

Let the Whole World Know – Resources for Preaching on Missions by Richard R. DeRidder and Roger S. Greenway, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988 (17 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

PART ONE Homiletic Outlines on Mission Texts

1. Central Idea-Missions Is Not an Option!

Chapter 1: Let the Whole World Know *Romans 10:14-18*

The evangelization of the world is a task which can't wait, nor may it be avoided. It is the abiding obligation of all Christians. In God's plan and purpose, the sending forth of gospel proclaimers is absolutely essential. Scripture makes missions the church's ongoing obligation.

Context of the Passage

Romans 9:1-29 teaches the sovereignty of God in the whole matter of salvation. It all depends on God's sovereign mercy.

Romans 9:30-10:13 teaches just as plainly that it is the lost sinner's responsibility to respond to the gospel in repentance and faith, or else he remains under judgment for his sins.

Romans 10:14-17, the text now being considered, adds the third dimension by teaching that not only is God sovereign and the sinner responsible, but Christians have the solemn duty to preach the gospel to everyone.

Romans 10:18-21, the verses immediately following our text, remind us that the Old Testament prophets long ago had prophesied that in this era the gospel would be proclaimed universally, Gentiles would be included among God's people, and there would be wide scale spiritual disobedience among Jews.

Homiletic Outline

The ongoing obligation to send missionaries to evangelize the world is...

I. Based on Profound Theological Premises

This passage, which is often called the Great Commission in Romans, is framed by two of the greatest theological premises revealed in Scripture:

Verse 13-"Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

Verse 17-"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

On pillar truths such as these the missionary enterprise rests. (1) The ancient *mystery* is now revealed: Gentiles can and will be saved. (2) The *message* is the call to faith in Christ, and (3) the *medium* by which it is conveyed is the preaching of the word.

II. Driven Home to Our Minds by Irrefutable Arguments

Like an iron chain with five great links, Paul's argument clinches the case: Missionaries must be sent, so that the world may hear. Because how can they call ... believe ... hear ... preach ... unless they are sent?

In staccato fashion Paul hammers home his argument in one of Scripture's most moving passages. The missionary enterprise to which Paul himself is dedicated is the continual obligation of the world church.

III. Presented in the Expectation of Response

This is not cold, impersonal theorizing, but a call to action. In view of the eternal lostness of the unsaved and the instrumentality of gospel proclamation in the redemption of sinners, missions can't be avoided or postponed. The church must act! It must *send* and the messengers must *go!*

To be "sent" (v. 15) is to be a missionary, a person called by God and put forth by the body of believers with the special task of bringing the message of salvation to the lost and unbelieving.

"Sent" ones in the New Testament never are people who go out on their own authority to carry out their private vision of God's will. Nor are they sent out empty-handed. But they go with the church's blessing, prayer, and support. *Missions is the church's glorious privilege and perennial responsibility.*

Applications

1. The most important thing the church can do for a lost and troubled world is to send, support, and pray for the emissaries of the gospel.
2. Parents who raise their children with a concern for the salvation of others shape their minds and values in line with the purpose of God.

3. Young people considering their life's calling must in all honesty consider missions. Each one should say in his heart, "Lord, I'm available if you want to send me." [Pages 15-17]

2. Central Idea – God Cares about Cities

Chapter 5. Mission to the City *Jonah 3, 4*

God cares about cities, even wicked cities like Nineveh, with their teeming populations, and God calls missionaries to declare his message to the cities.

Background

Nineveh was a world-class metropolis and capital of a powerful empire. The city lasted for fifteen hundred years and was famous for its beauty, military power, wealth, and wickedness. Its riches were gained through war, oppression and plunder, and eventually God's judgment fell (Nah. 1-3). Jonah was a small-town prophet from Israel called by God to preach to Nineveh. Chapters 1 and 2 give the account of God's call and Jonah's refusal, and the flight by sea which almost cost him his life. Finally repentant, Jonah reluctantly goes where God sends him.

Contemporary Significance

The world today is becoming more and more urban. At the beginning of this century, only 15 percent of the world's population lived in cities. Today over half the earth's inhabitants live in cities. Mexico City soon will have 25 million people, equal to the total population of Canada, coast to coast. Particularly in developing countries, the so-called Third World, the movement of masses of people to the cities is one of the major characteristics of our times. This means that the great frontier of missions is now in the cities.

Homiletic Outline

I. God's Message to Jonah

A. I've seen the wickedness of the city. It's terrible and it evokes my wrath and judgment.

B. I want you to go to the city and proclaim my message to its inhabitants.

C. I care about Ninevites, and even their animals (4:11). There is grace in my heart for the city. It is God who takes the initiative and sets the mission in motion. God chose the little man Jonah for a big task. Jonah's message was

given him by God (3:2) and the grace and compassion of God lay behind it (4:2).

II. Jonah's Reply to God

A. I hate the city and its ungodly inhabitants. They are not worth saving.

B. I won't go there to preach. A small town in Israel is the most I can handle. Since you're pressing me, I'm going in the opposite direction.

C. If I can't get away, I'll reluctantly go. But my heart's not in it. Let the city burn. I believe in saving green plants, but who cares about cities! Let's not be too critical of Jonah. Most of us feel toward today's great cities much as Jonah felt toward Nineveh—too crowded with people, too many problems, too many poor, too much crime and wickedness. Who wants to minister in a large city? Who wants to live there and run big risks to serve God?

III. Nineveh's Response to God

A. To the prophet's surprise, the Ninevites neither stoned him nor criticized. They repented, turned from their evil ways, and sought the Lord's mercy (10).

B. The total population took the message seriously. They believed God, implored his mercy, and gave up their evil and violent ways. From city hall to the poorest neighborhoods, evidences of change and repentance appeared. Even the animals were made to join in the demonstration (3:5-9).

C. Jesus affirmed the sincerity of Nineveh's conversion in Matthew 12:41. The city's conversion was only temporary, but it was enough to elicit God's forbearance and destruction was postponed.

This is a story which tells us much about God and his attitude toward city dwellers. Jonah's problem was essentially theological, for he didn't share God's heart and attitude toward sinners. It was likewise a problem of obedience, because he refused to go to a place that was personally repugnant to him. And Jonah also had the problem of misplaced affection. He cared more for plants than for people.

Applications

1. Jesus Christ is the "greater than Jonah" who has come. Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a huge fish; Jesus, in the grave. Jesus is the true Prophet who cares about sinners, sacrifices his own life for their deliverance, and sends forth his servants to proclaim God's grace to a lost world (Matt. 12:39-41).

2. God's missionary strategy is consistently the same: God commissions a person to go and speak his word; that person enters a city and heralds God's message; and then miracles happen and city dwellers are converted to God.

3. As Jonah represented Israel, the people of God elected from among the nations to be objects and channels of his grace and his witnesses among the peoples (Isa. 43:10-12), the church today bears this same privilege and responsibility. Reluctance to go where the need is greatest is still the problem which hampers missions. [Pages 31-34]

3. Central Idea – All Commissioned to Be Witnesses

Chapter 6. A Great Commission *Matthew 28:19, 20*

All members of Christ's church are commissioned by Jesus to be his witnesses. Mission is not the task of the missionary alone. The commission Christ gave has both an individual (for every Christian) as well as a corporate (for all Christians together) character.

Context

Matthew 28 tells us of events that occurred on the day of Jesus' resurrection and takes us to Galilee where Jesus kept a previously made appointment with his disciples (compare with Mark 16:7). It is in Galilee that the disciple fellowship receives this commission.

This is not the only time that Jesus commissioned his followers. Each of the gospels and Acts include one or more references to his assignment to them. Note examples in table 1.

Exegetical Note

Careful attention should be paid to the grammar of these verses. The verb *make disciples* is in the imperative mood,

Table 1

<u>Scripture</u>	<i>Mark 16:16-18</i>	<i>Acts 1:8</i>	The Eleven
<i>Matt. 28:18-20</i>	<i>Luke 24:47</i>	<u>Audience</u>	The Eleven?
	<i>John 20:21,22</i>		Two disciples Disciples

Disciples	Emmaus	Time	Resurrection
Place	Jerusalem	After the	day-
		Resurrection	Note the "again"
		Resurrection	(v. 17:18
Galilee	Mount of	Evening?	previously)
	Olives	Resurrection	Ascension Day
Jerusalem		day	

while go is a participle. Some grammarians take the participle as equivalent to an imperative; others do not. Popularly, most persons think of the go as the heart of the commission, whereas the *make disciples* is the heart. Pastors who reinforce this erroneous idea then must explain that while everyone cannot go, they can pray, support, encourage, (and so forth) those who can and do go. The words of Jesus are for his *entire church*. Some exegetes suggest as a translation, "Whenever [or wherever] you go, make disciples. . . ."

Homiletic Outline

I. A Mandate for Mission

A. The Occasion. Jesus' visit with his disciples in Galilee. It is possible that this may have included the larger disciple fellowship (the "five hundred" of whom Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 15:6).

B. The Authoritative Lord. A task of this dimension needs authority to carry out. The authority of Christ is central to mission. All power and authority is his, received from God, and employed on behalf of his people in their task.

C. The Recipients

1. The church, represented by the eleven (later twelve) apostles.
2. The individual believer empowered by the Spirit. We speak for God and God works with us (2 Cor. 5:20; 6:1).

II. Methodology for Mission

A. The Need. The training period of the disciples is now at an end. Jesus will soon leave them. What are they to do now? For us, what is our response to the grace which we have received? What must we do with the message we have been given?

B. The Call. Each person, wherever he is, must fulfill the purpose of his election in Christ. Our faith must be shared and others called to Christ's fold. Lifestyle, words, goals, our possessions—all must be placed in his service to reach out to others. The apostle Paul said, "... Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

C. The Motivation. To be what God made us to be—a witnessing people.

D. The Strategy. "Make disciples." Elements involved in this strategy:

1. "Baptizing in the name of the Father ... Son ... Holy Spirit." By baptism a person is acknowledged as a member of Christ's church (note the Forms for Baptism). The church must receive into its sacred fellowship all those who come to faith in Christ.
2. "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Instruction in the article of faith *and* in walking in God's ways is a vital part of mission. We teach others in many ways: life, deeds, words, and so forth. Those who sincerely follow God's will find it easy to speak of their faith.

(Exegetical note: "To observe" is literally "to guard," which means "to obey and preserve," and also "to preserve and keep inviolate." With this command Jesus retains and exercises his Lordship over the life of the believer and makes his claim upon the lives of those who believe.) who sincerely follow God's will find it easy to speak of their faith.

III. A Promise for Mission

A. The Divine Presence

1. Jesus is near to all his people today. He does not send us into the world alone. When wolves surround and threaten the sheep, he is there to preserve them.
2. Paul says (2 Cor. 5:18, 19; 6:1): We have received a *ministry* and a *message* of reconciliation from God, and that we work "together with him" (RSV). In each case the Lord's activity is central to our mission.

B. The Extent: "to the end of the age"

1. This gives us the assurance that the church will continue to the very end of time.
2. Wherever we go, whenever we witness, the ascended Lord is there. He is not an absent but an ever-present Lord.

Additional Notes

The following are two interesting attempts to summarize what our commission from Christ is.

1. One author says:

"You shall be my witnesses,

-in Jerusalem (where I was rejected and condemned)

-in Judea (where I was crucified)

-in Samaria (where I was not wanted)

-in the uttermost part of the earth (where I am not known).

2. Another author expressed the Great Commission this way:

GO: authority enough

YE: messengers enough

INTO ALL THE WORLD: territory enough

AND PREACH: work enough

THE GOSPEL: message enough

TO EVERY CREATURE: audience enough

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS: assurance enough [Pages 35-39]

4. Central Idea – The Cross Is the Heart of Our Message to the World

Chapter 8. The Master's Mandate

Luke 24:44-49

The cross of Christ, as an historical event with redemptive meaning, lies at the heart of our salvation and the witness we bear before the world.

Background

Christ arose early in the morning of the first day of the week. Luke tells of the appearance of the two angels to the women at the tomb, and the thrilling encounter with Jesus by the two persons on their way to the village called Emmaus. Jesus explained the Scriptures to these two, and as they were breaking bread together their eyes were opened and they realized who he was. They hurried back to Jerusalem to share the news with the other disciples, and in a short while Jesus himself appeared in the room with them. To prove that it was really he, he showed them the marks of crucifixion on his body and ate before them.

Introduction

Many Bible scholars believe that verses in the following paragraph, verses 44 through 49 are a summary statement of Jesus' teaching during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension. This probably is the case. During this period he led

them through the Scriptures and opened their eyes to what the Hebrew canon taught about the Messiah's role as the vicarious sufferer who would lay the foundation for the worldwide proclamation of the Good News of salvation. This intensive teaching ministry prepared them for Pentecost and the apostolic work lying ahead of them.

The sheer excitement of these forty days made an unforgettable impression on Jesus' disciples. They had seen marvelous events during their three years of accompanying Jesus during his ministry on earth. They had seen miracles and heard his preaching. And then they had felt the agony and disappointment of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. But nothing could compare with the marvelous experience of seeing him resurrected, realizing that he was alive and death had no power over him, and hearing him weave together all that he had done as direct fulfillment of the Scriptures which they knew and revered. Without this instruction they would not have been ready for the ministry which lay ahead. They came to realize that the crucifixion, which they had regarded as the ultimate tragedy, was in reality God's great provision for the redemption of his people.

Knowing this, they had an obligation to tell the world what the cross meant. Without the cross, there would be no gospel. Having the cross, they were duty bound to tell the news everywhere. They had a mandate for the rest of their lives.

Putting ourselves among these disciples listening to the Master's final, summary instruction in preparation for the worldwide mission of the church, let us learn along with them and fix our attention on these seven truths. For the disciples' mandate is our mandate, and the Master's instructions to them are equally important to us.

Homiletic Outline

I. The Source of the Mandate

The resurrected Jesus is the mandator. He has broken the back of Satan's power. All authority is now his. He is the master over life, death, and the grave. Like the rider called Faithful and True on the white horse of the Revelation, he gives his disciples their mandate. The divine Source of the mandate gives it distinctive character.

II. The Statements of the Mandate

The closing chapters of each of the gospels present the mandate in the various forms in which Jesus presented it during the forty days of intense teaching between his Resurrection and Ascension. Matthew 28, Mark 16, John 20 and 21, and Acts 1:1-8 each adds a particular emphasis, with its own phrasing of the mandate as Jesus explained and reiterated it in his teaching. The form in which it is presented in Luke 24 is especially gripping because it ties together so clearly Christ's redemptive work, the gospel and his mandate to the church.

III. The Scriptural Basis of the Mandate

The Master Teacher takes the Hebrew Bible and explains the meaning of both his ministry and his mandate. By his expository style he provided a model, as he did earlier in verse 27.

Verse 44 suggests that Jesus moved like a master interpreter through the three divisions of the Old Testament and showed how all Scripture pointed to him and his work. The cross and resurrection were not accidents, but the fulfillment of God's purpose and predicted long ago.

Besides teaching from the Bible, Jesus "opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures." He taught from within as well as from without. By his Spirit, he continues to do just that, when the Scriptures are explained and his saving work set forth.

IV The Main Subject of the Mandate

The gospel of salvation is the main subject. Using the Scriptures, Jesus explained that not only were his sufferings, death, and resurrection long ago foretold, they stand at the center of the proclaiming which the world must hear from the disciples. No cross, no mandate. Because of the cross, there is a mission to carry out.

The gospel consists of historical facts, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the meaning of those events, salvation through repentance and faith leading to remission of sins. Because of what Christ did, the ringing cry of the missionary is, "If you hear, repent, believe, you will be saved." (See Mark 1:15.)

V. The Scope of the Mandate

Preach it, said Jesus, to all nations. Literally, in the Greek, "to all peoples." All need it, and all must hear it. The rich and sophisticated as well as the poor and ignorant, city dwellers and humble villagers—all must hear the message and the meaning of Christ's redemptive work.

VI. The Spirit of the Mandate

Home and foreign missions are embraced in the same mandate. The spirit of the mandate, indicated most clearly in Acts 1:8, extends from each believer's own personal "Jerusalem," the locale of residence, worship, and activity to the farthest corner of the earth.

VII. The Spiritual Power to Carry Out the Mandate

Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the mandate cannot be carried out. Nor, if attempted, will there be fruit. At Pentecost the disciples received the enabling power

of the Holy Spirit to carry out Christ's mandate to bear witness to him and his cross. In John 20:23, Jesus gave them a pre-Pentecost, partial empowerment, saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit," at the moment he said "I am sending you."

Applications

Christians who march forward in obedience to this mandate witness to the cross of their Lord through their words, works, and attitudes. Witnessing to and under the cross involves a continual

- celebration of Christ's saving work; "
- self-giving and sacrifice, thinking not of self or personal advantage but of the Master and his mandate;
- suffering, crossbearing, as martyr-witnesses of him who died so that others might have life eternal. [Pages 45-49]

5. Central Idea – Jesus Cares for All His Sheep

Chapter 9. **Five Fundamentals of Missions** *John 10:15, 16*

Those "other sheep" for whom Christ died and whom he calls through missions, are in his heart-and in ours.

Context

In John 10, Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. After the cross, Jesus sees missions. He sees his sheep, beyond national Israel, scattered among the nations. He sees the long and vital work of missions by which the "other sheep" hear his call and come into his sheep pen.

Five fundamental truths about missions are taught in this verse. They focus on Jesus' teaching concerning the "other sheep."

Homiletic Outline

I. Those Other Sheep-The Basis of Missions

A. The Shepherd's Assertion. "I *have* other sheep." Jesus asserts more than merely a hope and desire. He makes the confident disclosure of a fact.

B. The Missionary's Comfort. God knows who is in each place, and he has his chosen ones whom the missionary must find. About Corinth, Jesus said to Paul: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking ... For I am with you ... because I have many people in this city" Acts 18:9, 10).

C. The Unchanging Purpose and Grace of God. *Canons of Dort I, 7*. On the sovereign purpose of God to save his people, the atoning death of Christ securing their

salvation, and the mighty work of the Spirit, bringing the sheep home, the work of missions rests. Jesus sums up the basis of missions by saying, "I *have* other sheep."

II. Those Other Sheep-The Scope of Missions

A. The International Character of Christ's Flock. *Other sheep that are not of this sheep pen.* Gentiles as well as Jews are included in the family of faith. No single race or social group can claim his exclusive concern.

B. The Narrow Vision Which Hinders Missions. The disciples knew what Jesus said, but they were slow in widening the scope of their mission. Acts 10, 11-the Cornelius story.

C. The Indifference Toward Others and Spiritual Near-sightedness Which Hold Back Missions Today.

III. Those Other Sheep-The Incentive of Missions

A. The Missionary Incentive in the Heart of God, revealed in Jesus' words *1 must bring them also.* God in Christ seeks the lost. Missions reveals the heart of God toward lost and straying people.

B. The Missionary Compulsion Expressed in the Words and Ministry of Jesus. Missions is a "must" with Jesus.

C. The Missionary "Must" in the Church. In the Great Commission, the "must" of God becomes the missionary incentive of his people.

IV Those Other Sheep-The Success of Missions

A. The Miracle Implied in Jesus' Words: *They shall hear my voice.* In the stammering words of the missionary, another voice is heard. Power is revealed here, and mystery.

B. The Encouragement This Offers Missionaries. When the story of Jesus is proclaimed, he still speaks and does his mighty work.

C. The Invisible Work of the Spirit. When the gospel is proclaimed, whether preached from a pulpit or whispered in an ear, the Spirit of Jesus fulfills this promise.

V Those Other Sheep-The Goal of Missions

A. The Fact of the Unity of God's People. *One flock and one shepherd.* Not a Baptist flock, a Lutheran fold, or Reformed and Pentecostal sheep pens. Just one flock gathered around one Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

B. The Unified Aim and Attitude of Missions. Missions should never encourage division in the Body, but rather unity of faith, fellowship and action (John 17:23). Jesus' words concerning unity provide an agenda as well as an attitude for missions to follow.

C. The Unity Toward Which Missions Moves. Despite our divisions, the "one flock" is being gathered and in the end it will appear. [Pages 50-52]

6. Central Idea-Victory in Christ

Chapter 14 Marching in Triumph 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Christians are sent on a divine mission. Sometimes events go against them and feelings of frustration take hold. But eyes of faith see Christ marching in triumph throughout the world and Christians marching with him. Believers share Christ's conflicts and his victory, and a vision of this ultimate triumph moves them forward on their mission.

Background of the Text

Paul and his readers knew all about the grand processions through the streets of Rome which were the highest awards granted victorious generals. In order to qualify for such an honor a Roman general had to defeat a formidable enemy, win a large territory for the Empire and gain complete victory over his foe.

For a soldier nothing could compare with the honor of marching with his general in triumph through the city amid thousands of applauding people. It made all conflicts and suffering worthwhile.

1. A Sudden Outburst of Praise. "But thanks be to God. . . ."

A. Verses 12, 13-Paul intended to bring the gospel to Troas, and God had opened a door of opportunity.

B. But Paul was deeply troubled because Titus had not come with news about conditions in Corinth. He was so troubled that he left Troas for Macedonia.

C. We who frequently face serious dilemmas in the course of our ministry know how it feels to be torn emotionally by fears, doubts, and conflicting inclinations. Amid the conflicts we need fresh visions of Christ's triumphal march.

D. Verse 14 must be seen in that context. Suddenly, the eyes of Paul's heart saw the bigger picture. He saw Christ like a triumphant general, marching through the

world and himself marching behind his Lord. Paul exploded with praise and renewed confidence.

II. Vision of Christ's Grand March. "God ... leads us in triumphal procession in Christ. . . ."

A. Christ has won the victory by his atoning death and resurrection. Satan, sin, and death have been conquered (Isa. 53:12 and Christ the victor is marching across the world powerfully and triumphantly, establishing his kingdom (Rev. 6:2).

B. Servants of Christ, like soldiers of a victorious general, follow in this triumphal procession. Though eyes of doubt see only conflicts and temporary setbacks, eyes of faith see victories as sinners repent, the church grows and the frontiers of God's kingdom keep enlarging. The fragrance of the saving knowledge of God are spreading across the world.

This thought leads Paul to reflect on ...

III. The Aromatic Witness of the Gospel. "We are to God the aroma of Christ.... "

A. In a Roman triumphal march, first came the government officials, followed by the conquered enemy soldiers and officers (whoever was still alive). Often they were chained to the wheels of chariots. Then came the pagan priests carrying bowls of incense, which they burned in thanks to their gods, and the incense filled the air. Finally, came the victorious general and his army. The crowds shouted and applauded, the victors smiled, and the captive soldiers grimaced and groaned, because they knew that slavery or death lay ahead of them. The smell of the incense was in everyone's nostrils. To the victors it was sweet; for the vanquished it meant doom and death. For the one it was a victory march; for the other, a death march.

B. The mission of Christians can be defined as this, to be the aroma of Christ throughout the world. The knowledge of God is emitted like incense from the totality of our witness, our words, actions, attitudes, and manner of living. When the fragrance of this witness seeps into minds and hearts, some find it sweet and embrace the Lord. Others find it repulsive and rebel. What a task! None by himself or herself is capable of bearing such a witness effectively. Only the invisible power of the Spirit can take our feeble words and less-than-perfect lives and make them the "aroma of Christ" to people enslaved by sin and death.

Applications

1. In Africa, a woman missionary is carrying on a word and deed witness in a Muslim community so effectively that each year sees men and women drawn to Christ, and at the price of risk and persecution, accepting baptism and uniting with the Christian community. Observers say she "loves Muslims to Christ." Her words and deeds are the sweet aroma of Christ.

2. In China, many thought the church was gone after the communist revolution and oppression seized the world's most populous nation. One hundred years of missionary effort seemed wiped away, as Christian churches, hospitals, schools and seminaries were shut down. But now we know better, because when doors to China opened again we found that the number of Christians had grown from 5 million in 1950 to over 50 million in 1980, and the number is steadily increasing.
3. It is becoming more difficult for Western missionaries to serve in some countries, but every year new mission agencies are formed by Christians within Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A whole new army of missionaries is rising. The soldiers of Jesus Christ have never been more numerous or so multinational. The aroma of Christ keeps spreading and the sound of his triumphal procession is heard all over the earth. [Pages 72-75]

7. Central Idea – Telling Our Salvation Story

Chapter 15. We've a Story to Tell *Galatians 2:1-10*

The people of God are storytellers. God wants them to tell their story to the world. In the telling of the story certain truths must be remembered.

Context

These ten verses contain a travel story told by the apostle Paul about a journey that he and his missionary companions made to Jerusalem, and the events which took place there. The story is the medium by which great truths are made alive.

Children love stories, and adults do too. The Bible is filled with great stories, and Jesus taught by telling parables which are "earthly stories with heavenly meaning." In this highly doctrinal epistle, Paul includes a travel narrative and weaves through it some important truths concerning missions.

Homiletic Outline

I. We've a Story to Tell-And It Must Be the Truth (vv. 2-6)

A. Paul's concern with the truth of his message. The purpose of his trip was to make sure of the truth about his message "the gospel that I preach." The issue back then was whether law keeping must be added to faith in order to be saved. Paul saw the central issue, the pure gospel of God's redeeming grace.

B. Our concern about the purity of the gospel. Not just any story will do. The message that we proclaim through missions must be nothing less than, or other than, the gospel of God's saving grace in Christ. Issues may be different,

but the gospel will always be challenged by attempted alterations which rob it of its saving power.

C. The futility of mission work that does not proclaim the true gospel. It's like running a race in vain (v. 2).

II. We're Accountable to the Church for the Story We Tell (v. 2).

A. *Paul's attitude toward the organized church.* Paul considered himself accountable to the church (even the conservative, Jewish church in Jerusalem) for his message and ministry. He took the risk of traveling to Jerusalem in order to lay before the church leaders what he was doing and preaching.

B. *Wrong attitudes toward the organized church.* In contrast to Paul, some missionaries do not want to be accountable to church leaders. They insist on being free to follow their private visions of where they should go and what they should do and say.

C. *Independency is not in the tradition of apostolic missions.* Paul knew he had received his message and calling from God, but he and his colleagues regarded themselves as accountable to the organized church and they reported fully.

III. Among the Storytellers, There Is Division of Labor

A. There is one Lord, and one source of all ministries. The whole world is the Lord's, and wherever we labor, the story is the same and the tellers obey the same mandate. Peter worked in Palestine, and Paul traveled the Roman world. This division of labor was by mutual consent and with equal dignity and respect.

B. The principle of the division of labor is recognized throughout Scripture and here in Galatians 2:7.

C. In modern missions, many different gifts, callings, and responsibilities are exercised. In the telling of salvation's story, all the gifts of the Spirit are needed.

IV. For the Story to Take Effect, It Ultimately Depends on God (v. 8).

A. Good storytelling is the missionary's duty. Peter was a great preacher, and Paul was intense and earnest. But even their best was not enough. God had to work, or nothing would have come from all their effort. (Note: NIV brings this out clearest in verse 8).

B. When God's grace is at work, the evidence can be seen in the effective ministry of his servants. "They recognized the grace given me . . ." (v. 9).

C. Dependence on the grace of God keeps gospel storytellers humble, hopeful, and appreciative of one another.

V. Both Jews and Gentiles Need the Story (v. 9).

A. Peter's field was the Jewish world, and Paul's was the Gentile. Yet God sent Peter to call the Gentile Cornelius, and Paul seized every opportunity to tell Jews about Christ. The apostles regarded all people as needing to hear the gospel story.

B. Not a whisper is found in Scripture to suggest that any race or people can safely be passed by in missions. The need for Christ is universal.

C. There are receptive people and resistant people; rich and poor, Jew and Gentile: the mission of God's storytellers is to one and all without exception.

VI. As We Tell the Story, We Must Remember the Poor (v. 10).

A. Ministry to the poor is a permanent missionary requirement. Jesus, the early church, and the long tradition of Christian missions testify to this. In verse 10, Scripture states it plainly.

B. "Remembering" is more than sympathizing. It means action on the poor's behalf. In the short term, it suggests benevolence; in the long term development of ministries which free the poor from poverty. And at all times it means justice, and seeing the needs of the poor through the eyes of God.

C. Word and deed belong together in missions. If we succeed in abolishing poverty but do not share Christ, we have failed in our mission. And if we preach Christ but forget the poor, we are false prophets. [Pages 76-79]

PART TWO **Illustrating Missions**

8. Chapter 5 Christians Care and God Paid

In a poor neighborhood on the fringe of Freetown, Sierra Leone, a middle-aged man told how he had been a Muslim for most of his life, and became a Christian just two years earlier. He said that two things had led him to believe the gospel. First, he saw the compassion of Christians for the poor, and this impressed him. Unlike Muslims, Christians showed mercy to Muslims and Christians alike, and they carried on projects in his slum community that broke the grip of poverty for some families.

Second, the man said he heard the Christians keep saying, "God paid," and he learned that they were referring to the death of Christ for sinners. "The words *God*

paid rang in my heart," he recounted, "and I came to a deep faith that Jesus paid for my sins too. At that point I became a Christian."

Now this man's wife and four grown children have become followers of Jesus, and he is actively evangelizing his Muslim neighbors. [Page 96]

9. Chapter 7 "Don't Waste Your Tracts on Him"

A missionary was talking to a Christian lady outside her home in Asia, and a crippled beggar approached them asking for a coin for food. The missionary gave him both a coin and a tract in his language.

"Don't waste your tract on him," joked the lady. "He'll never become a Christian."

On the surface, her opinion of the ragged beggar was not without basis. Crippled and low-caste, it was doubtful that he could even read. Besides, his religion was Hinduism and was a far cry from Christianity.

To the missionary's surprise, however, the crippled man appeared at the door three days later. Somehow he had found out where the missionary lived, and he had come eight miles to get there. This time he did not ask for money but only for another tract. After receiving three, he sat by the front gate for several hours studying them.

Back at the door again, the man said, "They talk about a book called the Bible. Could I borrow such a book to read?"

Much more could be added to the story, but the climax came after months of instruction, when the crippled beggar was baptized. He became the watchman and employee of a Christian bookstore where in his spare time he set out to read every book on the shelves.

His story proves that when you bear witness to Christ, even to unlikely people, you never know what God may do with your witness. He has his chosen ones in surprising places and circumstances. [Pages 99-100]

10. Chapter 9. God's Hot Peppers

Many Koreans eat soup three times a day. For breakfast it's like a mild broth; for lunch, vegetable soup; and for dinner-peppery!

You sip it and your tongue burns. The soup's too dark and thick to see the bottom of the dish, but the more you eat the hotter it becomes.

At the bottom you find one or two small green peppers. Not large, but those little seeds have a lot of effect!

In many lands, the church is like that. Small, like the little peppers in the soup, but influential. Christians may not be very visible, but they're God's "hot peppers" in a dark and murky world. [Page 104]

11. Chapter 16. The Lost Imperative

On a visit to New Delhi, India, to lead some Bible studies for the staff of a radio ministry, a mature, older evangelist asked the speaker this question: "What do you think of the newer translations of the Bible that are being published in English today?"

Not knowing what he was specifically referring to nor what version or versions he might have in mind, the leader asked for some clarification.

I mean," the evangelist said, "that in some of the translations I have read the translators lose the imperative." That was a somewhat surprising answer from one who had only minimal education, so an example of what he was saying was requested.

"I mean, like Acts 4:12. The Bible says, 'There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.' That word *must* is an imperative, but I find some translators make this verse say 'by which we may be saved.' They are losing the imperative!"

And he was right. The gospel is so often referred to as an offer as though man has the right to choose whether to obey or not to obey, to believe or not to believe. God *does not give man the choice to disobey*. His command is to believe and obey, and it is this urgency of what God is doing that gives our message power and urgency. Paul put this in a straightforward way to the men of Athens. "God commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). [Pages 115-116]

12. Chapter 19. More Philips Needed

An advertisement in a Christian magazine read, "When it comes to results, there is nothing as efficient as Scripture."

A missionary to the Philippines commented on this. On the surface that sounded good. Take the cost of supporting one missionary and use it to buy Bibles instead, for as the ad writer reasoned, Bible distribution reaches the unsaved masses quickly and efficiently while missionary work is "slow going."

"One evening, while teaching Acts chapters eight thru twelve in a New Testament survey class, that advertisement kept popping back into my head. I wondered what would have happened if Philip had sent a sack of scrolls instead of going to Samaria. The Ethiopian official was a wise man with an open heart. He took up the good book to read, yet when asked of his comprehension he replied, 'How can I understand unless someone guides me?'

"Putting the Word of God in the hands of eager readers is absolutely essential, and believe me I have seen eager readers-clustered on a street corner (usually only a girlie magazine would attract such a crowd) searching to see if Jesus really is God-stand-up bus passengers reading over seated shoulders-librariied university students pretending to study science but with Scriptures nestled inside a thicker tome. Bible distribution is, in fact, a major part of our mission work. But I have also seen houses with a Bible in every window to keep out the evil spirits; flyers exhorting the devout with the promise of two weeks dispensation (forgiveness of sins) for every two hours spent reading Scripture; and a half-left bathroom Bible whose fatal distinction was a quality of paper significantly above newsprint. A real eye-opener was the man who grabbed my arm in the public market and begged to borrow my Bible. He let the book fall open by chance and quickly bet the chapter and verse numbers in the daily lottery!

" 'Do you understand how to use this book?' Philip would have asked. 'Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news of Jesus' (Acts 8:35 RSV). We need to be Philips who, beginning with the Scripture, tell the good news about Jesus." [Pages 119-120]

13. Chapter 25. Providing for the Poor

The relationship of Word and deed in the mission of the church is extremely close. The total mission of the church includes both. Assistance to the poor is one aspect of that mission which finds frequent reference in the Bible. In the traditional marriage ceremony of the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka there is a paragraph in which the officiating minister counsels the bridegroom regarding his responsibilities as a husband. He is counseled to work to support his wife and the family God may give them, and then it is added, "and also to have something to give to the poor."

One's first reaction is "What a strange time and place to speak to a man about his duty to the poor!" But is it really so strange? Is this not perhaps a very appropriate occasion to do so?

What is a Christian man's duty beyond providing for his own and the needs of his loved ones? Is a Christian home the only concern to me? Am I to be preoccupied with food on the table, a roof over my head, comfort and security, money in the

bank, vacations and recreation? It seems that many Christians fall into the trap of thinking these are the only things that really count in a marriage.

Then comes the charge: "Work ... so that you will have something to give to the poor." We look beyond ourselves to others. The Christian home is the place where the true values of life are taught and lived. The Dutch Reformed fathers were correct: marriage also makes us look beyond ourselves to others and shows us how we can serve others. Word and deed belong together, and the family becomes Christ's hands of mercy and instruments of dispensing God's grace. [Pages 131-132]

14. Chapter 30. There Will Always Be One More

A missionary to the Philippines tells this true account.

Pastor Benny counted, his wife, Glo, counted, Lu counted, and I counted, but no matter how often we tried, we just couldn't find one more person. Benny, a Filipino pastor, and I began evangelizing in San Pablo two years ago. We started with the ones and twos-small home-Bible studies, tract distribution, and following up family contacts. At that time we did a lot of planning-and a lot of praying that the Lord would help us begin a church and would give it growth. In faith we set a goal to have one hundred people in the worship services within two years. Sometimes the goal seemed forbiddingly far away, but on Sunday, December 21, on the target date set so long ago, we all counted ninety-nine. Just one more!

People always come late-sometimes even after the sermon. Often there are a few curious visitors drawn by the singing. So every time a jeepney stopped outside, we hoped to hear footsteps on the stairs leading up to the worship center. We could think of people who had come regularly before but had not yet arrived-just one more!

Not by the congregational prayer, not by the end of the message, not even after the collection did another person show up-not a single latecomer.

After the service I mentioned to Pastor Benny that we came up one short. He said, "I guess that means we're not finished, not yet-there will always be just one more-one more who is lost." [Pages 140-141]

15. Chapter 32. They Found the Church There

They Found the Church There is the title of a book that tells of the surprise of many American servicemen who served in the Pacific theater during World War II and found flourishing Christian churches on the islands on which they served. They, as well as many in the West, know little of the remarkable success of Christianity among

the islands of the Pacific. Numerically and in point of time, the South Pacific was one of the most successful of the fields of Protestant mission work.

However, when we look for the names of those who actively engaged in missions in the Pacific, the number of missionaries is remarkably small and way out of proportion to the number of people who embraced Christianity. Nor is it possible that they were able to reach the many isolated, small islands that dot this great expanse of ocean.

Who were the real missionaries? We do not know their names. But they were the persons who, having come to faith in God, took with them in their trading journeys from island to island the message of Good News in Jesus Christ. The ocean erased in moments the trails of their frail catamarans. The graves of many who suffered martyrdom are lost and forgotten. Their names were never recorded. Yet the churches that resulted from their faithful witness stand today as monuments to their obedience in faith and the blessing of God on the work of his saints. [Pages 143-144]

PART THREE. Translation Treasures

16. Chapter 3. Comforter *John 14:26*

A missionary to the Karre people in French Equatorial Africa tried hard to explain to her helpers what the name "Comforter," given to the Holy Spirit in the Bible, meant. Finally one of her assistants said, "Oh, if anyone did all that for us we would say, 'He's the one who falls down beside us.'"

They remembered the stories their forefathers told about past times, when their people would be hired as porters to carry heavy loads for long distances. Sometimes these porters would become sick with malaria or dysentery and could go no farther. They would simply be left alongside the road to fend for themselves, or to die or be killed by wild animals. But if someone found them lying there, took pity on them, stooped down to pick them up, and helped them to reach safety, they would speak of that person as "the one who fell down beside me."

They now use this expression to describe the Holy Spirit who sustains, protects, comforts, and keeps God's children on their journey to their heavenly home. [Page 160]

17. Chapter 18. Redeemed *1 Peter 1:18,19*

A missionary working on a translation of the Bible for the Bambara people was having difficulty expressing the meaning of the word *redeemed*. Turning to his translation helper, he asked, "How can we say 'God redeemed us' so that your people will understand?"

"Why, we would say 'God took our necks out,'" his helper replied.

"But how would that help your people understand what we mean when we say, 'God redeemed us'? "

His informant then told him how many years ago, raiders would come through their villages and take the people into slavery. Iron collars were placed around their necks, and they were chained one captive to the next in long lines to be taken to the coast and sold. Sometimes a friend or a chief would see a friend being led away and would want to free him ("redeem" him). He could do this by paying the slave traders gold, silver, brass, or whatever was demanded. In redeeming his friend, he would be said to "take his neck out (of the iron collar)."

That is the expression that is now used among the Bambara people to describe what God has done to free us from the bondage and slavery of sin and self. The price was paid by the death of Jesus Christ. [Page 180]