blasphemed His name among the nations by forsaking their responsibility to remain faithful to Him. God had revealed His presence to them, and yet, they forsook

Him for gods who were carved by the hands of men. Israel could have changed the world. Instead, the world changed her.

Chapter 2

The Reluctant Evangelist

Israel had moved so far away from her responsibility to reach the nations, that she was rebellious about doing such when given the opportunity. This feeling was harbored even among some of those who were considered prophets. It may be that Jonah was just an ordinary person of great faith in Israel, not one who was specifically considered a prophet at the time. Regardless of his religious “status” in Israel, God used him to illustrate Israel’s unevangelistic spirit that caused the nation to withdraw within herself. Jonah illustrates the extent to which we can cocoon within ourselves by refusing to reach out to others with the message of the gospel.

A. Obeying the command to go:

Revealed in the case of Jonah is God’s central plea from the time of creation to the finalization of the world at the coming of Jesus. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. But He is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pt 3:9). So because God did not want the Ninev-

ites to perish, He sent a preacher with the words, *“Arise! Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it”* (Jh 1:2). But it was hard for Jonah to believe that *“God so loved”* the Ninevites as He loved Israel (See Jn 3:16).

God calls on His people to go to those who need to hear the message in order that they save themselves from the perverse generation in which they are living (See At 2:40). He pleads with us today to go *“make disciples of all nations”* (Mt 28:19), *“preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mk 16:15), and *“preach the word”* (2 Tm 4:2). *“Go your way. Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves”* (Lk 10:3). Among the wolves, He reassures us, *“... these things I want you to affirm confidently so that those who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works”* (Ti 3:8). But as Jonah, we often shrink back from our responsibility of being a witness for God to the nations around us. We thus “flee” through our failure to go forth.

B. Fleeing from our responsibility:

“But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord”

(Jh 1:3). So why would one who knew the one true and living God flee from an opportunity to preach good news to a nation of people who were willing to hear? It is difficult to understand, but Jonah fled because he knew the people would repent. After he went to Nineveh and preached, and subsequently the people repented, he was frustrated in his ethnocentric racism. He complained to God about their repentance, *“Please O Lord, was this not what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore, I fled before to Tarshish. For I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and One who relents from doing harm”* (Jh 4:2). Jonah fled because he knew that God would forgive the Ninevites if they repented.

Jonah was angry when God forgave the Ninevites upon their repentance (Jh 4:1). He was frustrated because he coveted Israel’s special relationship with God. Such reminds us of our rejection of others when they do things differently than us, and yet seek to do the will of God according to what they know. When others are not cloned according to our religious culture, we seek to reject, not respond with the graciousness and mercy of God.

Another problem that Jonah had was that he could not understand God’s graciousness and mercy toward the Ninevites. In order to illustrate Jonah’s spiritual problem on this matter, God caused a gourd to grow and give Jonah shade in the heat of the desert (Jh 4:6-11). But then God caused a worm to

smite the gourd so that it died, Jonah complained. Jonah became so sun-beaten with the east wind, that he fainted. He complained, *“It is better for me to die than to live”* (Jh 4:8). Jonah complained to God about the death of the gourd. As a result, he set himself up for a rebuke from God.

God reminded Jonah, *“You had pity on the gourd for which you had not labored, neither did you make it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also many animals?”* (Jh 4:10,11). God is not willing that any of His creatures perish. And if God is not willing that any of His creatures perish, then to be a people after God’s heart, neither should we. No Christian can be so presumptuous as to claim to be a Christian if he is willing to sit idly by and see God’s creation remain in a state of condemnation and certain destruction (See 2 Th 1:6-9). If Christians flee their responsibility to evangelize among God’s creation, then they will, as Jonah, end up in the belly of a “church hall,” having forsaken their mission to the world.

We have throughout the years heard every excuse to flee from our responsibility of going to Nineveh. Some have been as Jonah by saying, “We must build up our own home base first.” Others have said, “It is more important to reach those who are of our community, and thus, all our resources must be directed toward our community.” If the early church had

thought this way, then we would still be in Jerusalem.

If our vision cannot take us beyond a driving radius of home, then it is a vision that is too limited. If our evangelists cannot move beyond father, or mother, or brothers and sisters, then they are too immobile. If our arms of love and mercy cannot reach around the world, then they are too short. If our ethnocentric pride will not allow us to embrace those of other cultures, then we are not of the spirit of Jesus who came and identified with us in our earthly existence.

There is a little Jonah in everyone of us. We must not forget that it is Satan's work to bring to the surface our "Jonah syndrome" in order to keep the gospel from being preached to the world.

C. Taking ownership of our responsibility:

In the belly of the big fish, Jonah cried out to the Lord.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came in

to You, into Your holy temple. Those who revere useless idols forsake their faithfulness. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is from the Lord (Jh 2:7-9).

When we fully understand that salvation is from the Lord, then that knowledge should move us into action. When Jonah finally came to his spiritual senses he did what was right. After being vomited on dry ground, God again directed Jonah, "Arise! Go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you" (Jh 3:2). The result was, "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord" (Jh 3:3). His was the same response as Philip when God revealed to him that there was a lost person reading his Bible in the desert. "So he arose and went" (At 8:27). And so should we. If we are content to remain in the belly of churchianity at the bottom of the sea, we will never assume our "faithfulness" of taking the gospel to Nineveh.

Chapter 3

The Willing Evangelist

Because society is in the bondage of sin, God calls on His people to preach freedom. Such was the case during the days of Isaiah. The people called evil good and good evil (Is 5:20). They were "wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight" (Is 5:21). They justi-

fied "the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him" (Is 5:23). The people hated good and loved evil (Mc 3:2). They built Zion with blood and iniquity (Mc 5:10). It was a time in Israel for great social digression and oppression of the poor.

When good men fail to take a stand for that which is right, evil will prevail.

God's call of Isaiah 6:8 was seated in the context of great need. God called out, "*Whom will I send and who will go for us?*" Because He is not willing that any perish, God continually offers this call to those who have a heart for the people. When those who see the spiritual needs of the people hear this call from God, there should be only one response. It is the same response that Isaiah gave. "***Here am I. Send me.***" Isaiah was one who was willing to work and give, to be spent and be sent. He would rather burn out in service to the Lord, than rust out in idleness. It is people as Isaiah who have faith in God's call to go, because they have faith in the One who calls.

We live in a world wherein the lost call out for help. God calls on those who

will stand up to do that which is right. He is looking for those who will respond to His call, "Here am I. Send me!" George Bowen wrote,

"If there is one above all who notices the desires of men, I wish He would take note of the fact, that if it pleases Him to make known His will concerning me, I should think it the highest privilege to do that will wherever it might be and whatever it might involve."

Are there those among God's people who would make the same statement in reference to God's call for messengers to go out and preach the gospel to the world? We will find those who are excited about sowing the seed of hope when we find those who are concerned over the lostness of the world in which we live. Are there any Isaiahs out there?

Chapter 4

Open Doors

There is the old story of two shoe salesmen who went to a very poor developing country to see what could be done for the parent company to sell shoes in the country. One salesman wrote back to the parent company, "No one here wears shoes. The situation is hopeless, for there is no opportunity for marketing shoes." The other optimistic salesman wrote back to his parent company, "No one wears shoes here. The opportunity to sell shoes is limitless."

Francis Bacon wisely wrote, "A

wise man will make more opportunities than he finds." Unfortunately, many an opportunity for an open door is lost while blinded men bewail the fact that there are no open doors. While some sit comfortably in the chair of idleness, open doors often close in their faces. We see no open doors because we are not looking. And we are often not looking because we are content with where we are.

One thing we have realized about those who are seeking to be disciples of Jesus, is that they are never satisfied with

two things in their lives. They are never satisfied with their prayer life and they are never satisfied with their evangelistic life. If one is satisfied in these areas of Christian growth, then he has grown out of Christ. He is no longer a disciple. If one does not grow in reaching up and reaching out, he is out of reach.

A. Look out for open doors.

The apostle Paul was sensitive to open doors. He wrote to the Corinthians, *“Now when I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, and a door was opened to me by the Lord ...”* (2 Co 2:12). It is the Lord who opens doors. If we do not pass through them, then we are not following His leadership into opportunity. Have you ever wondered how the Spirit leads us is by opening doors of opportunity for the preaching of the gospel? If we cannot see those open doors, then the problem of the Spirit leading us is not with the Spirit, but with our lack of perception of seeing the open doors before us. We can be sure that the Spirit does not lead us into self righteousness. He leads in order to cross our paths with those who are seeking the righteousness of God. If we follow the open doors He provides, we will be led to the saving of souls.

Paul seized the opportunity to enter the open door in Troas. His preceding statement of 2 Corinthians 2:12 was made on his second visit to Troas on his trip from Ephesus to Macedonia. When we read Acts 20:7, we discover that the open door led to the establishment of disciples

in the city of Troas who met regularly for the love feast and Lord’s Supper. Paul seized the opportunity of an open door, and thus souls were saved.

We must remember, however, that it is the work of Satan to war against our discovery of open doors. On his journey to the Corinthian disciples, Paul wrote from Ephesus, *“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries”* (1 Co 16:8,9). We must keep in mind that opportunities for evangelism are not cancelled out by adversaries. On the contrary, for the evangelists of Jesus, the adversaries are often the indication that there is an open door to preach the gospel.

We know that it is the work of Satan to discourage us from entering open doors. Therefore, when a door seems to be hard to enter because of the work of Satan, then it must be reaffirmed that it is an opportunity for the salvation of souls. We know this because of what Paul wrote to the evangelist Timothy. *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Tm 3:12). For this reason, therefore, *“my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials”* (Js 1:2).

The “persecution” and “trials” are often God’s signal to alert us to the fact that something good for God is happening. Before we turn away from an open door, or become discouraged because of persecution or trials, we should take another look at the situation, for we may be turning away from a great open door for the salvation of many souls.

Paul and Barnabas suffered a great deal on their first missionary journey. Their trials became so severe that John Mark turned back from the work (At 15:36-38). On the journey, *“the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and embittered their minds against”* Paul and Barnabas (At 14:2). There was an attempt in Iconium to stone both Paul and Barnabas (At 14:5). In fact, the opposition by the Jews was so strong that they eventually stoned Paul in Lystra (At 14:19). This first missionary journey was accomplished with great persecution and danger on the part of the evangelists.

But take another look at the optimistic character of the evangelists when they returned to Antioch of Syria and the disciples who sent them forth. *“Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”* (At 14:27). We must never allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that hard times and persecution are an indication of a closed door. On the contrary, we must always assume that hard times and persecution are an indication that a door is wide open for Jesus. Because we know how Satan works, we know that opposition is an opportunity for the preaching of the gospel. Would we expect any less from Satan?

We must never forget what Jesus said to the church in Philadelphia. *“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it, for you have a little strength and have kept My word and have not denied*

My name” (Rv 3:8). First, the door remains open and no one can shut it. When God opens doors, no one can shut them. We simply have to use our ingenuity as to how we will enter.

Second, with “little strength” the disciples had in Philadelphia, they were promised that no one would shut the open door before them. It would not be shut because they had kept the word of the Lord. If they had given up the word of the Lord, then surely the door would have been slammed in their faces. Their candlestick would have been removed. It is imperative, therefore, that in order for an open door to stay open, one must adhere strictly to the word of the Lord. Wordless disciples shine no light for Jesus. And when religious leaders presume to be a light to the world through their wordless messages, they are blind guides who can present no open doors. Remember this statement from Jesus: *“They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch”* (Mt 15:14).

B. Situations produce open doors.

In A.D. 61,62 Paul was in a Roman prison. If we keep in mind that Paul seized every opportunity to look for an open door for preaching the gospel, we can understand what he wrote to the Colossian Christians in Colossians 4:3. *“Also continue praying for us so that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.”* Under such circumstances, most people would be bewail-

ing their predicament. But not Paul. He was “open door minded.” In every situation he saw the possibility of an open door for the preaching of the gospel. When men are focused on the things of this world, they are not “open-door minded.” Their love of the world has crowded out their concern for the lost souls in the world (See Mt 6:24).

Too often we are “this world minded.” We are of the nature of those about whom James wrote. These world-minded travelers say, “*Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year. And we will buy and sell and make profit*” (Js 4:13). Some travel into all the world in order to make profit. And then there are those disciples of Jesus who travel to make profit for the kingdom of Jesus. The secret to world evangelism is to travel as Paul. As a tentmaker, he traveled in order to preach. He did not travel in order to make profit (See At 20:33-35).

Paul traveled to Rome on the tab of the Roman government. And while in Rome, he “*dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ ...*” (At 28:30,31). Paul used his imprisonment as an opportunity to preach the gospel. During the same imprisonment he wrote to the Christians in Philippi, “*All the saints [in Rome] greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household*” (Ph 4:22).

Jesus once spoke a parable of a beaten traveler who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lk 10:25-37). The

priest and Levite who passed by the beaten man saw his presence as a problem. However, the Samaritan saw the beaten man as an opportunity to serve. After the beaten victim had recovered in the hotel, we wonder what his attitude was toward the Samaritan and what the Samaritan believed. Was a door opened in his heart to receive what the Samaritan had to say? Peter wrote, “*But sanctify Christ as Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ...*” (1 Pt 3:15). Sometimes we can create our own open doors by doing that which is right and good (See Gl 6:10).

God does close doors. He closed the door of the ark once the opportunity had been given to the world population to hear the hundred years of preaching by righteous Noah (Gn 6:3). He closed the door on the five unprepared virgins who did not take seriously the coming of the bridegroom (Mt 25:1-13). In view of the fact that doors do close, we must move out and seize the opportunity while they are opened. “*Behold, now is the acceptable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Co 6:2). Jesus offers His invitation at the door of every man’s heart. “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me*” (Rv 3:20). **The only way Jesus can stand at the door of any man’s heart and knock is through those whose responsibility it is to preach the good news of**

Jesus. If we are not preaching the good news, then Jesus is not standing at the door of some lost soul and knocking in order to enter. Our laziness, therefore, keeps more doors closed than any hard-

ships that Satan may bring our way. **Satan uses us to close the doors.** We should ask ourselves how many doors we have closed because of our lack of concern for lost souls.

Chapter 5

The Only Door

In the context of John 10:6-14 Jesus metaphorically portrays Himself as “*the door of the sheep*” (Jn 10:7). He was speaking to every generation when He stated, “*I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture*” (Jn 10:9). We see this as an emphatic statement. **It is emphatic because there are no other doors into salvation than what God offers through Jesus.** Therefore, if anyone would be saved, he must enter through the door of Jesus. **There is no other way.**

In the teaching of His earthly ministry, Jesus established the generic principles upon which all specifics would later be defined through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In reference to Jesus being the only door to salvation, there would later come specifics as to how one would enter through the door of Jesus.

Do not assume that this door is broad and generic simply because Jesus did not give specifics. He alerted us to the fact that specifics were coming when He said, “*Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven*” (Mt

7:21). Entrance through the door of Jesus, therefore, is confined only to those who are willing to do the “*the will of My Father who is in heaven.*” One cannot enter on the foundation of his own spirituality. He cannot enter on the genuineness of his religiosity. Neither can one construct a legal religious catechism by which he would enter. Because entrance is based solely on the “will of My Father,” the entrance is narrow, very narrow. For this reason, Jesus reminded His audience, “*Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. Because small is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it*” (Mt 7:13,14). Our task is to preach the narrow way that leads to life. We would be deceived workers if we made broad the narrow way. Many are trying to broaden the way by trying to get through on their own terms. Unfortunately, at the final judgment there will be many who are surprised. It will be a surprise to those who have invented their own system of religiosity in order to validate their faith before God.

Peter began the revelation of the

narrow door when he stood up on the Pentecost of A.D. 30 and cried out, *“Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (At 2:36). That salvation would be through Jesus only, narrowed the way. The way became even narrower when Peter revealed, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”* (At 2:38). Jesus had forewarned those who would seek to be His disciples concerning this “water entrance” through His door into salvation. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* (Jn 3:5). There is nothing difficult about understanding that being born of the water and Spirit is being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. Those who would broaden the way, proclaim that a simple faith alone will bring one into Jesus. But that is not what either Jesus or Peter stated. It is what Paul stated in Romans 6:3: *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”*

Jesus is the door to salvation, but we must enter according to His directions. This is absolutely necessary because of what Peter revealed. *“And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (At 4:12). Unless one is baptized into the name of Jesus, there is no entrance into the kingdom through Jesus. If one would refuse to be baptized into the name of

Jesus, then would we conclude that he is saved anyway?

One of the greatest misconceptions that is stated today is in the words, “I am a born again Christian.” This statement is erroneous according to the preceding statements of Jesus and Peter. According to what Jesus and Peter stated, **one becomes a Christian because he is born again from the waters of baptism.** He is not “born again” by some emotional experience to become a Christian, and then baptized, thus making baptism for remission of sins an option. Baptism for remission of sins in the name of Jesus is the narrow door through which we enter into the kingdom of God. We are not first in the kingdom, and then born again. We are as Paul revealed, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gl 3:26,27). Because we have been baptized into Christ, we are “born again” sons of God. The passage does not say, we are sons of God, and then baptized. It says, we are sons of God because we have been baptized.

We must take this point one step closer to clarity. The name “Christian” means that one is “of Christ.” Everyone understands this. Now we need to read the context of 1 Corinthians 1:12-14 very carefully. The Corinthians were dividing over different personalities after whom they called themselves. Some said, “I am of Paul,” others, “I am of Apollos,” “I am of Cephas,” and then Paul adds, “I am of Christ.” But notice carefully what Paul asked them. *“Was*

Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Co 1:13). Therefore, to be “of Christ” (Christian), two things had to have happened. Christ had to have been crucified for the person who would be “of Christ,” or Christian. And second, **the one who would be “of Christ” had to have been baptized into the name of Christ. One is a Christian when he has been baptized into the name of Christ.**

The reason we must remind ourselves of the preceding thoughts is because of one of the greatest deceptions that Satan is propagating throughout the world of Christendom today. It is the belief that as long as one proclaims Jesus as “Lord, Lord,” then he is saved, regardless of any specifics that the New Testament may give in reference to entering the sheepfold through Jesus.

The spirit of evangelism has been killed by a spirit of universalism. It is assumed that as long as one is not a Muslim, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or one of the other non-Christian religions, then he is fine. As long as one is meeting on Sunday and cries out “Jesus, Jesus,” then he has validated his membership of the sheepfold, regardless of what the word of God might reveal to be defining marks to make the gate very narrow to enter into a saved relationship with God.

We live in an age of universal salvation. It is a generation of ignorance of the word of God. It is a generation of religious leaders who are very charismatic and have the gift of smooth and fair speech. Religious centers throughout the world are filled with followers

who give allegiance to their favorite speakers. Concert assemblies have given adherents a sense of “worship” that is focused on the attendees, rather than the Door to the sheepfold. We have been deceived into thinking that the more emotionally misbehaved the attendees become in assembly, the supposedly more spiritual they are. But this is a deception, a self delusion.

Such thinking destroys our sense of evangelism. We conclude that misguided religious people do not need to be the focus of our evangelistic zeal. We conclude that if folks can be saved on the bases of their experiential emotionalism, then certainly God would allow such into His fold. **The spirit of universalism has sucked the life out of our evangelistic spirit.** Since everyone is a “Christian,” then we have relegated our missions only to those who do not know the name of Jesus. Since we have concluded that if one simply claims that Jesus is his “personal savior,” then that is as far as he must go in coming into Christ. This is an unfortunate conclusion since the New Testament teaches that there is more to remission of sins than a simple faith. But because so many people are universalists in their theology, we now understand why so many have stopped reading their New Testaments. They are afraid that those they have assumed were Christians, are actually not such according to the definition of a Christian in the New Testament. We must conclude with what the Holy Spirit said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

... and with all deception of wickedness among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth** so that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them **strong delu-**

sion so that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (See 1 Tm 4:1-3; 2 Tm 4:3,4).

Chapter 6

Command From The King

Sometimes in the history of the church we must start over again. We must go back to Jerusalem and sit with the 120 disciples at the very beginning. This is necessary because restoration movements lose their zeal. They start out to restore the nature of the early church, but then circle around and join the crowd from which they came. They “die on the vine” because they disconnect from Him who came to seek and to save those who are lost. And when they lose their evangelistic zeal, it is difficult to be restored since a religion of complacency has been established to which the multitudes conform. When we move into a philosophy of “Christian universalism,” we are gone forever as a witness of Jesus to the lost world. Our message becomes so vague that it is indistinguishable from those who have long lost their bearings with the word of God. For this reason, sometimes in history the remnant must pick up the leftovers of a dying movement and start over again. And in order to do this, we must go back to the last words uttered by our Founder during those last few days with His first disciples.

Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15,16 were the initial words that

sparked the revolution of the cross to a world dead in sin. We thus look to these guiding principles that Jesus established in Matthew 28 and Mark 16 as the foundation upon which we would restore the zeal of reaching the lost.

A. The historical setting:

Jesus’ great commission to the disciples on the occasion of Matthew 28 and Mark 16 finds its setting in the prophecy of the Old Testament. In the message of Daniel 7, in a vision, Daniel was placed in a heavenly setting. He saw one “*like the Son of man*” who came with the clouds of heaven. “*And He came to the Ancient of Days. And they brought Him near before Him*” (Dn 7:13). In this prophetic picture of Jesus being brought before God the Father by the angels after the ascension, He is being brought for His coronation. “*And there was given Him dominion and glory and sovereignty, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And His sovereignty will not be destroyed*” (Dn 7:14).

The ascension of Jesus took place

in A.D. 30 (At 1:9-11). Many years later, John rehearsed the meaning of Daniel 7 and what took place in A.D. 30. John pictured the redeemed who sang a new song of the ascended and reigning Jesus. *“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and language and people and nation”* (Rv 5:9).

During His personal ministry, Jesus sent His disciples to the tribe of *“the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Mt 10:6). But the time would come when they would be commissioned far beyond Israel. Because of the prophecy of Daniel 7, Jesus’ sovereignty would extend to all tribes of the world.

B. The authority:

At the time Jesus made the statement of Matthew 28:18, all authority had been given to Him. Jesus said, *“the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand”* (Jn 3:35). During His ministry, Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands (Jn 13:3). He knew that He had been given power over all flesh (Jn 17:2). *“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father”* (Mt 11:27). For this reason, Jesus *“taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes”* (Mt 7:29). He did so that we might *“know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”* (Mt 9:6). If He could forgive on earth, then certainly He could forgive as King of kings and Lord of lords in heaven. When the disciples stood with Jesus on the oc-

casional of the pronouncement of Matthew 28, they had to know that what He commissioned them to do came from One who had the authority to give such a directive.

Because all authority had been given to Jesus, He was validated to make a statement that affected the entire world of mankind from the time of the ascension until the time of His final coming. Jesus possessed in prospect at the time He made the statements of Matthew 28 that which would be validated by His final coronation at the right hand of the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

Not only would His authority be worldwide, it would be galactic. Jesus is now head over all things. *“And He [the Father] put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church”* (Ep 1:22; see Cl 1:16,17). Because Jesus now upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3), He commissions us to a global mission all those who would be His.

C. The commission:

The transitional word from the fact of “all authority” to what Jesus enjoined upon His disciples is the word “therefore.” Jesus’ right to give a worldwide commission was based on His worldwide authority.

Depending on your translation, the word “go” or “going” is an aorist participle. The literal translation would be “having gone.” The tense of the participle is contingent upon the tense of the

main verb, “disciple,” which is aorist, and in the imperative mood. Jesus knew that any true disciple of His would be going forth with the sweet message of the gospel on their lips. They would be going. His command was that they disciple others to Him as He disciplined them to Him. The power of His statement is not in a command to go, but in discipling those of every ethnic group. It was understood that they would go. True disciples disciple others as they are going forth. This is only natural for a disciple of Jesus. If one is a true disciple, he needs no command to go into all the world. The message he has on his heart is so powerful that he is driven into all the world.

There was no need to make a command to go for a true disciple. That is covered in Mark 16:15. In this context, Jesus knew that His disciples could not help themselves but to tell others about the One they experienced on the Galilean highways. True discipleship leads one to disciple others to Jesus on this journey throughout life.

In His discipleship of these early disciples, Jesus had sent His disciples out on many teaching journeys (See Mt 10:5,16). Because Jesus had found them and sent them out, they understood the principle of finding others in order to send them out. Going out to teach others is a natural life-style of discipleship. It is not something that must be commanded. It is something that is lived as a disciple of Jesus. One can never understand discipleship unless he is going about discipling others.

We are now beginning to under-

stand the nature of world evangelism. It is not something we do, **but something we are**. Since we are disciples of Jesus, discipling others to Jesus is our life-style. Evangelism is not a program. It is not a unique ministry assigned to professionals. **Evangelism is the inherent nature of one who is a disciple of Jesus.** It is the natural process of following and being like Jesus. If one is not discipling others to Jesus, then certainly he is not a disciple of Jesus.

D. The objective:

The old King James Version used the word “teach.” This would not be a complete definition of discipleship, but certainly discipleship involves teaching. In the imperative mood, Jesus commanded that His disciples “make disciples.” The word “disciple” in the verb form is also found in Acts 14:21 where we see Paul and Barnabas doing exactly what Jesus commanded that we do. *“And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many [discipled], they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.”* Paul and Barnabas were doing what Jesus had done with Joseph of Arimathea, *“who himself was also discipled to Jesus”* (Mt 27:57).

We know when one is a disciple of Jesus because he disciplines people to Jesus. Disciples disciple. If they do not, then they are not disciples of Jesus. In his commentary on Matthew, H. Leo Boles stated it correctly:

He [Jesus] has all authority, all power, all wisdom, and He now gives to His disciples an aggressiveness in evangelizing the world for Him. They are to “make disciples of all the nations”; that is, they are to “disciple” “all the nations”; that is, they are to preach the gospel and teach the people. To disciple a person to Christ is to lead that one to become a follower of Christ, to be a learner in His school, to be obedient to His commands, to become a Christian. To “make disciples” means to give all kinds of instruction for entrance into the church of our Lord.

E. The target:

It is the nature of the members of the body of Christ to go into all the world. Since the first disciples arose out of a distinctive ethnic group, the Jews, Jesus directed the thinking of these early Jews to think about every ethnic group of the world. They had to think culturally “outside the box” of their ethnic heritage. The phrase “all nations,” is actually *ta ethne*. Every ethnic group of the world was to be the focus of the discipling of the disciples of Jesus. Christianity is never to be ethnically confined or defined.

The prophecy of Daniel 7, and the proclamation of Revelation 5, speaks of Jesus having sovereign reign over **every nation of the world**, and thus to Him people would come from every ethnic group of the world. When the gospel is “preached to every creature that is under heaven,” then people of every ethnic group come to Jesus (Cl 1:23). The Kyak, the Murut, the Dusun and the

Bajau will come to Jesus if the gospel goes to these ethnic groups. Therefore, who will go to the Masak in Kisar, or the Masakin Tiwal of the proud Nuba people of Sudan? Who will go to the Abigar tribesmen of Ehtiopia? Who will go to the Ilubabor, the Anuaks and the seventy linguistic tribal groups of Ethiopia? Who will go to the 147 different linguistic groups of Angola? When Jesus used the word “*ta ethne*” to define the target of our evangelistic efforts, He meant that His disciples are responsible for taking the gospel to each of these tribal groups of our world.

One of the deceptions that has plagued us is that we have felt some assurance that the world is being evangelized because we have entered the geographical/political nations of the world. But this is not what Jesus was commissioning in Matthew 28:19. We need to erase national borders from our maps in order to see the individual ethnic groups that are scattered throughout the world. There are thousands. Jesus commissioned that every one of them must have the gospel preached to them.

Unfortunately, those who are asleep with indifference, locked in a cocoon of legalistic religiosity, or deceived into thinking that just being a good person will get one to heaven, will never feel the need to take the gospel to the world. The world will never be evangelized by a narcissistic church that is consumed with itself. Those who are content with being a parallel generation within their own culture will find it very difficult to engage those of other ethnic cultures. The problem

with a generation that is raised on entitlement is that such a generation can never say, *“I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them rubbish so that I may gain Christ”* (Ph 3:8).

A generation that is consumed with materialistic entitlement will often choke in their responsibility to evangelize the world as sacrificial disciples of Jesus. They will speak Jesus. But when it comes to walking the crucified life, they will lead themselves to believe that they have a right to their fine way of life. We will find few of an entitlement generation in the jungles of Africa and South America. We must search for those who “count all things loss” for Christ. It will be these sacrificial servants who will preach the gospel to the world.

F. What then?

When one is discipled to Jesus, Jesus explained how you can know that they are truly discipled. Those of all ethnic groups who believe are to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **If one is not baptized, then he has not been discipled to Jesus**, for it is the responsibility of a disciple who goes forth with the gospel to baptize those he has discipled. How can one who has not been baptized, claim to be making disciples for the One who commissioned all disciples to baptize?

All people who live by Christian principles are not Christians, but all those

who have been baptized *“into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* are Christians. The word “into” in the text is from the Greek word *eis*, meaning to come into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word can be translated unto, as “unto an allegiance with” as Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 10:2. *“And they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”* Paul also uses the word in the same manner in Galatians 3:27. *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* One has not put on Christ, nor has he come unto any relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, until he has been baptized.

In 1 Corinthians 1:13 Paul uses a different word in connection with the response of baptism. *“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* This is the Greek word *en*. The meaning is to be baptized under the authority of an allegiance to. Unless one is baptized according to Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 1:12,13, he is not of Christ. He has no allegiance to Christ.

When the disciples of Jesus go forth, they do not go forth to preach baptism, but the gospel (1 Co 1:17). When we preach Jesus and the good news of His sacrificial death for our sins, people respond to God’s instructions on how to take care of their sin problem. And this takes place in the cleansing waters of baptism (See At 2:38; 22:16). When Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, the eunuch responded by requesting that he be baptized. We learn at least one thing from

the encounter of Philip and the eunuch. Unless one preaches enough about Jesus that the one he seeks to disciple responds, “*Here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?*”, then we know that we have not preached enough about Jesus (At 8:36).

If we believe that faith in Jesus alone is sufficient to bring one into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then we have stopped short of the complete message of Jesus’ commission to the early disciples. If we believe that crying out “Lord, Lord” is sufficient to clothe one with Christ, then we have stopped short of baptizing people in the name of Jesus in order to put on Christ. But for those who know their Bibles and the mandates of the great commission of Jesus, it is different. It is different in the sense that Satan has deceived the world of Christendom by thinking that one has a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without being born again in the waters of baptism. Unfortunately, too many have been deceived into thinking that they have put on Christ without passing through the grave of baptism.

But with those disciples who have been baptized into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is different. They know that one must obey the gospel in order to be saved (See 2 Th 1:7-9). And the fact that they know this motivates them to disciple all nations, instructing those they disciple to complete their obedience by being baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

G. After baptism:

Discipleship means Bible study. We live in a world of experiential religiosity, that is, a world where people often validate their faith through their experiences. But the deception of this system of validation is that it is based on man’s experiences and emotions, not on a “thus saith the Lord.” When experiences reign over the word of God, then the word of God has no directive power in the life of the religious. Jesus knew this, and thus, He mandated His disciples to continue to teach those they baptized. This means that we must be teachers of the word of God. Disciples who have been baptized must continue to be taught. This means that teachers must continue to be students of the word of God. One who is not a student of the word of God cannot disciple others.

The very mandate of Matthew 28 is infused in Paul’s statement of 2 Timothy 2:2. “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be **able to teach others also.***” This is the function of the disciple in reference to the word of God. His life is characterized by study and sharing with others what he has learned.

We have discovered that those who are born out of a knowledge of what the word of God teaches, are continual students of the word of God. This was the thought of Peter when he stated, “*having been born again, not by perishable seed, but imperishable, by the word of*

God that lives and abides” (1 Pt 1:23). Those who have studied the word of God, and subsequently responded to its teachings by being baptized into Christ, will continue to study. Those who have validated their relationship with God through an emotional experience will usually never be Bible students. From the beginning of their faith, their supposed relationship with Christ is based on their personal experiences, not on what they had learned from a study of the Bible. And because they validate their relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit on the foundation of their experiences, they are never motivated by the word of God to learn more. They become spiritually dead because they do not source that which produces spiritual growth. *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pt 3:18).

We have thus discovered that experiential religionists have little regard for the word of God in their religion. It is for this reason that experiential church groups are not known for *“teaching them to observe all things”* (Mt 28:20). They are known only for trying to generate a weekly emotional experience among the adherents in order to keep the adherents in attendance. These “Lord, Lord” churches are not seeking to do the will of the Father, and thus have not come to Christ through the road map of Matthew 28:18-20.

So when will you obey the great commission? Realizing that Jesus has all authority as our King who is reigning in

heaven should be enough motivation to go forth at His command. Rosseau wrote in *Emilius and Sophia*, “Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.” And how right he was. The mandate of Matthew 28 and Mark 16 are the pronouncement of God. C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* the following inspiring words concerning Jesus at the conclusion of this masterpiece:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.

So we would conclude with the words from an old Muslim who said to a missionary, “How long is it since Jesus died for sinful people? Look at me; I am old. I have prayed, given alms, gone to the holy temple, become as dust from fasting and all this is useless. Where have you been all this time?” If it is as George Herbert wrote in *Jacula Prudentum*, “Hope is the poor man’s bread,” then where are all those who are willing to preach the Bread of Life to the world? We live in a world where all men have a hopeless end, but we as Christians have an endless hope to be offered to the

world. What do you think should happen to a person who has all that the hope-

less world needs, but is not motivated to share what he has?

Chapter 7

We Would Be Militant

We do not like the word “militant.” It conjures up in our minds all sorts of bad thoughts today as terrorism and senseless conflicts over who is going to control the money and be in power. But keep in mind that the Holy Spirit metaphorically used such words as “war” and “soldier” to define the Christian’s conflict with the forces of evil in this world. The dictionary defines “militant” to mean “fighting; engaging in war; serving as a soldier,” being “of a combative or war-like character or disposition; ready and willing to fight.” As disciples of Jesus we must never forget that we are to be militant in our spiritual conflict with the spiritual forces of Satan. We are engaged in a spiritual war with Satan and his army.

If you cannot see a raging warfare going on in this present world, take another look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but powerful through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

And again, “**Fight the good fight**

of the faith” (1 Tm 6:12). And again, “*You therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*” (2 Tm 2:3). Therefore, “*Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, and against the world forces of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places*” (Ep 6:11,12). If you do not bristle up against Satan when reading these statements from the Holy Spirit, then put this book down and take your chances with mediocracy at the judgment.

As a militant disciple of Jesus who has been mandated by the King to go forth into all the world, what should characterize us as good soldiers to fight the good fight of the faith?

A. Militant faith for the Commander.

Our Lord Jesus is “*called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (Is 9:6). He “*is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tm 6:15). He is the One through whom the worlds were created (Cl 1:16). When speaking of being a soldier for Jesus, we

are talking about being a soldier for God. Some have personalized Jesus so much that they have made Him, as the Middle Age sculptors and artists, an effeminate and frail “little Jesus” who is weak and wimpy. **This is a corrupt picture of Jesus!**

The disciple has a personal friendship with Jesus, but this personal friendship is not equal. Jesus is God reigning in heaven over all things (Hb 8:1). We are on earth as His soldiers who have been commissioned to go forth with the news of His cross that He offers to the world. We know that He “*will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel...*” (2 Th 1:7,8). And because we know this, we are moved with fear and urgency to take the gospel to all the world. “*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men*” (2 Co 5:11). If we fail to persuade men in our generation, then it will be this generation who will stand with us in judgment to face our failure to evangelize this world. A poem by Dillard Thurman might be appropriate here.

There was a man I met today,
A stranger unto me;
Whose path in life thus crossed my way
This side of eternity.
Our greetings held a friendly tone:
We passed the time of day.
But after I was left along
I asked, “What did we say?”

We’d talked of politics and sports,

Of weather, work and play,
Of news events of many sorts;
And then he’d gone his way.
I watched this chance acquaintance start,
Back on the path he’d trod:
Then realization pierced my heart –
I’d never mentioned God!

Not likely will our paths e’er cross
Again upon this earth;
Yet I had talked of worldly dross,
Ignoring things of worth!
When in God’s judgment all men stand,
We two shall meet again –
Will this man’s blood be on my hand
If he has died in sin?

B. Militant faith that Jesus is the only way.

When Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life,*” He did not mean that there were other options to the Father. The only way into eternity is through Jesus. Peter was moved by this fact when he proclaimed to a crowd of unbelievers, “***And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved***” (At 4:12).

If one believes that there are other options for salvation, then he has lost his motivation for being a militant soldier of the faith. If one believes that one can be saved in ignorance of the gospel, then why would one suffer so much in order to preach the gospel? The true disciple of Jesus knows that Jesus is coming from heaven to take vengeance on those who do not know God (2 Th 1:7-9). But if

one believes that one can be saved by being a good person in ignorance of the one true and living God, then he will never be moved with a militant spirit by which the early disciples went forth into all the world. If it is believed that Jesus is one of many options into eternal glory, then He is no option at all. If one can be saved by just being a good person, then the cross was a futile effort of suffering on the part of One who gave up being on an equality with God in order to identify with those for whom He suffered.

This is a point that we must not pass over in our speed reading. If goodness is the only requirement for salvation, then why did God put all the effort into choosing Israel in order to preserve a segment of humanity through whom He would send a “Savior”? Why would we need a “Savior” if we can get there on our own goodness? If goodness cancels sin, then why would we need a “Savior”? If ignorance of the one true and living God gives one a right to enter the eternal presence of the one true and living God, then why would God even attempt to intervene in His creation through incarnation? Surely, if there is a plan of salvation through either goodness or ignorance, then God would not be just to send anyone into condemnation. Has our theology of universalism made us deists? Has our universalism produced a theology that everyone will make it there regardless of one’s beliefs? Did God create, and then leave His creation untouched? Did He leave us to our own religious devices? If there is any such thing in the Bible as a “plan of salvation,” then goodness is not

good enough, and ignorance on the part of the unbeliever is not a “plan of salvation.” Before we allow our evangelistic fire to go out completely, we should think on these things. What do you think Satan would want us to believe in order to fill hell?

C. Militant faith for the one gospel:

Militant soldiers of the faith know that there is only one gospel message. It is this gospel that “*is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes ...*” (Rm 1:16). The militant soldier believes that if one does not obey this gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope, then one cannot be saved. Jesus is coming to take vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel (2 Th 1:7-9). So Peter asked, “*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it first begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” (1 Pt 4:17). Paul gave us the answer to Peter’s question. “*These will be punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of His power*” (2 Th 1:9). Because the disciples of Jesus know this, they go forth with urgency. They do so in order to offer an opportunity to all people to escape, through obedience to the gospel, the impending judgment to come. Those who do not believe what the Holy Spirit said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, will not be evangelistic. Their unevangelistic spirit, therefore, is either evidence that they do not believe the Holy Spirit, or

they believe the Holy Spirit, but are too indifferent to act on their knowledge. Either situation is not good.

D. Militant faith to preach everywhere.

The militancy of the early church was revealed in the fact that the members went everywhere preaching the gospel. *“Those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”* (At 8:4). They challenged philosophers, kings and priests. No one was exempt from their preaching of the gospel. *“And daily in the temple in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”* (At 5:42). Some today say we must always be positive in our message. Generally, this is true. But the militancy of the early disciples drove them to *“reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching”* (2 Tm 4:2). As a result, many rose up against the church of God’s people. In his “counter insurgency,” Saul, the military Jew, breathed threats and *“murder against the disciples of the Lord”* (At 9:1). Nevertheless, because of the militancy of the early disciples, *“the word of God grew and multiplied”* (At 12:24). The early disciples believed their message so firmly that they would not let persecution and murder detour them from their mission.

E. Militant faith for the salvation of the body.

The early disciples knew that Jesus was coming back for His bride, His body.

If one were not attached as a member of that body, there was no possible way for him to be saved. *“He is the Savior of the body”* (Ep 5:23). And if anyone would be saved, then they must be a part of His body. The early disciples knew how to become a member of this body. *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...”* (1 Co 12:13). It was not that the body saves, but that the Savior is coming to save the body. It is the Savior who saves. When we realize that there is no salvation outside the body of Christ, then we are driven to preach the message of the gospel in order that people be baptized into the body. When the gospel is received and obeyed, then God adds the obedient to the body (At 2:47).

F. Militant faith for the cross.

Want to know what the spirit of a militant character is? Read this:

I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gl 2:20).

This was the same person who said to some brethren who were fearful for his life in Jerusalem, *“What do you mean by 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”* (At 21:13). This is discipleship. Saul moved from being the persecuting instrument of Satan against the

church, to being Paul who was willing to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Becoming a disciple will cause this awesome transformation in the life of everyone who takes discipleship seriously.

We have found many people who want to study the subject of discipleship. But they often know not what they ask. Discipleship means a cross, and in the first century, bearing a cross meant carrying one's own cross to his own crucifixion. So Jesus prepared those who would be His disciples. *"If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me"* (Lk 9:23). Paul knew how to bear the cross as a good soldier in the Lord's army. *"And whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me,"* Jesus said,

"cannot be My disciple" (Lk 14:27).

We have discovered that the more affluent the economic environment is in which disciples live, the less evangelistic they are. When one is trapped in the luxuries of life, it is difficult to *"count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* (Ph 3:8). If you want to know how serious Paul was about trashing all those things that would keep one away from total commitment to Jesus, then you need to do a study of the word "rubbish" that the Holy Spirit used in this statement. The older King James Version made the correct translation. There are few warriors for Christ in white castles.

Chapter 8

Why Did It Work?

We now ask why the early church was so militant, so successful in taking their generation for Christ? In fact, in A.D. 61,62 Paul wrote to the Colossian disciples and made the statement, *"... continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was preached to every creature that is under heaven ..."* (Cl 1:23). How did they do this? What moved them into action? Did they have something we do not have?

We should introduce this chapter by what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. *"See*

then that you walk carefully, not as fools but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil" (Ep 5:15,16).

We live in an evil world. Nevertheless, we have the answer to evil. It is the message of Jesus. So we take every advantage to speak to others about Jesus. We thus believe that every time is an acceptable time to speak of Jesus *"Behold, now is the acceptable time,"* wrote Paul. *"Behold, now is the day of salvation"* to everyone we may encounter every day (2 Co 6:2).

We are debtors who must make payment on our debt. We are in debt to the

One who redeemed us from that which we could not redeem ourselves. Paul could not have stated it more clearly than in the words that he wrote to the Roman disciples. ***“I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also who are at Rome”*** (Rm 1:14,15). It was certainly with such motivation that the early disciples took the world for Christ. And we have that same motivation today.

A. Motivated to glorify God.

The greatest incentive to be evangelistic is to bring glory to God. The psalmist wrote, ***“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory for Your mercy and for the sake of Your truth”*** (Ps 115:1). God incarnated in the flesh of man, ***“and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”*** (Ph 2:8). However, ***“God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”*** (Ph 2:9-11).

The early disciples went forth to preach the name of Jesus in order that glory be brought to God. The psalmist wrote the point:

*“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
and uphold me with Your willing Spirit.*

***I will teach transgressors Your ways,
and sinners will be converted to You.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed,
O God, God of my salvation, and my
tongue will sing aloud of Your righ-
teousness. O Lord, open my lips, and
my mouth will show forth Your praise”***
(Ps 51:12-15).

Because of all that God has done for us through Jesus, we cannot but speak those things we have received from Him. It is as Peter said to those who resisted his testimony. ***“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard”*** (At 4:19,20).

When one realizes the fullness of what God has done in his life, he cannot but speak to the glory of God. Jesus said, ***“Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples”*** (Jn 15:8). We glorify God when we bear fruit through the preaching of Jesus. When we live as the disciples of Jesus, fruit happens. And when fruit comes as a result of our influence on the lives of others, then the name of God is glorified.

B. Motivated by example and command.

Jesus came into this world with an evangelistic purpose. ***“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”*** (Lk 19:10). David Livingstone said, “God had only one Son and he was a missionary.” Jesus was a

missionary from heaven on our behalf (See Ph 2:5-11). He came to find us. Since we have been found, it is our task to find others for Him. The closer we get to Jesus, therefore, the closer we move toward His example of coming for us. Our going forth as His disciples, therefore, is only natural because we are His disciples.

C. Motivated by the need.

We live in a world of over seven billion people, people who are dead in their sins. We live among the walking dead. The world's population is growing by about one hundred million every year. This is one hundred million dead people in sin that must be reached with the gospel.

We were once among the dead. But we were found by Jesus. And unless we become indifferent to the stench of the spiritually dead in our world, Paul writes to us as he did to the Ephesians. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved”* (Ep 2:5,6). What glorious grace we have received. We have been delivered out of our deadness in order to seek the dead. It is His grace that compels us. It is as Paul wrote to some who had been touched by the grace of God: *“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God”* (2 Co 4:15). It is this grace that brings glory to God because it causes thanksgiving. The more thankful

we are for the grace of God, the more evangelistic we become in telling it to others. **The foundational motivation of the early disciples was their tremendous appreciation for the grace of God.** We would correctly conclude that the less we appreciate the grace of God in saving us, the less evangelistic we will be in preaching grace to others.

D. Motivated by opportunity.

Paul was sensitive to open doors. He changed his schedules in order to take advantage of opportunities to preach the grace of God. *“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has been opened to me ...”* (1 Co 16:8,9).

Every disciple must be sensitized to look for opportunities to share the sweet grace of God by which we have been saved. To be sensitized for opportunity to share the gospel, one must *“grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pt 3:18). We have found that the more one grows in his appreciation for his own salvation by the grace of God, the more he is eager to share the grace of God with others. And in order to grow in the grace of God, one must be filled with the word of God. It is through God's word that we understand the tremendous sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. When we learn how far He had to come from heaven in order to redeem us from sin, we will go any distance to find others for Him. Our knowledge of His sacrifice for us sensitizes us to the needs of others who need Jesus.

E. Motivated by the zeal of Satan.

While living in Sao Paulo, Brazil, we once woke up in the morning and read the local newspaper. On the front page was the report of some misguided church members who bound their little children and drowned them in the Atlantic Ocean in a religious ritual. The work of Satan among religious people is strong. The horror of his work drives us to preach a message of truth and love. Because God first loved us through Jesus, we are driven to love others (1 Jn 4:19).

Paul exhorted, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil”* (Ep 6:10,11). We are driven into battle against the wiles of the devil because of our love of souls. The Basel Mission was started in the nineteenth century in Ghana. In the first nine years of the mission, eight of the ten missionaries who went to the mission died. For fear that the European supporters would discontinue the mission, the remaining two missionaries wrote back home with the words, *“Send more missionaries. Though a thousand missionaries die, send more.”* Many of these early missionaries that came to Africa packed their belongings in their coffins, knowing that the continent would soon take them with diseases. Satan will do his best to discourage the saints of God. But with great zeal we must fight back. We must repeat after Paul, *“For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusa-*

lem for the name of Our Lord Jesus” (At 21:13).

Churches grow simply because members zealously make telling others about Jesus central to their lives. The more zealous a group of people are, the faster they will grow. Jesus gave *“Himself for us so that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a special people who are zealous for good works”* (Ti 2:14). And that is the answer for church growth.

F. Motivated because of the results of failure.

Have you ever wondered what the consequences will be for our failure to evangelize the world in our generation?

1. Hell’s gates will be broken wide open. Jesus said, *“Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it”* (Mt 7:13). We must keep in mind that every person we do not share the gospel with will broaden the gates of hell.

2. Bad heritage to leave our children. We think of leaving our children a college education or a successful business. But when we leave them an unevangelized world we leave them an unbearable burden. Our fathers left us with this burden, and we often hand it on to the next generation.

3. God’s people are not seen as God’s people. Singing “standing on the promises” when we are sitting on the premises will never evangelize the world.

We are often like two skeletons hanging in a closet. One said to the other, "If we don't get any guts, we will never get out of here." We do not have the pleasure to sit in comfort with an indifferent attitude toward an unevangelized world. Sitting tight without sending the light will never take Christ into all the world. If we are truly the disciples of Jesus, then we must be as His disciples of light throughout our communities and throughout the world.

G. Motivated because of our joy.

When Christians are excited about their lives as disciples of Jesus, they get excited about sharing Jesus. Our excitement leads us to be convicted, and our conviction leads to more conversions.

Paul explained the character of the one who rejoices over his salvation. "*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died*" (2 Co 5:14). Christ died for all because of His love for us. We are thus compelled to love in dying to ourselves for others (See 1 Jn 4:19).

In 2 Kings 7:1-9 an event happened in the history of Samaria that truly illustrates our situation as the saved disciples of Jesus. Benhadad of Syria besieged Samaria. The siege continued until those trapped in the city were starving. But there were four lepers at the gate of the city. Because they were lepers, these were four men left untouched by the Syrians at the gate of Samaria. The lepers

reasoned among themselves, "*If we say, 'We will enter into the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there. And if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall to the army of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we will live. And if they kill us, we will but die*" (2 Kg 7:4).

What the lepers did not know was that in the middle of the night God caused a great noise of chariots and horses to be heard by the Syrian army. The Syrians thought that the Israelites had hired the Hittites and Egyptians to fight against them. In their fear, they fled the scene, leaving everything behind in the dark of the night.

Now when the four lepers came upon the camp of the Syrians, they perceived that no one was around. They were elated about their discovery. "*They went into one tent and ate and drank. And they carried from there silver and gold and clothing. Then they went and hid it. And they came again and entered into another tent and carried from there also*" (2 Kg 7:8). But in their joy of having received such great blessings, they began to think in the depths of their materialism. They finally confessed to one another:

"We do not well. This day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace. If we tarry until the morning light, some mischief will come upon us, Now, therefore, come so that we may go and tell the king's household" (2 Kg 7:9).

Chapter 9

Seizing The Opportunities

In the farming of wheat there is a window of opportunity for harvesting that is brief. The wheat cannot be harvested when it is too green for the grain will rot in the storage bin. If the grain is left unharvested too long in the field, it will dry and be essentially worthless. But when the farmer discovers that the wheat grain is dry enough for harvesting, there is about a two week window when the fields must be harvested.

Jesus knew this, as well as His disciples. So when He made the following statement to the disciples, they knew exactly what He was saying: “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, **for they are white already for harvest!**” (Jn 4:35). And indeed they were. “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son ...” (Gl 4:4). The time was right for harvesting.

A. **Make a commitment to see and feel the opportunity.**

Those who are deeply involved in being a disciple of Jesus know the meaning of what Jesus requested in Matthew 9:37,38. Those who are not involved, have no understanding of that for which He asked us to pray. They see no need. But if you are a disciple of Jesus, you know the meaning of His request.

The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray to the

Lord of the harvest so that He will send laborers into His harvest.

This is God’s harvest, not ours. And when one is intensely involved in reaping the harvest, he is intense about his commitment to get the job done while the harvest is ready. We can see that intensity in the words of Paul.

*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is **that they might be saved**. For I testify to them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (Rm 10:1-3).*

We live in a world where Christendom is rife with those who have created their own righteousness after their own desires. The primary theology of Christendom is universalism, that is, everyone can be saved on their own terms and beliefs. But their righteousness is not according to the knowledge of the word of God. And because it is not, Paul was intensely moved to teach the truth of the gospel. He was so intense, that he said the following words in Romans 9:1-3,

“I say the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sor-

row and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

How intense can a disciple become in order that the reaping of a ripe harvest be accomplished?

When Paul came into Corinth, he was faced with great opposition. It was so great that he had decided to leave the city and move on to other fields. But God knew something that he did not. God knew that there were those in the city, who, if they had the opportunity to hear the truth of the gospel, they would obey. Therefore, God came to Paul in a special vision in order to keep him in Corinth. *"Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak. And do not hold your peace. For I am with you and no man will attack you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city'"* (At 18:9,10).

When it seems that things are going bad, we must step back and understand that God has people in every city who need to hear. When these people hear, they will obey. We must remember that we are seed sowers and those who water. It is God who produces the fruit. But He cannot produce the fruit if we do not sow the seed.

B. Have faith that God is working through us.

At one time during Jesus' ministry a desperate father brought his son with a mute spirit to His disciples. The father

said to Jesus, *"I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out and they could not"* (Mk 9:18). What Jesus then said surely cut the disciples to the heart, as well as us in our lack of belief. *"O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I bear with you?"* (Mk 9:19). Those who think and work outside the work of God have a very difficult time walking by faith within the realm of God's work. At this time in their lives, the disciples were still outside, and thus, faithless as to what God would do.

Jesus asked the pleading father to bring the son to Him. We can see the tears in the father's eyes as he said to Jesus, *"And often it [the mute spirit] has cast him into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him"* (Mk 9:22). But listen to the father's plea. *"But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us"* (Mk 9:22). We must never forget Jesus' response. *"If you can? All things are possible to him who believes"* (Mk 9:23).

We feel we cannot get the job done because of our unbelief. But we forget what God promised. *"He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things"* (Rm 8:32). Therefore, *"in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Rm 8:37). *"If God is for us, who can be against us"* (Rm 8:31). We must have the confidence of Paul. *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Ph 4:13).

We must never forget that *"it is God who works in you both to will and to work*

for His good pleasure” (Ph 2:13). And He “*is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us*” (Ep 3:20). Since God is working in us, then it is He who is working to evangelize the world through us. If we refuse to have Him working in our lives, then the problem is not with God, but with us. For this reason, we must not quench the Spirit of power that is working in us to do His will (1 Th 5:19).

When we have the convictions, therefore, we will have the conversions as the Spirit works through us to take the gospel to the world. And when we allow God to do His thing through us, we get excited about sowing the seed of the kingdom because we are excited about the spiritual needs of lost men. When Jesus becomes everything to us, we will speak His name everywhere.

C. **Make the commitment to give all to Him who gave all to us.**

We must pay our redemption forward. Jesus came and found us, and now we must go and find others for Him. In finding us, He paid our debt, and thus we are debtors to others. Paul said, “*I am a debtor ...*” (Rm 1:14). We are indebted to Jesus for redeeming us from the curse of our condemnation in sin. However, His sacrifice for us reasonably requires a sacrifice from us. It is as Paul wrote, “*Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, **which is your reason-***

able service” (Rm 12:1). When we survey the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, it is only reasonable to conclude that we sacrifice the entirety of our lives for Him.

Discipleship, therefore, is not something we do. It is something we are. It is not something we study in a class on discipleship. If we have to take a class on discipleship, then we never really understood discipleship before we were baptized. Jesus commanded His disciples to go and disciple all nations (Mt 28:19). But if we have to enroll in discipleship classes after baptism, then we got in the water before we understood that there was a cross to bear as a disciple.

We baptize disciples. We do not baptize and then disciple. Practicing the reverse order brings into the fellowship of the organic body all sorts of dysfunctional members. Unevangelistic members never understood what being a disciple of Jesus meant before they went to the cross and grave with Jesus in baptism. If one learns of Luke 9:23, and similar statements, in a discipleship class after baptism, then he was really not disciplined before he was baptized.

We once heard an elder say to the assembly, “We need to pray for the personal evangelists among us.” With such lack of understanding concerning the nature of discipleship among us, we need to look no further to discover why we fail to evangelize our communities. When we single out those to whom we have relinquished our responsibility to evangelize our communities, then our communities will never be evangelized, much

less the world in which we live.

Being a disciple means that we are all evangelistic. There are no unique personal evangelists among us. We as disciples of Jesus are all personal and we are all evangelistic. It is the nature of following Jesus. If we feel that evangelism is the responsibility of someone else, then we will never take ownership of evangelism. This thought was in Jesus' statements of Matthew 10:16-26. In the middle of His exhortations concerning being His disciple, Jesus said, "*It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher ...*" (Mt 10:25). If we would be like our teacher, Jesus, then we too would say that it is our purpose to seek and to save those who are lost (Lk 19:10). We too would go on a mission from our abode to any place where there are those who need the saving power of the gospel (See Ph 2:5-11). We seek to be disciples of Jesus, and thus, we seek to emulate in our lives His life.

How we are evangelistic will vary from one disciple to another. However, how we work to touch the lives of others for Jesus will be according to how God has gifted us. But we must never come to the erroneous conclusion that God gifted us for ourselves. There is no such thing as a narcissistic disciple. If we behave as such, then we will introvert

within ourselves, seeking in our Christian life those things that please ourselves. We will create a Christian way of life wherein we feel good about our exciting assemblies, comfortable in our pews, and satisfied with a good pronouncement from the pulpit, while all the time the world is headed for a devil's hell. Assemblies should be for exhausted disciples, not times when we try to validate our faith by exhausting ourselves in the assembly.

God gifted us, not for ourselves, but for others.

In 1269, Marco Polo reported that Kublai Khan, who at that time ruled over a great deal of present-day China, had requested one hundred missionaries to come to China. He wanted the missionaries to come and teach his people about Christ and the truths of the word of God. At the time of the request there was a struggle as to who was going to be the pope in Rome. It was not until two years later that the request of Kublai Khan was answered. Pope Gregory X subsequently answered the plea for 100 missionaries with two friars. These two emissaries of the Roman church got as far as the frigid Himalayan Mountains and turned back. We wonder what Marco Polo would write of this generation of the church if he were alive today.

Chapter 10

How It Is Done

Evangelism is centered around true discipleship. Our personal evangelistic outreach to others is dependent on how

we feel a disciple of Jesus should behave. It is as Jesus said, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples*"

(Jn 8:31). And the word of Jesus is, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). There is nothing difficult in connecting “continue in My word” and “preach the gospel to every creature.” If one would be a disciple of Jesus, therefore, he must figure out how he is going to preach the gospel to every creature of the world. It is not a decision if one should, but how one should get the job done.

Look at discipleship from the viewpoint of the example of Jesus. Jesus said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). In His ministry, Jesus set the example of evangelism. Now compare this with 1 Peter 2:21. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.” We follow the example of Jesus in suffering, and following in His steps would be suffering for a life-style of reaching out to others. This is what John explained in 1 John 2:6. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Both in teaching and example, the early disciples got the point. Starting on the first day of the existence of the baptized body, and extending through the example of Paul and the apostles, the early church was evangelistic. Paul thus exhorted, “Be imitators of me even as I also am of Christ” (1 Co 11:1). And thus the early churches followed the example of the first Christians in Judea. To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “For you, brethren, became imitators of the

churches of God in Judea that are in Christ ...” (1 Th 2:14). And just look at what the Thessalonians did by imitating the evangelistic Judean disciples, who imitated Paul, who imitated Christ:

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you were examples to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that we do not need to speak anything (1 Th 1:6-8).

Get the point. People often ask how the early church was so evangelistic. The answer is in that they were true disciples. Christ set the example. Early disciples in Jerusalem followed the example. This example was spread throughout the early world where it was imitated by other disciples, who also set the example for other disciples to follow. If we would be as the early disciples, therefore, we must continue the example of evangelism. There is absolutely no other way. There are no magic programs. There are no especially trained men and women. There is no need for training schools in evangelism. All that is involved is to understand what a true disciple of Jesus is. If one is less than evangelistic in his supposed discipleship, then he is not a disciple of Jesus. Or, he is a dead disciple who needs to be resurrected.

Our task now is to determine how

the early church behaved as disciples of Jesus. This is an exciting study for it starts right in Jerusalem from the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. As we journey with the early disciples, we discover that there were at least seven things that caused the tremendous growth of the church. If we focus on these principles today, we will experience the same growth.

A. Communicate the gospel.

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said ...” (At 2:14). And that started everything. *“And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”* (At 5:42). The communication of the gospel continued endlessly and persistently. *“Therefore, those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”* (At 8:4). The communication of the gospel was so central to the lives of the early disciples, that Luke turns from counting baptisms to the growth of the word of the Lord. *“The word of God grew and multiplied”* (At 12:24).

There is no secret about this most essential principle for the evangelization of the world. If people do not open their mouths for Jesus, Jesus will never be made known to the masses. It is as simple as what Luke recorded of Philip when he met the Ethiopian eunuch. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture he preached Jesus to him”* (At 8:35).

B. Focus on receptivity.

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart ...” (At 2:37). On the day of Pentecost, Peter and the apostles preached Jesus to a receptive audience. Church growth comes when we find people as Sergius Paulus, a man who *“called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God”* (At 13:7). The early disciples focused on finding those who *“glorified the word of the Lord”* (At 13:48). But if there were those who would not listen, *“they shook off the dust of their feet against them”* and moved on (At 13:51). They moved on to those who *“were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily ...”* (At 17:11).

The early church grew rapidly because the disciples did not cast their pearls before the swine. They observed the principle that Jesus spoke. *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you in pieces”* (Mt 7:6). Good advice. If one would be a productive disciple, then he must be able to determine if he is casting his pearls before swine. No man has a right to hear the gospel twice when there is one man who has not heard it once.

Satan is very wise. He will hold up disciples who cannot move on. Everyone must have a chance to hear the gospel. But when one determines that his audience is not receptive, then he must move on. If he does not, then he has stolen away from another the opportunity

to hear the gospel. It is the same principle of life that Jesus illustrated in His life when some “*tried to keep Him from leaving them*” (Lk 4:42). These who sought to hold up Jesus had already heard. Jesus thus reminded them by saying, “*I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because for this purpose I was sent*” (Lk 4:43). Effective evangelism is still based on the principle, “*He who has ears, let him hear*” (Mt 13:9). And when there are listening ears out there, that is where we must be.

C. Assisting the obedient.

“*And those who received his word were baptized*” (At 2:41). It was these who obediently “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching*” (At 2:42). When Jesus is preached, and people are receptive, then obedience follows by those who seek to follow the example of obedience in Jesus. “*Though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him*” (Hb 5:8,9).

If people will not hear the word, then they will not obey the word. When they will not hear, it is time to move on to those who will. We seek those who want to follow the example of obedience of Jesus.

D. Teach the obedient.

“*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship ...*”

(At 2:42). Those who responded on the day of Pentecost continued to be taught by the apostles. Since the apostles knew that many of the 3,000 who obeyed the gospel would be returning to their homes in far away countries, it was necessary that they be grounded in the word of God before they departed Jerusalem.

Church growth happens when there are those who willingly submit to the teaching of the word of God. A disciple is identified by his willingness to be instructed in the word of God. Paul exhorted the evangelist Timothy, “*These things command and teach*” (1 Tm 4:11). He instructed the leader Timothy to teach other leaders. “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Tm 2:2). A leader is identified by his willingness to teach others. These leaders must in turn be willing to be taught by others. Such is exactly what Jesus mandated among His disciples. After a disciple is baptized, Jesus commanded the apostles to teach them “*to observe all things that I have commanded you*” (Mt 28:20). It is in this way that all disciples “*grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pt 3:18).

E. Disciples must fellowship.

“*And they continued steadfastly in ... fellowship in the breaking of bread ...*” (At 2:42). Baptized disciples must seek out the fellowship of others who have also obeyed the gospel. This was the

nature of the fellowship of the early disciples. *“Now all who believed were together and had all things in common”* (At 2:44). These early disciples were so bound together in their common obedience to the gospel that they sought out one another for fellowship. *“And continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and sincerity of heart”* (At 2:46). They continued in their love feasts with one another. As far as our New Testament record of these love feasts reveals, these feasts continued at least until the writing of both Jude and 2 Peter, which letters were written around A.D. 65,66 (See 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12).

The fellowship of the early disciples was more than meetings for talk and food. Acts 2 states that they *“had all things in common”* (At 2:44). Acts 4:32 explains, *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And no one said that any of the things that he possessed was his own. But they had all things in common.”* Without going into great detail to explain the circumstances that existed, consider the fact that there were visiting Jews in Jerusalem who came to the yearly Pentecosts. They were taught the gospel, and many were baptized. These obedient disciples stayed on in Jerusalem in order to receive more instruction at the feet of the apostles (At 2:42). Once they had consumed their funds they had for the journey for Pentecost, they would return to their countries from which they had journeyed. They would return to the synagogues through-

out the Roman Empire in order to preach what they had heard and seen in Jerusalem (See Is 2:1-3). What is interesting about this situation is the fact that the resident disciples in Jerusalem saw this as an opportunity to evangelize the world. In order to help keep the traveling disciples in town, the local disciples sold their possessions in order that the sojourning disciples might continue in their fellowship and the apostles’ teaching.

F. Worship God in spirit and truth.

“Those who received his word were baptized ... and they continued steadfastly in ... fellowship in the breaking of bread, and in prayers ... praising God ...” (At 2:41,42,47). The early disciples continued after the worship that Jesus explained. *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”* (Jn 4:24). Since they had given themselves as a total sacrifice to God, they worshiped God in their service to Him (See Rm 12:1,2). They assembled for praise and planning of work (Hb 10:24,25).

Worshipful disciples continue in their witness that Jesus is their Lord. The effectiveness of their testimony to others that they were the children of God was seen in the worshipful spirit by which they conducted themselves. Those who daily maintain a worshipful spirit are continually reminded in their outreach to others that they are working within the realm of God’s work. Those who are not of a worshipful spirit will devise programs by which they will offer service.

Unfortunately, such programs often force that which should only be natural in the spirit of a worshipful disciple. Disciples are evangelistic, not because they are following the schedule of some program. Disciples are evangelistic by nature because of their worshipful spirit. They naturally portray to others the God who is in their hearts. True worshipers of God, therefore, need no command to be evangelistic. They need no schedule or program to move them to be evangelistic. They are simply evangelistic because of the inspiration of the God they worship and the Lord they obeyed.

G. Disciples impacted communities.

The enemies of the early disciples accused, *“These who have turned the world upside down have come here also”* (At 17:6). And truly, the early Christians did turn the world upside down by their zeal to preach Jesus to the world. On the day of Pentecost when it all began, Luke initially recorded, *“And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls”* (At 2:41). From there the growth continued, *“But many of those who heard the word believed. And the number of the men was about five thousand”* (At 4:4). *“And all the more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number”* (At 5:14). *“And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teach-*

ing and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (At 5:42). *“So the word of God increased. And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (At 6:7).

The early disciples went everywhere preaching the word (At 8:4). Consequently, the number of disciples *“were multiplied”* (At 9:31). *“Many believed on the Lord”* (At 9:42). *“The word of God grew and multiplied”* (At 12:24). *“So the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region”* (At 13:49). God then *“opened the door of faith to the Gentiles,”* and thus the disciples took advantage of this great open door (At 14:27). Luke’s climax statement says it all: *“So the word of God grew mightily and prevailed”* (At 19:20).

In view of the fact that there is such an obsession on “miracles” today among many religious groups, when we read the preceding statements by Luke concerning the rapid growth of the early church, emphasis is placed on the word of God. Little emphasis is placed on the miraculous work of the Spirit. It was the preaching of the word of God that produced faith, not the miraculous work of the Spirit. The more the word was preached, the more there were those who believed. Their belief was in the preached message of Jesus, not some miracles that they may have witnessed.

Chapter 11

Banished Because Of Indifference

When the word of God is preached, it will prevail. There will be great growth. The name of Jesus will be proclaimed among the nations and the name of God will be glorified. But this was not always the case in the history of Israel. Because they did wickedly, the Lord delivered the children of Israel into the hand of Jabin the king of Canaan (Jg 4:2). They suffered under his hand for twenty years (Jg 4:3). Now when Israel cried out to the Lord in repentance, Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak, led Israel to freedom from Jabin. But in their call to all Israel to join in the battle against Jabin, Meroz refused to respond. While their fellow brethren went to war against the enemies of God and His people, the residents of Meroz remained in the comfort of their own homes. After the victory, however, God cursed them.

“‘Curse you Meroz,’ said the angel of the Lord. ‘Curse utterly its inhabitants, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty’” (Jg 5:23).

The inhabitants of Meroz did absolutely nothing to aid in the deliverance of Israel from the oppression of Jabin. They were indifferent and unconcerned. On all Bible maps there is usually no indication of the location of Meroz. If it is mentioned, there is usually a question

mark beside the assigned location. No one today knows where it was located. Will the same happen to churches in any region today if the members fail to rise up and go to war against the mighty enemies of God? When the church in Ephesus lost her first love, the candlestick was removed (See Rv 2:4).

The Hebrew writer cautioned, *“Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Hb 3:12). If we fall through unbelief, we too will not be granted the right to enter into eternal existence as those who did not believe in Israel and were not allowed to enter into the land of milk and honey. *“And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief”* (Hb 3:18,19). Meroz was taken out because of her failure to respond to the need for deliverance from Jabin. Will God take out the church that does not respond to the deliverance of men from the bondage of sin?

The Hebrew Christians were on the verge of neglecting their great salvation. They were considering a turn to their old ways in Judaism. But on the verge of apostasy, the Hebrew writer was not vague in his pronouncements concerning such an apostasy. *“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and*

every transgression and disobedience receive a just punishment, how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation ..." (Hb 2:2,3).

Under the Old Testament law transgressions received an immediate and just judgment. The Hebrew writer seeks to emphasize the seriousness of the "neglect" of the Jewish Christians to whom he was writing. In the parable of the talents, the "one-talent man" was called wicked and slothful because he neglected his responsibility in reference to the opportunity of his one talent (Mt 25:26). If we neglect our responsibility to answer the call to world evangelism, then would we not suffer the removal of our candlestick?

The same principle of neglect is taught in the parable of the ten minas (Lk 19:11-27). The one who was given one mina, with the responsibility of increasing it for the master, did nothing. He neglected his gift and opportunity. When the nobleman came, the unprofitable servant was judged to be a "wicked bond-servant" because he had neglected to increase that which had been entrusted to him (Lk 19:22). Would this fall under the principle about which James wrote? *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin"* (Js 4:17).

When we understand our responsibility that has come to us as a gift, and we do not take ownership of our gift, then we are in trouble. Timothy had such a gift given to him. Because of discouragement, he stopped preaching. It took an inspired letter to get him going again.

In the letter, the apostle charged, ***"Do not neglect the gift that is in you ..."*** (1 Tm 4:14). We do not know the specific gift to which Paul was referring, but we do know that at the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, Timothy was neglecting it. In the second letter, Paul exhorted again, *"I remind you that you stir up the gift of God that is in you ..."* (2 Tm 1:6). To "stir up" means to rekindle the flame.

Gifts were given only for the purpose of reaching out to others. They were not given by God as self-satisfying opportunities to build up one's self. If we fail to rekindle the gift that is given to us for the sake of others, then we are neglecting our gift out of indifference, laziness, fear, or any other obstacle that Satan has put in our way. As we rekindle a smoldering ember, sometimes our responsibility must be blown upon by the word of God in order to be ignited for Jesus.

In the parable of the talents an interesting statement was made of the bondservant to whom was given one talent. This was the bondservant who said to the master upon his return, ***"I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the earth. See, here you have what is yours"*** (Mt 25:25). His fear led him to be inactive and indifferent over that which was entrusted to him. He was given the opportunity, but because of fear, he did not perform according to the will of the master. We are reminded of the statement in Revelation 21:8: ***"But the cowardly and unbelieving ... will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone ..."*** Is this not what Jesus

meant when He said of the one-talent bondservant? *“Cast the **unprofitable bondservant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**”* (Mt 25:30).

There will be a tragic end to those who are unprofitable in the work of kingdom business. Regardless of what one’s gift is in reference to the benefit of the work of Jesus on earth through us personally, if we are not profitable to His work, then we will eventually be cast into the outer darkness. And now we know the motivation of Paul when he revealed to the Corinthians, *“Therefore, **knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men ...**”* (2 Co 5:11). And might we add, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Hb 10:31).

We must not let our fear of anything detour us from assuming our responsibility of evangelizing our communities. The only one we should fear is the One who has the ability to cast our souls into the outer darkness because we feared men more than we feared Him. *“But I will forewarn you whom you should fear. **Fear Him who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I say to you, fear Him**”* (Lk 12:5).

In Jesus’ judgment of the seven churches of Asia, six of the churches were commended for some good because of the circumstances in which they lived. But there was one church that received absolutely no praise. It was the church of Laodicea (Rv 3:14-22). This church was stricken with a deadly malady that

would take it away forever. It was stricken with a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference. And because the members were not serious about their faith, Jesus pronounced condemnation upon them. *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will spew you out of My mouth**”* (Rv 3:15,16). This very judgment could be spoken to a great number of people who pose to be true disciples of Jesus.

We may have buried our gift, neglecting the purpose for which it was given. We may have lost our first love as the Ephesians (Rv 2:4). Or we may have become lukewarm as the Laodiceans (Rv 3:15). Nevertheless, it is never too late to rekindle the fire of evangelism that is to be in our bones. Paul exhorted, *“Awake you who sleep and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”* (Ep 5:14). He exhorted the Corinthians, *“Awake to righteousness and do not sin”* (1 Co 15:34). And the simple reason to awake in order to assume our responsibility to evangelism is *“... some have no knowledge of God”* (1 Co 15:34). The only way they will receive a knowledge of God is through us. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their laziness and indifference by saying, *“**I speak this to your shame**”* (1 Co 15:34). If we believe Paul would write the same exhortation concerning our lack of evangelistic spirit, then it is time for repentance.

Chapter 12

Wrong Man's Job

It is interesting to note what Luke recorded concerning the results of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas after they returned to Antioch of Syria. "... they reported all that **God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles**" (At 14:27). It is God who uses us and it is God who opens doors for us.

We live in an era where churches send out evangelists to do the work of evangelizing the world. And rightly so, for how "*will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent?*" (Rm 10:14,15). We send out the preacher to proclaim the good news. This is God working through the church. It is God working through the church through preachers in order that the preachers enter the doors that He is opening. It is God doing His work in bringing souls into eternal dwelling with Him.

Now we often encounter some difficulty when it comes to reporting what God is doing among the nations for His glory, not the glory of the ones who are sent or the ones who are sending. Those who are sent often make the mistake of being intimidated into reporting on God's work, taking credit for what God has done. It is often similar to some in Corinth who took credit for other men's work.

We begin to understand this problem by first considering Paul's obsession to preach the gospel. "*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for necessity is laid upon me. For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*" (1 Co 9:16). Paul was compelled to preach out of his debt that he owed for his salvation (Rm 1:14). However, he would not boast in repaying his debt. The exhortation would be, "*He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord*" (2 Co 10:17), that is, in what the Lord does for us, not in what we do for Him. Though the Corinthians were his boast in the Lord, **it was the Lord who produced the Christians in Corinth through the preaching of Paul**. And above all, Paul would never boast in the labors of others who had preached the gospel. "*We are not boasting of things beyond our measure, that is, of other men's labors ...*" (2 Co 10:15). He would not boast "*in another man's realm of accomplishment*" (2 Co 10:16). If he had done such, then he would have been stealing away some of God's glory.

Now listen specifically to what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:12: "*For we dare not class or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*" Sometimes, mission reports by evangelists bow to the unwise practice of several unfortunate types of reporting. (1) They often take

credit for God's work. (2) They boast in their own accomplishments by bowing to the demands of supporters who seek a "baptism report." (3) Their supporters often compare their reports with the work of other evangelists. (4) Evangelists often measure their own accomplishments by the accomplishments of others, feeling that they are either competing or guaranteeing their own support. (5) They are simply self-oriented and seeking glory for themselves. In doing all such things, **they are not wise**. They bow down to the intimidation of those who sign their pay checks by boasting about the wrong man's job.

A. Our job is to plant.

Our focus is 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, specifically verses 6-9. In his message to the disciples throughout the city of Corinth, who were dividing over personalities, Paul stated that he had planted the seed of the gospel in Corinth (1 Co 3:6). Luke recorded this planting in Acts 18:1-11. On his initial visit to the city, "*Paul was compelled in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ*" (At 18:5). "*And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized*" (At 18:8). "*So he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them*" (At 18:11). Paul was their father in the faith, "*for in Christ Jesus I [Paul] have brought you forth through the gospel*" (1 Co 4:15; see 15:1,2). In recounting his trip to Corinth, Paul reminded the disciples that he came from a great distance in order to preach the gos-

pel to them (2 Co 10:14).

This is our job. We must go the distance for Jesus. If we are not willing to leave fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, lands and houses for Jesus, then we will not get the job done (See Lk 14:26; see Mt 10:37). It is our job to plant the seed of the gospel. As long as one is preaching the gospel to the lost, then he is doing his job (See Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15). This is exactly what the early church did as it went forth into all the world (At 8:4,12).

If Paul were like some notable religious leaders since the first century, we would have the "Paulite Church" today. We have Lutherans and Calvinists and Anglicans, and a host of others that are named after some religious leader or peculiar teaching. But have you ever encountered a Paulistian? While some men have craved to have their disciples focus on them as the leaders, Paul would only say, "*Be imitators of me even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Co 11:1). One could not focus on Paul without focusing on Christ.

Paul knew how to keep the glory focused. He knew how people like their heroes. They have a thirst to have a "king over them as the nations around them." Paul wrote to keep the people focused on King Jesus only. He, as the rest of the apostles, clearly reminded the people that they were only servants through whom the seed of the kingdom was planted in the hearts of men. "*Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but servants by whom you believed ...*" (1 Co 3:5). The fact that we have no Cephites or Paulites,

or Apollosites today is evidence that these men did their jobs well by keeping the peoples' minds focused on Jesus.

B. Our job is to water.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*Apollos watered ...*" (1 Co 3:6). This too is our job. Men are God's instruments to water His seed of the kingdom. Apollos came along after Paul left Corinth (At 19:1). While in Corinth, he used his gift of exhortation to build up the body of disciples. Luke wrote of Apollos' arrival and ministry in Corinth, for "*he greatly helped those who had believed through grace*" (At 18:27).

Apollos may have been as the teacher who stood before the assembly of disciples and said, "We ain't what we oughta be, and we ain't what we're gonna be, but thank the Lord, we ain't what we used to be." It is our business to water the seed of the gospel in order that men and women live lives that are worthy of the gospel (See Ph 1:27). It is our job to use our gifts to edify the body of Christ, "*from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working of each part, causes growth of the body to the edifying of itself in love*" (Ep 4:16).

C. God's job is to bear fruit

When we do our job of planting and watering, then God takes it from there. Paul reminded the Corinthians, "... *God gave the increase*" (1 Co 3:6). There-

fore, we must remember: "*So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*" (1 Co 3:7). Those who plant and water are one organic body of Christ (1 Co 3:8). But we must remember that "*we are laborers together with God*" (1 Co 3:9). God gave us the message. God is opening the doors. God is using our gifts to His glory. And when we report, **we can only report on what God is doing among the nations.** We can take no glory in the fruit bearing business. We may plant and water, but years later the fruit may come forth. If we glory in the fruit, not only are we boasting in God's business, but we may be taking credit for another person's planting and watering that took place many years before. When we report on the fruit, therefore, we must be cautious that we are not taking credit for another man's labors, and thus be as the arrogant folks in Corinth who compared their works with one another.

If we would be concerned, we must be concerned about our planting and watering. If we do our job, God has promised that His word will do its work and bring forth fruit. It is our business to "*go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in so that my house may be filled*" (Lk 14:23). Someone challenged all of us with these words:

Some people want to live within
The sound of church or chapel bell;
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.

Within a yard of hell I went
 To tell of life above,
 And from the slums of sin I saw
 Hearts now full of love.

Lives were changed and hope was given,
 What wonders I could tell;
 Will you not go with me, my friends,
 Within a yard of hell?

Chapter 13

Being Fruitful

Paul made an interesting statement when he wrote to the Roman disciples a statement that should make many of us sit back and take notice of our responsibilities, both toward the disciples, as well as toward the lost. He wrote, *“I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you. But I was hindered until the present, so that I might have some fruit among you also, even as I have among the other Gentiles”* (Rm 1:13).

Now in view of Paul’s statement to the Roman disciples, it is good to read what Jesus said to His disciples. *“Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples”* (Jn 15:8). Regardless of how we would define the “fruit” about which both Paul and Jesus spoke, one thing is very clear. If one does not bear fruit, **then he is not a disciple of Jesus**. Our fruit bearing validates our discipleship.

Jesus warned and exhorted, *“I Am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bring forth more fruit”* (Jn 15:1,2). Those who bear fruit, therefore, are connected to Jesus. One is determined to be connected to Jesus by his

fruit bearing. Jesus continued, *“Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me”* (Jn 15:4). The signal that one is abiding in Jesus is by his fruit bearing. If there is no fruit, then there is no abiding in Jesus. *“He who abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing”* (Jn 15:5). Our discipleship depends on whether we are bearing fruit. Those who seek to be disciples, seek to abide in Jesus. And since they are abiding in Jesus, they are bearing fruit. The signal that one is not abiding in Jesus is that he is not bearing fruit. By our fruit bearing, we bring glory to God. We prove that we are the disciples of Jesus.

In His personal message to the twelve disciples, Jesus made a qualifying condition for the disciples’ prayers to be answered. *“I appointed you so you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you”* (Jn 15:16). Unproductive disciples will certainly have unproductive prayers. No fruit, not answered prayer.

Fruit bearing can be accomplished personally, and indirectly through an-

other person. We must personally be involved in fruit bearing in our own lives through spiritual growth and evangelism. In the context of this discussion, bringing forth fruit through the preaching of the gospel is paramount to being a true disciple of Jesus. In fact, as stated in the preceding mandates of Jesus, one is not a disciple unless he is bearing fruit. We can personally bear fruit, but we can also bear fruit by supporting those who go forth to preach the gospel. This is brought out in the early discipleship of both the Philippian jailor and Lydia.

Paul had stayed in Philippi on his first visit only a few days (At 16:12). From Philippi, he, Timothy and Silas went on to Thessalonica (At 17:1). Luke stayed in Philippi. When Paul wrote to the disciples in Philippi many years later, he reminded them of their early desires to bear fruit in other areas through the support of Paul, Timothy and Silas. *“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only”* (Ph 4:15). We wonder why the jailor and Lydia, who were only a few days old as disciples, did what Paul wrote, *“For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again for my needs”* (Ph 4:16). The answer is simple. Paul reminded them of what he had taught them. *“I desire the fruit that abounds to your account”* (Ph 4:17). **The Philippians received the fruit of the converted souls in Thessalonica because they financially supported Paul, Timothy and Silas who preached the gospel to the Thessalonians.**

One is determined to be a disciple by personally bearing fruit in his own life. But one is also determined to be a disciple by bearing fruit through the support of those who go forth to preach the gospel in other areas. Paul asked, *“And how will they preach unless they are sent?”* (Rm 10:15). When Jesus said, *“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men,”* He meant that we must fish local waters, as well as waters in foreign areas (Mt 4:19). We must never forget our responsibility to the world. Paul reminded the Colossians, *“Even in all the world this gospel is bringing forth fruit, just as it does also in you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth”* (Cl 1:6). If we deny the world the gospel by failing to support those who go into all the world, then we will have no fruit from the preachers who go into all the world. As the gospel brought us forth as a disciple, it is only natural that a true disciple will seek to disciple others through those he supports to go forth and preach the good news. This is the marvelous truth the Philippian jailor and Lydia realized even when they were only a few days old as disciples. Unfortunately, there are some who claim to be disciples of Jesus but have never understood this principle of Christianity for decades. Someone well wrote,

You must save another's soul
If you would save your own,
The door of heaven is closed
To him who comes alone.

And therefore, we would add these inspiring words. *“He who wins souls is wise”* (Pv 11:30).

MY FRIEND

My friend, I stand in the judgment now,
And feel that you're to blame somehow.
On earth, I walked with you day by day,
And never did you point the way.

You knew the Lord in truth and glory,
But never did you tell me the story.
My knowledge then was very dim,
You could have led the way to Him.

Though we lived together on the earth,
You never told me of the second birth,
And now I stand here, condemned,
Because you failed to mention Him.

You taught me many things, that's true;
I called you "friend" and trusted you,
But now I learn, when it's too late —
You could have saved me from this fate.

We walked and talked by dawn and night,
And yet, you showed me not His light.
You let me live and love and die,
You knew I'd never live on high.

Yes, I called you "friend" in life,
And trusted you through joy and strife,
And yet on coming to the end —
I cannot call you now "my friend."

(unknown author)