

# *The G's of* **MISSIONS**

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by Raymond L. Teachout

In reading this book and any book, please do so with Scriptural discernment.

*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Act. 17:11)*

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Th. 5:21)*

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# THE GOD OF MISSIONS

Isaiah 45:11-22

CONSIDERATION OF MISSIONS needs to begin and end with God. He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8). To focus on missions without a clear God-centered focus will be short sighted.

God is at the beginning of missions. First, He is the Creator of all things and of mankind (Isa. 42:5). Second, when man rebelled against Him and was separated from Him, it was God who initiated the work of reconciliation. God is the Savior. God sent the first missionary, the ultimate and perfect missionary, His Son Jesus Christ. He proved to us His love, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 5:8). If we can love him, it is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). God not only commanded the Gospel to be preached unto the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18-20), He also initiated the formal plan of carrying out the Great Commission through missionaries and those who would help them (Acts 13). Missions begins with God.

God is also the end of missions. The task of missions is not simply to make man wholesome again, and give him life eternal; it is rather that man be returned unto the purpose for which he was created: to be in that blessed state of being able to say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). There is untold joy and blessing to be in worshipful communion with our Maker: the righteous, holy, loving, faithful, omnipotent, gracious, omniscient God. Missions seeks to give to each person that opportunity of repenting and joining in on the praises sung unto our Lord. Missions ends with God.

Furthermore, this central focus on the God of missions will also answer some important questions. What authority do we have in proclaiming the God of the Bible as the only true God? On what basis can we send out missionaries to go to foreign lands and have them declare those people's religions as false? How can we in the same manner go across the street and present the worship of our God, the God of all creation and His Son Jesus Christ, as the only true religion? The answers to such questions are found in who God is and what God has said.

In considering the God of missions, we have every cause to present Him to the whole world, for there is none other, and He Himself has given us His unquestionable credentials as to His person.

Isaiah 45:11-22

*11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*

*12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.*

*13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.*

*14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.*

*15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*

*16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.*

*17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

*18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.*

*19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*

*20 ¶ Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.*

*21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.*

*22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

In this text, we are given three reasons God gives in defense of His claim of being the SOLE GOD, THE ONLY GOD, a major theme which is repeated several times (vv. 14b, 18b, 21b, 22). First, He alone has created all things (v. 18). Second, He alone knows all things and is able to predict the future (v. 21). Third, He alone is able to save (v. 22).

**I. God is the sole CREATOR (v. 18)**

This first defense is cried out day after day, night after night, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty five days a year.

This first defense is cried out every where, whether high in the sky, or in the deepest caves, or in the thickest jungles, whether those jungles are the forest jungles of Africa or the cement jungles of huge metropolises. There is no refutation against this evidence. The witnesses are innumerable, and are constantly crying out their testimony.

*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. (Ps. 19:1-4)*

Look around you; everywhere you look points to this sole, one true God, the God we worship!

You don't need God's Word to have this line of evidence given to you. Everyone has this witness given to him... In fact, we are told in Romans 1:18-25 that every one knows this down deep inside, but man rejects that knowledge and replaces the worship of the true God with serving the creature (ultimately himself) through man-made religion of one form or another.

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

*19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

*20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

*21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

*23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

*24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

*25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (Rom. 1:18-25)*

Our main passage of study, Isaiah 45:11-22, is only a synopsis of the larger segment of Isaiah dealing specifically with the person of God, chapters 40-48. As we understand

better the structure and background of Isaiah, we can better appreciate the relevance of the topic at hand.

Isaiah is like a miniature Bible. Its 66 chapters bring to mind the 66 books of the Bible, especially when we see that the two main parts of Isaiah reflect well the two Testaments of the Bible. Isaiah 1-39 portray well the 39 books of the Old Testament with its main emphasis on judgment, while including the promise of restoration. The Old Testament leaves us under just condemnation under the law, with the promise of a coming Savior to redeem us from the curse of the Law. The last 27 chapters of Isaiah (chaps. 40-66) portray well the 27 books of the New Testament with its main emphasis on restoration, while including a severe warning of judgment upon those who refuse to repent and trust in God. The introduction to these last 27 chapters of Isaiah sets the tone: *“Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people, saith your God.”*

Upon the completion of the introduction (40:1-11), God jumps in His main topic for the next 9 chapters: He is the only God. Isaiah 40:12-26 :

*12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*

*13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?*

*14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?*

*15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.*

*16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.*

*17 All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

*18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

*19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.*

*20 He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.*

*21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

*22 It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:*

*23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.*

24 *Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.*

25 *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*

26 *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

God is the Creator of the whole world, whether man acknowledges it or not. This comes directly into contrast with the vain idol worshipers. It is not their false gods who made them; they, mere creatures, have created or invented their own deities, which by very nature of that fact are false gods, a figment of the vain imagination of man. God shall not be compared to any false god, to any idol! Why? He is the CREATOR of everything.

The significance of this topic in this second part of Isaiah is of most marveling interest. The prophet Isaiah lived in Israel with his compatriots around 700 B.C. during the time the Assyrians were the dominating world power. Isaiah addresses his contemporaries in chapters 1-39. In chapters 40-66, Isaiah addresses a future generation of Jews, the Jews that lived in exile in Babylon around 150 years later (from around 605 B.C. to 535 B.C.). This generation that would come long after Isaiah would be tempted to doubt their own God, and turn to the Babylonian gods as the ones worth worshiping; after all, they might have thought: "did they not win over the God of Israel?"

Thus with this prophetic backdrop of Babylonian exile, God addresses His people and confronts their doubts. No, God is not to be likened to an idol. No, the idols are not stronger than the God of Israel. No, Israel is not in exile because they were abandoned by God, or because God was not able to win, but only because of their sin (Isa. 42:17-25; 43:1; 43:3-15). God had sent them off to exile as a chastisement for their national sin of turning away from Him. Thus God, through His prophet Isaiah, confronts prophetically this generation and establishes His unquestionable credentials as the only true God, in contrast to the false gods of Babylon.

Whether man creates a false religion by carving idols out of wood or stone, or whether man creates a false religion by placing his trust in himself to earn for himself eternal bliss, or whether man substitutes chance for the eternal and omnipotent God, it all comes down to the same thing: he has "*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*" (Rom. 1:25). Isaiah 2:22 concludes a whole section where man casts away his idols as vanity in the fearful day of the Lord by saying: "*Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?*"

Idols are a man-made abomination, which witness against themselves in the fact that they cannot see, nor can they hear (Isa. 44:9-20). They have no strength in themselves and need to be propped up and secured with nails (Isa. 41:7). Isaiah 44:16-22 says,

16 *He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:*

17 *And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.*

18 *They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.*

19 *And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

20 *He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

In total contrast to worshipers inventing their own gods, God is the true God who has literally created His own worshipers. He has set up and instituted Israel as a nation, and has entered in a covenant with Israel. He refers to that fact over and over again in Isaiah 40-48.

*I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. (Isa. 43:15)*

*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. (Isa. 43:21)*

*Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. (Isa. 44:2)*

*Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. (Isa. 44:21)*

The fact that God is the Creator of all is a foundational proof of the exclusive right God holds on His creatures for the rightful worship of His glorious Majesty. To worship anything else would be a vain and abominable lie.

## **II. God is the all-knowing PREDICTOR (v. 21)**

Who knows the future? What will it be like next year? In ten years? In a hundred years? Any guesses? True, we can guess, but who really knows? God says: Me! I can tell the future, because I know the future: I am God!

In His contrasting Himself with man-made religion and false gods, God first gives them a chance to prove themselves and give proof of their claims. In Isaiah 41:21-24, God

says,

*21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.*

*22 Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.*

*23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.*

*24 Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.*

In response to the inability of the false gods of doing anything, much less foretelling the future, God shows His own ability. He goes on in verse 25 by saying,

*25 I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.*

*26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.*

*27 The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.*

*28 For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.*

*29 Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.*

What God begins to do in chapter 41, here in verse 25, and previously in verse 2, constitutes an amazingly powerful “punch” of proof regarding His ability to prophecy. As was mentioned, Isaiah is speaking to a future generation. He is living around 700 B.C. He just spoke directly to his own generation in chapters 1-39. But now, in chapters 40-66, he is specifically addressing a future generation living around 550 B.C. in exile in Babylon, and he is speaking to them, that God is about to deliver them. This generation was confused, bewildered; how could their God have abandoned them? Was it that the gods of Babylon were stronger, better? NO! Absolutely not. God has not only clearly established His “Creatorship” of the whole universe and of Israel itself, but now He starts revealing that He has predicted long ago through Isaiah the very person that He has raised up to deliver Israel from Babylonian exile.

He starts off somewhat enigmatically by describing this deliverer, where he comes from, what he shall do. He shall come from the east, from the north; he shall let Israel go back, and call for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Isaiah 41:2, 25; 43:6-9; 44:24-26). Finally,

in Isaiah 44:28-45:1, right in the middle of this first section (chapters 40-48), God comes to a very climactic point in which He reveals the very name of the deliverer: Cyrus.

Can you imagine that generation living around 550 B.C., as they read from copies of Isaiah's manuscript? They can see themselves through Isaiah's description of a people in exile under Babylon. They can read regarding God's claim of being able to prophesy, and they see it happening in their own day. They see Cyrus coming upon the scene, causing the fall of Babylon, and permitting them to go back to the Promised Land. They hear of Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem, and that not for money (Isa. 45:13). What they had been reading from that old Isaiah scroll, old of 150 years or so, they see happening before their very eyes! What refutation to God's claim can they advance? Absolutely none!

In fact, God specifically calls His people Israel to take notice and witness to the fact that it is God alone who has done it all and foretold of Israel's deliverance through Cyrus (43:9-12). That is why God constantly asks through this whole section: “Who? ... Who hath foretold? ... Who hath raised up? ... Who?”. God did so in such a way that Israel could do nothing but acknowledge God's truthful claims and not give the glory due to God to fabricated man-made false gods. He says, in Isaiah 48:3-11,

*3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.*

*4 Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;*

*5 I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. ...*

*11 For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.*

Therefore, God's powerful master-piece of proof is the naming of Cyrus, the very deliverer of Israel. It was not enough to simply show the inability of the false gods to prophesy. It was not enough to thwart their feeble attempts and show the foolishness of their predictors (Isa. 47:13 – like horoscopes and palm reading and such vanity and abomination). It was not enough for God to show His prophetic ability through prophesying Israel's exile to Babylon. God goes further and prophesies to this future generation under exile the very name of the one that will deliver them out of Babylonian exile.

Following this climactic naming of Cyrus in the middle of 40-48, God goes back to speak about him more generically (45:13; 46:11; 48:14-15). As the summit towers over the sides of a mountain, God has kept the most powerful and precise part of His prophesying to the middle of this section (40-48).

This leads beautifully and powerfully into God's third main point of proof: He alone

can save! For not only has God foretold of the redeemer of Israel's exile, He also specifically foretells a much greater redeemer: the ultimate and perfect Redeemer.

### **III. God is the sole SAVIOR (v. 21b-22)**

Did you notice in Isaiah 41:24, when God spoke to the idols, He said they were nothing, they were vanity; "an abomination is he who chooses you." Isaiah 45:16-17 says,

*16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.*

*17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

What is the difference between those who trust in God and those who trust in idols or in their man-made religion? The ones are saved, and not confounded. The others are confused and ashamed forever.

God says: "idols do not save, they can do nothing!" "I, alone, can truly save: I am the LORD God, there is none other!"

All man-made religions are the same: they leave people tired and hopeless, confused and bewildered, trying to earn their way to heaven, or to a state of bliss, because their religion can do nothing for them but give them empty rituals or vain pursuits that leave the soul seeking. God says in Isaiah 45:20-22,

*20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.*

*21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.*

*22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

Man-made religions are a burden to bear. The gods of Babylon had to be saved, saved by their worshipers. They could not save their worshipers; to the contrary, their worshipers had to attempt to save them!

*1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden; they are a burden to the weary beast*

*2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. (Isa. 46:1-2)*

Bel and Nebo, two Babylonian gods, were but a burden to the animals upon which they were put in order to be rescued. For what? For nought!

Actually, man-made religion is worse than vain. It does not bring blessing. It brings the opposite: greater JUDGMENT.

*10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.*

*11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.*

*12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.*

*13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.*

*14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.*

*15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee. (Isa. 47:10-15)*

*Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. (Jer. 17:5)*

To the contrary, God can save and has saved. He shows His power in delivering Israel out of the bondage of Babylonian exile. They were there because of their sin, but God redeems them, and as a nation frees them to return to their land. But God is a much greater Savior than that. He will provide a salvation from the ultimate root problem: their sin and the eternal consequences that come with it.

We have seen how God has given us one climactic point in 44:28-45:1: the naming of Cyrus, the chosen vessel of God to render justice, in judging Babylon, and delivering Israel at the completion of their payment for national sin. But there is a greater climax. There is a greater chosen servant. There is a greater redemption.

God has given us a clearly delineated three-part structure in Isaiah 40-66:

A. The first nine chapters (40-48) end with: "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked."

- B. The second nine chapters (Isaiah 49-57) end with: *“There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.”*
- C. Finally, the third nine chapters (Isaiah 58-66) end with an expansion of that chorus: *“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”*

We have already commented briefly on the main subject of the first section (chapters 40-48). The main subject of the second section (Isaiah 49-57) is precisely how God will do His work of salvation. He will raise up a much greater servant than Cyrus. He will raise up a perfect Servant, the Servant of the Lord, who will perfectly do God's bidding, and will work out the righteousness of God, not only bringing judgment upon sin, but providing a perfect, permanent and eternal restoration from sin. This Servant of the Lord is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate.

The task given to this Servant is much more than just the redemption of Israel. As God says in Isaiah 49:6, *“It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”*

Is it any surprise then, that, as with the first section, this second section (49-57) finds its climactic point right in the middle of the section? Isaiah 53 gives the most precious and precise account of how the Servant of the Lord will bring about redemption in giving Himself to die for the sins of us all.

Just as much as God, in these chapters, keeps the best for the middle, as a summit to its mountain, Isaiah 53 is the summit of the summits. It is the middle of the middle section. Therefore, far greater in significance than even the naming of Cyrus, Isaiah 53 is the precise foretelling of how God can rightly save guilty sinners and be just while justifying them who put their trust in Christ: it is by having the sins of the whole world placed vicariously upon the innocent Perfect Servant of the Lord, who will thereafter be risen from the dead ever to intercede for His own.

#### Isaiah 53

- 1 *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*
- 2 *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*
- 3 *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
- 4 *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*
- 5 *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

- 6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- 7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*
- 8 *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*
- 9 *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*
- 10 *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*
- 11 *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*
- 12 *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

That is why God could already cry out in Isaiah 45:21-22,

*... who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

#### CONCLUSION

God is the God of missions, desiring that His Salvation go out unto the ends of the earth, that He might be recognized as the only true God, the One who has created all things, and declared all things, and who alone can save and restore unto Himself lost and vile sinners. Therefore He should be the only One to whom honor and glory be given.

It will not do therefore to let anyone exchange the truth for a lie, and serve the creature rather than the Creator, without confronting them for their sin, and showing them the Savior who alone can save.

Have you trusted in Him? Have you turned from your own man-made religion, religion of a god that cannot save, that cannot foretell, that is invented by rebellious creatures that have rejected the one true GOD, their creator?

Only God can save perfectly and truly. When He saves, He saves completely. When He forgives, He forgives totally. When He washes, He washes effectually. When He saves, He saves eternally! And we know that this salvation is through Jesus Christ His

Son!

People do not need the Bible to know they need a Savior. They know they have a deep and profound problem of sin, sin in their very nature, sin which they can do nothing about. Conscience tells them that (Rom. 2:15). They also know that there is a judgment coming upon all their ungodliness (Rom. 1:32). But all men need to hear the Word of God, to hear about the Savior and the Salvation He provides. Romans 10:17 says: "so then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Notice that God's apologetic is EVANGELISTIC in nature! He says: "I am the LORD, there is none other, and you need to come to me!"

God also shows great care for ALL MEN! It is not just for His people Israel, but for every person, even unto the ends of the earth.

The same God that gave us the great commission is the same God of the Old Testament who was deeply concerned for all, His own and those unto the ends of the earth.

The same God who sent His Son, the God incarnate, Jesus Christ, to look at the multitudes and to be moved with compassion because they fainted, as sheep not having shepherds, is the SAME God of the Old Testament who looked at all the idols, and all the man made religions, who knew that they are but vanity, and that man is empty, confused and void of any hope when turning to those religions.

The same God who gave us the commandment to give reason for the hope that is within us, is the same God of the Old Testament who has laid down HIS undisputable case:

He is the creator,  
He is all knowing, perfect predictor,  
He is the sole Savior.

All that to say this: HE alone is God.

That is why we can and should go and send missionaries to present this true God to a lost world. That is why we can and should go just as much across the street as across the ocean with the needed proclamation of the salvation of this true God in Christ Jesus His Son!

The realization that God is truly God and alone is God, is what will urge us to join our voices to the constant witness of nature: **our God is the CREATOR!**

That is also what will give us encouragement to trust in and proclaim God's written promises, knowing that He alone speaks truth, and what He says always comes to pass: **our God is the all-knowing PREDICTOR!**

That is also what will constrain us to develop God's deep care for all of mankind, near and far, and to say with Him: "Come unto Him, all ye ends of the earth and be saved!" **Our God is the only SAVIOR!**

## THE GIVING TOWARDS MISSIONS

### "The Grace of Giving" / Faith-Promise Giving

The goal of this section, from 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 and Philippians 4:17-19, is to know the same grace of God manifested in Macedonia, that God may use us to meet specific needs outside our church and to help in the propagation of the gospel unto the establishment of new Bible-believing churches, while seeing God faithfully meet our own needs.

#### I. Three kinds of giving

A. Honor Giving (Prov. 3:9) *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.*

This consists of tithes and offerings: to honor God by giving of the first-fruits of what God provides us; putting God first. It is applying to our finances what we are called to do in general, for it is a general principle in life.

Mat. 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Mat. 10:39 *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

If we trust God with our soul, shall we not trust Him also with our finances?

We also see that it is a principle that began even before the law was given: Abraham gave his tithes to God. Genesis 14:20 says, "And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

It is a principle seen in the first-fruits (Ex. 22:29; 23:16, 19), and the Passover, the dedication of the first-born to God (Ex. 13:1-13). The first-born belonged to God. First-born animals needed to be sacrificed to God. First-born humans had to be redeemed with an animal sacrifice, as God did not want human sacrifices. Therefore, the consecration of the first-born reflects the general principle of the honor that is due to God, since we owe him our very life.

*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. (Ex. 22:29)*

God promises to take care of those who honor Him. In 1 Samuel 2:30, God says “for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” How does God honor those that honor Him?

*Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. (Prov. 3:9-10)*

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Mat. 6:33-34)*

God does not promise immediate wealth or abundance, but heavenly treasures together with taking care of our needs here below (Mat. 6:20, 33). *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

May it be known that God is a debtor to no-one. He blesses, even when persecutions are part of our pilgrimage here below.

*The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. (Prov. 10:22)*

Some people might be tempted to think: “We can’t afford to tithe.” However, in reality, when God is considered (it would be folly not to consider the One who is the giver of every perfect gift, and the One who can give and take back, Jam. 1:17; Lu. 12:18-21), we should rather say: “We cannot afford not to tithe!”

Faithful Christians through the centuries could give multiple testimonies concerning the faithfulness of God. God honors those who honor Him.

I remember the story of a friend from college, whose father worked for Sears. He was told one day that he would have to work on a special Sunday, Sears’ anniversary. This man, a faithful Christian, told his manager: “I made it clear when you hired me that I would never work on Sundays. That is the Lord’s day, my place is at church.” The manager warned him that he would fire him first thing Monday morning if he did not see him Sunday. The employee did not compromise and expected to pay the price of holding to what was right. That Monday morning, the manager came to see him and told him: “You are a man of conviction and I like that. I have decided to give you a raise.”

For those who want to honor God, according to the honor He deserves, it is entirely normal that we return unto Him the first part of which He has entrusted us with.

**B. Sacrificial Giving** (Luke 21:1-4; 1 Ki. 17:8-16) ... *but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

When we give beyond our regular tithes and offerings, out of which we need, out of our necessities of life, then we are going beyond honor giving, we give sacrificially. This is exactly what the poor widow did in Luke 21:1-4. She gave of the substance of life she possessed. It was a great sacrifice.

*And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

In similar fashion, the widow of Zarephath sacrificed her last meal to give it to Elijah the prophet, according to the Word of the LORD.

Humanly speaking, it makes no sense, but let us not forget that God exists and that He is the author and sustainer of our lives, and that He takes care of those who trust in Him.

*There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it. (Prov. 11:24-26)*

The Macedonians gave out of a sacrificial heart, they who were not rich, but showed great liberality. 2 Corinthians 8:2 says, “How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

When we see a great need, and we are ready to personally sacrifice in order to meet that need, we reveal what is really important to us.

**C. Faith-promise giving** (2 Cor. 9:7-8; cf. 1 Kings 17:8-16; 2 Cor. 8-9) *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give .... And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency, in all things, may abound to every good work.*

The sacrificial giving of the widow of Zarephath was not a unique and one-time gift. She kept giving to the prophet of what God had provided to her through multiplication on her behalf. In being willing to give sacrificially, she also gave by faith that God would provide for both her needs, and the ability to keep giving to the prophet. Her faith was

manifested in that she first had to give sacrificially her last meal before God's special provision would be given.

When we "*purpose*" (make a personal commitment before God, whereby the concept of promise) to give sacrificially beyond our tithes and offerings, for external needs abroad, we are then speaking of "faith-promise giving" (or faith-purpose giving) – faith that God will not only provide for our needs in the future, but also for the ability to keep giving for those needs to which we have purposed to give (2 Cor. 9:8 "*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*"). This is the aspect of faith and purpose that goes beyond the faith that is inherent in the other two kinds of giving.

Honor Giving is simply returning to God the first portion of what He has already given us.

Sacrificial giving is to give out of our own substance of life by faith that God will take care of our needs.

Faith-promise giving is to give and promise to keep giving above and beyond our regular tithes and offerings by faith that He will not only meet our future needs, but also permit us to keep giving towards those needs of others.

The Macedonians gave "*beyond their ability*" (2 Cor. 8:3 "*yea, and beyond their power ...*"). How? God multiplied their provisions and giving.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 is a precise summary of this third type of giving.

*6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

*7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

*8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

*9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.*

*10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)*

*11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.*

We notice some key ingredients in the above passage: 1) the element of purpose, or promise, ("*as he purposeth in his heart*") 2) the element of willingness, not out of constraint (the opportunity is there, but it is not commanded), 3) faith in the promise of God of taking

care of our needs ("*that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things*") and of providing for continued giving ("*may abound to every good work*")

Faith giving is above and beyond the regular tithes and offerings. It is no use taking of what we would give for honoring the Lord, to give for special external needs and/or missions. It would be the same as what the Pharisees did:

*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. (Mat 15:3-6)*

Regular tithes and offerings should be given to take care of the internal needs of the church. Faith-promise is given sacrificially over and above those tithes and offerings for external needs.

Faith giving is not commanded (2 Cor. 8:8-10 "*I speak not by commandment...*"). Honor giving is commanded in Proverbs 3:9, but faith-promise giving is not. Faith-promise giving toward special needs, as the famine in Judah (2 Cor. 8-9) is not commanded. Faith-promise as it is applied to missions is not commanded. Faith-promise is an *opportunity* for the willing, for volunteers, to be used of God in a special way and to see His grace be manifested in our behalf, to see God, through us, provide towards the furthering of His purposes. It is like fasting which is also not commanded, however, it is assumed that God's children will in special times use that special opportunity to dedicate greater time and concentration in the Lord's presence (Mat. 6:16, "*when ye fast...*").

Seen as an opportunity, the Apostle Paul introduces his description of faith-promise giving in 2 Corinthians 9:7-11, by the verse 6, "*He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*" The opportunity is there to the degree one wants to take it. The blessing in return will also be received accordingly.

This kind of giving by faith must be done according to our means, and not according to what we do not have. 2 Corinthians 8:11-14 says,

*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. 13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.*

On the surface, these verses may seem contradictory to the concept of faith-promise giving, but rather than being contradictory, it rather brings in a very important nuance and

delimitation. The widow of Zarephath did not give a million dollars, she gave of what she had to begin with. The faith aspect was in the fact that she trusted God not only to replace what she would sacrificially give to the prophet, but also multiply it so she would have enough for many days worth of personal needs, and also for the continued giving to the prophet. In that light, she ended up giving far more than what she had at first to give. In that way, she gave above her ability (as the Macedonians had done), but also, in that light, she had given according to what she had. Therefore, faith in this context is not detached from wisdom and the present ability of a Christian. The faith is that God will provide for our needs (from which we are sacrificially dipping into) and for our continued ability to give. It would not be faith for a fifteen-year-old to purpose before the Lord to give \$100,000 a week. Wisdom and realism are called for by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:11-14.

Finally, we should mention that it is not for everyone at all times. There are those situations that God permits which precisely necessitate ministering unto the saints. If God permitted a famine affecting the Christians in Judea to the point that it was necessary to make a special collection to help them (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1), then it should not be strange for us to realize that there may come a time of distress in which we will need to graciously accept God's special provision through other believers. Having said that, we need to be very careful to not use this important truth as an excuse that "we are too poor to do anything." Although their situation was not Judea's situation, the Macedonian Christians gave out of their "deep poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2) to help those in greater distress yet, beyond what they were already doing for missions.

## II. Why faith promise giving?

Beyond the motivations found implicitly in the very definition of faith-promise giving, what would motivate us in participating voluntarily in such an offering?

**A. Imitate Christ** (2 Cor. 8:9) *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

The greatest motivation is to imitate Christ. If we are in a position to even be able to imitate Him, it is only because of His sacrificial love towards us. A lost sinner cannot imitate Christ. One must accept Christ's salvation. Then, this very salvation becomes a source motivation for us to become like Christ.

By the principle of giving, Christ made himself literally poor so that we would be rich. He was born in poverty (to Mary, and adoptive father Joseph). His coming into this world was rather humble, very humble. Perhaps we have romanticized the scene of His birth in a stable, but for Him and His parents, there was not much enviable to a manger for crib, with the beasts of the stable. The rest of His life went along the same humble course. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

In fact, Christ went to the very end of what it means to be poor. Of course, we know He gave His life for the sins of the whole world. However, the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, describes His gesture in financial terms. Would it not be appropriate then to meditate on the financial significance of His work on Calvary? We know of course that as He was put on the cross, even the last few things He possessed (His garments) were taken from Him. What did He still own? Literally nothing, as a human being. The Son of God, glorious, rich and powerful, whom Isaiah saw in all His splendor (John 12:41; Isa. 6) finds Himself totally destitute of everything, nailed to a cross. It is very hard to comprehend the extent of the contrast given in these divinely inspired words: "though he was rich... he became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9).

To go one step further, the poverty unto which he attained for our sake is a vivid way of expressing the very death he experienced vicariously. For He did it for us who were poor. When we delve into the reality of how utterly poor we were before God, we realize that it is a striking description of the reality of the lost. When one is separated from God, he is separated from the Life-giver, and the One from whom we receive all blessings. The things that the lost own during this life might tend to make them forget how truly poor they are before God; they in fact only have things by the patience and grace of God who withholds for a season their due in order to give them time to repent. Their utter poverty will be evidenced unmistakably in the lake of fire, as they will have nothing, no friends, no light, no comfort, no water, no ease, no homes, no golf sets, nothing... The eternal torment of being separated from God and cast into the lake of fire is the total and ultimate poverty from which we were saved to be made rich.

Can we speak of a greater sacrifice? Did He carry it out? Yes, for you and me, that we may be rich. Now when we contemplate the richness we receive by faith in Christ Jesus, once again, the Word of God is not just using a symbolic word. Christ made himself poor that we might be rich, rich with eternal luxury, ease, comfort, well-being, owning "permanent real estate" in the mansions God has prepared for us. If the streets are made of gold, can we even begin to comprehend the great riches that await us in God's presence? Yes, truly, financial terms are very adequate to speak of Christ's sacrifice and work on the cross.

"That we may be rich" helps us further understand that He made Himself poor not just as a sacrifice, but as an investment, for the fruit, and for the joy that was set before Him.

*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:23-24)*

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)*

Some may unjustly be tempted to think: "But Christ only did a temporary sacrifice. He was raised from the dead. He gave His life only temporarily." May we cast out any such thought, as His resurrection did not take anything away from the awful misery, suffering and shame He took upon Himself on our behalf. Furthermore, such thought is ludicrous, as it suggests that God asks of us a permanent sacrifice beyond what Christ did. God does not ask of us anything more than Christ did Himself. In truth, what He asks of us does not come close to what Christ did for us. Furthermore, the sacrifice He asks of us is also temporary in light of eternity. God promises an eternal reaping to us who, by faith, are willing to sacrifice the present moment (Mat. 6:20, 33).

To borrow the thought of missionary Elliot, is it really a sacrifice to give what we cannot keep, to gain a hundredfold of what we cannot lose?

Finally, as we contemplate what Christ has done for us, let us reflect on the purpose for which He made Himself poor that we may be made rich. For what purpose has He made us the recipients of so much blessing even during this present life? Is it to hoard such blessings and riches for ourselves? Or is it not rather that we may in turn desire also to sacrifice of the blessings He bestows upon us, that we may help others receive of the riches God desires to grant in Christ Jesus? As He sacrificed as an investment in us, should we not as well sacrifice as an eternal investment in others, whose souls are the only everlasting entity that can be found on this earth? In light of what Christ has done for us, would it be hard to give sacrificially, by commitment of faith, in order to advance the cause of the gospel, and to express our love to believers?

**B. Demonstrate the sincerity of our love** (2 Cor. 8:8) *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.*

True love acts. 1 John 3:18 says, "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*" (See also James 2:14-15).

To commit personally in this type of offering demonstrates the sincerity of our love to God. More specifically, even tangibly, it demonstrates it also toward those around us, toward the saved in responding to great needs, such as the famine in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:24), toward the unsaved in getting missionaries out with the gospel.

This type of offering is done with difficulty by those who have not given themselves to God before. We are not speaking of giving out of our excess. We are speaking of giving above and beyond our regular tithes and offerings. It is not the type of offering people do just to appease their conscience.

Have you given yourself to God? Then it will be easy to demonstrate the reality of your love for the missionary cause, and toward the special needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

This demonstration of our love will also provide a great assurance before God. 1 John 3:17-22 says,

*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 19 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

**C. It will keep missions at the heart of our interests.**

To want to do the maximum possible for the cause of missions and the spreading of the good news of our precious Lord Jesus Christ was the great burden of the churches of Macedonia. They were themselves first very committed to sharing the Gospel (Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Thess. 1:6-8), but were also very involved in missions and giving towards missions, that more churches may be started (Phil. 4:10-19; 2 Cor. 11:7-9).

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Phil. 1:29).*

*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. (1 Thess. 1:6-8)*

*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. (Phil. 4:10)*

*I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. (2 Cor. 11:8-9)*

After Paul had planted the church in Philippi, that Philippian church helped Paul start the church in Thessalonica, and together, the Philippian and Thessalonican churches helped Paul begin the church in Corinth. And it is the Corinthian church that Paul teaches regarding principles of giving by faith to meet special external needs. He also conveyed

his desire to see them involved in helping him go beyond Corinth and start churches beyond Corinth (see Acts 16-18). 2 Corinthians 10:15-16 says,

*Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.*

If a church does not seek to do the maximum for missions, it can become stagnant. If the Macedonian churches are used as examples for their love of the brethren and for their love of the lost, it is not the case of every church. Take for instance the church of Ephesus which was rebuked for its cold orthodoxy. This church had lost its first love (Rev. 2:1-6).

#### **D. To grow in our faith, to keep it living**

When we take part in a faith-promise program, we have the opportunity to see God do great things, multiply funds, send out missionaries, start new churches.

We see God provide in His way, and in His time according to His riches.

*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:19)*

*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8)*

It is to put yourself in the place of being at the mercy of God, of being a tool of God, so that what is done will be evident that it was done by God. Such grace that was manifested in Macedonia was God acting to the degree that the Macedonians had given "beyond their ability" (2 Cor. 8:3).

How many testimonies can be given by Christians who have grown in their faith, having seen God provide and multiply funds for the cause of Christ around the world!

#### **E. To be a powerful encouragement to others**

The Macedonian churches were a powerful encouragement to other believers (2 Cor. 8). Paul could use them to motivate the Corinthians. They were a concrete example, a motivation factor, an encouragement to act according to their commitment (2 Cor. 9:2-3). If Christ has sacrificed for us, it was to be an encouragement for us to do the same. When we do it, we encourage others to do the same.

#### **F. To place our goods in a super-efficient, and totally secure investment**

There is really no comparison with financial investments here below. To get 10% or even 20% in a guaranteed investment would be an incredible deal in our present economy. What God offers is beyond comparison. God offers us to invest in something absolutely certain, guaranteed by His infinite resources and sure Word of prophecy: present provision (2 Cor. 9:8), future eternal riches (Mat. 6:33), and fruit that abounds to your account (Phil. 4:17).

**G. To know most abundant spiritual joy** (2 Cor. 8:2) *How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

The Macedonians knew that true and abundant joy. They knew the truthfulness of what Christ said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

*"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).* That fulness of joy is found in those who not only have accepted the grace of God, but have sacrificed in giving it to others, according to the heart of God. The joy we find in the presence of God flows out of the joy He had in saving us, as it "pleased the LORD to bruise" His own Son on our behalf (Isa. 53:10). For Christ Himself, it was "for the joy that was set before Him" that He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2).

**III. The prerequisite: to give yourself to God** (2 Cor. 8:5) *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*

Paul said to the Philippians that what they had given was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18). The Macedonians gave out of their pockets as an extension of themselves. They had already given themselves to God.

If God has not your heart, He cares not for your money! If we give to God an offering, with the idea that it will help us get out of the need to obey other commands, we are mistaken!

First, money does not pay for sins. Only the blood of Christ does. 1 Peter 1:18 says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ." Only as the blood of Christ is applied to our sin through confession and faith is fellowship with God possible (1 John 1:9-2:2). We cannot give an offering in the hopes that it will excuse some sin.

Second, it is vain to give to God, if we are knowingly sinning against Him. Amos 5:21-24 says,

*I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them:*

*neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*

Our reasonable service is nothing else than ourselves given as a living, holy and pleasing sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). This is the fundamental “offering” we must give to God. Out of this “offering” will there voluntarily be made all other offerings and personal sacrifices for the cause of Christ around the globe.

To hesitate in giving out of our pockets toward missions is only a symptom of a greater problem: we have not yet given ourselves to God. We continue living in ingratitude towards everything God has done for us. We live according to the devil's lie. Satan would have us believe that real happiness comes in putting ourselves first, and putting aside God and His Word. There is nothing further from the truth.

We have two choices: 1) Live for God and others. 2) Live for self.

Christ gave and humbled Himself, and renounced His own rights and comforts, that we may also be giving and sacrificial, in other words be God-centered in our living.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:1-8)  
And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:15)*

2 Corinthians 9:8 grows out of 2 Corinthians 8:9.

*8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

2 Corinthians 8:9 speaks of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that He made himself poor to make us rich – **His Grace to save us.**

2 Corinthians 9:8 speaks of the grace of God which abounds toward those who have been made rich in Christ Jesus, who choose to give and meet needs – **His Grace to use us.**

*9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*

#### **IV. Principles of sowing and reaping**

In enunciating the principles regarding faith-promise giving, Paul uses the illustrative terms of sowing and reaping.

*Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. (2 Cor. 9:10)*

These agricultural principles are applied in Galatians 6:7-9 to life in general.

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

I am indebted to Dr. David Cummins, deputation direction for Baptist World Mission, for the following four simple principles.

#### **A. The law of identity**

We reap what we sow.

*“for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” – Gal. 6:7*

This is obvious in agriculture. If we sow wheat, we will get wheat. If we sow corn, we will get corn. No surprises there, ever.

This is as true spiritually for life in general as the flesh is corruptible, and he who sows thereunto will reap corruption (death). The Holy Spirit is, by very nature, living and incorruptible, and those that sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7-9).

Paul applies the sowing and reaping principle to finances. When we sow our goods unto the Lord, we shall not reap poverty, but we will see God's provision in our every need, and treasures untold in heaven.

#### **B. The law of multiplication**

We reap more than we sow.

*“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.” – Mat. 13:8*

If the farmer only expects to get back what he put in, why would he go through the arduous work of sowing, watering, and caring for the growth of the plants? The promise of a multiplied harvest of grain makes it all worth while.

God is the God of multiplication. He who, year in and year out, multiplies grain continuously in every field, is the God who through Jesus Christ multiplied bread and fish on various occasions. He is the One who multiplied the flour and oil for the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:14). He also multiplied the oil in the vases of the prophet's widow (2 Kings 4). God also gave many more children to Hannah, who had given to God her first-born to serve Him (1 Sam. 1; 2:21). Our God is the God of multiplication.

In this context, the apostle Paul said that God, who “*ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.*” (2 Cor. 9:10-11).

### C. The law of time

We reap after we sow.

“*for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*” – Gal. 6:9

The farmer knows that there will be a length of time between the sowing and reaping. He is patient in the spring and summer, waiting for harvest time. Investment in financial ventures takes time as well, before a new company begins to see profits.

The theme of waiting upon God is actually a very important theme in Scripture (Ps. 25:5; 59:9; 62:1; 69:3; Isa. 25:9; 30:18; Jer. 14:22, etc.). When we sow for the Lord, we wait upon Him and His time for the harvest. We wait with patience, enduring the course He has set for us. Immediate gratification is not a promise from God, nor is a gospel of wealth, whereby we think that if we accept Christ and serve Christ, we will be made rich here and now. We *will* be rich, in His time. Meanwhile, His promise is to take care of us and not abandon us.

### D. The law of proportions

We reap to the degree we have sown.

“*He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully*” – 2 Cor. 9:6

This goes beyond understand the law of multiplication. Perhaps, we are talking of exponential multiplication. Again, this is self evident in every domain. The multiplication is according to the degree of investment.

Paul applies this specifically to his development of the principles of faith-promise giving. The one who wants to seize the opportunity to see God multiply funds and increase the fruit of his Christian labor can do so to the degree he wants. If one wants to do it a little will benefit a little. If one wants to do a lot, he will benefit from it a lot.

But it all starts with the investment, which is the sacrifice of ourselves and of our resources, in faith of the multiplication that only God can operate.

Jesus knew this for Himself.

*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* (John 12:23-24)

Jesus saw Himself as that grain of wheat which had to die in order to produce much fruit. That was His glory. But He also knew that the same truth applied to those who would want to follow Him, since He went on to say,

*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.* (John 12:25)

# THE GOING IN MISSIONS

## BACK TO BABEL or “what are we doing clumping?”

### INTRODUCTION

How can we summarize true Christianity in two words? Coming and going.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Mat. 11:28)*

*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? (Isaiah 55:1)*

Christ's invitation to the lost, is to come to Him on His terms. Not claiming one's goodness, sincerity, baptism, religiosity, etc, but coming as a destitute sinner deserving only judgment.

*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:3-5; also see Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Peter 3:18; Rom. 3:23-25; Rom. 2:3-5)*

If you have not yet come to Christ on His terms, I urge you to do so today! Don't delay, come to Christ.

What is Christ's command to those who have already come to Him? It is to go, to go to others who have yet to come, so that they can come to Christ and then in turn go out to others who have yet to come.

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Mat. 28:19-20)*

*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Marc 16:15)*

Fundamentally, there had to be a going on Christ's part. From our perspective He came, but from His perspective He went to a lost and dying world. God sent His Son (John 3:17 Gal. 4:4; 1 John 4:19). And just as much as there was that fundamental going on Christ's part to establish the gospel, His desire and command is that the proclamation of the gospel go out into the whole world unto every creature!

But what does it mean to go? What does it entail?

### THE QUESTION

There is a most important question: **should we equate exclusively “going” with formal missions?** We are used to seeing the call of going as an integral part of the formal missionary call, and rightly so. It is! But I fear we also have seen the call of going as an exclusive part of the formal missionary call; that is, if I am not called as a formal missionary, I am not called to go! And we have unjustly limited the consideration of going to that simple question, “Am I called to be a missionary?” Is this a legitimate way of thinking?

### THE PLAN

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

### THE PATTERN OF CLUMPING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit came at Pentecost, in Acts 2, at which time the apostles began to preach with great boldness. Consider Peter who preached very boldly to a hard and cruel audience. It was only a few weeks before that this same audience cruelly and fanatically called for the crucifixion of Christ. Peter, who at that time had denied knowing His Lord, this time stands up for Him and confronts the people with their need of repentance toward God and belief in Christ.

This was only the beginning, as the apostles and disciples witnessed boldly for Christ on a continual basis. They did so to the point that the enemies of the gospel told them very pointedly in Acts 5:28.

*Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, **ye have filled Jerusalem** with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

On one hand, this was great! May it be said of every gospel-preaching church that we fill our area with the Word of God.

However, was it God's intent that this filling of Jerusalem be in conjunction with the neglect of next door and abroad? Filling Jerusalem unto the detriment and neglect of next door and abroad was not God's purpose.

*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples **multiplied in Jerusalem greatly**; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)*

What were the disciples waiting for before also being witnesses in Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth? They had received the Spirit; there was nothing more for which to wait.

### THE SCATTERING

God did not permit the continued clumping of those bold disciples. He permitted a persecution that would spark a scattering of the disciples and henceforth of the gospel.

*And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. (Acts 8:1, 4-5)*

The apostles at first did not scatter. On one hand, to their credit, they would not be scared off by persecution. However, God's desire was not for them to simply remain forever in Jerusalem. Praise the Lord that the apostles later did start scattering out.

However, at this point, it is the simple Christians of the original Jerusalem church – not the full-time preachers – that were scattered out, going about witnessing wherever they went. Even Philip, one of the original deacons of Jerusalem, became an evangelist preaching the gospel in Samaria. Finally then the gospel starts getting out into Judea and Samaria, and it did not end there.

*19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*

*20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.*

*21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)*

Local churches were started as believers organized themselves into local assemblies. One important example of such a church, started by the scattered Christians of Jerusalem, is the church in Antioch. Antioch becomes a very significant city in Acts. It is there that God begins the formal missionary enterprise.

### MISSIONS PROPER/FORMAL MISSIONS.

*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:1-4)*

The Holy Spirit directed the church of Antioch in setting apart Barnabas and Saul for the work He had for them: starting other self-supporting churches (Acts 13-14), and coming back to report to their sending church (Acts 14:27).

The point is to be made, however, that formal missions was not the exclusive way God used in getting the gospel out. If it was the exclusive way, God would have had to start missions in Jerusalem so that the gospel would get out into Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world. God did not desire a concentration of Christians in one place to the neglect of the rest of the world.

### THE PATTERN OF CLUMPING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The early Christians in the New Testament were not the only group that had at first tended to clump rather than scatter. For them it was an oversight, as they were burdened and bold with the gospel.

Many years earlier, there came a generation following Noah that did a major clumping also, this time, out of pure rebellion.

*And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. (Gen. 11:4)*

The tower of Babel was built in the context of a rebellion against God, a refusal to scatter as God had commanded. God had commanded Adam and Eve, and then later Noah and his family to multiply and fill the earth.

*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. (Gen. 1:28)*

*And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. (Gen. 9:7)*

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. (Isa. 45:18)*

This Babel generation said, "Not so; we will not scatter." But God had the last word! He forced the scattering by confusing their language.

*So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:8-9)*

Just as God did not permit the clumping of the souls He created and that were alienated from Him, but forced the scattering through the confusion of language, God did not also permit the clumping of the redeemed, but forced a scattering of the witnesses so the gospel would begin going out to where the souls had scattered.

### **THE GREAT DISPROPORTION – THE PATTERN OF CLUMPING TODAY**

Unfortunately, there is undeniably a great disproportion of concentration today regarding where the witnesses are. It is no secret that one country above all others has perhaps ten times as many churches and witnesses across its land, proportionally speaking, as compared to other countries.

In the United States, perhaps we have started thinking that this great disproportion is normal or even desirable, because with such a large base and concentration of churches, the United States can be the "home base" for missions. However, what determines that missions has to come from the States? Why not desire to broaden our base? Is missions an American thing, or is it the responsibility for every church around the world, as growth and maturity permit?

The United States is just another mission field. The only difference is that the United States is a very highly developed mission field, disproportionately developed when compared to all the other mission fields.

Of course, this should not lead us to think that the United States is thereby a Christian nation; it is not! Continued and fervent witnessing needs to be done. It should not be neglected, anymore than Jerusalem was not to be neglected. The ratio of genuine Christians to unbelievers is still very small in the States. But have we neglected to develop the drive to spread out and scatter our witness more widely?

Without giving many statistics, I will just give some examples. Michigan has a population of twelve million; Ontario has a population of ten million. They both pretty much have the same homes, restaurants, vehicles. Michigan has at least one thousand independent, fundamental Baptist churches. Ontario has approximately fifty or so independent, fundamental Baptist churches. The province of Quebec has around twenty-five or so, for a population of seven million. The size of the churches are also not at all comparable. Many other countries have even less. The witnesses are so few that there are huge stretches of land where there are no gospel witnesses at all. In Quebec, in certain places you can travel for hours going by town after town where there are no gospel preaching churches. The same could be said of so many other places in the world. That speaks of millions upon millions around the world that have no gospel witness within a fair distance.

There are a few more symptoms of this great disproportion. In the United States, it is not rare that a church seeking a pastor will have twenty-five to thirty candidates. The rest of the world does not have such luxury of choice. Many churches are happy when they finally find one person available to provide pastoral leadership. So many go without a pastor for great lengths of time.

The mission field of the United States has so much in terms of supporting ministries as well. Available godly evangelists are not a disappearing breed. In Quebec, we have no French-speaking evangelist that I can call on to come and help us.

I often ask young men this question, once I know they are training for a ministry in Evangelism, Music or Christian camping: "Have you ever considered doing such a ministry full-time in another country?" Often a blank stare is returned with the thought, "well, no, I am not called as a missionary, so I have not thought of going to another country." Not only do we not have any Quebec French speaking evangelists, we also have no where we can order French choral arrangements. This is just illustrative of there being a wealth of available material in some countries and practically nothing in others.

Is it normal that nine out of ten of our graduates from our colleges and seminaries stay in the States and keep developing this great sky scrapper of gospel development? Are we sufficiently scattering out our witness? Are we tending to fill our Jerusalem with the Word of God to the detriment of outside areas?

### **A GREAT EXAMPLE**

The point that needs to be made is not just the lack of full-time, life-time, God-called missionaries going out (and staying out), but there are so few “simple Christians,” as God had used in Acts, scattering out.

Not only should we pray that God send out more full-time missionary laborers, but we should also encourage the “laymen” Christians to consider the great benefit of their pursuing open doors of relocating in other parts of the world where there are so few witnesses.

I was greatly encouraged in recent times about meeting a family from North Carolina that moved to Montreal to learn the language and to be part of the core people of a church plant, helping missionaries there. This family is like any other “layman” family. The husband is the breadwinner who works for his wages. They desired to go out and spread out where so few witnesses were.

### **A PATTERN IN HISTORY**

Unfortunately, it seems like history is repeating itself. We have seen a pattern in the New Testament, a pattern in the Old Testament; there also has been a pattern in history.

The comments of Hudson Taylor, missionary to China around one hundred fifty years ago, should well be considered.

Taylor was troubled in England by the lack of interest in China. In 1865, as he paced the floor, he dictated to Maria: *China: its spiritual need and claims*, “Can all the Christians of England,” he wrote, “sit still with folded arms while these multitudes [in China] are perishing—perishing for lack of knowledge—for lack of that knowledge which England possesses so richly, which has made England what England is and made us what we are? What does the Master teach? Is it not that if one sheep out of a hundred be lost, we are to leave the ninety and nine and seek that one? But here the proportions are almost reversed, and we stay at home with the one sheep, and take no heed to the ninety and nine perishing ones!” (From “Christian History” Vol. 15. 100. 4, 1996 [Issue 52, p. 13])

Taylor’s burden and call for more laborers spreading out unfortunately seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. As Hudson described it, England could have been compared one hundred fifty years ago as a sky scrapper of gospel knowledge and development. Tragically, England today could barely be considered a two-story building. The generation of Hudson Taylor did not develop much of a vision to scatter, leaving them weaker and less able to reach later generations.

Today, the United States is a sky scrapper in terms of number of gospel believing churches that are spread across the land, when compared to other countries. Yet, there is relatively little sending out and scattering out. Churches across our land need to develop a much greater vision to spread out the Christian witness around the world.

Perhaps we would do well to develop more of the thought pattern that missionary James Gilmour expressed in his diary:

“Having decided as to the capacity in which I should labour in Christ’s kingdom, the next thing which occupied my serious attention was the locality where I should labour. Occasionally, before, I had thought of the relative claims of the home and foreign fields, but during the summer session in Edinburgh I thought the matter out, and decided for the mission field; even on the low ground of common sense I seemed to be called to be a missionary. Is the kingdom a harvest field? Then I thought it reasonable that I should seek to work where the work was most abundant and the workers fewest. Labourers say they are over-taxed at home; what then must be the case abroad, where there are wide stretching plains already white to harvest, with scarcely here and there a solitary reaper? To me the soul of an Indian seemed as precious as the soul of an Englishman, and the Gospel as much for the Chinese as for the European; and as the band of missionaries was few compared with the company of home ministers, it seemed to me clearly to be my duty to go abroad.

“But I go out as a missionary not that I may follow the dictates of common sense, but that I may obey that command of Christ, ‘Go into all the world and preach.’ He who said ‘preach,’ said also, ‘Go ye into and preach,’ and what Christ hath joined together let not man put asunder.

“This command seems to me to be strictly a missionary injunction, and, as far as I can see, those to whom it was first delivered regarded it in that light, so that, apart altogether from choice and other lower reasons, my going forth is a matter of obedience to a plain command; and in place of seeking to assign a reason for going abroad, I would prefer to say that I have failed to discover any reason why I should stay at home.” (Cited from <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/msquotes.html> October 21, 2005 )

### **WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

America certainly has been blessed with religious liberty, and with many open doors to get the gospel out, with many people coming to Christ, and with establishing many a church across this land. Certainly, we should not feel bad about God blessing this country with so many churches, as He had done in permitting many to come to Christ in Jerusalem. The question is: What should we do with this blessing? Enjoy it and no more? Keep it to ourselves? Or should we not rather develop a greater burden and vision to share it, to scatter ourselves more, and share the wealth of witnesses around this world?

Where is the concentration of churches in the USA? Is it equally laid out? It is common knowledge that gospel preaching churches are mostly found in the more secure, comfortable suburbs and rural areas. Not many are found in the populated, poor, and

dangerous inner-cities of America. Is this not a sad commentary on what drives us in considering where we are willing to serve God?

In speaking with a pastor from an inner-city work, the pastor shared with me: “Our biggest problem is that we see people saved, discipled, their lives turned around and made orderly, and then they move out to the suburbs.” We might think, “Why would someone who grew up in such an environment not want to stay there where he is used to living; he would be such a great asset in winning others to Christ?” But the reason would be the same as why people from the suburbs who know Christ do not have a great burden to move into such areas where so few witnesses are going! That reason is unfortunately a lack of that vision and burden that Christ had when He came.

In times past, our fore-fathers in the flesh had a greater vision to scatter than we do as a Christian community. Pioneers wanting to spread out and develop the West put everything they could fit into a wagon (which wasn't much), and they set off to leave the comforts of the well-established East, to start things from scratch out West. Do we not have a much greater cause?

Does the fact that America is the most comfortable country to live in have anything to do with the few numbers of Christians leaving the States? Why is it that people are tending to stay in the States, and even foreigners who come to get trained end up staying right here where there are already so many churches and sound ministries?

### THE GREAT GRAVITATIONAL PULL

Speaking now from my viewpoint on a mission field, I have long been very burdened regarding the number of international students that travel to the States for training who end up staying and never returning home. But it had never hit me so hard until recently, where I am beginning to find out what it is to be on the losing side of things, and am hearing other Quebec pastors share similar observations. It is most demoralizing to invest in developing strong youth and to feed their desire to serve our great and living God, and then when they begin to show great promise and go to the States for training, they feel great temptation to stay and not return. Natural “chemistry” has often something to do with it when their educational experience is accompanied with the discovery of a wide pool of a nice selection of potential spouses. The tendency to stay in the States becomes even greater.

I feel I somewhat created a monster a few years back, when, with a fellow missionary, we took some of our teens for a short college tour to the States. Our purpose was to permit them to see first hand some fine institutions who seek to develop an ever higher standard of excellency in serving Christ. I thought it would be good to broaden the horizons of our teens in that regard. Now I realize it is a double edged sword, because with the high standard of service being developed in some fine colleges across the States, comes the taste to international students of a nice life of service and vast opportunity that are greatly lacking in most if not all other countries around the world. That taste is hard to forget and hard to oppose. It is hard to want to return to the basic tastes of simple beginnings when the full taste of pleasant ministerial opportunities is experienced. It is

also hard, naturally so, to interest students to go to good but small and simple Bible schools, often run by missionaries around the world, when they have seen the pleasant side of what a rich and full college life, with all the extra-curricular activities, can offer in the States. Now humanly speaking, I wish everyone could have such great experiences and opportunities; the only problem is they tend to dim the burden for sacrificial service to our great King. They also hinder the small schools in getting the students they need to be able to grow and develop.

It is as if the proportionally great concentration of Christians in the States constitutes a large mass with very strong gravitational pull because of their strength in numbers in terms of nice and well-ordered churches, ministries and educational institutions. I therefore will be most hesitant now before encouraging nationals to train in the States, and I will rather generally discourage it, because with the good training, I know they will also be submitted to the great gravitational force of finding their “niche” somewhere in the States. And their niche in the States leaves a gaping hole in the area from where they came. After investing much time and energy to bring youth away from worldliness and giving them a heart for the things of God, and seeing their desire to serve God grow in a place where there are few paving the way (or should I more appropriately say, opening up a dirt road, since “paving the way” seems too advanced), and then seeing that investment being lost in the great sea of American ministerial opportunity, alarms me profoundly as to a wrong pattern of things. In the pitch-black night of most mission fields, is it normal that just about when a star begins to flicker on the horizon, it disappears only to be found lost somewhere in the starry night of the States?

Now not all international students lose their vision, burden and purpose of going to the States to get trained in order to return and develop things in their own country. Because of knowing of this “great gravitational force” to which they would be submitted, some have gone to great lengths in doing what was necessary to insure sticking to their original plan of returning home. One family from India even went to the point of doing without most basic furniture, and lived in a bare apartment so that they would not get comfortable living in the States. They have been back ministering faithfully in India for some time now and are not a part of the statistics of those whose vision, burden and purpose to return has been dimmed and lost by the time they receive their diplomas.

Now, it is not as if those remaining in the States are out of fellowship with God. Most stay to minister faithfully and efficiently in sound churches and ministries. The hard question, however, does need to be asked: if the Jerusalem Christians, as faithful and motivated as they were in serving Christ in Jerusalem, were lacking in their drive to carry the gospel out further, should we not be greatly concerned with the tendency of losing so many international students to American ministries? It is as if, beyond the problem of Jerusalem Christians not scattering (until Act. 8), the few Christians that might have been in Judea, Samaria and beyond were tending to return to Jerusalem.

So, not only are there so few Americans leaving the States permanently to develop other countries for the gospel, the little progress in these other countries is often set back in a major way when their promising young people go to the States for training and get

pulled into its gravitational orbit.

Beyond growing in their missionary emphasis, churches, schools, and ministries should be very leery in accepting foreign students for permanent positions. Rather, they need to encourage them to the utmost to stick to their original plan of getting trained to go back and develop the work in their own countries. After all, those permanent positions will be filled fairly easily by others, whereas the country of origin will greatly feel the loss of their trained youth.

What will give the drive to both the American and the foreign student to desire to get out of the great gravitational force of “clumping” in a comfortable place in which to live, and serve in another field? Let us look at Christ’s example.

### **CHRIST’S EXAMPLE**

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)*

Christ gave up the comforts of heaven to make Himself poor for us. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there was none richer than Christ, even as Isaiah saw His glory sitting upon His throne (cf. John 12:41). Christ could not have lowered himself more. Truly, Christ did not look at keeping His “standard of living,” or His “lifestyle.” He was willing to lay them down and He was sent to a poor and dangerous world.

Should we not have the same mind set? Of course, there is a point that we should care for the well-being of our families. However, should we not be desiring to lay down our comforts and safety and be wanting to go to places where there is so little gospel witness, even were it unsafe and uncomfortable? Christ did not come to a safe world either. He who directed perfectly Christ’s life on this earth can be trusted with our lives and our families.

We are doing peace-time living, instead of war-time living. During World War II, it was not just the soldiers that sacrificed a lot. People at home had to do with very little in order to maximize what could be put toward the war effort. That generation did what it had to, to go win a terrible and costly war. The cause of the gospel is much, much greater. The consequences are eternal. Should we not desire to see the wealth of gospel knowledge scattered throughout this world, and desire to sacrifice personally in going as far as the Lord opens the door, and in sending others beyond where we can go, so that the gospel gets out, and is known to every creature?

### **GO, OR JUST BE WILLING?**

Sometimes I wonder if we are not watering down God’s Word, with a misplaced emphasis on: “Just be willing...” It seems that there are lots of “I am willing” to go around, but little actual going. Do we really believe God is not wanting more Christians to go out? Do we really think that God wants America to have so much and everywhere else so little?

That would be hard to believe.

Was GOD’S COMMAND simply...

- Be willing to go, and be willing to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...? (cf. Mat. 28:19)
- Be willing to be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, Samaria, unto the uttermost parts of the world? (cf. Acts 1:8)
- Be willing to go and be willing to preach the gospel to every creature? (cf. Mark 16:15)

No, but I do need to be careful, because the aspect of being submissive to God’s will is foremostly important, as Christ himself said, “*Not my will, but thine be done*” (Luke 22:42). However, He also said (as in Ps. 40:8 and Heb. 10:7) “*Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will.*”

Isaiah put it this way. When God asked him, “*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*” his reply was not: “I guess if you really want me to, I am willing, but my heart is over here...” To the contrary, he said, “*Here am I; send me.*” His plea was for God to send him. He wanted to go, for that was God’s desire.

Perhaps we are not sensitive to God’s desire for us to go, as we have our heart in the wrong place, too consumed by the needs of our standard of living and of our comforts, and we satisfy our consciences with a vague and reluctant “I am willing.” Rather than be desirous of and delighted in God’s will, we do not give serious consideration of where we should live to best be the witnesses God wants us to be.

Beyond that, should we not desire God’s call on our lives? Or are we too consumed with our agendas, our dreams, our aspirations? Do we view God’s call to proclaim the gospel as the highest possible privilege during this age? As Christ put it, “*let the dead bury their dead*” (Mat. 8:22). The spiritually dead can deliver bread to the other spiritually dead. The unconverted can defend the rights in court of the other unconverted. Lost sinners can give the medical attention that other lost sinners need. But they cannot share the bread of life to others; they cannot plead and intercede for others’ soul; they cannot give the spiritual attention that lost sinners need. Only Christians can do that. We should see it as the most enviable case that God would permit us to work full-time for His eternal causes, especially working full-time taking the gospel to new places.

### **PURSUE GOING TO ITS FARTHEST**

Obviously, we cannot go everywhere, and so, in a tangible way, what do I mean? Just being willing does not do justice to the great burden we should have and the deep desire for the gospel to get to every creature. We should personally be committed to pursuing that divine plan of going to the fullest extent of what that might imply for us personally. Christians should therefore sincerely ***desire to go***, not just ***be willing to go***. The difference is great; it is the difference of where the heart is!

We should be actively pursuing going out for the gospel sake:

1). We should actively desire God's call on our lives so that we could have the privilege to serve God full-time and for a life-time, especially as a missionary. If God does not extend to us that call for full-time service, then 2). we can still actively consider the possibility of relocating to help start churches in places where there are none or so few. If God closes the door to a major relocating, 3). we are to actively be going out as much as possible in our local area, and beyond us through helping others take the gospel where we cannot go ourselves.

In such a way, we can know that we are pursuing going to the fullest of what God wants for us. We will not be ignoring God's command to go, but will know that we are obeying it.

### EXTENDING OUR GOING THROUGH OTHERS

Supporting missionaries should not be seen as the missionaries vicariously going in our stead. "I don't have to go, since the missionaries I support are going in my place..." No, such would not be a proper way to view missionary support. Missionary support is rather to be seen as an opportunity to extend one's own going beyond what one can physically do.

The Macedonians (Philippians and Thessalonians) were personally involved with going out and spreading their witness (Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Thess. 1:6-8). The Philippians suffered for spreading their witness. The Thessalonians were specifically great examples of having spread abroad their faith. But neither the Philippians and the Thessalonians were content with that extent of going out. They extended their going by helping missionaries carry the gospel farther and plant new churches.

Paul mentions in Philippians 4:10-19 how the Philippians had helped him with support when he was church-planting in Thessalonica. He also mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 how the Macedonians (which would include the Philippian and Thessalonian churches) helped him when he was establishing the Corinth church. Finally, as he suggests in 2 Corinthians 10:15-16, Paul hoped that the Corinth church would also do likewise and extend themselves beyond through him in helping him go beyond Corinth with the gospel.

### Go OR Give? NO, Go AND Give!

Giving does not take away our responsibility to go or replace our going. We need to pursue going to its fullest of what God would have us personally do. Beyond that, we can give to help the gospel go farther as an extension of our going.

In such a way, we can know we are fulfilling these commands:

– *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* (Mark 16:15)

– *and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* (Acts 1:8)  
 – *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* (Mat. 28:19)

The command to go is joint with a command to pray that God would send out more laborers: «*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* » (Mat. 9:38)

### WILL WE NOT LOSE OUT?

Will a church lose out if it really pushes the need to scatter? Will it lose all its people? Will the States lose out if it really carries out this need of sending out? I do not believe so.

**We do not gain by holding back.** This principle is given in Scripture over and over in varying contexts.

*He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* (Mat. 10:39)

*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.* (Mat. 16:25)

*Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.* (Mark 8:35; Lu. 9:24; 17:33)

*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* (John 12:25)

*There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.* (Prov. 11:24)

*There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.* (Prov. 13:7)

### REPLACEMENT- MULTIPLICATION PRINCIPLE 2 COR. 8:9 – 2 COR. 9:8

As we have previously seen, the grace that Christ showed in sacrificing personally for our salvation was not just to save us, it was also meant to abound toward us in giving us the privilege to be used of God, that as we also sacrifice for others, God's grace might abound toward us.

8:9 *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*

As a church develops a greater and greater passion to see its witness go out unto every creature, God can replace those who do go out from the church. He will see that the needs of the church will be met even as the church seeks to keep sacrificing people and funds for the furtherance of the gospel.

### **CONCLUSION**

COME, if you have not yet come to Christ on His terms.

Then GO. GO out locally, and pursue the GOING beyond, desiring to be called of God to formal missions. If He does not do so, pursue the GOING as a simple witness to spread out and help where so few witnesses are. If God closes that door, keep GOING out to those around you, and GO beyond through being involved with helping others spread your going.

GO, GO, GO so that every creature hears the gospel!

# THE GRACE MOTIVATING MISSIONS

## Fuel for Missions

IF GRACE is what motivated Jesus Christ in the highest personal sacrifice possible in going from His glories and comforts of heaven to a terrible place to save wretched sinners, and if we are not tending to go as He did, then perhaps have we need of a lesson on grace. Perhaps God's grace is not motivating us as it should, not because it has ceased being what it should be, but because we have ceased taking it for what it is.

Jonah, a very familiar story....

A prophet that is commanded to go and preach to a nation.

He disobeys, goes in the opposite direction.

God stops him in his tracks and a big fish swallows him.

God again commands him to go preach.

This time he goes, and a great revival takes place! Great!

That's where the story typically ends in kid's songs, and in kid's story books.

The last part of the story is puzzling, and does not seem to make sense.

Why would Jonah get upset? What was his problem?

Grace, a very familiar subject....

A subject we claim to be most familiar with.

A subject that will fuel missions like nothing else.

A subject that is at the heart of who God is.

A subject that is at the heart of who we are as His people.

A subject just as much misunderstood sometimes as the book of Jonah....

Jonah is a familiar story. It is one of those stories that if we have grown up in Christian home, we will have heard from our earliest years: Jonah was a disobedient prophet who repented and then saw a great revival take place in Nineveh.

But sometimes we miss the point of familiar stories. We have not stopped to think of what is really going on, what is underlying the story. What is the main point of the story?

We know that this event in Jonah's life really took place. It is not just a made up story. Yet the author of the book is not simply writing an historical report. Where the author begins his story, where he ends it, the details he includes, all show that this book has a theme that comes through the events recounted. It is this theme that we will look at now. I would invite you to take the time right now to read through the short book of Jonah.

The whole point about Jonah is understanding God's grace. It is extended to His own. It is extended to the worst sinners. It is extended to all who come to Him in repentance and faith.

The Jews knew God was a God of grace. What Jonah said about God in Jonah 4:2 was a familiar refrain in Israel: Ex. 34:6-7; Joel 2:13; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Nahum 1:3; I Chron. 30:9.

God's grace does not function on merit. The "best" of us, the worst of us, need God's grace, and God's grace makes no difference between us: It is granted to the worst, it is granted to sinners.

But Jonah did not want Nineveh to have God's grace. He felt they were not worthy of it. He had **twisted grace into something to be deserved!**

It is ironic that in the same way this very familiar story is so often misunderstood, so is the main subject of the book.

Let us look at seven by-products of twisting grace into merit.

### 1. DISOBEDIENCE – Jonah 1:2-3

God had given a clear command to Jonah to go to Nineveh and proclaim the Word of God there. Jonah was a proto-typical missionary sent off to a foreign people that needed to hear of God's Word. However, he flatly disobeyed, going in the exact opposite direction. Unfortunately, it was not because he was not familiar enough with the grace of God. His familiarity had bred contempt and had twisted selfishly its meaning.

In fact, with Jonah's antipathy toward Nineveh, when God told Jonah to go and preach against Nineveh because the time of judgment had come, we could have expected Jonah to run toward Nineveh with great glee, anticipating God's judgment upon those unworthy sinners. But quite to the contrary Jonah runs in the opposite direction, being so convinced that God is a God of grace who desires to spare and not to judge. And since Jonah did not want Nineveh to be spared, he went in the opposite direction so that they would have no chance of hearing God's Word, so that they could not repent nor believe God, so that their judgment would be certain. That is how much he was convinced that God is a God of grace. That is also how much he was

convinced of the need of sinners to hear God's Word in order to be able to repent, believe and be spared (also see Rom. 10:17).

Jonah had a twisted understanding of God's grace. There was a percentage of MERIT in it. To Jonah the Ninevites *did not deserve God's grace*. They deserved to be judged. They were not God's people. They were cruel, savage, barbaric in how they treated people. They would be later God's instrument to judge Israel. If anyone did not deserve God's grace, it was Assyria and Nineveh its capital.

This expression "their wickedness has come up before me" reminds us of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin had reached its maximum level. Time was declared for judgment. It was not that Nineveh had just begun to sin. No, their characteristic wickedness had gone far back. But now, it had accumulated to such a point, God said "Enough." Judgment was at hand.

Did Nineveh deserve God's grace? No! But that is the point! Sinners do not deserve God's Grace. That is precisely why grace is received through faith and trust, and not by works.

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Gal. 2 16)*

*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Rom. 11:6)*

*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Tim. 1:9)*

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph. 2: 8)*

That is precisely the problem with the Catholic religion, fundamentally twisting the grace of God into merit. They think they need to earn God's grace through various means, through rites, through righteous living. Since it is by their own earning, it is to be gained little by little; it is never a "done deal", never a complete saving and receiving of God's grace.

Is God's grace fair? If He gives it totally apart from merit, is it fair to consider a guilty person innocent? But yes, God does it in a way to be fair. It cannot be on any merit of our own, since we deserve eternal judgment/death, and not God's favor. But it is based on merit, the merit of Jesus Christ, the Holy, the Just, who shed His blood on

our behalf, for our sins, so that God could be totally and perfectly righteous and just and still extend grace and justify the sinner, and consider him just!

If you have never fundamentally come to grips with what you deserve and your need of God's grace, come now, do not delay!

So Jonah was very familiar with God's grace, but he had twisted it into merit. So first, he outright disobeyed.

What about you? Are you obeying God's injunction to go and witness, and proclaim God's word, to the lost, the wicked, the abominable? Or have you slipped and started twisting grace into merit, by not wanting to go to your neighbor or co-worker? Sure he might be very wicked, immoral, cruel, etc. But that is the whole point! That should motivate you to go, not to disobey.

God's command to us today has not changed: it is to go to the lost in every corner of this world and make known to them the Word of God. God's desire has not changed: it is still that wicked sinners be spared and forgiven, if only they cast themselves simply before the grace of God through repentance and belief.

Do we disobey God's clear commands by not going out to the lost, because, after all, we might think like Jonah, "let them get what they deserve"?

## **2. SPIRITUAL PRIDE: a Sense of Being Part of the Elite – Jonah 1:9**

When asked by the boatmen regarding his identity and origin, Jonah answered: "*I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land*" (Jonah 1:9).

How could he claim to fear God when he was in direct disobedience against Him? The fear of God is to depart from evil (Job 28:28), even to hate evil (Prov. 8:13). He claimed to fear God because, as he put it, he was an Hebrew, part of the covenant people. He felt he was part of the group that was in a special relationship with God, as if he belonged because he was worthy of it. He forgot that Israel had been made the covenant people of God only and purely because God chose to do so out of love and mercy, not out of merit on Israel's part! (Deut. 7:7-8)

He took for granted his relationship with God, and out of spiritual pride permitted himself to disobey and still claim to fear God.

We would do well to be careful, as Fundamental Baptists, to not get proud of our position, or start thinking we are part of God's elite. Sometimes we lose the wonder and meaning of His grace, and become proud, and also disobedient or negligent about being used to reach out to wicked sinners.

God answers that with irony. It is these wicked pagans and idolaters that really fear God and take Him seriously. The boatmen hear about the true God of heaven and earth through Jonah, and cannot conceive of Jonah having done what he did. It is the same spirit that Joseph manifested when tempted, "*how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Gen. 39:9). The fear of God will make us abhor even the thought of sinning against God. Sinning against God should be unthinkable to

us. How could we render evil to the God to whom we owe everything and who is perfect, holy, omnipotent, and omniscient? The boatmen greatly feared God and made vows (Jonah 1:16).

Nineveh also showed true fear of God when its people repented, and cast themselves before God, with no claim of merit... only recognition of their unworthiness! Fear of God makes us depart from evil.

But even a proper of understanding of grace would have turned Jonah away from disobedience and sin. Titus 2:11-13 says,

*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*

Twisting God's grace unto an excuse of sinning is a trademark of false apostles. Jude 4 says,

*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jonah had twisted grace as an excuse for selfish, disobedient living, instead of taking it as a motivation to go and preach to the lost.

## **3. FALSE REPENTANCE: Refusal to Deal with Sin in its Depth – Jonah 2**

Jonah's lofty prayer might look good on the surface, but look again. Does he confess he sin? Does he reveal any repentance of heart? His prayer and his praise, though lofty, center on his circumstances. God saved his life from the waters. He recognized God had mercy on him. In his way of thinking, it was normal that God would show mercy to him, after all, was he not "a Hebrew who 'feared' God" ?

Did he ever change his mind to what made him disobey in the first place? No, not at all! When he was given another opportunity to go to Nineveh, he went, but with the same attitude that had caused the disobedience (Jonah 4:1-3). That is why he was so upset when Nineveh did repent and was spared as he had feared.

In fact, in his very prayer of "repentance" he shows his true feelings regarding grace. He says, "*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy*" (Jonah 2:8).

Has he ever properly understood God's grace? In the midst of the main theme on God's grace, we have a picture of what repentance is not. Jonah praised God for

saving him in the fish, but never changed his heart attitude toward God and God's grace.

When you take for granted God's grace for you (that is, when you assume it is normal that you get it), you will not be concerned with sin in its depth.

**4. HEARTLESS SERVICE: Serving out of duty, not out of desire – Jonah 3.**

So he did go! Great! Well, not entirely. He went with motives as far opposite from God's as he could get. He went without any compassion for the people, without any of the desires of God, which are that the wicked not perish, but be converted. In Ezekiel 18:32, God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." God says, be converted!

Perhaps you might have grown enough in your Christian walk to know you cannot just simply and outrightly disobey. So you do witness, and give out tracts. But you might be doing it only out of a sense of duty. Duty demands it! Yes, but far more. Compassion demands it! God desires it! God takes great pleasure in saving wicked sinners, enemies, haters of God, who repent and turn to Him!

As you go out witnessing, are you moved with compassion? Do you sow with tears (Ps. 126:5)? A lack of compassion is only a symptom of having forgotten the meaning of grace.

This episode echoes a lesson seen in Philippians 1:14-18. Salvation is of the Lord and the power is in the truthful message of God's Word, not in the messenger.

*And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

**5. BITTERNESS: Refusing to extend grace on the basis of merit (or the lack thereof) – Jonah 4:1**

Maybe not often considered, but Jonah's sinful attitude led him to bitterness. It says he was angry; he had an enduring deep-seated anger.

Bitterness is essentially not to extend our grace to some one who has harmed us in some way. When you get down to it, bitterness is not believing the other is worthy of our grace, of our mercy, of our forgiveness. But by very definition grace is not something to be worthy of! Bitterness, therefore, reveals a misunderstanding of grace, since we are commanded to extend our forgiveness and mercy to those who harm

us on the sole basis of God having forgiven us for Christ's sake and His alone (Eph. 4:32).

Jonah was bitter towards Nineveh, not because they did him wrong personally, but because they did not get what they deserved and he wanted them to get it. But for us, do we not often let bitterness seep in because we do not think the other deserves grace? It is like saying "They deserve punishment and we are going to give it to them in one way or the other."

Hebrews teaches much about the fruit of bitterness:

*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)*

Bitterness is essentially to refuse to extend grace, but by the same token it refuses to be extended God's grace in the situation. Bitterness shuts off grace from us to the other, but also from God to ourselves.

How about for us? Do we reveal a misunderstanding of grace in relationships we have with others around us? Do we refuse to extend them grace and mercy because in the back of our minds "they don't deserve it"?

The most motivated in spreading the grace of God are not eaten up by bitterness.

**6. UNTEACHABLE SPIRIT: Stubbornness – Jonah 4:5**

Jonah was done with his duty, yet he lingers.

*So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. (Jonah 4:5)*

He was still hoping that fire from heaven would come down and consume those undeserving sinners.

First, God confronts Jonah with a question, as He often does (as with Cain, Elijah, etc). "Doest thou well to be angry?" "Jonah, is it righteous holy anger? Or is it sinful self-centered anger you are showing?"

Then, God illustrates His lesson with a gourd. He has a gourd grow to give Jonah shade but then has it withered. Then, when Jonah is upset, apparently for the sake of the gourd, but really for his own sake, God confronts him with the concluding message of the book.

Jonah "had pity on the gourd"– selfishly, for his own sake! and would not God have mercy on His own creation? God's desire is to spare, to show mercy. He is not an unloving Creator who created us for evil – may that thought perish! – Nay, rather, He is by virtue of His very person a loving Creator who loves His creatures and has no desire

in their perdition, but rather desires to save the ones who have so ungratefully and foolishly rebelled against their own Maker.

### 7. **SINFUL DEPRESSION: Self-centered realism – Jonah 4:9**

Jonah finally became realistic. He came to that realism of understanding that he was not in control nor sovereign; that he could not make things go the way he wanted, and since he was stubbornly self-centered, wanting everything to go his way, his only “recourse” was a deep and sinful loss of wanting to live.

There is such a thing as a self-centered vain optimism. People being self-centered, wanting things their way, and not wanting them the way God designed them, and who are still at the point of thinking it will work, have this type of vain optimism. Vain because it cannot work; it will not work! It may seem like it might during that time when God is patient, holding back judgment for people to repent. But God is the source of life, God is the source of true happiness, of living. And we would want to do our own thing, be our own master, and cut ourselves off from this God? How foolish! We would cut ourselves off from the God of the living!

Satan invented the lie that it could work to rebel against God and be one's own master, equal to God. And he did so to his own destruction, and to the destruction of any following after such a lie. Anyone following after this lie of Satan, the father of lies, will end up realizing one day, that apart from God, apart from His grace, there is nothing worth living for, and nothing possible to live for. There is only sorrow in the realization that rebellion against God does not lead to happiness, nor can it ever do so.

Jonah finally came to this self-centered realism, and was depressed. Oh, that he would have turned to God, and lived a God-centered life, in light of His grace, having every thing to live for!

Living in the light of what God's grace truly is will give us everything to live for! We will appreciate it for ourselves, we will run away from sin, and we will desire it for other wicked sinners as we once were. No sacrifice would be too great to go and let others know of this marvelous God, the God of Creation, the all-knowing God, the Savior, the God of grace! The vain comforts of this corrupted life will not gain our focus, and will not rob us of wanting to go as far as God would have us go in order to proclaim the glories of our gracious God!

God's grace, the fuel for missions, to go and proclaim God's Word, at home, and abroad, going with compassion, with a forgiving, humble and teachable spirit.

### **CONCLUSION**

What's the message of Jonah? God's grace! An undeserved grace that extends to His people, and to the worst of sinners. None is too bad to be extended grace from God upon repentance, but oh, how many are “too good” compared to others and thus reject God's grace, because they stubbornly twist in it some kind of merit.

Perhaps we have not lowered ourselves to the same degree as Jonah. But perhaps we have started taking God's grace for granted. Perhaps we have been bored a little with the songs of His grace and with the preaching of His Word. Perhaps we have not been driven as much by grace as we should be. Perhaps our view of God's grace has not made us want to go in unpleasant places to reach unpleasant people. Perhaps our loss of awe regarding God's grace has left us lacking in personal sacrifice to help others go with the gospel ever farther unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Oh, may we not stay in such a state.

This grace had motivated Paul to go out as a missionary. This grace also motivated the Macedonians to be used of God to meet outside needs. It can motivate you, if you will let it.

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