

The Bible's Missionary Message

Part II A: The New Testament

Steef van 't Slot, PhD

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The Bible's Missionary Message, Part IIA: The New Testament

Author: Steef van 't Slot, PhD.

Recruiting for Missions

www.recruiting4missions.org - steefvantslot@gmail.com

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Table of Contents

Endorsements for ‘The Bible’s Missionary Message’	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Author’s Preface	viii
Introduction	ix
How to Use This Book	x
Chapter I Missionary Aspects in the Gospel	1
1. <i>Matthew (1)</i>	2
2. <i>Matthew (2)</i>	6
3. <i>Matthew (3)</i>	9
4. <i>Mark (1)</i>	12
5. <i>Mark (2)</i>	15
6. <i>Luke (1)</i>	19
7. <i>Luke (2)</i>	23
8. <i>John (1)</i>	26
9. <i>John (2)</i>	30
10. <i>John (3)</i>	33
Chapter II Some Lessons from Acts	36
1. <i>From Jerusalem to the World</i>	37
2. <i>Double Conversion</i>	41

Chapter III	Missionary Observations: Paul's Epistles	45
1.	<i>Galatians</i>	46
2.	<i>The Other Gospel</i>	50
3.	<i>Thessalonians (1 & 2)</i>	53
4.	<i>First Corinthians</i>	57
5.	<i>Second Corinthians</i>	61
6.	<i>Romans</i>	67
7.	<i>Colossians</i>	71
8.	<i>Philemon</i>	75
9.	<i>Ephesians</i>	78
10.	<i>Philippians</i>	82
11.	<i>First Timothy</i>	87
12.	<i>Titus</i>	90
13.	<i>Second Timothy</i>	93
Other Books by Steef van 't Slot		97
Bibliography		98
Recruiting for Missions		99

Endorsement for ‘The Bible’s Missionary Message’

‘You must meet my Dutch friend,’ exclaimed a Belgian friend of mine about a decade ago. ‘He has written and teaches some of the best material I have seen on the Biblical foundations of mission’. A short time later I was introduced to Dr. Steef and a bond formed between us around a shared goal of training missionaries throughout the world. Since then I have had the privilege of teaching with Steef in Africa.

The work he has done in these newly revised volumes is priceless. We affirm that it is mandatory that all who serve cross-culturally have a clear grasp of God’s view of mission as revealed in Holy Scripture. This is what these volumes contain. Steef has searched scripture verse by verse and line by line. It is a rich resource for both the beginning student and the academic expert who teaches and writes at the highest levels.

I am particularly thankful for this excellent work. I believe it will be an oft-quoted and useful tool for years to come. So whether you are new to mission study, wanting to understand God’s heart for the world or are quite familiar and looking for new discoveries with clear analysis and treatment of the entire sweep of scripture, this is a must for you.

I predict that you will find yourself stopping from time to time just to worship, thanking God for His great love for all ethne.

This love moved the Father to make the ultimate sacrifice – allowing His own Son to die – providing a way that each of us can be forgiven and adopted into His family. May these pages inspire you to become a proclaimer of this ‘good news’ to those who have not yet heard it, wherever they may be on this planet.

Paul Strand, Senior Professor and Training Consultant
Bethany International Ministries
Bloomington, Minnesota USA

Endorsement for 'The Bible's Missionary Message'

The Bible's Missionary Message, Part IIA - New Testament, is the revision of Steef van 't Slot's earlier book *The Biblical Foundation for World Missions*. The word 'revision' expresses a lot about the author. Despite, or may-be due to, his mission experience already for many decades, he persists in his search for even better ways to emphasise the missional value of the whole Bible. He does so from the starting point that the foundation of missions is in the Bible. But, based on this axiom, the author's desire clearly is to expand the richness of the Bible's message on missions. He does so by looking for further evidence of missional aspects in the Bible and by looking for ways how to teach even more relevantly about this evidence. Though the author has a PhD himself, he manages to communicate on the level of his target group: Christians who want to be missionaries, but many times lack sufficient education. His experience in working with this target group encourages him to continue searching for relevancy.

The above makes this book, and I am sure also the New Testament part IIB, still to come, a valuable book to study the Bible as 'mission book', both theoretically and practically. And not only for the mentioned target group, but also for those who were blessed with better education and want to learn about communicating to Christians from an oral culture.

I sincerely recommend this book as a study book on missions and as an encouragement for those who experience being called by God into the mission fields.

Kees van der Wilden
Associate Director
WEA Mission Commission

Acknowledgments

I want to express much appreciation for my friend Anton Kemp, who chaired our Dutch support team (that later developed into the foundation ‘Recruiting for Missions’) during our years in Africa. He read the contents of all three volumes in Dutch, and gave many helpful comments regarding understandability of text and footnotes. He also suggested to publish three volumes instead of two.

Thanks also to my friend Kees van der Wilden, who, apart from writing an endorsement paragraph, also gave much useful advice on how to best shape this manuscript into a book.

Author's Preface

Most of the contents of this book were originally published (by Hebron Theological College, Rynfield, South Africa, 2005) as a one-volume book, with the title *Biblical Foundation for World Missions*. This book was too voluminous, too costly to produce and too heavy to transport with its 281 pages in A-4 format.

Therefore I re-worked it into 78 short articles, published on our website www.recruiting4missions.org between April 2008 and September 2014. I publish them now in 3 small volumes, trusting that it makes production, use and transport more tenable.

This second volume contains 25 articles on the New Testament; volume one contained 28 articles on the Old Testament and volume three will contain another 25 articles on the New Testament. They were designed for modular teaching in Bible schools, theological seminaries and missionary training centers: each of them takes about an hour to teach. Depending on how many teaching hours there are in one school week, each volume can be taught in about a week – which makes it a pretty intensive program, though.

Remember the book's target group: Christians in the Developing World who want to become missionaries. Their level and type of education recommends oral teaching, for which this text is at best a sustaining tool, not one that best stands alone. It can also be used for Bible studies or sermons and during retreat weeks or mission conferences.

May these studies increase your understanding of the Bible's world missions message and stimulate your journey from initial awareness to enthusiastic, successful, and exciting involvement!

Steef van 't Slot, Ede, The Netherlands, Fall 2014

Introduction

The best way to learn the Biblical message about world missions is not to read *a* book about it (such as this) but to read *the* Book, more specifically: to read the Bible *with missionary eyes*. That is how its forerunner was written and it is also the basis for volume IIB on the New Testament.

Some major themes run through all three volumes. The *first* is the unity between Old and New Testaments: both are the Word of God and speak about the same God. Both are of equal importance: call the Old Testament the picture book and the New Testament the textbook, if you wish. They tell the same story and complement each other.

A *second* major theme is, that God is the God of the whole world, whose name needs to be preached to the ends of the earth. All people groups in the world need to know that only He is God. There is not a single people group in which He is not interested.

Another is, that God, who could not and would not tolerate sin in Old Testament times does not tolerate it in New Testament times either. He has not changed; He has always offered only one way of salvation out of judgment and He still does: today it is faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christianity is unique: there is no other religion whose god comes down to save people. Only Jesus Christ did that.

The *last* one is, that as there is only one way of salvation, there are consequences when you do not choose that way. Man has been created as free moral agent; a relationship between man and God is possible only when man chooses such a relationship voluntarily. Jesus talked a lot about hell as the horrible alternative. He is the only One who knows what He is talking about, and yet we don't like to hear about hell nowadays.

It is time that we take God, Jesus and the entire contents of the Bible seriously again. We have become too liberal and tend to think that all roads lead to Rome, as the expression goes. Let's return to the full Biblical message and hear and obey Jesus' words. The era of grace will soon be over. Let's use our time, before night falls.

How to Use this Book

For the student who reads these materials it is very important to do so with an open Bible: look up all Scripture references that are given under the footnotes. That will increase your Bible knowledge significantly. Discussing the study questions at the end of each section will help to improve your understanding and to easier retain the main issues.

The order of Paul's letters (in Chapter III) is not as you see it in the Bible. I have ordered them chronologically, in the order Paul wrote them. This makes it easier to read them in conjunction with Luke's story in the book of Acts. I encourage you to seek an understanding of the continuous interaction between Acts and Paul's epistles.

Chapter I

Missionary Aspects in the Gospel

Introduction

The gospels are missionary biographies of the purest kind because they deal with the story of the Redeemer Himself. Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, became His Father's Missionary. Never did any missionary ever cross over bigger cross-cultural barriers than Jesus did: He left Heaven for earth and sinlessness for a life among sinners. No human apostle ever has to cross distances like that!

He is our great example. Of course He is the example to all believers, but even more so to them that He has commissioned to a ministry among the nations, until all worship Him in front of His throne of glory. *Firstly*, He is our example in Godly character. His main purpose is to shape us after His own image. *Secondly*, He calls us to do His works, even greater ones than He did Himself. In the gospels we see how He trained twelve men and that education is a model to the school He leads us through.

His disciples made mistakes – a great comfort to us, who do the same. We recognize ourselves in their sins, misunderstandings, erroneous theologies, unbelief, powerlessness – and hopefully also in their enthusiasm, love and perseverance. Join me in these ten short sessions and be changed like all true disciples do!

1. *Matthew (1)*

Jesus Christ is the Messiah, truly God and truly Man, *the central Person* in the gospel; even more there, than anywhere else in the Scriptures, because of His life and presence among us on earth.

In the Old Testament we saw world missions foreshadowed; in the New we see reality appear with the great Missionary Himself. He is the pivot around whom all history revolves, the center of the universe Who will be seen by all and be escaped by none.¹

It is said: ‘God has only one Son, and He made Him a missionary’. Jesus was the greatest Sent One of all times, sent by the Father² to save people from sin.³ Being sent with a specific purpose is the greatest common denominator in all gospels, which are actually missionary biographies. In becoming a missionary, Jesus had come a long way.⁴

In Genesis we saw *sent ones* eventually become *senders*. This principle is magnified in the gospels. After Jesus accomplished His mission He sent His disciples into the world to finish what He started.⁵ All missiological data in the gospels are needed to gain a good missions perspective.

The aspect of suffering comes through loudly in all gospels, first through Jesus’ example, then through His warnings about persecution the disciples would suffer. Some of these I will elaborate on in chapter II of the third volume of the Bible’s Missionary Message, (IIB).

The significance of suffering in the Christian’s life is important enough to give ample attention to, not in the last place because it played a major role in Christ’s life. In the Old Testament suffering was understood to be the consequence of sin, and therefore the concept of the *suffering of the righteous* was often not understood (e.g. Job, Joseph, David and others).

¹ Phil. 2:10,11

² John 20:21

³ Matt. 1:21

⁴ Phil. 2:5-11

⁵ Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8

In the New Testament, suffering gains new meaning in the light of the Kingdom. *Firstly*, Jesus introduces ‘discipleship-suffering’ as formulated in the third gospel.⁶ The disciple is ‘to deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me’, Christ said. He Himself had to learn obedience through *what He suffered*.⁷ This also applies to His disciples.⁸

The *second* level we see e.g. in the lives of Jesus and Paul, and can be called ‘apostleship-suffering’,⁹ summarized by Paul as ‘I fill up in my flesh what still lacks in regard to Christ’s afflictions’.¹⁰

A sent one submits voluntarily to suffering in order to preach the gospel where it has not yet been heard.¹¹ Jesus trains His disciples on both levels, and His life shows that with *much suffering* comes *much fruit*. *Little suffering* will yield *little fruit*. *When suffering is avoided altogether there won’t be fruit at all*. When we see little fruit, it may be so because many disciples try to escape suffering by staying inside their comfort zone.

John the Baptist preached that the *Kingdom of Heaven* had come near.¹² His radical message was typified by a call to repentance and followed by water baptism. Jesus extended his message¹³ and magnified it by His teaching and preaching, which was by far superior to John’s: by His healing, casting out of demons, raising the dead and other miracles; and by His authority, superior to that of the Pharisees.

He also revealed the spiritual realities behind the visible elements of His ministry, and exposed the devil as the originator of sin, suffering and spiritual oppression. John wrote later that Jesus was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.¹⁴ The message of the Kingdom means: God rules in the lives of His people, until He establishes His Kingdom on earth, visible for everyone.

⁶ Luke 9:23; 14:33

⁷ Heb. 5:8 (*italics mine*)

⁸ John 15:18,20

⁹ See e.g. 2 Cor. 6 & 11

¹⁰ Col. 1:24

¹¹ As did Paul, conform his ambition, Rom. 15:20

¹² Matt. 3:2

¹³ 4:17

¹⁴ 1 John 3:8b

Knowing that His ministry on earth would have time-limits and geographical boundaries, Jesus called followers, trained them into leaders and sent them as missionaries. This is still the Church's blueprint for extending the Kingdom of God in the world.

Jesus calls His followers *disciples*, i.e.: pupils, students, people under instruction.¹⁵ Character training was and is Christ's most essential module for them. Godly character precedes ministry (*be someone* before you *do something*). We see this in the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁶ Its message can be summarized as: *'Don't wear masks. Don't say one thing and behave differently. Practice what you preach, be perfect sons of God and show it. Act in the opposite spirit'*.

The disciples were trained for a life of sacrifice and faith.¹⁷ Only after they received training were they allowed into the next stage. Along with character-transformation they went through the outreach-example phase. Jesus showed them how *He* worked¹⁸ before He sent *them* on their first short-term outreach.¹⁹

He participated with His disciples in synagogue life, discipled them and sent them to preach the Kingdom. His approach was about *total integration* of church, bible school and sending agency, as Johnstone argued before.²⁰

¹⁵ Matt. 4:18-22

¹⁶ Chapters 5-7

¹⁷ 8:18-27; Ps. 107:23-30

¹⁸ Chapters 8 & 9

¹⁹ Chapter 10

²⁰ P.J. Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger than you Think*, 1998:149-210

Study Questions

1. *Describe Christ's person and His central role in the gospels*
2. *Describe Jesus' mission*
3. *Describe the long way He had come, to become God's Missionary*
4. *Why does suffering play such an important role in the gospels?*
5. *Briefly describe the two levels of suffering, pointed at in this chapter*
6. *What is the relationship between suffering and bearing fruit?*
7. *Define the message of the Kingdom of God*
8. *What two training phases did the disciples go through before they were sent on their first sort-term outreach?*
9. *Explain Jesus' three-tier ministry approach*

2. Matthew (2)

Matthew gives a model for short-term outreach.²¹ Jesus sets boundaries to the apostles' ministry with some key-elements. The *assignment* was: preach, heal and deliver; the *executives*: the twelve apostles; the *target area*: Israel, not yet Samaria or the Gentiles.²² The *message* was that the Kingdom is near, proven by *miracles* of delivery, healing and raising the dead.²³ The *method* was short-term, without long-term settlement preparations, but with instruction about how to deal with contacts and how to evaluate success or failure.²⁴ The *accompanying effects* encompassed persecution, especially during later, long-term ministry;²⁵ the ultimate reality of final vindication;²⁶ separation lines within families²⁷ and the reward.²⁸ The time-frame is between 'then' and 'the end', *during* the tribulation *before* Jesus returns.²⁹

When we look at the seven parables³⁰ we see five Kingdom principles. The *first* parable is about sowing and reaping; the *second* about weeds that hinder the harvest; the *third and fourth* about extension, talking about the mustard seed and the yeast; the *fifth and sixth* about making a sacrifice for profit, speaking about the hidden treasure and the pearl; and the *last* about going out and gaining: the fish-net. Kingdom principles that are used here are sowing, planting, penetrating, trading and fishing. The one word they all have in common, is:

“Growth”!

Matthew mentions six spiritual growth-catalysts: giving, prayer, fasting, tithing, sacrifice and persecution.³¹

²¹ Matt. 10

²² 10:1-8

²³ Vs. 7,8

²⁴ Vs. 9-15

²⁵ Vs. 16-25

²⁶ Vs. 16-33

²⁷ Vs. 34-39

²⁸ Vs. 40-42

²⁹ Vs. 22,23a (italics mine). The return of Jesus is *preceded* (not followed) by persecution, suffered by His disciples who are on their mission of preaching the gospel. There is no biblical argument that these disciples should be Jews only, neither that the place of outreach is limited to the country of Israel

³⁰ Chapter 13

³¹ 6:2,3; 6:5,60; 6:16,17 & 9:15; 23:23 & Luke 11:42; Matt. 10:37,38 & Luke 14:33; Matt. 5:11 & 10:19,33 & 21:36 respectively

All these are attached to the word *when*, not *if*! These six elements are not optional, but are being considered as signs of genuine discipleship.³² On top of this, Jesus sets higher standards than those in the Tenach: 'It was said ... but I tell you'.³³ In the same line lies the *demand* for production and profit.³⁴

Fleeing, impending arrest and death threats can be, and often are, part of missionary life.³⁵

Missionary life can be very demanding. Look at Jesus' 24 hours non-stop ministry shown *in one chapter only*, including mourning, political tension, teaching and feeding thousands, a night of prayer, saving a sinking disciple, calming the weather and meeting new crowds. Moreover, He trained His disciples to skip their sleep too!³⁶

It is a Kingdom principle to seek the lost, either the flock's, or outsiders.³⁷

Jesus had to cleanse the temple because it was meant as a house of prayer [for the nations].³⁸ The same is true under the new covenant: the temple of the Holy Spirit must be clean in order to function for the salvation of the nations, whether in an individual or a church context.³⁹

There were encounters with Gentiles. Although Jesus said that He was not sent to them but to the lost sheep of Israel, we see enough meetings with Gentiles that showed His interest, e.g. with the Roman centurion and his great faith for healing; with the Gadarene demoniacs and how they were delivered; and with the Canaanite woman whose daughter received healing.⁴⁰ In the other gospels we see more examples.

³² 13:44-46

³³ 5:21-48

³⁴ 25:14-30

³⁵ See e.g. 2:13-20; 10:17-25; 12:14; 21:46; 22:6

³⁶ Chapter 14

³⁷ 18:10-14 & 22:9,10 respectively

³⁸ 21:12,13 & Is. 56:7

³⁹ 1 Cor. 6:19,20 & 3:9,16,17 respectively

⁴⁰ Matt. 8:5-13; 8:28-34 & 15:21-28 respectively

We also see some eschatological aspects in this gospel, especially in its implications for workers.⁴¹ The words ‘be ready’ refer to works of faith, without which there is no proof of salvation. Works cannot save, but lack of them causes judgment.⁴²

Could Jesus have meant that part of the great commission is *not* going to be finished?⁴³

Questions are thrown at missionaries like ‘Why not stay in your own country? The need is right here. There is plenty to do locally. Why go to a place where you have to do language study?’ – and related questions. The answer is ‘Only in his hometown is a prophet without honor’. Man seems to have less problems accepting truth from a stranger than from his own countrymen.⁴⁴ Is it coincidence that in Mark this ‘home-criticism’ is followed immediately by Jesus sending out the Twelve?⁴⁵

The climax of missiological content in Matthew is the great commission.⁴⁶ Here, the authority (Jesus), the assignment (go and make disciples), the area (all nations)⁴⁷, the method (baptizing and teaching) and the presence (I am with you) together form the complete picture of world evangelization.

Study Questions

1. *Mention the key-elements of Jesus’ short-term outreach model*
2. *Which five Kingdom principles do we see in the seven parables?*
3. *What are the six spiritual growth-catalysts?*
4. *Give your opinion on the issue of fleeing when it gets dangerous*
5. *Explain the alternative meaning of the temple-cleansing*
6. *Why are missionaries often sent out of their own countries?*

⁴¹ 24:42–25:46

⁴² James 2:14–16

⁴³ Matt. 10:23

⁴⁴ 13:54–57

⁴⁵ Mark 6:1–13

⁴⁶ Matt. 28:18–20

⁴⁷ To be understood rather as ‘people groups’

3. *Matthew (3)*

It is interesting to look at the missiological implications of Jesus' parable about the vineyard owner.⁴⁸ There are four elements that demand our attention: the urgency of the job, the remaining short period of time, the excuses of potential workers and the generosity of the reward for all participants. Finally we may wonder how to best assist this desperate Personnel Recruiter?

First there is the persistence of the vineyard owner, going to the market place five times that one day to hire personnel. Only *he* knows how much work there is to be done and how short the time is. He must have been desperate indeed, to leave overseeing the work in his garden five times to mobilize and recruit new personnel. Maybe he left the work with the urgent request to his already engaged laborers 'to pray for more workers'!⁴⁹

Then there is the aspect of the duration of the day. This may be interpreted in *three* ways. That whole day may be seen as the *church era*, in which the worldwide job of evangelization and missions unfolds itself. Then it may be interpreted as the period of a *national church* since its inception and the impact it made on its nation. Finally it may be seen as a *personal* issue: some decided to serve the vineyard owner early in life, others did so later and some only did it as an afterthought.

Thirdly, it is remarkable that the recruiter does not comment on the previous business of any of the people hired earlier, but the ones he recruits at the 11th hour (05.00 p.m.) he asks: 'Why have you been standing there all day, doing nothing?' The lame excuse is 'because nobody hired us'. Lame indeed: the truth is that they had not been there before, they never made themselves available – otherwise they would certainly have been hired earlier too.

A final aspect is the reward: everybody receives the same amount, whether they worked all day or just the last hour. The owner's reward system is divine and thus too generous to understand, certainly by performance-and-reward-oriented western mindsets.

⁴⁸ Matt. 20:1-16

⁴⁹ 9:37,38

Of course he has a right to be generous; it's his nature! Now, let's look at Jesus' message for today's church and its disciples.

First we see a greater urgency for mobilization and recruitment by the end of the day than in the beginning. At the 11th hour of church history people are being called into work they never did before because they were not available, whatever the reasons may have been. This is true for most of the churches in the Developing World: they may have worked their backyards – whatever these may represent – but largely failed to join the vineyard owner *in his work of cross-cultural missions*.

Then we note that at the last hour of church history apparently 25-40% of the vineyard still needs to be worked.⁵⁰ The vineyard owner undertakes to recruit those who never participated in that work. During the past few decades He initiated an incredible mobilization and recruitment of churches and personnel from Latin America, Africa and Asia in order to finish the work of cross-cultural missions.

Thirdly, we see how He emphasizes the immense importance of cross-cultural missions to the remaining unreached people groups of this world, when He calls non-participation 'standing there, doing nothing'. That strong remark should force us to consider and evaluate our lives, goals, purposes and motivations in the light of His. How useful have our churches and we ourselves been in the light of world mission's urgency? How lame are our excuses?

The *good* news lies in the *last aspect*: there is a full reward to be reaped by all, even by the last ones – whether churches or individual missionaries – to engage in world missions now, during the last hour of history. Africans will reap equally with Americans and Asians with Europeans. The *bad* news is, that at 05.30 p.m. there will be no more recruiting. A night will fall in which no one can work.⁵¹ Latinos, Africans and Asians are invited to join now, to not forsake their reward!

⁵⁰ As most current missiological data indicate

⁵¹ John 9:4

The final question is: How can *we* assist the Vineyard Owner? I believe by doing four things: *firstly*, making ourselves available immediately for world missions in whatever form, leaving behind our ‘doing nothing’; *secondly*, praying as instructed;⁵² *thirdly*, exercising faith in what we might consider as ‘least-likely candidates’ and *finally*, mobilizing their churches and recruiting their missionaries to finish the job of world missions to the remaining unreached people groups.

Isn’t it a highly significant work of the Holy Spirit that the number of non-western missionaries has surpassed that of their western colleagues? South Korea for instance, around 1900, had no Protestant church, whereas by 1990 it was 30% Christian with 7,000 churches in Seoul alone⁵³. It has pushed England from its second place as missionary-sending nation in the world, with more than 21,000 missionaries in the field⁵⁴. True, many of them may not work cross-culturally, but this country has shown how a *praying nation* will inevitably become a *sending nation*.

Christians in ‘older sending countries’ can help their siblings in the ‘newer sending countries’. Let’s roam the ‘market-places’ of the church in the Developing World for more personnel. Let’s motivate and stimulate them, train and encourage them, tell them over and over that we believe in them and, what’s more: that He believes in them. Then we may look forward to that Day of Reward, where all of us receive our denarius – now without grumbling or jealousy!

Study Questions

1. Which are the four main elements of this parable?
2. In which three ways does the author define ‘the day’?
3. Why were the people who stood in the market place at the 11th hour not hired before?
4. What percentage of the ‘vineyard’ still needs to be worked at the 11th hour?
5. What does this last part of the work represent, in missiological terms?
6. How would you define the ‘good news’ and the ‘bad news’ of this parable?
7. In which four ways can we assist the Personnel Recruiter?

⁵² Matt. 9:37,38

⁵³ Stearns, 1991:16

⁵⁴ Mandryk, *Operation World*, 2010:510

4. *Mark (1)*

There is a remarkable ‘anti-missions aspect’ in Mark – although not exclusively in this gospel, namely Jesus’ desire to ‘not tell anyone’.⁵⁵ His desire to rid the ministry of sensationalism and wrong crowds⁵⁶ was not meant to keep a person from glorifying God. His desire to not tell anyone was pragmatic.

Prayer accompanied the strategy Jesus chose for His ministry.⁵⁷ *This* prayer is placed between the passages where He called His disciples. Knowing how exactly Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit and how strong His communion with the Father was, we can safely assume that He made no mistakes, also not in choosing Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Him. This act strongly denies the teaching of pre-destination *unto damnation*. Judas received a three-year window of grace, in which he could have repented of his sins – but did not.

A little further we see three parables, comparing the Kingdom of God to sowing and seed, implying that Jesus speaks about production and growth.⁵⁸ Later we learn from the fig tree⁵⁹ that not bearing fruit means a curse because it is against the nature of the Kingdom.

It almost sounds superfluous when Jesus says that He came to save sinners, not the righteous,⁶⁰ but how often does ‘church-growth’ prove to be ‘sheep-stealing’ rather than saving new souls out of the world? Transfer-growth is *not* conversion-growth!

When we see that Jesus chose some of His disciples to become apostles – sent ones, or missionaries – He took *those He wanted*.⁶¹ Becoming a

⁵⁵ See e.g. 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26,30 and 9:9

⁵⁶ 8:11,12; Matt. 12:38,39

⁵⁷ Mark 1:35-39

⁵⁸ Chapter 4

⁵⁹ 11:12-14,20,21

⁶⁰ 2:17

⁶¹ 3:13

missionary therefore is God's initiative rather than ours – which is no excuse to remain passive.⁶²

Mark spends only a few verses on the first short-term outreach of the apostles.⁶³ Matthew describes this topic elaborately.⁶⁴

After outreaches, short-term or long-term, opportunities must be created for debriefing and rest.⁶⁵ For mutual encouragement of senders *and* sent ones, the stories of the latter should be heard.

Missions is not an office-hours-job. Sometimes it takes precedence over privacy,⁶⁶ as I explained earlier.⁶⁷

We see a balance in Jesus' ministry: He preached in villages, towns and the countryside.⁶⁸ He gave equal attention to urban *and* rural outreach.

We may wonder why missionaries who gave up things for the Lord and the gospel are often seen as poor. After all, the Lord promises rewards, not only in the age to come (eternal life), but *also in the present*, even *a hundred times as much*.⁶⁹ Do we honor the Lord with an attitude of poverty? Or did we not really give up that much for Him?

An attitude of servanthood is the criterion for greatness in the Kingdom.⁷⁰ In spite of that, it is often difficult for its executives to look to the unseen reward in the future and some fall into the trap of pursuing greatness in the visible realm.⁷¹

⁶² E.g. as in Matt. 25:24-30, where the lazy slave hid his talent in the ground

⁶³ Mark 6:6b-13

⁶⁴ See what I wrote before, Matthew #2

⁶⁵ Mark 6:30-32

⁶⁶ 6:33,34

⁶⁷ Van 't Slot, *World Evangelisation – That All May Hear*, 1999/2005/2012:63,64

⁶⁸ Mark 6:56

⁶⁹ 10:28-30

⁷⁰ 10:42-45

⁷¹ 10:35-41

Jesus states that the temple was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations.⁷² Are our churches houses of prayer for all nations? Are they houses of prayer at all?

Jesus tells the Jews to pay taxes to Caesar because this ruler's image is found on the coin.⁷³ By telling them to give to God what is God's He implies that we should give ourselves to Him, since He stamped His image on us.⁷⁴ We are not our own, nor are we authorized to choose what to do with our lives. We are to walk in His plans.⁷⁵

Study Questions

1. *Explain the 'anti-missions aspect'. Can you think of another reason Jesus might have had, not mentioned in the text?*
2. *Explain why the choosing of Judas Iscariot speaks against a doctrine that teaches pre-destination unto damnation*
3. *Why does not bearing fruit bring a curse?*
4. *Explain the term 'sheep-stealing' as a means of church-growth*
5. *Give four reasons for the need of proper debriefing of missionaries*
6. *What does it mean to 'render to God what is God's'?*

⁷² 11:17; Is. 56:7

⁷³ Mark 12:13-17

⁷⁴ Gen. 1:26,28; 5:1b

⁷⁵ Eph. 2:10

5. *Mark (2)*

Jesus gives more exact information to them that ask Him specifically.⁷⁶ The closer we are to Him, the more understanding of His plans He gives us. Jesus honors them that ask the ‘when’ and ‘how’. Within the body of twelve disciples, there was an inner circle of three: Peter, James and John. At this particular occasion Andrew was with them as well.

The attitude of Christ’s workers should be one of watchfulness and staying alert;⁷⁷ not surprising when we see that some are prone to fall asleep.⁷⁸

Even unusual acts of love towards the Lord form a legitimate contribution to world evangelism: think about how Mary anointed Him;⁷⁹ how Joseph of Arimathea buried Him in his own tomb⁸⁰ and how the women brought spices to anoint His body after burial.⁸¹ Their stories are told wherever the gospel is preached.

Some missions must have a secret nature for obvious reasons. For example, the betrayer was not to know the place where the Last Supper was to be held,⁸² in order to preclude the possibility of early disturbance.

Jesus believed in factual and precise information to be revealed at the proper time and in a discreet way.⁸³ In this way He announced His imminent betrayal by Judas. Less attentive people could have easily missed this.

It is acceptable for missionaries to be deeply distressed, troubled and overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death for the sake of their ministries⁸⁴ – with the desire for that suffering to end – as long as they submit their will to God’s, like Jesus did in Gethsemane.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Mark 13:3

⁷⁷ 13:5,9,23,33,35,37

⁷⁸ 13:36; Matt. 25:5

⁷⁹ Mark 14:9

⁸⁰ 15:43-46

⁸¹ 16:1

⁸² 14:13-16

⁸³ 14:18-21

⁸⁴ 14:33,34

⁸⁵ 14:35,36,39

Edwards profoundly described this particular aspect of submission.⁸⁶ He points out that every committed Christian will sooner or later face his or her Gethsemane.

During His interrogation Jesus did not answer accusations about what He had said or done, but only spoke about who He is.⁸⁷ It may be that missionaries should do the same if they find themselves in similar circumstances.

After the resurrection, the women had a mission to fulfill *to the disciples*, before the latter could fulfill theirs *to the world*. The women were very fearful during that mission of re-mobilization.⁸⁸

The persecution factor is also present in this gospel. Mark experienced that, in proclaiming the gospel and extending the Kingdom, persecution precedes glory.⁸⁹ On his first missionary trip he had left Paul and Barnabas prematurely, probably for fear of persecution that might – and indeed did – occur in Asia Minor.⁹⁰ Fortunately, he later returned to the ministry and was reconciled to Paul.⁹¹

Indeed, *sent ones* are being persecuted for the gospel.⁹² This was true in the days of Israel when Jesus and the earlier prophets were persecuted as it is now for gospel preachers far and near.

Strong persecution for Christ's witnesses in the end times⁹³ runs parallel with more *eschatological signs*.⁹⁴ The strange natural phenomena *follow, not precede* the unequalled distress of those days.⁹⁵ Only *at that time* (i.e. *after that distress*) will all elect from heaven and earth be gathered by the angels.⁹⁶

⁸⁶ Gene Edwards, *Exquisite Agony*, 1994

⁸⁷ Mark 14:60-62

⁸⁸ 16:7,8

⁸⁹ 10:37-40

⁹⁰ Acts 13:13; 15:36-40

⁹¹ Col. 4:10

⁹² Mark 12:1-8

⁹³ 13:9,10

⁹⁴ 13:5-25

⁹⁵ 13:19

⁹⁶ 13:27,28

Some missionaries, like Peter, overestimate their willingness and ability to undergo suffering⁹⁷ but when it happens, they prove unable to pay even a small price, like sacrificing some sleep.⁹⁸

Certain missionary behavior is undesirable. *Firstly*, ministry-related circumstances, resisted by disciples, can harden their hearts so that they, like the twelve, do not recognize Christ anymore as the solution for their precarious situation during their ‘night at the lake.’⁹⁹

Secondly, money can distract missionaries and jeopardize ministry – as happened to Judas.¹⁰⁰

Then, when God’s mission to make Israel into an example for the nations was abandoned by legalistic, hypocritical priests and Pharisees, *their* mission turned *against* God, and therefore they didn’t notice their errors.

Fourthly, some missionaries fight the right battle at the wrong time and with the wrong weapons and so work against God instead of for Him, like Peter did with his sword.¹⁰¹

Finally, we sometimes betray Jesus because we follow Him at a distance, like Peter did,¹⁰² instead of close by.¹⁰³

Unbelief in these missionaries, even after the announced resurrection, was striking.¹⁰⁴ Are we doing better?

⁹⁷ 14:29,31

⁹⁸ 14:32-41

⁹⁹ 6:45-52

¹⁰⁰ 14:10,11

¹⁰¹ 14:47

¹⁰² 14:54

¹⁰³ Rev. 14:4b

¹⁰⁴ Mark 16:11,12,14

Study Questions

1. *Is it right to ask Jesus specific questions? Why, or why not?*
2. *Why must some missions be of secret nature? Give biblical examples*
3. *Why do committed Christians sooner or later have to face 'their Gethsemane'?*
4. *Why did Mark not finish his first missionary journey?*
5. *When will all the elect from heaven and earth be gathered by the angels? Give the scripture reference too*
6. *Mention some examples of undesirable missionary behavior*

6. *Luke (1)*

An important aspect in Luke's gospel is Jesus' encounters with Gentiles: people from Tyre and Sidon,¹⁰⁵ a believing Roman centurion¹⁰⁶ and a Gadarene demoniac whom He delivered and sent back to his village to tell what He had done for him.¹⁰⁷ After a disappointment with some Samaritans¹⁰⁸ Jesus stated that we have no right of revenge against 'stubborn nationals' who refuse to cooperate. The nature of Jesus' message is salvation, not destruction. It was and still is not the time for God's vengeance, a clause Jesus left out when He quoted Isaiah.¹⁰⁹ Now is the era of grace. Another Samaritan He met He healed.¹¹⁰

We distinguish a number of sending principles in Luke. It starts with prayer. Jesus prayed before He chose His disciples¹¹¹ and before He decided what outreach strategy He would follow.¹¹²

Later we get a rare glimpse into Jesus' support team.¹¹³ Such a group is a necessity for any missionary to have, and often consists of those who have been blessed by his or her ministry.

In Matthew we looked at the first short-term outreach of the apostles; Luke gives us a shorter version of it.¹¹⁴

Jesus has an interesting way to test the motives of new missionaries.¹¹⁵ There are three categories. To the *first* He says 'foxes have holes...' in other words: are you prepared to leave your comfort zone? Following and working for Me will cost you!

¹⁰⁵ Luke 6:17

¹⁰⁶ 7:1-10

¹⁰⁷ 8:26-39

¹⁰⁸ 9:51-56

¹⁰⁹ 4:18,19; Is. 61:2b

¹¹⁰ Luke 17:11-19

¹¹¹ 4:42a, preparing for 5:1-11

¹¹² 4:42a, preparing for 4:43,44; see also 5:16 & 6:12-16

¹¹³ 8:2,3

¹¹⁴ 9:1-9

¹¹⁵ 9:57-62

To the *second* He says ‘let the dead bury their dead’ which is an encouragement to set your priorities straight (Family? Kingdom?) before you can enter the ministry. To the *third* He comments on ‘looking back’: are you really willing to leave your old life behind?

In Luke – as in contrast to Matthew – we see a second short-term outreach. Now 72 people were sent out.¹¹⁶ Jesus instilled in His apostles the need for more workers. After their first outreach¹¹⁷ they understood how much work remained to be done. Jesus’ solution is: sending more workers and telling His disciples to pray for still more.¹¹⁸ We see again the non-settlement principle of short-term outreach: ‘do not take and do not greet’.¹¹⁹

The man of peace is the one most inclined to receive the Prince of Peace and His messengers.¹²⁰ The missionary locates and blesses this person and after he accepts the gospel he becomes the beachhead in the area. If not even one man can be found, the curse – already over that place for rejecting the Lord – must be confirmed by the workers shaking the dust off their feet.¹²¹

Knowledge leads to responsibility.¹²² If the gospel is rejected, the consequences are more severe than for the Gentiles of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon who did not hear. In this context Jesus also mentioned Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and Jonah preaching in Nineveh.¹²³

The passage about Satan falling from heaven¹²⁴ reminds us of Joshua, telling his officers to put their feet on the necks of five subjugated kings.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ 10:1-18 there may have been 70, in accordance with the first list of people groups in Gen. 10

¹¹⁷ Luke 9:1-6

¹¹⁸ 10:1,2

¹¹⁹ 10:4-11; we would say: ‘forget about your comfort’ and ‘don’t procrastinate, don’t be distracted’

¹²⁰ 10:6,16; Is. 6:9

¹²¹ Luke 10:10-15

¹²² 10:13-15

¹²³ 11:29-32

¹²⁴ 10:18

¹²⁵ Josh. 10:24

Jesus refers to His victory at Calvary, where He would expose and then triumph over His enemies.¹²⁶ With this, He indicates the aspect of spiritual warfare in missions.

Very important is the missionary's integrity, as in contrast with the hypocrisy Jesus fights in the Pharisees and Law-scholars. Christian character cannot be over-emphasized. When Jesus speaks about the lamp of the body, He indicates that the light of the gospel can only shine through us, when we shed the darkness in our body, i.e. our heart and thinking.¹²⁷ Our eyes must look into the right direction so that our feet will walk the right path.¹²⁸ Without that light any gospel witness is neutralized. Admitting darkness into your life *in secret* will dim its radiance *in public*.

Later He says 'you clean only the outside of the cup'.¹²⁹ He contrasts the polished outside to the wicked inside. Jesus mentions an attitude of giving to the poor as an antidote for greed. These are deep, non-negotiable principles and decisive factors as to whether believers will become true disciples or not. The rest of the passage¹³⁰ shows that a believer who lacks integrity is a hypocrite and no better than a Pharisee. Hypocrites wear masks because they have things to hide. Honest people have nothing to hide: they can show both outside *and* inside without being ashamed. There is no point in hypocrisy: everything will be disclosed and revealed in the end.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Col. 2:15

¹²⁷ Luke 11:33-36

¹²⁸ Prov. 4:23-27

¹²⁹ Luke 11:37-41

¹³⁰ 11:42-54

¹³¹ 12:1-3

Study Questions

1. *Give examples of encounters Jesus had with Gentiles and how He blessed them*
2. *Which are the three categories of future missionaries, of whom Jesus tests their motives?*
3. *Explain the function of the 'man of peace' in any new region where the gospel is being preached*
4. *Explain why the 'lamp of our bodies' must be clear if we want to be witnesses of the gospel*
5. *What solution does Jesus offer when we are struggling with greed?*
6. *Explain what hypocrisy means and why it is so destructive*

7. *Luke (2)*

There are some more topics in this gospel that are worth pondering in a missionary context. When people are not inclined to listen to God's messengers, they will not listen when He speaks to them directly either;¹³² neither will miracles change them.¹³³ Missionaries can be discouraged when people reject the gospel, but must realize that their audiences in fact reject Jesus Who sent them. Faith is based on free moral choice, not on extraordinary circumstances, although these *may* be part of a gospel presentation.¹³⁴

Our new spiritual identity – our names are written in heaven¹³⁵ – is more important than our work for the Lord (demons submitting to us). We see the same principle in the story of Martha and Mary:¹³⁶ our relationship with the Lord is of greater importance than our work for Him.

The story of the good Samaritan¹³⁷ shows how two sent ones, the priest and the Levite, failed in their calling and how a Gentile – a Samaritan and not even a minister – had compassion for somebody who was severely injured. In Kingdom service we should *un*learn to say 'this is not my ministry', or 'I have more important things to do', or even 'I will not defile myself'.

Jesus says that when we as missionaries and relief workers enter areas that are hit by disaster, we should not assume that people there are worse sinners than those in our own countries.¹³⁸ Disasters that strike the Developing World are often seen by workers as directly related to sins of complacency and immorality which cause AIDS; poverty related to greed and corruption of political leaders; economic malaise following theft and incompetence, etc. Christ calls all to repentance.

¹³² Luke 7:29,30; 10:16

¹³³ 16:27-31

¹³⁴ Mark 16:17,18

¹³⁵ Luke 10:18-20

¹³⁶ 10:38-42

¹³⁷ 10:25-37

¹³⁸ 13:1-5

The parable of the unproductive fig tree¹³⁹ suggests that there is a time limit for fruit to appear. There is no use therefore to continue work in barren areas when all has been done, because a ministry must yield fruit within a certain time. We must be critical in evaluating our endeavors. The *growth and production principle* belongs to the Kingdom's DNA; violation of this principle will not be tolerated;¹⁴⁰ the same is seen in the parable about the minas.¹⁴¹

‘Oh Jerusalem’, Jesus cried out.¹⁴² Although He was rejected, He cried out for the city in compassion. Can we weep like Jesus did¹⁴³ over resistant cities, in spite of rejection?

An interesting detail we find in the parable of the great banquet.¹⁴⁴ You may be discouraged because as sent one, you lack results and after your pleas, people still do not come to Christ. You are in good company. Your Lord is even angry about it – though not with you. He shares your disappointment and will eventually make your ministry successful.¹⁴⁵

The cost of being a disciple comes close to that of being a missionary. Both examples – building and waging war – are missionary in nature.¹⁴⁶

One of the King's characteristics is to seek the lost.¹⁴⁷ There is seeking, finding and joy after finding the sheep and the coin. These are only things. Losing a son, in the third parable, goes much deeper. The father grieved about the loss, the older brother did not. Do we care about the lost? Or do we have the attitude of a mercenary (‘slaving’, ‘orders’)¹⁴⁸ like the older son, instead of a compassionate, missionary heart?

¹³⁹ 13:6-9

¹⁴⁰ 8:5-15; 13:7b,9b,19,21

¹⁴¹ 19:12-23

¹⁴² 13:31-35

¹⁴³ 19:41

¹⁴⁴ 14:16-24

¹⁴⁵ 14:21-23

¹⁴⁶ 14:25-35, especially vs. 28-32

¹⁴⁷ Chapter 15

¹⁴⁸ 15:29

We learn from the dishonest manager¹⁴⁹ that God's managers are *stewards* of His goods, *not owners*, as many think. We have to invest His riches into people's salvation ('welcomed in eternal dwellings'). This brings the Master's recommendation.

The rich man was not lost because he was rich but because he did not care about his fellow-man.¹⁵⁰ The story is similar to that of the shrewd manager. Affluence does not cause God's judgment but the way in which it is used – either for eternal or temporary purposes; for others or for self is what makes the eternal difference. Senders and sent-ones look out for others and their salvation. The rest of the population concentrates on self, and in 'finding their lives' lose it.¹⁵¹

Are missionaries advised to be physically armed?¹⁵² Although it looks like it, the context together with other gospels shows us otherwise. Jesus stops Peter's forceful action¹⁵³ and gives His reasons.¹⁵⁴ Later, no apostle ever used weapons. The only legitimate sword in the New Testament is the Word of God. Our struggle is *not* against flesh and blood.¹⁵⁵

Study Questions

1. *What may have been the motives of the priest and the Levite to pass by the wounded man?*
2. *What missionary lesson do we learn from the unproductive fig tree?*
3. *Give an analysis of the character of the older brother in the parable about the lost son*
4. *What was the main mistake of the shrewd manager, that caused him to be fired?*
5. *Why did the rich man end up in hell?*
6. *Give your opinion about the use of carrying fire arms in dangerous areas and include a biblical basis for your view*

¹⁴⁹ 16:1-15

¹⁵⁰ 16:19-31

¹⁵¹ Matt. 10:39

¹⁵² Luke 22:35-38

¹⁵³ 22:49-51

¹⁵⁴ Matt. 26:52; John 18:11

¹⁵⁵ Eph. 6:12,17; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 1:16; 19:15,21

8. *John (1)*

John ministered in Ephesus, where he wrote his gospel, three letters and the Revelation in the nineties of the 1st century. The first section of his gospel proves Christ's deity and equality with God.¹⁵⁶ The first five verses define His status by His names. Names indicate identity in Hebrew thinking and culture. Also His role in creation¹⁵⁷ is emphasized.¹⁵⁸

How far humanity had drifted away from God becomes obvious from the words 'did not recognize Him' and 'did not receive Him'.¹⁵⁹ The good news is that Jesus re-opened the way to God¹⁶⁰ and gave people a new start, so drastic that only the term 'new birth' describes its powerful dynamic. Christ's deity is also proven by John the Baptist's words 'He was before me'; an argument for Christ's pre-existence¹⁶¹ since John was six months older than Jesus:¹⁶² John was *not* talking about Jesus' humanity.

Christ in the flesh dwelt among us¹⁶³ in a dual nature: truly God and truly Man. The term 'only-begotten Son of God', (Greek: *μονογενής Θεός*, *monogenes Theos*) can better be translated as 'only begotten God'.¹⁶⁴ The Father begot only once; the result was the God-Son. This took place before the foundation of the world, when the salvation plan was also designed, hence the Son was revealed as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world.¹⁶⁵ The begetting had nothing to do with His incarnation. God did not get a Son when Jesus was born in the flesh. The Son has neither beginning nor end, typified by Melchizedek.¹⁶⁶ As Man He does have a beginning.

¹⁵⁶ Fil. 2:6

¹⁵⁷ Gen. 1:2

¹⁵⁸ Compare John 1:10 with Col. 1:16

¹⁵⁹ John 1:10,11

¹⁶⁰ 1:12,13; 14:6

¹⁶¹ 1:1-3

¹⁶² Luke 1:24,26

¹⁶³ John 1:14

¹⁶⁴ 1:18

¹⁶⁵ Rev. 13:8b

¹⁶⁶ Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:15-17

No mere human could bring about as big a change in dispensation from law to grace and truth as Christ did.¹⁶⁷ All this needed to be established clearly in order to validate the title 'Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world'.¹⁶⁸ Only a Man without sin qualifies for such a task.¹⁶⁹ John the Baptist adds his testimony of the deity of Christ because he saw the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus and remain on Him. He received this recognizable fact by divine revelation.¹⁷⁰

Two of Jesus' frequent expressions in this gospel are: 'I tell you the truth' and 'the Father Who sent Me'. These make sense in the light of the above. The *Holy Spirit* as third person of the Godhead is also very visible in John's gospel.¹⁷¹

His gospel differs from the others. He wrote it about AD 90; the others were written before AD 65. John wrote for the churches in Asia Minor (now Turkey). They knew the other gospels. So, why did he write another? All gospels show different sides of Jesus. Matthew shows Him as *King*, Mark as *Servant*, and Luke as true *Man*. These would not have been complete without John's story in which Jesus is shown as *Son of God*. He is shown complete: as King (the highest), Servant (the meekest), Man (the limited), and God (the unlimited).

He wrote the gospel probably in Aramean, the language spoken by Jesus. He may have translated it into Greek, the lingua franca in Ephesus, but this is not certain. This gospel is written with only about 700 different words, similar to a child's vocabulary.

First John ministered in Jerusalem. How then did he end up in Ephesus? In AD 44 Herod killed his brother James.¹⁷² The persecution that broke out at that time may have caused John to leave. We do not know where he stayed all the time, but according to old writings he ministered in Ephesus during

¹⁶⁷ John 1:14,16,17

¹⁶⁸ 1:29

¹⁶⁹ Heb. 4:15

¹⁷⁰ John 1:30,34

¹⁷¹ 1:32,33; 3:34; 6:63; 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:7-11,13-15 and 20:22

¹⁷² Acts 12:2

his last years, before Rome became the center of the Church. This is clear from the fact that he knew the seven churches in Asia.¹⁷³

In AD 95 the Emperor Domitian sent him in exile to Patmos. In 96 he was allowed to return to Ephesus where he wrote down the revelations, now our book of Revelation. After 98 when Trajan had become Emperor, he died as the last of Jesus' apostles.

Christ's deity is the key to this gospel.¹⁷⁴ With the name 'I AM' God revealed Himself to Moses.¹⁷⁵ All Jews connected that name with God. They became furious when Jesus used it to point to His position as God's Son. Fourteen times He said I AM: the Messiah;¹⁷⁶ the Bread of Life;¹⁷⁷ the Light of the world;¹⁷⁸ from above and before Abraham was;¹⁷⁹ the Door of the sheep and the Good Shepherd;¹⁸⁰ One with the Father and the Son of God;¹⁸¹ the Resurrection and the Life;¹⁸² Master and Lord;¹⁸³ the Way, the Truth and the Life and in the Father, the Father in Me;¹⁸⁴ the True Vine.¹⁸⁵

The last time 'I AM' spoke, at His arrest, He revealed such power that the demons accompanying the army shuddered. Frightened and confused they backed off and threw 600 armed men off their feet.¹⁸⁶ It is obvious that Jesus surrendered voluntarily!

¹⁷³ Rev. 2 & 3

¹⁷⁴ John 20:31

¹⁷⁵ Ex. 3:14

¹⁷⁶ John 4:26

¹⁷⁷ 6:35,48,51

¹⁷⁸ 8:12; 12:46

¹⁷⁹ 8:23,58

¹⁸⁰ 10:7,9,11,14

¹⁸¹ 10:30,36

¹⁸² 11:25

¹⁸³ 13:13

¹⁸⁴ 14:6,10

¹⁸⁵ 15:1,5

¹⁸⁶ 18:6

Study Questions

1. *Formulate John's Christology as well as you are able to*
2. *Explain Christ's dual nature*
3. *Why was Jesus the only Man Who qualified to take away the sins of the world?*
4. *Explain how all four evangelists describe Jesus Christ from a different perspective*
5. *Mention at least 7 examples of how Jesus finished the sentence that formulates God's identity as 'I AM'*
6. *What happened when He used that name for the last time?*

9. *John (2)*

John the Baptist pointed two of his disciples to Jesus, who started following Him. What a great example of Kingdom-mentality versus building one's own empire: sending your personnel to somebody with a greater ministry than your own.¹⁸⁷

Jesus started His ministry by going to a wedding party and participated with His disciples in the success of the celebration. Even during a party He could reveal His glory and thus inspire His disciples to faith.¹⁸⁸

Missionaries often face the discouragement of not seeing results after years of sowing. Jesus comforts them, saying that sower and reaper will rejoice together.¹⁸⁹ The sower's hard work will not be forgotten.¹⁹⁰

Ever since Jesus accused a crowd that they followed Him with wrong motives ('you are looking for Me... because you ate the loaves...'),¹⁹¹ the world has seen 'rice-Christians': people who profess Christ because of the material advantages this would bring. As missionaries we must guard against insincere followers, who only pursue gain.

Jesus had known from the beginning who would betray Him¹⁹² and yet he put up with Judas Iscariot patiently for three years.

It is remarkable that the story of the man born blind seems to be placed in a missions-context.¹⁹³ Is it often not also true, that no one whose eyes have not been opened for missions can be sent on a mission? Is it coincidence that the man was sent to the pool of Siloam, a name that also means 'sent'?¹⁹⁴ Receiving vision for missions may be as miraculous a revelation, as receiving eye-sight was a miracle of healing.

¹⁸⁷ John 1:35-37

¹⁸⁸ 2:11

¹⁸⁹ 4:31-38

¹⁹⁰ 1 Cor. 15:58b

¹⁹¹ John 6:26

¹⁹² 6:64,70,71

¹⁹³ Ch. 9

¹⁹⁴ See 9:7. Greek: *απεσταλμενος* (*apestalmenos*), root of our word apostle

Dying to self and bearing fruit for the Kingdom are inextricably linked.¹⁹⁵ The investment of temporal life in this world will reap the much greater benefit of eternal life.

Jesus was sometimes sharp in His words, but the Father always told Him *what* to say and *how* to say it.¹⁹⁶ Let that be our prayer also.

In the Master's presence, Who had cast out demons from many, the prince of demons, Satan, now entered His disciple Judas Iscariot. People's deepest heart-choices are eventually granted. Judas, who had even known and experienced the deliverance ministry, ultimately made the choice for Mammon rather than God. He hardened his heart, to the point of no return.¹⁹⁷ Especially apostles (missionaries) cannot play with sin endlessly. It was night outside;¹⁹⁸ inside Judas eternal night had begun.

Twice, before He suffered, Jesus said 'I'm telling you this before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe in Me'.¹⁹⁹ He knows the end from the beginning.²⁰⁰

A *relationship with* the Lord is more important than *working for* Him. The latter is even impossible without the former, and should have priority in all we do.²⁰¹ This love relationship, proven by obedience, is the condition under which the Kingdom flourishes.²⁰² This quality of ministry will meet the same hate and opposition Jesus met in His ministry. We may suffer, but He suffered first. We may be rejected, but in fact *He* is rejected. As missionaries we must count with suffering²⁰³ lest we become disappointed if He does not protect us against struggle and inconvenience.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁵ 12:24,25

¹⁹⁶ 12:49

¹⁹⁷ 13:27

¹⁹⁸ 13:20

¹⁹⁹ 13:19; 14:29

²⁰⁰ Is. 46:10

²⁰¹ John 15:4,5

²⁰² 15:7-17

²⁰³ E.g. Col. 1:24

²⁰⁴ John 15:18-25

Jesus reminds us that persecution, sometimes resulting in death, is part and parcel of any true disciple's life.²⁰⁵

At the end of His walk on earth as Sent One, Jesus became sender like many great Bible characters before Him.²⁰⁶ A true sender, like Jesus, should live in holiness and sanctify himself for the sake of the sent ones.²⁰⁷

The unity between the Father and the Son should also be seen among the apostles as indispensable condition for reaching the world.²⁰⁸ These three verses are the biblical definition of partnership. Private empire building and a chief-mentality do more damage than good to God's Kingdom.

Disciples should pray continually that Jesus reveal the Father to them. This conforms to Jesus' prayer and will.²⁰⁹ Growth in intimacy with God should be an ongoing process in our lives. Intimacy with Him is the heart of world missions.

Study Questions

1. *Explain the term 'rice-Christians'. Can you give an example from your own experience?*
2. *In your opinion, did Jesus make a mistake when he chose Judas Iscariot to be His disciple? Motivate your answer*
3. *Explain the secondary meaning of the story about the man who was born blind*
4. *Why did Jesus say so much to His disciples about suffering?*
5. *What point of view (or attitude towards suffering) will help us greatly, once we are facing it ourselves?*
6. *What characteristics should belong to a sender?*
7. *Which three verses form the biblical basis for partnership and what is the key-issue mentioned there?*
8. *What is the heart of world missions?*

²⁰⁵ 16:1-4

²⁰⁶ 17:18

²⁰⁷ 17:19

²⁰⁸ 17:21-23

²⁰⁹ 17:26

10. John (3)

During Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman, He *first* overcame the *culture* and *gender* barriers (Samaritan/Jew; man/woman).²¹⁰ Then He created an opening by arousing her curiosity.²¹¹ Carefully she brings up the issue of His identity 'Are you greater than our father Jacob...?'²¹² – a question He answers only later, by using the revelation the woman already had of the coming of the Messiah.²¹³ The *next barrier* He tackles is her *social dilemma* when He told her 'go, call your husband'.²¹⁴ He saw her honesty in that she did not try to hide the ugly facts. The woman, ashamed now, quickly hides behind the *next barrier*, a *religious one*.²¹⁵ Jesus draws her out from there as well, *not* 'respecting her religious feelings' and by plainly stating that 'we Jews are right and you Samaritans are wrong because salvation comes from the Jews'.²¹⁶ So much for inter-faith dialogue...

Yet, He speaks about a near future where both forms of worship, Jewish *and* Samaritan, would be abolished and a new form introduced.²¹⁷ This is a distinct Messianic Self-revelation.²¹⁸ Summing it up, Jesus opened the conversation, crossed the barriers of culture and gender, social status and religion, and finally revealed His identity after noticing true openness.²¹⁹

An interesting interlude then develops. The woman, suddenly insecure with many more men appearing on the scene,²²⁰ goes back to town on her first evangelistic outreach, leading her townspeople to Christ.²²¹

²¹⁰ John 4:7,9

²¹¹ 4:10

²¹² 4:12

²¹³ 4:26,25; in verse 26 Jesus says in fact I AM

²¹⁴ 4:16-18

²¹⁵ 4:19,20

²¹⁶ 4:21,22

²¹⁷ 4:21 'neither', 23,24

²¹⁸ 4:25,26

²¹⁹ This is a model of E-2 evangelism, cross-cultural gospel communication to people of a related but slightly different culture, language and/or religious belief. I explained this concept, coined by the late Dr. Ralph Winter, in my book *World Evangelisation – That All May Hear*, (2000/2005/2012:59,60

²²⁰ 4:27,28

²²¹ 4:39-42

When the disciples came back they were surprised that Jesus was violating the old and accepted cultural barriers and astonished that He did not want to eat; they did not even dare to ask the ‘what & why’ questions.²²² They had not yet learned to think in terms of missions and evangelistic outreach to lost souls, and therefore Jesus taught them lessons about ripe harvests, sowers and reapers – a reality that became visible almost at once.²²³ In this paragraph we see how Jesus’ cross-cultural missions was turned – as it should be – into mono-cultural, local, evangelism: the woman now evangelized her own community. Also, the villagers built their faith on Jesus *directly*, and not on Him *via the evangelist*.

The Samaritans, whose spiritual hunger was evident, urged Him to stay – which He did for two more days, resulting in a greater spiritual harvest. The people understood that He was the Savior of the world. What a contrast this story presents with that of the people in the Gerasene village who asked Jesus to leave²²⁴, which He did and after which there is no recorded evidence *they* ever came to know Him as their Savior.

In the last chapter it seems that world missions dangled on a thin thread. Peter’s initiative and that of six other disciples to go fishing had a more definite character than the English text shows. Greek text, grammar and syntax suggest a definite end to their former commitment.²²⁵ After his betrayal, Peter felt unworthy to continue in the ministry. By violating the command to become a fisher of men²²⁶ he practically resigned. Hence Jesus’ question ‘do you love Me more than these?’ referring to the fish business as opposed to Kingdom business. Had the others lost their vision too?

Jesus then executes a five-step plan to bring back His renegade band of apostles. His *first* step was that they caught nothing, a divinely engineered reminder of an earlier time.²²⁷ His *second* step was, that *this* time there was a

²²² 4:27,31-34

²²³ 4:35-42

²²⁴ Luke 8:37

²²⁵ Wuest, *Great Truths to live by from the Greek New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1952:115-131

²²⁶ Luke 15:10

²²⁷ 5:5

big catch too.²²⁸ The *third* step was a fire of burning coals at the shore that reminded Peter of his denial when he warmed himself at another fire.²²⁹ The *fourth* step was the most painful one, when Jesus asked Peter three times about his love for Him.²³⁰ Finally, referring to Peter's later spiritual maturity whereby he would give his life for Christ,²³¹ Jesus promised him an ultimate success at the end of his life, that softened the pain of his failure. With Peter reinstalled in ministry ('feed My lambs, feed My sheep') the others returned also. World missions was saved.

Study Questions

1. Describe Jesus' methodology to reach the Samaritan woman
2. How tolerable did Jesus show Himself toward foreign religions?
3. Explain the terms 'mono-cultural, local, evangelism' & 'cross-cultural missions' and how they apply in this story
4. Explain how Jesus saved world missions in John 21

²²⁸ 5:6,7; John 21:6

²²⁹ 21:9; 18:18

²³⁰ 21:15-17

²³¹ 21:18,19

Chapter II

Some Lesson from Acts

Introduction

In this short chapter we learn some elementary lessons in missiology from the book of Acts. If this would be the only covering of Acts, it would be a bit thin. But don't worry: in my next volume (IIB), spread out over the chapters II-IV, I will revisit Acts a few more times.

The *first* topic shares again with you the difference between local, mono-cultural *evangelism* and cross-cultural foreign *missions*. For many people it remains hard to clearly distinguish the difference. Yet, this is very important; otherwise the popular paradigm might continue to hold that 'everyone can be a missionary' – which is equally untrue as the statement that everybody can be a pastor or a prophet.

The *second* issue we consider is called '*double* conversion', a term that may cause some frowns – and rightly so – yet seems the rule rather than the exception in world missions; whether one regards it from a historic perspective or from practices that are still prevailing today in some areas of the world. The aim of this study is to show that *single* conversion – to Christ – is enough.

1. *From Jerusalem to the World*

When Jesus spoke about His commission for the apostles to preach the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth,²³² He meant more than only those literal, geographical locations. What else did He have in mind for us, His disciples of the 21st century?

In a *geographical* sense, *Jerusalem* to us means our city or village, those *physical* places that we are most familiar with. In a *relational* sense *Jerusalem* points to the *people* we are most familiar with, whether spouses, children, family, friends or colleagues, that are not yet believers in Christ.

In a *geographical* sense, *Judea* to us means our country or part of the country where the same language is spoken. Places that may not exactly be near – they may even be far away – but places where *relationally* we would not really be considered as strangers because we share the same culture, worldview and value-system.

The work of being witnesses for Christ in *Jerusalem* or *Judea* means mono-cultural *evangelism*: the gospel can be shared with most people, without it being necessary for the evangelist to learn another language or culture.

In a *geographical* sense *Samaria* for us means either another country or part of our own country, where a slightly different language is spoken and where people's religious views are also a bit different, e.g. belonging to a different form of the same major religion. *Relationally* speaking, the *Samaritans* are the people we prefer to avoid because we dislike or despise them for whatever reason.

The *'uttermost parts of the earth'*, in a *geographical* sense, are parts of countries that are so hard to reach, that the gospel has not yet been taken there. Reasons can be that there are no roads, rivers, or airports that make the area accessible. These uttermost parts can often only be reached by foot and are far away. These are areas where the languages as well as the cultures and religions differ very much from our own. *Relationally* speaking the people in the *'uttermost parts'* are those we are least familiar with. They are total

²³² Acts 1:8

strangers to us in all respects. We may almost feel that they come from another planet!

Being Christ's witnesses in 'Samaria' and the 'uttermost parts of the earth' means cross-cultural *missions*: the gospel can only be shared with people once the missionary has learned that people's language, culture and religion very well.

Outreach to Jerusalem & Judea
=
<i>Mono-cultural local Evangelism</i>
Outreach to Samaria & the Ends of the Earth
=
<i>Cross-cultural foreign Missions</i>

For *evangelism* in 'Jerusalem' and 'Judea' no more training is required than being Christ's disciple, the ability to give one's testimony and to tell the gospel to an unbeliever in a way he or she can understand. The words of such a witness need to be backed up by a Godly lifestyle. Practice and preaching must be consistent. 'Talking the talk' without 'walking the walk' will not work and bring discredit to the name of Christ and the church.

For *missions* in 'Samaria' and the 'uttermost parts of the earth' serious, intense training is needed, apart from the basic training anyone needs to minister in Jerusalem and Judea. Such missionaries need to be thoroughly trained in how to learn foreign languages, how to adapt to different cultures and how to get to know non-Christian religions so well that they can intelligently debate it with its spiritual leaders.

Although it may sound complicated, we need to understand that we are talking about *cultural, linguistic and religious barriers* even more than *geographical* ones, although the latter do play a role in certain areas. For instance, when Christians live in a large city, it will be relatively easy for them to meet 'Samaritans' and people from the 'uttermost parts' just across the street where they live.

With the present urbanization, the migration from rural areas to the cities, one can now meet many more nationalities in one place than, say, fifty years ago. The mission fields have come closer than ever before, especially in the cities. This however, should not blind us to the fact that the remaining unreached people groups are unreached *for good reasons*, whether physical or relational. The ‘easier’ forms therefore, we call *mono-cultural evangelism* and the ‘harder’ forms we call *cross-cultural missions*.

Finally we should understand that Jesus spoke about Jerusalem *and* Judea *and* Samaria *and* the uttermost parts of the earth. Every healthy church should occupy itself with all four areas. Jesus never gave us the choice to minister *either* here, *or* there. The often heard argument that ‘we don’t have to engage in world missions, because the need is right here, at our doorstep’, therefore is a fake and unbiblical excuse. Every Kingdom-focused church should do the one and not omit the other.

The gospel has been preached in many places, but we should do well to keep Paul’s ambition in mind, to preach it where it has not yet been preached before.²³³ The everlasting discussion about how we define terms like ‘unreached’ and ‘least-reached’ will not help us always,²³⁴ but the picture becomes clearer when we ask whether the gospel is *available* in any given place or not. We need to concentrate on the latter and make sure that in those very places it will be presented to the local population in a relevant way, so that it addresses their felt needs.

²³³ Rom. 15:20

²³⁴ The Joshua Project uses the criteria of ‘less than 2% evangelical or less than 5% adherent’ to define ‘unreached’. See www.joshuaproject.org

Study Questions

1. *Explain the 'Jerusalem – Judea – Samaria - Ends-of-the-Earth' concept from a geographical, physical and relational perspective*
2. *Use the same concept to explain the difference between mono-cultural evangelism and cross-cultural foreign missions*
3. *Explain the difference in training needs between local evangelists and foreign missionaries*
4. *Give some reasons why the present unreached people groups are still unreached*
5. *Does the church have a choice where to minister? Motivate your answer*
6. *What should be our priority in world missions?*

2. *Double Conversion*

Double conversion is a danger to world missions, ever since it made its entry on the list of topics to be discussed during the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49.²³⁵ Throughout church history double conversion had and still has many different expressions. It's almost as if we never really understood the apostles ruling – or failed to act upon it.

The question was whether Gentiles needed to convert to Christ *and* to Judaism. The answer was clear: conversion to Christ was sufficient and nothing external or traditional had to be added in order to be saved. The early Church did not need the pure gospel of Christ to be wrapped in an old, worn-out Judaist garment. Had the Church in later ages abided by that principle, much damage to God's Kingdom and loss of souls could have been avoided.

The *Church of Rome* became the norm, presenting a form of Christianity with uniform teaching, liturgy, habits and language, even when it was foreign to the world outside the Roman Empire. It never moved away from this habit and attempts at indigenization of worship met with much opposition. Until far into the 20th century Latin was maintained as clerical and scriptural language in the Roman Catholic Church worldwide.

The *Protestants* in later centuries continued such practices: the gospel was preached in many parts of the world, but almost exclusively dressed in western-cultural garments. Their church buildings, organs, liturgy, hymnals, hierarchical structures and clerical robes look the same in Europe and in many parts of the non-western world.

Many *Evangelicals* also express the gospel by teaching *their* styles of worship, democracy, leadership and ministerial ethos as forms, foreign to the mission fields they serve. They wrap the gospel in *forms* that tend to become just as much 'gospel' as the gospel itself. It is for that reason that the so-called prosperity gospel tends to imply double conversion: to Christ *as well as to the atmosphere of wealth in which it is presented*.

²³⁵ Acts 15:1-35

Throughout church history, double conversion as discussed and *disagreed* with in Acts 15, was the rule rather than the exception. It was only in the 2nd half of the 20th century – basically after the Second World War – that the beginning of *indigenous* forms of worship and theology became visible in parts of the Church in the non-western world.

The result of long centuries with double conversion practiced as the norm, produced a syncretistic church. *The Roman Church* accepted much of local pagan practice, not in the last place because it largely failed to present the Word of God to its mission fields.

In later centuries large parts of *the Protestant Church* let its original biblical theology be defiled by the age of enlightenment, which resulted in a liberal, secularized and ‘de-mythologized’ theology and so failed to address the same local pagan practices with biblical principles.

Foreign and local world-views were mixed; problems like demon-oppression, sickness and polygamy were addressed on a secular rather than a biblical basis, with the result that Christianity became an optional extra, a thin veneer over traditional pagan beliefs.

Churches planted on the mission fields of the world were thus weakened by conflicting worldviews, that prevented them from making Jesus Lord of all, so that converts remained converts at best or became apostates at worst, instead of being transformed into disciples. The result was that such churches largely failed in cross-cultural missionary outreach.

In places where Christianity became biblically indigenous through revival and spiritual renewal however, the Church regained her biblical fervor to reach the nations. Indigenous mission movements in Africa, e.g. in Nigeria and Ethiopia – initiated in the early seventies of the 20th century – prove this.

Primary issues need to be separated from secondary ones. What the primary and secondary issues are, differs from place to place and from era to era. Unnecessary to say that *the Word of God must always be the norm because it supersedes culture*.

Yet, even Paul wrote within a certain cultural context, where we need to distinguish between his eternal non-negotiable principles and his culture-dictated values; the former to be kept intact, the latter to be reviewed within temporary local norms of culture.

This may sound like ‘dangerous doctrine’ but it is not. God is not rigid, for He wants representatives of ‘every nation, tribe, people and language’²³⁶ to be in His Kingdom. He loves diversity of people, culture, style, color, dress and habit, otherwise, why would He have made the mono-cultural people of Babylon to spread over the earth?²³⁷ Not only because of their capacity to sin, but because He had already said so before sin entered the human race.²³⁸ God is not rigid, nor is His Word, and any rigid interpretation should be avoided. The Word embraces the whole world; just consider for instance the nine references mentioned in four short Psalm verses.²³⁹

A hard example of interpretation has proven to be the issue of women in ministry, especially in Paul’s letters. Did he really, literally mean what he said? If so, why don’t we follow him more consistently? Or should we evaluate some issues in the light of our own culture? If we do so, are we compromising the Word of God? We look into that issue of Bible and culture a bit more thoroughly, when we consider the role of women in ministry.²⁴⁰ After all, that is a topic of great missiological importance, since more than half of our missionary task force in the world consists of women!

²³⁶ Rev. 5:9 & 7:9

²³⁷ Gen. 11

²³⁸ Gen. 1:28

²³⁹ Ps. 67:2-5 ‘on earth ... all nations ... the peoples ... all the peoples’ etc.

²⁴⁰ See the appendix of the next volume, IIB, first entry

Study Questions

1. *Define the term 'double conversion' and give a contemporary example*
2. *Which chapter in Acts gives us the correct guidelines?*
3. *Can you formulate these in one sentence that sums them up?*
4. *Explain how Roman Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals violated this biblical principle, stemming from Acts*
5. *Since when has indigeneity started to return to the Church?*
6. *How does this express itself?*
7. *Explain the term 'de-mythologized theology'*
8. *What helped the Church regain her fervor to reach the nations?*
9. *Can you explain with an example, the difference between 'eternal, non-negotiable principles' and 'culture-dictated values'?*

Chapter III

Missionary Observations: Paul's Epistles

Introduction

This chapter treats Paul's missionary theology and practice. Although we know much about it from regular Bible reading, there is still a substantial part, hidden in inconspicuous details that we usually overlook, though important if we want to style our missionary practice according to Pauline examples. Study this chapter and you will find out for yourself.

In the next volume (IIB) you find missiological comments on the remainder of the New Testament teaching from James, the author of Hebrews, Peter, Jude and John, including the Revelation.

In the first volume of this series, *The Bible's Missionary Message* in the Old Testament, you find the first half of a series of entries about eschatology, the second half of which appears in the third volume (IIB), because the New Testament ends with the book of Revelation and for that reason was more suitable to host the remainder of my eschatological entries. Therefore you will not find much on eschatology in this second volume (IIA).

1. *Galatians*

Jewish opposition against Paul's law-free gospel had been present since his earliest enterprises.²⁴¹ It remained his constant companion throughout his career.²⁴²

The main problem Paul addresses in Galatians is that the new believers had been told by Jewish Christians that they could not be saved if they did not keep the law and were circumcised. In their eyes, the sacrifice that Jesus made for their sins was not sufficient. Being justified by faith alone they considered as insufficient: works of the law had to be added. Paul uses the strongest possible language²⁴³ against such heresy.²⁴⁴

We should remember that not only most non-Christian religions are big on works to obtain 'salvation'; the same poison has effectively spread in large parts of Christianity as well. A return to pure biblical teaching is therefore of utmost importance.

We also look at criteria Paul used for personnel recruitment, issues of syncretism missionaries may run into, the need to reach unreached people groups and reasons why missionaries may face persecution.

On his second visit to Jerusalem, Paul took Titus with him.²⁴⁵ The latter, a Greek, was not compelled by the leaders in Jerusalem to be circumcised. So why then, less than two years later, did Paul urge Timothy to be circumcised?²⁴⁶ Stein explains:

"For Paul circumcision was an irrelevant issue in itself,²⁴⁷ for it only involved the presence or absence of a piece of skin, unless one argued that the removal of this piece of skin was a requirement for salvation. Thus, when a theological issue was

²⁴¹ Acts 13:45 and onward

²⁴² 28:25

²⁴³ Gal. 1:8,9

²⁴⁴ Remember 'Double Conversion' (II#2) and also see #2 hereafter

²⁴⁵ Gal. 2:1-3

²⁴⁶ Acts 16:3

²⁴⁷ Gal. 5:6; 6:15

at stake, he refused to have Titus circumcised;²⁴⁸ but in the case of Timothy, when it did not involve a theological issue but permitted greater freedom in ministering among the Jews, he was willing to have him circumcised.²⁴⁹ To understand Paul's view of freedom we must recognize that he was so free that, unless a theological issue was at stake, he could ...surrender his freedom ... to facilitate the spread of the gospel.²⁵⁰ People are only truly free, when they can surrender their freedom out of love for the weak".²⁵¹

When reading the first paragraph of Gal. 5 we see a parallel between Paul's plea against reverting back to circumcision as an unnecessary addition to being saved by grace through faith, and the syncretistic forms of belief we sometimes see in the Developing World. The following parallels become visible:

Being saved through faith in Christ is the 'big prize': the permanent delivery from spiritual poverty, the pearl of great value.²⁵² After obtaining His complete salvation, no addition is needed. Nobody who is a billionaire will want to earn a few more pennies through hard labor, to add to his tremendous wealth.

Even more strongly, Paul says that he who undergoes circumcision as condition for salvation alienates himself from Christ to such an extent, that Christ is of no value to him at all and that he has even fallen away from grace.²⁵³ In other words: by trying to bring in your own pennies, you lose your fortune.

²⁴⁸ 2:1-3

²⁴⁹ Acts 16:1-3

²⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 9:19-23

²⁵¹ As in Hawthorne, Martin & Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, 1993:471

²⁵² Matt. 13:45,46

²⁵³ Gal. 5:2,4

“The little yeast that works through the whole batch of dough”,²⁵⁴ means in this context that mixing human works into the process of divine salvation will eventually spoil the latter. People who cause such confusion will pay the penalty for advocating lies.²⁵⁵

Therefore, any action that is undertaken to appease the gods, venerate ancestors, stem revenge or actions of evil spirits, seek protection from witch-doctors, seek healing or deliverance outside of Christ, gain power over people, obtain fertility, manipulate weather conditions and receive mediation between himself and God, falls under this chapter.

The indescribable gift of God²⁵⁶ contains the solution to all the above-listed practices, which are merely pathetic man-made ways ‘to help God along’. Adding ‘help’ to God’s solution is an insult He will not tolerate. His only way of salvation is Christ. Either we have Christ alone or nothing at all.

In this letter we read one of the clearest New Testament references of God’s promise to Abraham, that through him *all* the families of the earth will be blessed.²⁵⁷ Like Abraham walked in the faith that justified him, so will *all* Gentiles be justified by faith through the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ.²⁵⁸ The crux of the matter is that missionaries must go to the remaining unreached Gentiles to preach this gospel.

The main reason for the persecution Paul faced, was his preaching the cross of Christ.²⁵⁹ Had he decided to leave that out in order to avoid further persecution, he would have fallen into a moralistic religion, consisting of rules and regulations that appeal to the flesh. In doing so he would not only lose his opponents but also the powerful signs the Holy Spirit did through his ministry. If gospel preaching does not meet with fierce opposition, the question is whether a true gospel is preached, or that a watered-down version is presented.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ 5:9

²⁵⁵ 5:10b

²⁵⁶ 2 Cor. 9:15

²⁵⁷ Gal. 3:6-14; Gen. 12:1-3 (*italics mine*)

²⁵⁸ Gal. 5:16,22,26-29 (*italics mine*)

²⁵⁹ 5:11; 6:12

²⁶⁰ 2 Tim. 3:12

If gospel preaching does not result in people who become new creations, it has missed its goal.²⁶¹ The only way to enter the Kingdom of God is through many hardships, as Paul had told the Galatians when he visited them.²⁶²

Study Questions

1. *What is the main issue Paul addresses in this letter, that still, in other forms, poses a major problem in many churches today?*
2. *To what different people groups did Paul want Titus and Timothy to minister to, respectively?*
3. *Explain why Titus did not have to be circumcised, although Paul advised Timothy to undergo circumcision some time later*
4. *What is the consequence of undergoing circumcision as a means to obtain salvation?*
5. *What was the main reason that Paul was persecuted?*

²⁶¹ Gal. 6:15

²⁶² Acts 14:22

2. *The Other Gospel*

In his letter to the Galatians Paul accuses the readers that they ‘are so quickly deserting the One Who called them’ and ‘to turn to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all’. He states that some people are ‘throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ’.²⁶³ He referred to the replacement of his gospel of grace by a counterfeit one that demanded that the law of Moses be kept as well as circumcision applied. He condemns such practices with a double curse.²⁶⁴

Unfortunately the 20th century shows us many more versions of ‘another gospel’ being perversions of the true gospel of Christ. These are still alive in the 21st century. So, if missionaries forget what the ‘true gospel’ looks like, the world is in big trouble. I now highlight six forms of ‘other gospel’ that form a danger to the execution of Christ’s great commission.

A *first* form of ‘other gospel’ can develop when certain gospel truths are so over-emphasized that a caricature appears in which other truths are being suppressed. For example: the goodness of God can be so accentuated that His judgments – or any sufferings for that matter (especially of believers) – are being interpreted as the devil’s doing.

A *second* version of ‘other gospel’ shows the opposite: some gospel truths are hardly mentioned – if at all – to the detriment of preaching its fullness. For instance, the functioning of a deliverance ministry where demons are cast out is not often seen, under influence of an ‘enlightened’ theology that preaches a rationalized gospel, with no room for the invisible world.

Another very popular gospel deformation is based on the statement that certain biblical teachings are no longer true or applicable for today, e.g. the functioning of the gifts of the Holy Spirit²⁶⁵ or the fivefold ministry²⁶⁶. Many other examples could be given and it goes without saying that such statements rob the church of invaluable spiritual jewels.

²⁶³ Gal. 1:6,7

²⁶⁴ 1:8,9

²⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 12:8-10; Rom. 12:6-8

²⁶⁶ Eph. 4:11

Similar false theologies deny the literal occurrence and spiritual functionality of biblical miracles, including the resurrection (first of Christ and later of all who believe in Him). Unnecessary to say that by such ‘demythologization’ attempts the gospel is stripped of its core. What is left over is no more than an empty shell.²⁶⁷

A *fifth* version of ‘other gospel’ is seen in any form of syncretism, where true Christian faith is mixed with something distinctly anti-Christian, e.g. when it is said that God cannot be approached directly²⁶⁸ but that mediators are needed²⁶⁹, e.g. in the form of ancestral spirits or of deceased people of any kind. Such syncretism is nothing but idolatry.

Finally, a very dangerous form for any mission endeavor is the nowadays so popular ‘health-and-wealth-gospel’ that preaches material prosperity as God’s will for all of His people. By preaching such a distorted ‘gospel’ the necessity of suffering in the believer’s life is denied.²⁷⁰ Subsequently people are being blamed that they lack faith when God does not grant them physical healing or material abundance. They try to twist His arm by ‘investing a little to gain a lot’. Piously the label of spiritual sowing and reaping is glued to this fake teaching. This ‘prosperity-gospel’ may have done more damage to the cause of world missions since the end of World War II than any of the other distortions I mentioned.

Once I stayed for a week in the house of an African pastor who had invited me to teach a seminar on mission awareness for other pastors in that city, during the same week. Every evening he watched American TV programs that had been recorded at some set of glitter-and-glamour evangelicalism: beautiful cathedrals, sophisticated sound systems, large orchestras accompanying long-robed choirs, expensive suits and dresses, bold ‘name-it-and-claim-it’ language and other show-offs that would be no misfit in the world of professional entertainment. These programs went on for hours, night after night.

²⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 15:13,14

²⁶⁸ As opposed to Heb. 4:14-16 & 10:19-22

²⁶⁹ As opposed to 1 Tim. 2:5

²⁷⁰ As opposed to 2 Tim. 3:12

The outcome is predictable: 'If that is what Christianity really is, we want it too'. Is it strange? Which poor man will say 'no' to riches he thinks he can get by following a certain faith or way of believing? Who can blame him that contents become less important than the shiny wrappings it is presented in?

Yet, we were warned a long time ago 'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, *the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does* – comes not from the Father but from the world'.²⁷¹

The carnal cravings of a material-wealth gospel are diametrically opposed to the spiritual attitude of self-denial and 'cross-carrying' that Jesus expects from His disciples. Therefore I consider the so-called prosperity-gospel as one of the most dangerous and soul-crippling 'other gospels' of our time, because it appeals strongly to the carnal appetites of poor people and devastates their missionary usefulness, drowning their evangelistic zeal in covetousness. May the ones who have 'seduced these little ones' repent and change their ways, before the 'millstone of judgment will be hung around their necks'!²⁷² Apparently very drastic decisions are needed to deal with the problem effectively.²⁷³

May the Lord be gracious to all of us who have the responsibility to preach His gospel far and near, so that we may present it in all its pureness without any distortion.

Study Questions

1. Formulate 'the other gospel' Paul was arguing against in his letter to the Galatians
2. Which forms of 'other gospel' do we still see regularly in our days?
3. Which did the author describe as 'very dangerous for missionary endeavors' – and why?
4. By what communication medium was this false teaching disseminated so effectively?
5. Find three scriptural 'antidotes' against this gospel distortion

²⁷¹ 1 John 2:15,16 (italics mine)

²⁷² Matt. 18:6,7

²⁷³ Matt. 18:8,9

3. *Thessalonians (1 & 2)*

Paul's consistent prayer and thanksgiving for 'his' churches indicated his close relationship with their members.²⁷⁴ He and his co-workers lived *among* the Thessalonians,²⁷⁵ not in a missionary compound or a hotel. Living among a target population increases missionary bonding and also encourages and strengthens personal relationships.

He describes his intimacy with them in parental terms: 'mother', 'little children', 'father' and mutual 'longing'; and by 'we not only shared the gospel with you but our lives as well'.²⁷⁶ He is grateful that they, in spite of their intimacy, did not interpret his message as merely human, but as coming from God.²⁷⁷ The friendship had not jeopardized his apostolic authority.

Paul commends them for becoming imitators, the best quality of disciples, of the Lord and of him and his co-workers.²⁷⁸ Converting and discipling are two sides of the same process.

They also became imitators of the Judean churches, by going through persecutions.²⁷⁹ Suffering through persecution for being witnesses, runs like a major theme through these letters.²⁸⁰ And witnesses they were! Their lives were models of true Christianity. They preached the gospel in Greece and beyond, so that their faith became known everywhere. Paul even heard from elsewhere how well they had received the message when he and his team first arrived.²⁸¹

He encouraged them to *pray* for his ministry, and in spite of persecution also asked them to pray for deliverance from wicked and evil men.²⁸²

²⁷⁴ 1 Th. 1:2,3; 2:13,17; 3:9,10 & 2 Th. 1:3,11,12; 2:13

²⁷⁵ 1 Th. 1:5b

²⁷⁶ 2:7,8,11; 3:6

²⁷⁷ 2:13

²⁷⁸ 1:6; 2:10,12

²⁷⁹ 2:14

²⁸⁰ 1:6; 2:2,14; 3:3,4 & 2 Th. 1:4,5; 2:4; 3:2

²⁸¹ 1 Th. 1:7-9a

²⁸² 5:25 & 2 Th. 3:1,2

The Thessalonians had turned from their idols to the living God.²⁸³ Paul addresses a majority of Gentile believers; the Jews seem to have been a minority.

We smile, when reading ‘you know ... our visit to you was not a failure’.²⁸⁴ *They* did not see Paul’s visit as such, but *he* had thought so, hence his relief when his ministry had proven to be fruitful.²⁸⁵ Even the great Paul was human enough to need encouragement!

Being beaten, imprisoned, shackled and living through an earthquake might have caused *us* to leave our mission field, but it did not have that effect on Paul and Silas in Philippi. They simply left the city and continued to minister in Thessalonica.²⁸⁶

His suffering made it unnecessary to remind the Thessalonians of his good motives,²⁸⁷ although some questioned these, accusing him of greed. Concerning motives, Paul states that even if he could deceive the Thessalonians, God cannot be deceived and had tested Paul and approved of him as a missionary.²⁸⁸

In this light he also mentions his tent-making principles – not to burden anyone.²⁸⁹ When ministering in Thessalonica he received support from Philippi.²⁹⁰

Paul was not driven by false sentimentality towards Jews but saw their present spiritual condition.²⁹¹

²⁸³ 1 Th. 1:9b

²⁸⁴ 2:1

²⁸⁵ 3:1,2,5-8

²⁸⁶ Acts 16:22-28; 1 Th. 2:2

²⁸⁷ 2:3,5

²⁸⁸ 2:4

²⁸⁹ 2:4,6,9 & 2 Th. 3:7-9

²⁹⁰ Philip. 4:16

²⁹¹ 1 Th. 2:14b-16

This did not lead to ‘ethno-exclusivism’;²⁹² he always preached the gospel to them first and often expressed his love for them.²⁹³

No missionary can always work as planned. Paul knew *who* stopped him.²⁹⁴ Once the Holy Spirit changed his direction; another time Satan opposed him.²⁹⁵ His solution was to pray that ‘God our Father Himself and our Lord Jesus would clear the way ... to come to you’.²⁹⁶

‘When we²⁹⁷ could stand it no longer ... we sent Timothy’.²⁹⁸ Going to Thessalonica would have interrupted his just started Corinthian ministry. It is good to have co-workers to send on other missions.

‘May the Lord make your love overflow for each other *and for everyone else ...*’ has been a condition for mission work since Jesus said so.²⁹⁹

It is of great importance for Developing World churches to ‘work with your hands ... so that your ... life may *win the respect of outsiders* and ... *not be dependent* on anybody’ and ‘warn those who are idle’.³⁰⁰ Idleness and poverty are related and the number of churches and ministries that depend on foreign funds and personnel is alarming. Such churches are usually not missionary-sending churches. Paul proposes how this should change.³⁰¹

For the Thessalonians to be worthy of God’s calling³⁰² means more than holy and exemplary living;

²⁹² Not a current term, but describing e.g. the attitude that Jonah had towards the Assyrians: he excluded those people in his thoughts from the right to hear the Word of God

²⁹³ Among other passages, in Rom. 9-11

²⁹⁴ This is an example of how the gift of discernment of spirits can operate, 1 Cor. 12:10

²⁹⁵ Acts 16:7 & 1 Th. 2:18

²⁹⁶ 3:10,11

²⁹⁷ I.e. Paul and probably Luke, compare with Acts 16:10-17a (‘we’ and ‘us’) although we cannot say with certainty at what places Luke was present. Also, Silas may already have returned from Berea

²⁹⁸ 1 Th. 3:1-8

²⁹⁹ Compare 3:12 (*italics mine*) with John 13:35 & 17:23

³⁰⁰ 4:11,12; 5:14 (*italics mine*)

³⁰¹ 2 Th. 3:6-12

³⁰² 1:11 & 2:17b (*italics mine*)

it includes the success of ‘every good purpose of *yours* and every *act* prompted by *your* faith’. These words encourage evangelism and missions.

Even missionary documents can be falsified, and should be checked on being genuine.³⁰³ Satan will try every trick to discredit God’s workers and their teaching.

The important issue of eschatology in ‘Thessalonians, will be discussed in volume IIB, chapter IV#4.

Study Questions

1. *Why should missionaries live among their target-population, rather than separate from it?*
2. *Describe Paul’s personal relationship with the Thessalonians*
3. *From where did Paul receive financial support when he ministered among the Thessalonians?*
4. *Why does Paul exhort people to work with their hands?*

³⁰³ 2:2; 3:17

4. *First Corinthians*

From this letter I want to share *fifteen* observations with you:

Paul appeals to unity among believers³⁰⁴ and Jesus mentioned it as a necessity for them to be His witnesses. World missions would benefit if its executives would eliminate their divisions.

Paul was glad he had baptized only a few people, so that none had reason to build their faith on him instead of on Christ.³⁰⁵ Therefore, missionaries should not engage in church ministry or administration, but rather leave it to local leaders.

The message of the cross and preaching Christ crucified contains two elements. The *first* preaches His life and selfless sacrifice; the *second* how His disciples should follow Him in it: ‘deny yourself ... take up your cross ... follow Me’. The latter is often neglected in preaching today. Yet, if we don’t preach Christ *and* show His sacrificial attitude in *our* lives, our message will not draw many people into the Kingdom.³⁰⁶

Paul’s remark to ‘think of what you were when you were called’ tells those, privileged to serve Christ full-time, not to boast because they are not superior to other believers. Where would we have been without Christ’s salvation? Paul even realized that concerning himself.³⁰⁷

Paul says that an unmarried person can be fully devoted to the Lord and His affairs, not having to please a spouse. His reasoning is often ignored. Brierly mentions some reasons why married missionaries leave their fields prematurely. Yet, the decision to marry or not has to do with people’s capability of self-control or having a gift, possibly of celibacy.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ 1 Cor. 1:10 & John 13:34,35; 17:11b,21-23

³⁰⁵ 1 Cor. 1:14-16; 2:4,5

³⁰⁶ 1:18,23; Luke 9:23; 1 Cor. 2:2

³⁰⁷ 1:26-28; 2:1,3

³⁰⁸ 7:32-34; Brierly, in ‘Taylor *Too valuable to lose*’ ... 1997:92-94. Reasons include e.g. children, marriage outside the missions agency, marriage/family conflict; 1 Cor. 7:7,9

The principle of becoming all things to all men³⁰⁹ speaks about the cultural adjustments missionaries need to learn before they can present the gospel in a culturally relevant way.

Read Paul's words about hair, dress and covering³¹⁰ in the context of restoring unity in the church, and do *not* explain them as cultural absolutes for all times and places. The issue is to stay within the boundaries of generally accepted cultural norms of decency and modesty. Paul brought them up to re-unite the church. In our time it can only divide the church when such issues are *not* felt needs but are brought up anyway, with a desire to create uniformity, according to cultural habits and practices of times and places, other than ours. Therefore, cross-cultural workers must be careful and knowledgeable of their host-people, before they address cultural issues, differing from their own.

Paul mentions three tools to repair unity: there is no division in the Trinity, neither in the workings of the Spirit, nor in the Body of Christ. The fact that God gives everyone a place and function in the Body should bring the Corinthians to relaxation and contentment. Differences should be celebrated, not be fought over. Divisions eliminate love; disciples will not be recognized and their mission remains undone.³¹¹

Love moved the Father to send the Son to save the world; it motivated the Son to lay down His life for it³¹² and a missionary to leave his comforts to preach the gospel to the unsaved. Quality and character of such love is described in chapter 13, between the Holy Spirit chapters of Principles and Practice.³¹³

³⁰⁹ 9:19-22

³¹⁰ 11:1-16

³¹¹ 12:4-6, 7-11 & 12-27 respectively; 3:5b; 12:18,28; 1:10; 11:17,18; 13:1-13; 14:24,25

³¹² John 3:16 & 10:15b respectively

³¹³ Chapters 12 and 14 respectively

In addition to what is taught about clear communication of the gospel *in church* so that believers are edified and unbelievers come to repentance,³¹⁴ the chapter teaches on cross-cultural communication of the gospel *on foreign mission fields*.³¹⁵

The question of the ‘silent woman’ has been blown out of proportion. The context suggests that women should refrain from asking disruptive questions during church services, but rather ask their husbands at home. Had Paul insisted on total silence from women, he would neither have allowed them to pray or prophecy, nor worked with them as his co-laborers.³¹⁶

Belief in Christ’s bodily resurrection, then of His people, and finally of all others is a non-negotiable. Denying Christ’s resurrection is not smart: it is a historic fact, witnessed by too many to be fake. Denying a resurrection for all who expect salvation from Christ, takes away the core of the gospel and makes faith futile.³¹⁷ Either one has the gospel including the resurrection, or one has nothing. The resurrection must have a prominent place in preaching, in local evangelism and in cross-cultural missions, just like in Acts and the epistles.

While ministering in Ephesus, a great door was opened for Paul but he also faced opposition. These are normal occurrences for who plants the gospel where it has not yet been preached.³¹⁸ In 2 Corinthians we look at Paul’s sufferings for his ministry.

Consider Paul’s ‘member-care’: Corinth is exhorted to treat Timothy well. Paul did have hard times with them, and did not want Timothy to suffer similarly. When Corinthian leaders visited Paul we see member-care again:³¹⁹ they blessed him materially and spiritually. Missionaries need friendship and attention, especially from whom they serve.

³¹⁴ 1 Cor. 14:1-25

³¹⁵ 14:4b,5,12b,19 & 24,25 respectively, and e.g. 14:9-11,19,21a

³¹⁶ 14:34,35 & 11:5 respectively; see also Rom. 16:3-12

³¹⁷ Well proven by the gospels and Acts; see also e.g. 1 Thess. 4:16,17;

Rev. 20:11-15; 1 Cor. 15:3-7,51,52,12-19

³¹⁸ 16:9; Acts 19; Rom. 15:20

³¹⁹ 1 Cor. 16:10,11,16,17

The curse over whoever does not love the Lord³²⁰ reinforces the gospel's seriousness. There is only one way of salvation. The church must prioritize her mission more than it does now.

Study Questions

1. *Give at least three reasons why missionaries should not engage in leadership roles in the churches they planted*
2. *Which two key elements are contained by the message of the cross?*
3. *What does it mean to 'become all things to all men'?*
4. *Does the Bible teach cultural absolutes for all times and places? Motivate your answer with some examples*
5. *Should women be silent in church? Motivate your answer*
6. *Which key-Christian doctrine was preached regularly in the early days, and is emphasized by Paul in this letter?*
7. *Briefly formulate what you learn in this letter about member-care*

³²⁰ 16:22a

5. *Second Corinthians*

A theme of major importance in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is that of apostolic suffering. That topic will be dealt with specifically in volume IIB, chapter II#5. In this entry we look at *eighteen* more general missiological issues.

Paul had found an open door for ministry in Troas, but left the city when he had no peace of mind because of Titus' absence.³²¹ Later in this letter we understand why. He was less worried about Titus than about the situation in Corinth, where he had sent him. The reason was his own strained relationship with that church. When Paul went to Macedonia and met Titus there with good news from Corinth, his peace of mind returned.³²² Relationships under stress prevented even him from being able to enjoy God-given open doors for ministry!

There is comfort for missionaries who struggle to learn a local language and are still unable to express themselves well. The solution is to be Christ's aroma.³²³ If our attitudes, characters and behavior are friendly, loving and compassionate, people can 'smell Christ' in us before we can explain about Him and His work in words. A similar analogy is: being 'a letter of Christ ... legible for everybody'.³²⁴ It shows that *being* precedes *doing* and *walk* precedes *talk*. People will notice the Spirit's work through you, even without words.

When, as missionaries, we have maneuvered successfully through the minefield of complicated cross-cultural challenges, we can only say that our competence is God's work in us,³²⁵ and His gifting. It is a miracle and not something to boast about.

Missionaries have to realize that, after all that was done to lead people to Christ, there will still be those whose eyes are veiled against spiritual things and who will harden their hearts.³²⁶

³²¹ 2 Cor. 2:12,13

³²² 7:5-16

³²³ 2:15

³²⁴ 3:2,3

³²⁵ 3:5,6

³²⁶ 4:3

The real enemy who blinds the unbelieving mind is the god of this age,³²⁷ inspiring all opposition against Christ's Kingdom. Spiritual warfare must not be neglected,³²⁸ especially where the Kingdom's borders are extended by reaching the unreached.

In preaching Christ, we affirm His uniqueness and only way of salvation.³²⁹ There is no other way. Compromising that truth equals destroying the need for world missions.

Related to this, Paul shows an analogy with creation. Light drives away darkness, like Christ, the Light of the world, drives the darkness away from people's hearts, and re-creates them into His image.

Similarly, He sends His missionaries into the darkness: 'As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you'.³³⁰ This verse links the letter's Christology with its missiology.

'Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade man'³³¹ plays down 'compromise outreach'. *Presence-evangelism*, (just being around as Christians) will not do. Neither is *proclamation-evangelism* (just preaching) enough. Relationship-based *persuasion-evangelism* is needed. This is dialogue, almost arguing with people, trying to persuade them. Of course only the Holy Spirit can really persuade people.³³² But if we fear the Lord and are convinced of His right, we will try harder to save people. Paul states that Christ's love compels us:³³³ He died for us and therefore we should take evangelism and missions more seriously, imploring people to become reconciled to God through Christ. This *ministry of reconciliation* is entrusted to us.³³⁴

We must urgently wake up to the 'now-aspect'³³⁵ of world missions. The era of grace will not last forever.³³⁶ Countries are closing for the gospel.

³²⁷ 4:4

³²⁸ Eph. 6:10-20

³²⁹ 2 Cor. 4:4b; John 14:6

³³⁰ 4:6; Gen. 1:3; John 1:4,5,7,9; 8:12; 12:46; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 20:21

³³¹ 2 Cor. 5:11

³³² John 16:8

³³³ 2 Cor. 5:14

³³⁴ 5:15,19,20

³³⁵ 6:2

³³⁶ John 9:4

Persecution increases.³³⁷ Certain judgments occur already. We must prioritize eternal matters as long as ‘now’ lasts. A night comes in which no one can work.³³⁸

Genuine repentance shows by people’s grief over their sins.³³⁹ Emotional conversions are not wrong; it is logical that people who see themselves and their sins in the light of God’s holiness burst into tears. Yet, tears do not prove true repentance. Fruit seen afterwards, does.³⁴⁰

Christ, rich before His incarnation, *became poor for our sakes* by becoming man, and to identify with the poor.³⁴¹ Why then do many missionaries today think they cannot do their work without plenty of material means? The poor often have a hard time identifying with missionaries who live on much higher levels of affluence than they do. These missionaries, especially those who pump much money into their fields regularly, may confuse *the Good News* with that of the monetary relief they bring. Christ’s miracles of provision were occasional, not structural – in fact He *refused* to be structural in that respect.³⁴² Paul worked according to the same principle.

Paul describes the personal responsibility for a ministry:³⁴³ in this case he rejoices that Titus has the same enthusiasm and initiative as he has himself. Paul had not imposed that on Titus; the Lord put it into his heart.

Paul hopes that the faith of the Corinthians will grow, so that his area of activity from them will expand. In other words: when the faith of the Corinthians grows, quality is added to Paul’s ministerial accomplishments. This means that there is less need for him to work among *them*, and he can concentrate on the evangelization of areas *beyond*.³⁴⁴

³³⁷ Matt. 24:9,21

³³⁸ John 9:4

³³⁹ 2 Cor. 7:9

³⁴⁰ Matt. 3:8; Rom. 10:9,10

³⁴¹ 2 Cor. 8:9

³⁴² John 6:27

³⁴³ 2 Cor. 9:16,17

³⁴⁴ 10:15,16

Paul is as concerned about preaching the gospel where it had not yet been preached³⁴⁵ as about his quality of work. This is expressed in ‘I promised you to ... Christ ... as a pure virgin’.³⁴⁶ He was concerned, because the Corinthians were so easily deceived and urged them to aim for perfection – a desire that he turned into prayer.³⁴⁷

Paul accepted no funds from the Corinthians among whom he worked.³⁴⁸ He worked free of charge, ‘not being a burden ... in any way’. But he gladly accepted support from *Macedonian* churches, when working among *Corinthians*, or from *Corinthians*, when working in *Ephesus*.³⁴⁹ ‘Free of charge’ seems largely forgotten today. It means: do not count on or ask for human support; rely on the Lord alone for all personal and ministerial needs. Be a burden to none, especially people you minister to, so that the gospel may spread unhindered.³⁵⁰

The principle of ‘more suffering’ pleads *for* the legitimacy of true apostolic ministry, *not against* it.³⁵¹ In human *strength* God’s power cannot manifest itself but in *weakness* it does.³⁵² Human weakness is the *basis* for God’s operative power, *not a proof against* a ministry’s legitimacy. This is what the false apostles failed and still fail to understand and accept.

Greater knowledge of and intimacy with God³⁵³ has a price. The more we participate in His resurrection power, the more we share in His sufferings.³⁵⁴ These may come in the form of satanic oppression. If prayers for relief are not answered, we know that God has His reasons.³⁵⁵

³⁴⁵ Rom. 15:20; 2 Cor. 10:15,16

³⁴⁶ 11:2

³⁴⁷ 11: 3,4,20,28; 12:9b,20,21; 13:11a

³⁴⁸ 11:7-10

³⁴⁹ 1 Cor. 16:8,17

³⁵⁰ 9:12b

³⁵¹ 2 Cor. 11:24-27

³⁵² 12:9

³⁵³ 12:2-4

³⁵⁴ Phil. 3:10

³⁵⁵ 2 Cor. 12:7-9

The marks of an apostle are signs, wonders and miracles.³⁵⁶ Too many people love to call themselves apostles, in whose ministries these characteristics lack. They make a joke of the Lord and of themselves. The world is not helped by such conceit.

Materialism has contaminated missionary thinking. Can we truly say to the people we minister to: ‘what we want is not your possessions but you’? Paul was willing to *spend* his funds on the Corinthians, not *gain* from them and expected the same of his co-workers. Yet, some think they can follow materialistic ways with impunity. Is our main concern to live from the gospel as is our *right*, or is it *rather* never to hinder its spreading by *attaining* to that right? Preaching the gospel free of charge is a reward in itself. There is nothing against receiving *unsolicited* gifts – in fact, allowing people to give adds to their spiritual accounts. Also, gospel ministers should be the first to testify by their own experience that ‘*God* is able to make *all* grace abound ... so that in *all* things at *all* times [they] have *all* they need ...’.³⁵⁷

Finally, Paul speaks of his authority:³⁵⁸ exercising discipline among his church members. He would rather *not* use it, but at the same time not shun confrontation when necessary. What about us? Are we so peace-loving that we would let injustice have its way rather than confront its perpetrators? Or leave it to local leaders? Neither the fear of man³⁵⁹ nor our non-confrontational cultures should jeopardize the less popular parts of our ministries.

³⁵⁶ 12:12

³⁵⁷ 2 Cor. 12:13-18; 1 Cor. 9:12,14,15,18; 2 Cor. 2:17; 6:3,10b; 11:7,9; Phil. 4:17;
2 Cor. 9:8 (italics mine)

³⁵⁸ 13:2b,10

³⁵⁹ Prov. 29:25

Study Questions

1. *What comfort is there for missionaries who do not yet master the local language?*
2. *Explain the difference between 'presence-evangelism', 'proclamation-evangelism' and 'persuasion-evangelism'. Which one did Paul use?*
3. *What proves true repentance?*
4. *Why should missionaries operate on the same level of affluence as their host-population?*
5. *What principle did Paul use for acceptance (or not) of support gifts?*
6. *Is suffering a proof for or against the legitimacy of missionary ministry?*
7. *Why may 'a thorn in the flesh' be granted to missionaries?*
8. *Briefly explain Paul's philosophy behind his practice to preach the gospel free of charge*

6. *Romans*

In this book I observe *twelve* issues that I share here with you:

Paul gives two criteria for true salvation: confessing Jesus' lordship with the mouth and believing with the heart that God raised Him from the dead.³⁶⁰ This goes beyond raising one's hand or walking to the altar after a call to repentance. Whether Paul's conditions are met can only be verified in personal follow-up sessions. Anything less leads to self-deception.

He gives a perfect model for preaching the gospel locally and mono-culturally (evangelism) as well as cross-culturally (missions) to the unreached: 'how can they believe, if they haven't heard or hear without preaching, and how can someone preach if he wasn't *sent*?'³⁶¹ In other words: no evangelist or missionary can or should work on his own, but should be sent by the church. Therefore, a church that shirks its responsibilities in this regard fails to fulfill the very reason for its existence, namely to reach the world for Christ.

Working hard at the evangelization of the Gentiles and thereby making the Jews envious, is one of Paul's major tactics in reaching the latter and leads them to accept the gospel.³⁶² The principle stretches a lot further though, and should not be limited to Jews; Jesus already taught us about making people envious through the Christian love and unity among us.³⁶³

Jesus said that 'the first will be last and the last will be first'.³⁶⁴ Throughout His ministry the Jews were the first to receive the gospel, even though the majority rejected it. Then the message continued to the Gentiles and only after their full number has been saved will the Jews accept it at a larger scale.³⁶⁵ The basis for this grace is God's promises to the Patriarchs.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁰ Rom. 10:9,10

³⁶¹ 10:14,15 (my paraphrase and italics)

³⁶² 11:11,14

³⁶³ John 13:35; 17:23

³⁶⁴ Matt. 19:30 & 20:16 – both verses frame the parable of the vineyard workers

³⁶⁵ Rom. 11:25,27

³⁶⁶ 11:28,29

When Paul says that ‘God has bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all’³⁶⁷ *he does not mean that everybody will be saved*. That would imply a doctrine of universalism, which would be a hybrid element to Paul’s teaching. What he *does* mean, is that God’s offer of mercy should be *made available to all*. None is to be excluded.³⁶⁸

Dealing with the weak and the strong³⁶⁹ must *also* be read from a *missiological* perspective where differences in opinion that surface from diverse cultural backgrounds need to be taken into account. On mission fields, differing cultural opinions can become major stumbling blocks between nationals and cross-cultural missionaries, also when the latter work in multi-cultural teams. Different cultural biases often present barriers in world missions. Rome’s multi-cultural society was also reflected in the church. Paul’s principles³⁷⁰ stretch much further than eating meat or drinking wine: we should not please ourselves, and so cause our brothers to stumble over cultural, social or spiritual differences.

All of us will be subject to God’s judgment.³⁷¹ From an evangelism- and missions-perspective (apart from the direct context not to judge *one another*) this should be an encouragement for us to take the gospel to literally every person.

Making the gospel known where it is unavailable, in other words: giving priority to the unreached and least reached, is a Pauline principle³⁷² that has to rule world missions today as well. All too often missionary effort is directed to places where the gospel can be heard a hundred times a day, while those who have never heard it even once, are neglected.

Paul did not settle in known or comfortable areas, nor did he ever assume local leadership. A true missionary keeps moving. He had worked from Jerusalem via Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece to Illyricum (Albania and the Croatian coast).

³⁶⁷ 11:32

³⁶⁸ 2 Pet. 3:9

³⁶⁹ Rom. 14

³⁷⁰ 14:1-15:7

³⁷¹ 14:10-12 – a judgment of our works, *not* of our faith

³⁷² 15:20,21

This was a huge area and it must have satisfied Paul to be able to say that ‘there is no more work for me in these regions’.³⁷³ Therefore he looked at areas where he had not been yet, i.e. Spain.

Paul felt free to ask the Romans’ assistance for his trip to Spain – although he probably never got there. He did not specify that assistance, but did ask for prayer.³⁷⁴ He refused to detach his missionary work from church-involvement.

He shares the principle, that *recipients* of the gospel (i.e. Gentiles) should share their material means with its *senders* (i.e. Jews).³⁷⁵ Paul elaborates on this several times in other letters.

The fact that the gospel must be made known to all peoples is a mystery for most church leaders today. If world missions is to receive the place it deserves, divine revelation is needed for them, so that what remained the church’s poor side-show³⁷⁶ will become her major thrust.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ 15:23,24. Paul did not mean that *every person* had heard the gospel, but that *every different people group* had been reached. See J. Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1993/2007:179-181; 192-195; 208

³⁷⁴ Rom. 15:30,31

³⁷⁵ 15:26,27

³⁷⁶ Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, Chosen Books, New York, 1991:237,238

³⁷⁷ Rom. 16:25,26

Study Questions

1. *Which two criteria does Paul give for salvation?*
2. *What is the Church's main reason for her existence?*
3. *How does Paul's teaching about the weak and the strong relate to the two different cross-cultural relationships: that of the missionary toward his host population and that of different nationalities among missionaries themselves?*
4. *In which 2 verses in Romans do we see Paul's desire to give priority to the unreached?*
5. *Do you agree with Paul that a missionary should not assume local leadership? Why or why not?*
6. *What did Paul mean when he stated that there was 'no more work for me in these regions' (15:23,24)?*

7. *Colossians*

Paul had a worldwide missions vision,³⁷⁸ in contrast to many missionaries today who know little beyond their own ministries; some are not even interested in what others do. Paul was interested in all fruit, not only in his own ministry in Ephesus, but also in that of Epaphras in the Lycus Valley.³⁷⁹ Although the Colossians were not the fruit of his own ministry, Paul definitely took partner-responsibility, in that he prayed for them earnestly.³⁸⁰ His prayer included the ‘bearing of fruit in every good work’ – in which he indicates outreach in local evangelism as well as in cross-cultural missions.³⁸¹

Encouragement to reach out lies in the ‘once enemies but now reconciled by Christ’.³⁸² People, remembering their former misery, will have compassion with those still in it.

The words ‘if [you are] ... not moved’³⁸³ indicate that the gospel is not a cheap message that, once accepted, will guarantee eternal benefits even if neglected. You can lose it. This becomes clear from the exhortation to ‘work out your salvation with fear and trembling’³⁸⁴ and from other passages.³⁸⁵ Paul was as concerned about discipling his converts as about making converts; he did not want his efforts to be in vain.³⁸⁶

His observation that ‘... the gospel ... you heard ... has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven’³⁸⁷ was not meant to indicate that he considered the great commission as finished.

³⁷⁸ Col. 1:6

³⁷⁹ Acts 19 & Col. 1:7 respectively

³⁸⁰ 1:9

³⁸¹ 1:6-10

³⁸² 1:21,22

³⁸³ 1:23

³⁸⁴ Philip. 2:12

³⁸⁵ Ez. 18:24; Hebr. 6:4-6

³⁸⁶ 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 2:2 & 4:11

³⁸⁷ Col. 1:23b

There was still work to be done, as he said in other letters too.³⁸⁸ Saving people costs suffering from Christ's workers.³⁸⁹ Some believe that the more Paul bore suffering himself, the more his fellow-believers would be spared.³⁹⁰

Paul resisted every form of exclusivism. Some believers thought that they were better, i.e. more spiritual, than others, but he aimed at presenting '*everyone with all wisdom so that everyone [might be] perfect in Christ*';³⁹¹ this meant a real struggle for him.³⁹²

Paul was serious about discipling converts as part of his missionary follow-up program,³⁹³ and sums up some aspects: encouragement of heart; unification in love; complete understanding of Christ in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; living in Christ; being rooted and built up in Him; strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness. People who have been taught well in these areas will not easily be deceived.

In stating that there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but [that] Christ is all and is in all,³⁹⁴ Paul says that former unbelievers and believers can only be united in Christ; that doctrinal and educational differences between believers can only be solved in Christ;³⁹⁵ and that social and societal differences can only disappear in Him. Only in Jesus such walls of enmity will be broken down.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁸ E.g. in 2 Cor. 10:15,16 and Rom. 15:23,24. Even when imprisoned in Rome he had not yet visited Spain and might still contemplate going there after his expected release, Philip. 1:19,25,26; 2:24

³⁸⁹ Col. 1:24; Philip. 3:10

³⁹⁰ O'Brien, referring to 2 Cor. 4:12, in Hawthorne, Martin & Reid, *Dictionary of St. Paul and his Letters*, 1993:625

³⁹¹ Col. 1:28 (italics mine); Paul expresses similar thoughts in 2:2,3,10 ('full', 'complete', 'all', 'fullness')

³⁹² 1:29; 2:1

³⁹³ 2:2-4,6,7

³⁹⁴ 3:11

³⁹⁵ That is if we define 'barbarians' as simple, uneducated people and Scythians as 'technically sophisticated nomad people' (as in Reicke & Rost, *Bijbels-historisch woordenboek*, V, 1970:53)

³⁹⁶ Eph. 2:14-22. A similar thought was expressed in Gal. 3:28, where 'male and female' are added

Paul asks for prayer to support his ministry, for open doors³⁹⁷ and for the competence to explain the mystery of Christ clearly, as he asked earlier.³⁹⁸ He also asks the Colossians to pray for grace for him to endure his imprisonment.³⁹⁹

Later he encourages them to behave and converse wisely, so that they may keep their good witness and use the opportunities to testify about their faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁰ Presumably he refers here to local, relationship-oriented evangelism.

Missionaries need to keep in touch with their sending churches.⁴⁰¹ These need to remain informed about what is going on at the mission fields and with the missionaries, so these churches can persevere in intercession.⁴⁰² Implied is Paul's desire to remain posted about how the churches are doing. Church-mission relationships should be bilateral.

An early missionary attrition case, John Mark, who left the ministry 12-14 years earlier was now reconciled to Paul and probably back in the work of the gospel.⁴⁰³

Mark and Jesus (Justus) were Paul's Jewish co-workers for the Kingdom and had been a comfort to him. Within cross-cultural ministry there can be much-needed comfort in mono-cultural friendships, especially when people are ministerial colleagues.

Paul praises his co-worker Epaphras before the church the latter had planted. There was no jealousy or competition in Paul, just enjoyment about his colleague's success. Paul's interest was in *the* Kingdom, not his own.

³⁹⁷ Col. 4:3,4

³⁹⁸ 1:26,27; 2:3

³⁹⁹ 4:3,18

⁴⁰⁰ 4:5,6

⁴⁰¹ 4:7-9

⁴⁰² 4:2-4

⁴⁰³ Acts 13:13; Col. 4:10,11

Some missionary pioneers are not good at finishing what they started; hence the exhortation Paul addresses indirectly to Archippus to complete his work.⁴⁰⁴

Study Questions

1. *Does Paul believe in 'once saved, always saved'? Motivate your answer with Scripture passages*
2. *Mention some topics in Paul's discipling program*
3. *Christ can break down all walls of enmity. Which ones were specifically mentioned in the above text?*
4. *Why do missionaries have to keep in touch with their sending churches?*

⁴⁰⁴ 4:17

8. *Philemon*

Paul wrote the letter to Philemon as well as those to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians during his 1st Roman imprisonment⁴⁰⁵. Timothy was with him during that time⁴⁰⁶ except when he wrote to the Ephesians. Paul expected to be released.

Philemon lived in Colossae,⁴⁰⁷ where he probably led a house church.⁴⁰⁸ Epaphras ministered there⁴⁰⁹ during Paul's time in Ephesus.⁴¹⁰ Philemon seems to have found the Lord through Paul's ministry,⁴¹¹ possibly in the hall of Tyrannus.⁴¹² This explains Paul's intercession for him.⁴¹³ Whether Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus his son is not certain.

The epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon are related: both were written from Rome, addressed to the same church, delivered by Tychicus,⁴¹⁴ mentioning Paul's circumstances in jail⁴¹⁵ and have almost identical personal greetings.⁴¹⁶

This letter deals with Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus,⁴¹⁷ who visited Paul in Rome, by whom he came to know Christ.⁴¹⁸ Paul seeks to restore the relationship between master and servant⁴¹⁹ and to recruit Onesimus into missionary service by motivating Philemon to become his sender.⁴²⁰

⁴⁰⁵ 60-62 AD; Philemon:22

⁴⁰⁶ Philip. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon:1 as in contrast to Eph. 1:1

⁴⁰⁷ As implied in Col. 4:9

⁴⁰⁸ Philemon:2

⁴⁰⁹ Col. 1:7,8; 4:12,13

⁴¹⁰ 52-55 AD

⁴¹¹ Philemon:19b

⁴¹² Acts 19:9

⁴¹³ Philemon:4-6

⁴¹⁴ Col. 4:8,9

⁴¹⁵ 4:3; Philemon:1,13

⁴¹⁶ Patzia, in Hawthorne, Martin & Reid, *Dictionary of St. Paul and his Letters* 1993:704

⁴¹⁷ His name means 'useful'

⁴¹⁸ Philemon:10-18

⁴¹⁹ :17,18

⁴²⁰ :13,14,20,21

This writing is the shortest and most personal of the *Corpus Paulinum*⁴²¹, although it is also addressed to the church.⁴²² No doctrinal issues or heresies are addressed; that was done in the letter to the Colossians.

Paul encourages Philemon to share his faith⁴²³ through local evangelism – not only to win people for Christ but also because it stimulates growth in spiritual understanding.⁴²⁴

With his request, Paul chose not to use apostolic authority – although he had the right to do so.⁴²⁵ He opted for a loving, diplomatic approach,⁴²⁶ naughtily throwing imprisonment and age⁴²⁷ into the game. Kind requests are harder to refuse than apostolic orders.

It was obvious and logical that Onesimus could not stay with Paul because Philemon owned him and therefore Paul had to send him back.⁴²⁸ Yet Paul would love to recruit his new brother as co-worker and makes this clear by requesting Philemon, the church leader, to now become a missionary *sender*.⁴²⁹ Such a thing cannot be forced:⁴³⁰ there must be willingness in a sending church to let its missionaries go.

Paul talks about a partnership between sender and sent one, between church and missionary, one that has practical and logistical implications,⁴³¹ where the sender facilitates the sent one, or where the settled one helps the traveler.⁴³² Itinerant missionaries cannot function well without facilitation.

⁴²¹ The complete body of Paul's letters

⁴²² Philemon: 2

⁴²³ :6a

⁴²⁴ :6b

⁴²⁵ :8,19b

⁴²⁶ :7a,9

⁴²⁷ He was probably approaching the age of 70 at that time

⁴²⁸ Philemon:12,14

⁴²⁹ :13,20,21

⁴³⁰ :14

⁴³¹ :17,22

⁴³² See e.g. Titus 3:13

Future missionaries should be treated as veterans are treated⁴³³ and there should be no favoring of persons. The once-a-slave newcomer should be treated with equal respect to the ones that have been around for a long time.

Study Questions

1. *Give a small biography of Philemon*
2. *Explain to which letter the one to Philemon is related and why*
3. *What did Paul have in mind for Onesimus?*
4. *Explain why Paul rather used diplomacy in his request, than apostolic authority and how he did this*
5. *Paul actually asks Philemon to become Onesimus' ...*
6. *How should new arrivals on the mission fields be treated?*

⁴³³ Philemon:17b

9. *Ephesians*

Few passages in Paul's letters describe the beauty of God's character and His salvation plan in Christ as exhaustively as the first two chapters of Ephesians do.⁴³⁴ The new life believers receive, contrasts strongly with their former lives.⁴³⁵ This should be a major motivation to preach the good news everywhere. It is no coincidence that the verse about us being 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do'⁴³⁶ is placed between this contrast in life-styles and the revelation that Jews and Gentiles have both become partakers in the gospel.⁴³⁷ In other words: as bridging text, 2:10 is of missiological significance: God's beauty and His message (1:3-22 & 2:4-9) is contrasted to the gentile way of life (2:1-3 & 4:17-19).

The Church must make this message known to all generations.⁴³⁸ That is world missions. God's wisdom finds manifold expression in the Church. This many-colored outlook should be celebrated rather than cause division. God's wisdom must not only be made known to all people of all places and all times, but even the rulers and authorities in heavenly places must learn of the width, length, height and depth of Christ's love⁴³⁹ by perceiving it from the Church. They watch and learn from what they see among us.

Christ does not only break down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile.⁴⁴⁰ Contemporary missiological interpretation sees Him also as breaking down barriers between genders, races, tribes, social and educational classes as well as of walls between church denominations. The latter is summarized in the sevenfold 'one' (body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father).⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁴ Eph. 1:3-22 & 2:4-9

⁴³⁵ 2:1-3 & 4:17-19

⁴³⁶ 2:10

⁴³⁷ 2:11 – 3:9

⁴³⁸ 3:10,21

⁴³⁹ 3:18,19

⁴⁴⁰ 2:14

⁴⁴¹ 4:4-6

There seems to be little scriptural support for the thought that Christ led *hostile* spiritual prisoners of war on his way to heaven.⁴⁴² More consistent with the rest of Scripture is that He, Who came to set the captives free,⁴⁴³ also led those He had liberated from bondage to Satan and death, with Him to heaven.⁴⁴⁴ This is consistent with what David said in one of his Psalms: 'He leads forth the prisoners with singing' and the verse quoted in Ephesians a little further.⁴⁴⁵ They were Satan's captives, now liberated, on their way to heaven with their Redeemer. We as His people received the same commission: to liberate people by the gospel message and take them with us to heaven. This is world evangelization, in line with what the great Missionary did Himself.

Evangelism and missions is Christ's initiative. He instituted the ministries of evangelists and apostles.⁴⁴⁶ They are to equip the saints for ministry;⁴⁴⁷ in other words: they have to train other evangelists and apostles to carry the gospel farther.⁴⁴⁸ This grossly neglected truth is similar to the generally accepted principle that pastors are needed to train other pastors and that teachers usually train other teachers. Why then is it that evangelistic, and even more so specialized apostolic cross-cultural missionary training, has almost entirely disappeared from the curriculae of most of our theological training institutions?

Missions will never function well without intercession for missionaries: they need to speak the right words and have an attitude of fearlessness.⁴⁴⁹ More than this will not be said about the use of the spiritual armor in missions, because the topic of spiritual warfare surpasses the disciplines of evangelism and missions. As such its treatise can be found in many theological study books.

⁴⁴² 4:8, as Reid states, in Hawthorne, Martin & Reid, *Dictionary of St. Paul and his Letters*, 1993:754

⁴⁴³ Isaiah 61:1 as quoted in Luke 4:18

⁴⁴⁴ Compare e.g. Matt. 27:52,53 (righteous people, held captive by death, were now liberated by Jesus)

⁴⁴⁵ Ps. 68:6,18; Eph. 4:8

⁴⁴⁶ 4:11

⁴⁴⁷ 4:12

⁴⁴⁸ Compare e.g. with 2 Tim. 2:2

⁴⁴⁹ Eph. 6:19,20

One specific term we *do* need to look at – it occurs seven times in the epistle to the Ephesians, out of a total of 21 times in all of Paul’s letters – is the word *mystery*. The Greek word *μυστηριον* (*musterion*) means a hidden thing, a secret, a mystery. In the New Testament it means: what is not understood until revealed by God. This is how Paul uses the word: it was hidden in the past, but has now been revealed. The seven occurrences of this word we see in:

The *mystery of His will*, namely to bring everything in heaven and on earth together under one head, Christ,⁴⁵⁰ was revealed to Paul⁴⁵¹ and therefore he got insight into that *mystery of Christ*,⁴⁵² namely that Gentiles are heirs with Israel, members of one body and sharers in the promise of Christ Jesus⁴⁵³ of which Paul was an administrator⁴⁵⁴ and which he had to make known without fear.⁴⁵⁵ The *mystery of unity between Jews and Gentiles* in one church, *and Christ*, is pictured by the *unity between husband and wife*.⁴⁵⁶

The use of the mystery concept is of missiological significance: unity among all men in Christ under His Lordship, is the basic message of God that has to be preached as far as the ends of the earth.

⁴⁵⁰ 1:9,10

⁴⁵¹ 3:3

⁴⁵² 3:4

⁴⁵³ 3:6

⁴⁵⁴ 3:9

⁴⁵⁵ 6:19

⁴⁵⁶ 5:32

Study Questions

1. *Which two contrasting passages are connected by the missiological bridging text 2:10?*
2. *What is the function of God's manifold wisdom?*
3. *Mention at least six dividing walls of hostility between people that Christ wants to break down*
4. *What does Paul mean by the 'prisoners of war' he mentions in 4:8?*
5. *What training principle does Paul lay down in chapter 4 and what is its implication for missionaries?*
6. *Define the mystery of God's will, the mystery of Christ, and tell which mystery is symbolized by the husband/wife unity*

10. *Philippians*

Paul's involvement with church members is striking if we notice words like 'all', 'every' and 'always'.⁴⁵⁷ He was not a 'hit-and-run-evangelist' but one who engaged at a personal level with his converts.⁴⁵⁸ Cross-cultural outreach did not go at the cost of human relationships with Paul.

Only the church in Philippi partnered often with Paul to spread the gospel.⁴⁵⁹ Even today most churches do not care for missionaries or world missions as they should, thereby missing blessings that could be theirs.⁴⁶⁰

Paul was not merely interested in the number of converts; he wanted quality disciples, functioning as Kingdom ambassadors in unity, and not afraid to suffer opposition.⁴⁶¹ His radical gospel did not cater for lukewarm, spineless pseudo-Christianity.

Paul is confident that Christ can make straight hits with crooked sticks. This does not mean that he lowered his standards for true discipleship, but that what his opponents meant as trouble for him did not really affect him.⁴⁶²

His suffering ('chains') was an advantage for the gospel rather than a setback.⁴⁶³ More people were now confronted with the gospel than otherwise would have been the case. Paul's example of being a bold witness in prison prompted *most* of the brothers – apparently not *all* – to be more courageous in their witness.⁴⁶⁴ What will *we* do when our leaders suffer for the gospel?

Every missionary must fight to gain sufficient courage to come to the same acceptance as Paul, when he said that he would rather be with the Lord, but for reasons of ministerial fruitfulness decided that it would be better to

⁴⁵⁷ Phil. 1:3,4,7,8

⁴⁵⁸ 1 Thess. 2:7,8

⁴⁵⁹ Phil. 1:5; 4:10-14,18

⁴⁶⁰ Ps. 67:6,7; Phil. 4:17

⁴⁶¹ 1:9,10,27-30

⁴⁶² 1:15,17,18

⁴⁶³ 1:12,13

⁴⁶⁴ 1:14 (*italics mine*)

stay.⁴⁶⁵ However, after prayerful consideration he believed that he would soon be free again. Yet, he would not mind laying down his life.⁴⁶⁶

He encouraged his church members to contend as one man for the faith of the gospel.⁴⁶⁷ This shows that he did not leave local evangelism in the hands of the church leaders but expected all members to participate in outreach to their communities.

Paul sees suffering for the gospel as a gift, not only for himself as an apostle, but also for the church members.⁴⁶⁸ In Paul's theology there was no place for escapism with regard to carrying one's cross, among a half-hearted Christendom of mediocre commitment.

The desire to build one's own empire, rather than God's Kingdom, is a bad disease in missions. Paul gives an excellent remedy against that attitude: 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition ... in humility consider others better than yourselves ... do not only look for your own interest ... but also for that of others'.⁴⁶⁹ He continues to contrast such an attitude with the one Jesus had,⁴⁷⁰ which consisted of humility, servanthood and obedience. Attitude is choice, and when the greatest of all became the humblest, who has the right to exalt himself?

This brief passage shows how Jesus became a Missionary, crossing enormous barriers: He laid down His rights as Son of God; He left the sinlessness of heaven to live among sinners on earth and heaven's wealth to submit to poverty; He took on a human body with all its limitations; He chose to be a servant and consistently obeyed His Father until He was killed. No missionary, regardless of the many complicated barriers he has to cross to take the gospel elsewhere, will ever come close to the sacrifices *Jesus* made to save humanity.

⁴⁶⁵ 1:20-24

⁴⁶⁶ 1:24-26; 2:24,17

⁴⁶⁷ 1:27

⁴⁶⁸ 1:29,30

⁴⁶⁹ 2:3,4

⁴⁷⁰ 2:5-8

The rest of this passage⁴⁷¹ is the letter's Christological point of gravity: Jesus received the highest place and the most eminent name in the universe and eventually people of all times and places, living and dead alike, will submit to Him. There is no way around Jesus. Restoring our relationship with the Father, forgiveness of sins and our final redemption go only through Him; there will never be another way of salvation.

Following Him by being bright stars in a dark universe amidst a crooked and depraved generation, means laying down every darkness in our lives, by being blameless, pure and without fault.⁴⁷² *Being* precedes *doing*; *character* comes before *deeds*.

Key words in 2:17 are 'even if'. It shows total submission to God's will. Paul would gladly die for the gospel, should God so desire. He had reached Jesus' level of obedience to death: 'Father ... not as I will, but as You will'.⁴⁷³

Timothy was a missionary, entirely different from the 'empire builders' mentioned earlier: Paul speaks about him as having a genuine interest in the welfare of the Philippians.⁴⁷⁴ From the context we see that he is like a son and a friend, very much of one mind with Paul.

Chapter 2 describes another missionary, Epaphroditus.⁴⁷⁵ Willing to go where he was sent, either by his church or by Paul, he cared about the concerns his senders might have about his health and was willing to risk his life for the work of Christ. Paul says that he should receive honor for a well-completed assignment. Do we honor our sent ones when they return from their fields?

Paul warns against the evil influence of the 'mutilators of the flesh', probably referring to the circumcision group.⁴⁷⁶ He contrasts their teaching (salvation by works of the law) with salvation by grace through faith in

⁴⁷¹ 2:9-11

⁴⁷² 2:15

⁴⁷³ Matt. 26:39b,42b,44b

⁴⁷⁴ Phil. 2:20-22

⁴⁷⁵ 2:25-30

⁴⁷⁶ 3:2; Gal. 2:12

Christ.⁴⁷⁷ His concern is that this ‘other gospel’ is no gospel at all⁴⁷⁸ and it should not gain ground among his churches.

Years of missionary suffering, including the loss of things, getting detached from comforts, and seeing the uselessness of temporal things, helped Paul to only regard the eternal Lord and His work as worthwhile pursuing. The rest paled in comparison and became rubbish.⁴⁷⁹

Maturation in thinking made him future-oriented and gave him eschatological ‘speed’ in theology and lifestyle. This way of thinking is not typically apostolic: all spiritually mature people should eventually arrive at such total dedication to Christ.⁴⁸⁰

Having seen the advantages of Roman citizenship and on occasions owing his life to it,⁴⁸¹ he sees his heavenly citizenship⁴⁸² as the only thing that counts. Missionaries should not rely more on secular than on heavenly advantages.

Unity among ministry colleagues has a high priority with Paul, hence his plea with two women to come to agreement regarding differences of opinion. Earlier he said this to the whole church but suggests here that its leadership should set the example.⁴⁸³

Paul understood the fears and anxieties of missionary life well and knew what he talked about when he said ‘Do not be anxious about anything ... but pray for everything’.⁴⁸⁴

Missionary life is unpredictable and presents sometimes-unpleasant situations. Paul learned and taught to always *choose* for an attitude of contentment specifically with regard to provisions.

⁴⁷⁷ Phil. 3:9

⁴⁷⁸ Gal. 1:6,7

⁴⁷⁹ Phil. 3:7-10

⁴⁸⁰ 3:11-15a

⁴⁸¹ See e.g. Acts 16:37; 22:25-29; 25:10-12

⁴⁸² Phil. 3:20

⁴⁸³ 4:2 & 1:27

⁴⁸⁴ 4:6

What an example for missionaries, from one who never solicited funds for himself – and never accused God or man of letting him down in this area. Such an attitude makes one powerful.⁴⁸⁵

Lacking interest in material affluence, he could genuinely say to be interested more in the spiritual gain of his supporting churches than in any personal gain or comfort he might reap from them.⁴⁸⁶ May his attitude function as a searchlight to bare wrong motives that may be hidden in our own hearts, so that we can get rid of them.

Paul is not afraid to say that he is amply supplied.⁴⁸⁷ How often are we silent about our material blessings, fearing that this may cause people to diminish or stop their support of us? There is no clearer plea for a life of faith in God's sufficient supplies, than 'My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus'.⁴⁸⁸ When He pledges to do so, why do we solicit funds from lower authorities?

Study Questions

1. *What was the effect of Paul's imprisonment on the brothers in Rome?*
2. *Which verse shows that Paul expected all church members to participate in local evangelism?*
3. *Is suffering for the gospel only meant for missionaries? Motivate your answer with the relevant Scripture verse*
4. *What arguments does Paul raise against 'building your own ministerial empire'? Include the Scripture reference*
5. *Describe the 'cross-cultural barriers' Jesus had to cross in order to become God's Missionary (include the reference)*
6. *Explain this letter's Christological point of gravity*
7. *What strong character traits do we see in Epaphroditus?*
8. *How do you learn to regard all things as rubbish, if only you may know Christ better?*
9. *Why was Paul more interested in the spiritual gain of his donors than in their gifts?*

⁴⁸⁵ 4:11-13

⁴⁸⁶ Compare 3:7-10 with 4:14-17

⁴⁸⁷ 4:18

⁴⁸⁸ 4:19

11. *First Timothy*

Paul gives us alternative missionary-selection criteria, based on his experience as persecutor of the church. He states that God would rather have a zealous, unbelieving *ignoramus* than a decent but lukewarm pietist.⁴⁸⁹ Should we not pray more often for revolutionaries, terrorists and religious fundamentalists to come to Christ, and to be called to service in the Kingdom of God?

Paul instructs Timothy to minister with the spiritual gift he received during an occasion of dedication or ordination under the laying on of hands by the elders,⁴⁹⁰ through a prophetic word. It may have been the gift of evangelistic ministry but there are also definite *duties* coming with such an office,⁴⁹¹ although it should not be expected of any worker to continually work outside his combination of gifts. Staying within that mixture avoids burn-out.

The next issue is the tough one of church discipline. Hymenaeus and Alexander have been handed over to Satan.⁴⁹² We read about such a disciplinary action only once more.⁴⁹³ At that occasion the reason was *moral*, in this case it could have been *doctrinal*.⁴⁹⁴ When people have caused the destruction of faith of others in the church, the only drastic solution seems to be to separate them from the congregation that they have infested with their erroneous teaching. This ‘handing over’ can best be seen as excommunication, a placing outside the church,⁴⁹⁵ back into the world, Satan’s domain.⁴⁹⁶

Paul – the missionary himself – undertook the action in both cases, as founder of the congregations. His actions were probably meant as *remedial* rather than *punitive*.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁸⁹ 1 Tim. 1:12-16

⁴⁹⁰ 1:18; 4:14

⁴⁹¹ 2 Tim. 4:5

⁴⁹² 1 Tim. 1:19,20

⁴⁹³ 1 Cor. 5:5

⁴⁹⁴ Look at 2 Tim. 2:17,18

⁴⁹⁵ Compare with Jesus’ ruling in Matt. 18:17

⁴⁹⁶ See 2 Cor. 4:4

⁴⁹⁷ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles – An Introduction and Commentary*, 1977:68,69

Delivering people into the hands of Satan meant placing them outside the spiritual protection of the church to a place where (physical) harm might befall them⁴⁹⁸ to such an extent, that it was hoped that they would repent and return to Jesus Christ. It seems that such disciplinary action occurred more in churches that were newly planted by missionary pioneers than in older and more established ones.

Paul's admonishment to pray and intercede for all in authority is not only meant to please God, or for the church to lead a comfortable, unhindered life.⁴⁹⁹ The key lies in the next verse:⁵⁰⁰ [so that] 'all men ... be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth'. This applies not only to local evangelism but also to cross-cultural missions. Paul worked under different people groups as 'herald ... apostle ... and teacher ... to the Gentiles'.⁵⁰¹

He encourages and advises especially new missionaries, short-termers and first-term career workers who have no command of the target-people's language as yet.⁵⁰² As long as they do not master the local vernacular, they can still *set an example in life, love, faith and purity*.⁵⁰³ The other guidelines apply to workers who have adjusted sufficiently to their host culture.

Although Paul speaks about widows in chapter 5, many faith missionaries also find themselves in situations like that of the widow, by calling day and night to the Lord for help.⁵⁰⁴ Yet they must meet certain criteria to be entitled to support.⁵⁰⁵ Not all of them do however⁵⁰⁶ – which may not have to do much with physical age, in the case of missionaries, but rather with not functioning adequately.

⁴⁹⁸ Compare e.g. with Acts 5:1-11

⁴⁹⁹ 1 Tim. 2:1-3

⁵⁰⁰ 2:4, Similar to the thought, expressed in 2 Pet. 3:9

⁵⁰¹ 2:7

⁵⁰² 4:12,15,16

⁵⁰³ See also #5 of this chapter (Second Corinthians)

⁵⁰⁴ 5:5

⁵⁰⁵ 5:9,10

⁵⁰⁶ 5:11,14

Study Questions

1. *Give some reasons why we should pray that religious fanatics and terrorists should come to repentance*
2. *Why should Christian work ideally be done within the combination of gifts the workers have?*
3. *Explain the reasons and the expected outcome why some people were 'handed over to Satan' by Paul*
4. *Give your opinion whether such a practice should be maintained in our time*
5. *Why does Paul admonish us to 'pray for all in authority'?*
6. *What can missionaries still do, although they don't master the local language yet?*

12. Titus

1 Timothy and Titus were written in the same period, after Paul's release from his 1st Roman imprisonment around 64-65 AD during a travel period and 2 Timothy during his 2nd and last incarceration.

We know less about Titus than we do about Timothy. The latter is mentioned twice as much in the New Testament. Titus, although he was a Greek, was not forced by the leaders in Jerusalem to be circumcised.⁵⁰⁷

They ministered in Crete together.⁵⁰⁸ Since we read nothing about this journey in Acts, we depend on Paul's letters for our data. After working at Crete, Paul travelled on and Titus stayed. It may have been either man's 2nd visit – depending on who planted the churches and when – seen that *between* these visits opponents of the gospel damaged the churches.⁵⁰⁹ Titus had to repair the damage and appoint leaders who could care for the flock, preventing such things to happen again.⁵¹⁰

Paul was in Miletus and Troas, respectively south and north of Ephesus at the Turkish west coast,⁵¹¹ possibly during the same trip. He asked Titus to come to Nicopolis,⁵¹² in the northwest of Greece. It is as if we see a fourth, post-Acts, missionary journey develop; what lacks however, is the order in which places were visited and the length of stay in each. Spain is not mentioned.

It was logical from a cultural perspective to let Titus minister on a Greek island: communicational differences would be minimal; a condition for sorting out the problems, described in chapter 1. For Titus this was E-1 ministry: local and mono-cultural. His effectiveness would not be hindered because of foreignness.

⁵⁰⁷ Gal. 2:1-3. Also see #1 of this chapter (Galatians), where this was explained

⁵⁰⁸ Tit. 1:5 'I *left* you in Crete' (italics mine)

⁵⁰⁹ 1:11,10

⁵¹⁰ 1:15,16

⁵¹¹ 2 Tim. 4:20,13

⁵¹² Tit. 3:15

The households Paul mentions were probably house churches, as we see in several references.⁵¹³

Paul was sufficiently acquainted with Cretan culture to know about its poets, quoting Epimenides (6th century BC), as *prophet*.⁵¹⁴ This indicates the importance of studying language and culture by the missionary of his or her target-people.

Teaching would be of little help if it had not been backed up by Titus setting a godly example.⁵¹⁵ *Doing* is nothing without *being*. The latter is the more effective weapon against opponents.

The most common people (slaves) can be successful evangelists if they are *trustworthy*, and so make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.⁵¹⁶

The verse about Jesus, purify[ing] for Himself a people,⁵¹⁷ is placed in the eschatological context of ‘the glorious appearing of ... Jesus Christ’⁵¹⁸ and reminds us of the ultimate vision for cross-cultural missionaries, namely the ‘multitude ... from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing ... in front of the Lamb’.⁵¹⁹ That is our goal. If we want to be strategic, this must be our measuring rod for or against certain ministerial activities.

Paul encouraged Titus to remind the church members ... to show true humility toward all men because ‘at one time *we too* ... were foolish’.⁵²⁰ ‘We too’ includes missionaries. Some who walk in faith for decades and minister on foreign fields for a long time, gradually adopt an attitude of arrogance toward sinners.⁵²¹ We must always remember our origin and not succumb to an ‘us and them’ outlook when we try to reach people.

⁵¹³ 1:11 and also e.g. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon:2 and implied in several other places

⁵¹⁴ Tit. 1:12; Richards, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, 1984:9,22; quoting the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, 15th edition, vol. 3, p. 924

⁵¹⁵ 2:1-8

⁵¹⁶ 2:10

⁵¹⁷ 2:14

⁵¹⁸ 2:13

⁵¹⁹ Rev. 7:9

⁵²⁰ Tit. 3:1-3 (*italics mine*)

⁵²¹ See e.g. Luke 15:1,2; 18:9-14

In one chapter Paul speaks three times about being ‘ready ... devoting ... to doing what is good’.⁵²² What 21st century, lukewarm Laodicea, Christendom lacks most is true commitment to Christ, His Kingdom and the ministry. It is seen in the shortage of workers on the mission field⁵²³ and in the church.

Titus likely made it to Nicopolis to spend the winter.⁵²⁴ Later, after being imprisoned again, Paul wrote ‘Titus [has gone] to Dalmatia’.⁵²⁵ This area, Croatia’s west coast, was the logical next step on a trip from Crete, via Greece’s mainland, farther north than Illyricum (Albania) where Paul preached before.⁵²⁶ It probably was their last winter together, before Paul was beheaded at Nero’s command.⁵²⁷

Study Questions

1. *What must have happened in the churches at Crete, that necessitated Titus’ continued ministry for a while? (Give references)*
2. *Explain why Titus was the obvious choice, to minister at the isle of Crete*
3. *How do we see that Paul was well-acquainted with Greek culture?*
4. *Why was it important for Titus to set a Godly example?*
5. *What should be the ultimate vision of every missionary? (Give a reference)*
6. *What is the reason that we have a perpetual shortage of workers, in church as well as on the mission fields?*

⁵²² Tit. 3:1,8,14

⁵²³ Matt. 9:37,38

⁵²⁴ Probably 65-66 AD

⁵²⁵ 2 Tim. 4:10b

⁵²⁶ Rom. 15:19

⁵²⁷ Probably in AD 68

13. *Second Timothy*

Paul prayed much for Timothy.⁵²⁸ Especially now that Paul was in prison, knowing he would not come out again, the success of his ‘son’s’ ministry became even more important to him. Do we pray for mission colleagues as fervently as for ourselves?

Paul’s tears might be about Timothy’s ministry in Ephesus where he faced opposition, and had difficulty operating his gifts.⁵²⁹ Paul often encouraged him to join him in suffering for the gospel.⁵³⁰ Maybe, paying that price was hard for him.⁵³¹ Timothy, used to work in Paul’s team, possibly found it difficult to work alone.

The verses ‘fan the gift into flame’, ‘God didn’t give us a spirit of timidity’, ‘do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord’ and ‘join with me in suffering’⁵³² suggest that Timothy was not as bold as Paul and may have felt inferior.⁵³³ The exhortation to do an evangelist’s work⁵³⁴ suggests that he lacked in that area. Was this because ‘all ... in ... Asia had already heard the Word ...’, or because Paul had preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum?⁵³⁵ Did Timothy consider the great commission as already finished? Did he forget that there were still ‘regions beyond’⁵³⁶ to evangelize?

Onesiphorus, possibly an Ephesian house church leader, gives a beautiful example of member care.⁵³⁷ He blessed missionaries with whatever they needed: physically, spiritually or emotionally. He provided such refreshment when Paul was present, but even travelled to Rome to ensure that he was well cared for. This teaches us that: missionaries need member care (‘he helped me’); the Lord rewards it (‘show mercy, because...’);

⁵²⁸ 2 Tim. 1:3b

⁵²⁹ 1:4a; 1 Tim. 4:12a; 1:18; 4:14,15; 2 Tim. 1:6-8a; 4:5

⁵³⁰ 4:8b; 2:3; 3:11,12

⁵³¹ In 3:11 Paul reminds Timothy of what happened, with regard to persecution in Acts 13 & 14

⁵³² 1:6-8

⁵³³ 1 Tim. 4:12a

⁵³⁴ 2 Tim. 4:5

⁵³⁵ Acts 19:10 and Rom. 15:19 respectively

⁵³⁶ 15:23,24; 2 Cor. 10:16

⁵³⁷ 2 Tim. 1:16-18

‘member care persons’ identify with workers (‘not ashamed’); it should happen regularly (‘often’); they sacrifice for it (‘he searched hard’) and persevere (‘until he found me’). This care costs time and money.

Paul evangelized, planted churches, but also recruited personnel, e.g. Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, etc. He showed that one should not only minister on his own – which *adds* fruit – but also encourage others to do so, which *multiplies* fruit. When he wrote ‘the things you heard me say ... entrust to *reliable* men, ... *qualified* to teach *others*’,⁵³⁸ he also pointed to church mobilization and personnel recruitment for local evangelism and cross-cultural *missions*.

Paul gives three analogies of missions ministry.⁵³⁹ *First*, he says that a soldier should not be involved in civilian affairs, but focus on pleasing his commander. Many missionaries though have to be involved in civilian affairs, e.g. a secular job, because their churches insufficiently support them. *Second*, an athlete should ‘compete according to the rules’. Many rules can be broken in missionary practice, e.g. building one’s own empire,⁵⁴⁰ taking credit for ministerial success⁵⁴¹ and abusing the ministry for financial gain.⁵⁴² In other words, things *taken* instead of graciously *granted by the Lord*. *Third*, a farmer should be the first to receive his share of the crops. This is often understood as receiving a heavenly reward, but it may also indicate a reasonable *material* reward.⁵⁴³

Paul says that the Word is not chained.⁵⁴⁴ This is true in a spiritual⁵⁴⁵ *and* in a physical sense: *he* was chained but *not* his co-workers, and thanks to his vision to multiply fruit by recruiting colleagues, the Word still spread freely through *their* ministry.

⁵³⁸ 2:2 (italics mine)

⁵³⁹ 2:4-7

⁵⁴⁰ See e.g. Acts 8:13-24: Simon, formerly sorcerer, now Christian, wanted power – but received a rebuke instead. The principle comes out also in Philip. 1:15,17a: ‘preaching Christ ... out of envy and rivalry’

⁵⁴¹ Is. 42:8 ‘I will not give My glory to another’

⁵⁴² 1 Tim. 6:5b ‘... who think that godliness is a means to financial gain’

⁵⁴³ This is in line with verse 4 as well as with 5:17,18. See also: 1 Cor. 9:7-14

⁵⁴⁴ 2 Tim. 2:9

⁵⁴⁵ See e.g. Is. 55:11 & Eccl. 11:1

Some of Paul's co-workers – Demas, and possibly Phygellus and Hermogenes – had given in to temptations,⁵⁴⁶ which were strong in Rome's secular, urban environment.

Although Crescens, Titus and Tychicus had left for other areas and only Luke was with Paul, he nevertheless missed them as friends, and asked for more company.⁵⁴⁷ It is noble that he asked for John Mark, whom he had refused to work with after Mark had deserted 18 years earlier,⁵⁴⁸ but who had now been restored.

Tychicus, a faithful servant⁵⁴⁹ was sent on several missions by Paul, carrying his letters to the churches. He travelled with Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem;⁵⁵⁰ was sent from Rome to Ephesus during Paul's first imprisonment⁵⁵¹ and to Colossae, with Onesimus⁵⁵² to deliver Paul's letter to Philemon. He may have visited Titus on Crete.⁵⁵³ Paul's version of mission logistics!

'Alexander the metal worker did ... great ... harm'. Paul warns Timothy for him.⁵⁵⁴ Is it right to warn colleagues against opponents on the mission field? Jesus warned His disciples against the Pharisees.⁵⁵⁵ Is it wrong to say 'the Lord will repay him ...'? No, since revenge belongs to the Lord.⁵⁵⁶ Yet, we may ask forgiveness for our enemies.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁴⁶ 2 Tim. 4:10; 1:15

⁵⁴⁷ 4:10-12

⁵⁴⁸ Acts 15:37,38

⁵⁴⁹ 2 Tim. 4:12

⁵⁵⁰ Acts 20:4

⁵⁵¹ Eph. 6:21

⁵⁵² Col. 4:7-9

⁵⁵³ Tit. 3:12

⁵⁵⁴ 2 Tim. 4:14,15. This Alexander may have caused the riot in Ephesus, twelve years earlier (Acts 19), but was not likely the one Paul mentions in 1 Tim.

1:20. The first A. was not a Christian, the latter, though an apostate, was

⁵⁵⁵ Matt. 16:6,11b,12

⁵⁵⁶ Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19; Hebr. 10:30

⁵⁵⁷ Luke 23:24; Acts 7:60

Study Questions

1. *Give a character description of Timothy's, using Paul's encouragements to him as your guideline*
2. *Describe the quality of member-care Onesiphorus provided for Paul*
3. *What important ministry characteristic do we see in Paul, apart from evangelizing and planting churches? What was the result?*
4. *Explain the three analogies Paul gives between secular jobs and missionary ministry*
5. *Describe the ministry of Tychicus'*

Other Books by Steef van 't Slot

World Evangelisation – That All May Hear, Hebron Press, Benoni, South Africa, 1999/2005, re-published by Recruiting for Missions, 2012.

This book is also available in French under the title *Evangelisation du Monde – Que Tous Puissent Entendre*, 2013

The present three books *World Evangelisation & The Bible's Missionary Message, Part I – The Old Testament and IIA – The New Testament* can be ordered on line as Print on Demand at one of the following websites: www.biblekiosk.co.uk or www.bijbelkiosk.nl

Books are printed on demand through the Print Location Network of Publidisa's Global Content Manager – at several locations worldwide

Biblical Foundation for World Missions, Hebron Press, Benoni, South Africa, 2005. This book is out of print, but still available as MS WORD document. Should you be interested, you can contact the author at recruiting4missions@gmail.com This book was the basis for the three volumes of *The Bible's Missionary Message*, of which *Part IIB – The New Testament* will be published in 2015.

Biblical Mission Stories, a Theology of Missions Course for Oral Learners, 2007. This course was not published as a book but translated into an East-Asian majority language where it is used to train cross-cultural missionaries. This document is being published in the form of monthly articles on the website www.recruiting4missions.org from October 2014, in English only.

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The Foundation 'Recruiting for Missions' was established in 2010 in The Netherlands, as a legal entity to a ministry that started in 1998 and was started by Dutch missionaries Steef & Tineke van 't Slot, until 2006 working in and from South Africa.

The ministry seeks to mobilize churches, mainly in the Global South, to participate in the execution of Christ's great commission. It helps them recruit and train cross-cultural missionaries to people groups in their countries and on their continents that are unreached or least-reached with the gospel; and with the training of Christian workers for children's ministry.

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