
Principles of Missions

International Educational Fellowship School of Ministry

Principles of Missions

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Chapter One

Before The Foundation of the World

God's Purpose for the Church

The writers of the New Testament revealed a wonderful secret about the purpose of God -- something which had been "kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). The secret is this: by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, all barriers between Jew and Gentile have been abolished, and now "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).

It is this mystery which the Apostle Paul proclaimed. He endeavored by the power of God to make all men see "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God . . ." (Ephesians 3:9).

The fellowship of the Gospel now includes "a great multitude . . . of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . ." (Revelation 7:9). God always intended to have such a company of believers. Before the creation of the world, God had in mind a group of chosen people, elect from all nations, who would answer His call: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Paul mentions this wonderful plan of God as he encourages the Gentile Ephesians: "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). What a tremendous privilege to be in Christ and to be a part of God's plan!

In the days of the New Covenant, when the Spirit of God was poured out in power, this marvelous mystery of the Church of Jesus Christ was first revealed. It had been hidden, as the Greek word *musterion* suggests, from previous ages; yet, in the new Testament writings, it is brought into full view.

The significance of this revelation is overwhelming: God has directed all of creation toward the goal of bringing into full manifestation the Church of Jesus Christ. All of His power is now geared to this purpose - to perfect His Church, so that the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ may be revealed in it. Everything in the process of development in the earth is working toward this purpose of God.

If this is truly the heart's desire of the Father, and if also the gifts of Christ are given to us for the purpose of perfecting the Church (Ephesians 4:8-13), should not the desire of God's people today be the same - to see the Church be gathered out of all nations and be brought into the perfection which God has already planned for it? It is for this reason that Jesus came as the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). It is for this reason that God chose us in Christ before the world began. The heart of God the Father yearns for the full maturity of the Church, and for this reason He has "predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:4,5).

If such is the will of the Father, it is therefore understandable that prophecies are found in the Old Testament. These prophecies foretell the coming of God's New Covenant which would embrace all nations and offer to all men everywhere the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Promise to Abraham

Even before God instituted the law He called out a man, Abraham, through whom He intended to bless all nations (Genesis 12:1-3). As Paul explains, the blessing of Abraham is now extended to all nations through the Seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ. "That the blessing of Abraham, might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:8-14). The true children of Abraham as Paul declares, are not a natural seed descended through the flesh, but "they

which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham . . . For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus . . . And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:7, 26-29).

The Vision of Isaiah

By the Spirit of God, the prophet, Isaiah, saw the full panorama of the ministry of the Church personified in Jesus Christ: "It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved (or desolations) of Israel; I will also make you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). What a tremendous vision! God lifted the prophet's eyes beyond the narrow confines of natural Israel, and even beyond the task of restoration to behold His worldwide purpose for the Church. "Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles . . ." (Isaiah 49:22).

The prophet Isaiah received a tremendous vision of the universal scope of the Church's ministry. Speaking of the servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the prophet declared: " I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6).

Speaking prophetically of the Covenant people of God, the Church, His prophecy continues: "And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising . . ." (Isaiah 60:3-12). It is furthermore declared: "And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek . . ." (Isaiah 11:10). Isaiah declared the end-time purpose of God to draw all nations into His glory in the Church: "Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew not, you shall run unto you because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you" (Isaiah 55:5).

The Vision of Other Old Testament Prophets

The Lord lifted the eyes of Jeremiah the prophet to behold the day when the Lord would reveal Himself in the earth as the One True God: "O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto you from the ends of the earth, and shall say 'Surely, our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?' Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The Lord" (Jeremiah 16:19-21).

Micah, the prophet, also saw the people of the earth drawn to the purposes of God in Church in the last days: "But in the last days, it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in top of the mountains . . . and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob . . ." (Micah 4:1-2 and Isaiah 2:1-3).

The prophet Haggai also declared the universal extent of the Church in the last days: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:7).

Zechariah prophesied further concerning the linking of all nations to the purpose of God in His Church: "And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of you. . ." (Zechariah 2:10-13).

At the birth of Jesus, the worldwide nature of the new Covenant was seen by the venerable old Simeon: "Mine eyes have seen your salvation . . . a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of they people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). John the Baptist's testimony rang out also: "All flesh shall see the salvation of God!" (Luke 3:60).

The Great Commission

In the light of these Old Testament prophecies, is it surprising that our Lord commissioned His disciples to go to all men everywhere? Jesus told His followers that all power was given to Him, and that this power was to be used to carry out God's worldwide purpose: "Go, ye, therefore (because of the power I have received) and teach (or "make disciples of") all nations . . . baptizing them . . . (and also) teaching them to observe ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Here is seen God's twofold purpose in the world today: evangelism to win souls out of every nation and discipleship to bring these souls into glory in the Church. The first apostles obeyed this commission explicitly. Beginning in Jerusalem, expanding into Judea and Samaria, and finally reaching the known world of their day, they went out not only to make converts, but also to lead these converts into the perfection which God had originally planned for them. It cannot be overemphasized that the apostles carried out their mission by establishing churches and then, by teaching these churches ALL THINGS which the Lord Jesus Christ had commanded them to do.

This apostolic commission of Jesus Christ has never changed. The Church today needs these apostolic principles in operation to bring us to the perfection to which we are called. Christ gave us His ministries for this reason, for the 'perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

God Guides His Church Into His Purpose : The Day of Pentecost

The fullness of time had come. It was God's time for Revival. There were those who were ready for it. The disciples who had obeyed the Word of the Lord were waiting for the promise of the Father. The much longed for day arrived. Suddenly, all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak strange sounds, foreign to their own understanding. As they

continued worshipping the Lord in this manner, people began to gather to see what was happening. Almost in surprise, the disciples began to realize that they had been speaking known languages from all nations under heaven. They had been telling of God's wonderful works to citizens of at least seventeen nations of the known world (Acts 2:1-11).

Seeing the crowds milling around them, the Apostle Peter arose with the eleven and began to minister to the multitudes in the name of the Lord Jesus. Thousands received the Word and were baptized. The great in-gathering of God's elect and the formation of the Church of Jesus Christ was underway.

The universal nature of God's purpose for the Church is revealed in Peter's message: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . . it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved " (Acts 2:17-21).

The Revival in Samaria

A new thing had begun! No longer was the gospel confined to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5, 6). Now, all who believed in the Lord would be blessed. This move of God began to spill over into nearby areas. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them. When they saw the miracles which he did, they listened and received his word. The whole city was filled with joy. Later on, after the converts had been baptized, Peter and John came from Jerusalem, and these new believers also received the Holy Spirit, (Acts 8:5-17).

The Surprise at Caesarea

God began to move. Things were progressing smoothly. Yet an experience lay ahead, which at the high tide of revival would test the obedience of the Church. If the Church obeyed God, a wonderful new understanding of His purpose would be given to them.

It began as Peter rested atop the house of Simon in Joppa. The details of this experience would become important later. Peter had a vision of a sheet let down from heaven filled with unclean animals which the Jews were forbidden to eat. He was told to kill and eat them. Peter's instinctive reaction: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). This vision was repeated three times. As Peter puzzled over it's meaning, the Lord told him to go downstairs, for three men sought him. Peter was to go with them "nothing doubting." He went down, and there were three servants of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, awaiting him. Upon their arrival at Cornelius' home, Peter learned how God had sent an angel to Cornelius and had given him Peter's name and address. Now they were waiting to hear what he had to say. How his heart must have burned with this knowledge of God's direct guidance. Something important was at stake here!

Peter began to speak: "You, know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has showed me that it should not call any man common or unclean (he had realized the meaning of his previous vision) . . . Of a truth, I perceive, God is no respecter of persons; But in every nation, he that fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:28, 34, 35).

This dramatic incident demonstrated to Peter beyond the shadow of a doubt that God truly intended to bless those of all nationalities and all walks of life. However, Peter would soon need even more confirmation of God's will in this matter, for the Church of Jerusalem would not understand his ministry to Cornelius. In spite of the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament Scripture, the instruction of the Lord Himself to go into all nations, and the fact that the Holy Spirit had spoken to every nation on the day of Pentecost, many Christian Jews would not believe that "unclean" people could receive "their" blessings.

To help persuade the Church Council (which lay in the future), the Lord added the final stamp of His approval to Peter's ministry at Cornelius' house. As Peter was preaching to them

the truth about Jesus, the Holy Spirit fell upon all of them - upon Gentiles! They were then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What a sovereign act of God! This was a greater display of God's sovereignty than on the day of Pentecost. At that time, the disciples had been instructed about receiving the Holy Spirit and they had waited for ten days praying for the blessing. At Cornelius' house, no one had even been instructed about receiving the Spirit, and suddenly all of them began to speak in tongues! God simply moved in and demonstrated His desire to bless all nations. Would the Church follow the Lord in His desire to open the New Covenant blessing to all people?

The Dispute at Jerusalem

After what had happened in Caesarea, word came quickly to Jerusalem. In the Church there were people who still believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation and they disputed with Peter. They accused him of disobeying God's laws. Peter recounted step by step what God had done in the house of Cornelius. The six men who had been with him were able to substantiate what he said, (See Acts 11:12). Peter's final statement put an end to the debate. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles, he said: "For as much then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?" He threw them the challenge. Will you then withstand God's hand? No one wished to. "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God saying, Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life " (Acts 11:17-18).

It would have been wonderful from that point on had the Church and even Peter himself held to this early conviction of God's desire to bless all nations. Things would have gone much more smoothly, yet as is often the case, once a new truth of revelation has been introduced by the hand of God, time and experience are needed for this new truth to penetrate into the hearts and minds of the believers. So it becomes fully established. Peter and the Church would have to learn again the lesson taught at the house of Cornelius.

The Revival in Antioch

The spread of the Word into Gentile lands was just beginning. The Church could no longer assume that what happened at the house of Cornelius was unusual or unique. A revival then appeared in Antioch, which presented a further challenge. In all previous revivals in Gentile cities at least one Church leader such as Philip, Peter, or John, had "headed up" the meetings. Now a new situation developed. After Stephen's persecution, many disciples were scattered to distant cities, "preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only." Some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene arrived in Antioch and began to preach to Greek-speaking Jews, called Grecians. (Acts 11:20). The Lord demonstrated His favor upon this effort, for "the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

Here a work was started by relatively unknown believers and a notable revival was the result. The Church of Jerusalem desired to find out about this new awakening and sent Barnabas, a gentle, kind man and an apostle to Antioch, (Acts 14:14). When he arrived there and saw the grace of God, he "was glad, and exhorted them all. With purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

The Church of Jesus Christ had been challenged to accept God's divine expansion program. God in His sovereignty raised up a church in Antioch, and as this church was brought under submission to the apostolic authority of Jerusalem, vested in Barnabas, they increased greatly. "Much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:24). From this church would rise other apostolic ministries which would forge a unity in the Church between Jew and Gentile. One of these ministries came to the church in Antioch after Barnabas had traveled to Tarsus, "for to seek Saul" (Acts 11:25).

Chapter Two

Paul: A Pattern Apostle

His Commission

From the very beginning of his Christian life, the Apostle Paul was marked for a special ministry. His conversion was unquestionably unique - a bright light from heaven and a personal conversation with the Risen Christ, (Acts 9:3-18). Many believers must wait years to fully understand what the Lord has for them to accomplish, but Paul was given an immediate commission at his conversion: "I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people (the Jews), and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send you" (Acts 26:16-17). Jesus Christ definitely commissioned Paul to go to the Gentiles.

His Own Testimony Concerning His Ministry

Many recognize the ministry of the Apostle Paul as second in importance only to that of Jesus Himself. No other ministry was as significant in declaring the truth of the Gospel for all ages. Peter's ministry was mainly to the Jews, but Paul's ministry prepared the way for the transfer of the Kingdom of God to the Christian Church, (Galatians 2:7-9).

Paul stated that he was "ordained a preacher, and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles . . . " (I Timothy 2:5-7). In this one man was the embodiment of three of the five ascension ministries: evangelist, apostle, teacher.

This ministry did not spring into existence all at once. Like all true ministries, it had to be developed gradually (See Appendix: "Paul's Periods of Preparation"). In fact, Paul would have appeared to some to have progressed quite slowly. First of all, immediately after his conversion, he ministered in Damascus and "confounded the Jews . . . proving that this is very Christ" (Acts 9:19-22). Fleeing attempts against his life in Damascus, the second period of his training began. By his own testimony, he "conferred, not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia for an undetermined period of time and returned again unto Damascus" (Galatians 1:16, 17). During this time of preparation, he received large amounts of direct revelation from the Lord: "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither receive it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11, 12). Evidently, Paul's own personal encounter with the Lord at his conversion was only the beginning of many such experiences!

Following this second period of direct revelation from the Risen Christ, he returned to Damascus for three years (the time period usually attributed to his stay in Arabia), (Galatians 1:17, 18). Paul then traveled to Jerusalem to see the Apostle Peter and James, the Lord's brother, but remained only fifteen days, before fleeing to Tarsus, (Galatians 1:18-20; Acts 22:17-21; 9:26-30).

His presumably longest period of training was spent in the church at Antioch, to which Barnabas brought him, where we find Paul's name listed among the prophets and teachers in that church, (Acts 11:25, 26; 13:1). Finally, fourteen years after his initial visit to the apostles in Jerusalem, he returned there to share his revelation with the church leaders in order to be sure that he had not in any way "run in vain." After a total of seventeen years,

God had prepared him to such an extent that none of the apostles in Jerusalem could add anything to his ministry (Galatians 2:1-6).

It is important to realize that by the time Paul traveled to Jerusalem to meet with all the apostles there; his ministry among the Gentiles had already been powerfully demonstrated. By correlating Galatians 2:1 with Acts 15:2, it is possible to infer that Paul came to the Church Council in Jerusalem after his first missionary journey had been completed. A journey filled with the evidence of God's mighty power in which at least four new churches had been established. As Paul shared his revelation and his ministry with the apostles in Jerusalem, they recognized that the "gospel of the uncircumcision" had been committed to him. They extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas and agreed that the latter "should go unto the heathen", and they themselves would go "unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7-9).

What an seeming imbalance! All twelve apostles, including Matthew, were to minister to the circumcision (the Jews), while only two, Paul and Barnabas, were responsible to reach the rest of the world (the uncircumcision)! It is no wonder that other apostles were raised up in New Testament days to aid Paul and Barnabas in their ministry "unto the heathen" (As one example, compare I Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:1-6).

His Concern for the Jews

In spite of his primary call to the Gentiles, Paul had a profound love and respect for "Israel after the flesh", the Jews of his day. "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites, to whom pertains, the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises . . . Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 9:1-4; 10:1).

Many believers today do not share Paul's attitude toward the Jews and want to write them off as forever condemned. Paul is careful to warn Gentile Christians about this problem: "Boast not against the branches (that were broken off: Jews). But, if you boast, you barest not the root, but the root you. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you" (Romans 11:18-21).

Paul recognized the desire of God to bring the Jews into His New Covenant relationship, and he explains how God will bring this "grafting-in again" to pass: "For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

When this fullness of God's blessing rests upon the Gentile Church, the Jews will recognize that God is of a truth with the Church of Jesus Christ and will ask for mercy from God to enter into its blessings. This conversion of the Jews will "graft them in again" into God's Church and will issue an untold blessing for all the people of the earth: "For if the casting away of them (the Jews) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be (into the Church), but life from the dead? . . . Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness" (Romans 11:15; 12).

In the light of his wonderful vision of God's purposes, Paul "manifests his office" as an apostle to the Gentiles to bring in the fullness of the Gentiles so that natural Israel will desire to be a part of the New Covenant people, the Church (Romans 11:13,14). Should not the Church today be challenged with such a wide scope of God's plan? Let us learn from Paul's understanding of God's purpose for the Jews: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not

believed (the Jews), that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy." Can we not exclaim with Paul: "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out " (Romans 11:28-33).

His Pattern of Ministry to the Jew First

It is important to realize that God offered the opportunity for entering the Church "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16; 2:9, 10). The reason was that the New Covenant in Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of everything God had promised to the Jews in the Old Testament. Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfill the law and prophets, (Matthew 5:17, 18). The early Church was formed on the Day of Pentecost from Jewish converts only (See Acts 2:5,6). Indeed, the first seven chapters of Acts are concerned with the formation of the Christian Church out of Judaism and the persecution it received from the people who remained in the Jewish religion.

Even in his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul was careful always to offer the Jews the first opportunity to receive the Gospel knowing that some would believe in the Lord. And indeed in every city, some Jews did believe and enter the new move of God. Yet the majority of the Jews rejected Paul and his message. He then consistently turned from these unbelieving Jews and exercised his apostleship to the Gentiles. "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46 ;See also Acts 18:1-8; 28:17-31).

Contending for the New Order

Such a pattern of ministry obviously resulted in the formation of New Covenant Churches composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and from these assemblies problems arose among the Jewish Christians. Unable to move quickly into God's perspective of universal blessing for all nations in Christ, and burdened down with past prejudices and traditions,

some Jewish Christians insisted on making converted Gentiles become Jews as well!

Inevitably things progressed to the point that a "top-level" decision was necessary to settle the issue. In the book of Acts, we learn what happened when Paul's apostolic ministry to the Gentiles was challenged (as was Peter's ministry to Cornelius) by the Judaistic element within the Christian Church.

The church conference began as Paul and Barnabas recounted all the blessings which God was bestowing upon the Gentile churches. Instead of rejoicing with them, some of the Pharisees which had been added to the Christian Church rose up and said that these Gentile converts should not be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, (Acts 15:5). The debate began. Yet as in the previous conflict over Peter's ministry to Cornelius, the Lord had prepared everything in advance. Peter retold his experiences in Cornelius' house, and again the opposition was put to silence as Peter maintained that salvation is by grace alone. In the end, God was praised for the mighty miracles which He had wrought among the heathen. What a wonderful spirit was manifested in the early church in the midst of disagreements! No factions were ever allowed to grow and to split the unity of the Church, and all objections were settled by the Word of God.

Yet even in spite of the agreement on this issue, the matter of Jewish tradition in the Christian Church was not yet fully settled. After the Jerusalem council had already sent it's letter to all the Gentile churches relieving them of most of the burdens of Mosaic law, Peter journeyed to Antioch to visit the church there. From Paul's writing, we learn that Peter of all people, was again carried away with the traditions of Judaism. In the presence of Jewish Christians who came down from Jerusalem, Peter who had previously eaten with the Gentile Christians, now withdrew himself and ate according to the Jewish customs, "fearing them which were of the circumcision," who had just arrived. All the other Jews followed Peter's example, and even Barnabas was influenced to eat separately from the rest of the church, (Galatians 2:11-13).

By this observance of Jewish ritual, a great rift had occurred in the church and Paul could not suffer it to be so. "When I saw that they walked, not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all: If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles (Paul exposed Peter's earlier association with the Gentiles which Peter wanted to hid after his friends from Jerusalem arrived) . . . why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? " (Galatians 2:14).

The truth of the Gospel had to be maintained. A defeat in one place would lead to other defeats, for once a principle is weakened in one point it is weakened in all. From this disagreement among the apostles, we learn that apostolic authority does not rest in personal judgment or decision. True apostolic ministry is demonstrated only by the correct application of the Word of God itself and the authority which truth alone possesses. The Apostle Paul realized that the Church of Jesus Christ must be founded only upon the Gospel. He wanted Jews to be a part of the Church, but they were to come up to the Church's level of grace and love as he had done, and they were to leave their traditions and prejudices behind.

Establishing "New Order" Churches

The cry of the heart of the Apostle Paul was the establishment of local churches, through whom the fullness of Christ would shine out into all the surrounding regions. His own "strategy" was to remain in the influential urban centers until a strong church was formed which could continue the work of evangelizing its own area. Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessaloica were examples of key cities where Paul spent much time and effort. He spent over two years in Ephesus, and of this church it could be reported: "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). (Asia at that time, referred to the territory in which Ephesus was located - western Turkey.) His ministry in Corinth lasted over a year and a half, and later he could write: ". . . unto the Church of

God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia (the territory in which Corinth was located.) . . ." (II Corinthians 1:1).

We see evidence here that in each city the church had reached out into all the surrounding area with the message of the Gospel of Christ. Paul made it his burden to establish and preserve local congregations which would carry out the work of the Lord after he had moved on. He could then travel to other areas, knowing that the work of the Lord was continuing in the cities in which he had previously ministered.

He thus manifested principles in his ministry which brought forth tremendous results in the Kingdom of God. His missionary labors were so effective that within his own lifetime (without the aid of modern communications) he could declare: " . . . from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum (western Greece), I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19). Paul's ministry is truly a Scriptural pattern from which we can learn much concerning the missionary task of the Church today.

Chapter Three

The New Testament Pattern for the Development of Local Churches

A Foundation in Body Ministry

The principle of Body Ministry was clearly demonstrated in the missionary journeys of the Apostles Paul, Barnabas, and Silas. These journeys began as a direct result of the prophetic word in the church in Antioch. The whole body had gathered together in prayer and fasting, and as they waited upon the Lord, "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work where unto I have called them " (Acts 13:1-5).

The missionary venture was therefore not a one-man operation. They did not propel themselves into the missionary task. God had already called these men to work for Him, yet

they continued in submission to the church in Antioch until special direction came from the Lord concerning the time of their departure. When this word of direction did come, it was not given to either Paul or Barnabas, but to the church! The whole church heard the word and became involved in their ministry. Notice the full participation of the Body of Christ: "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:3).

Later on after the conclusion of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch, "whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them . . . And there they stayed a long time with the disciples" (Acts 14:26-28).

The second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul also originated in the church of Antioch. Paul had been teaching and preaching there "with many others," and when it came time to revisit the new churches in Galatia and Phrygia, he chose Silas, "and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God" (Acts 15:35-16:6). At the conclusion of this second missionary journey, they again returned to their home church and "spent some time there" (Acts 18:22, 23).

By these examples from Acts, we understand how Paul's ministry was linked to the ministry of a strong, local church. He did not separate himself from the Body of Christ even though he had received so many wonderful revelations from the Lord. Revelations could not be surpassed by all the other apostles! Paul still acted out of responsibility to his own church, and he was submissive to the Word of the Lord which the church received concerning his own ministry.

Not only was Paul an integral part of the Body of Christ at Antioch, his missionary journeys themselves manifested Body Ministry in a marked way. These first missionary operations were team efforts! Paul often traveled in company with other apostles, fellow

ministers, and helpers. As many as eight traveled together during part of his third missionary journey. (See Acts 20:4)

Represented in these teams were all the ascension ministries needed to establish new converts in the faith and to ordain elders over the churches. As has been noted, Paul had vested the ministries of evangelist, apostle, and teacher. Both Baranbas and Silas (or Silvanus) were prophets, as well as apostles. (See Acts 13:1; 14:14; 15:32) (Compare also I Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6) Other men gifted in the Holy Spirit were not left at the home church, they were fully active in the field as essential to the missionary program of the New Testament Church.

The importance of team ministries in missionary outreach cannot be stressed too highly. In the New Testament, when a cooperative ministry was not in operation, no cities were shaken, and no churches were formed. While Paul was alone in Athens, his spirit was stirred in him and he began to preach to the men there about Jesus Christ. Things progressed until he had a huge audience in the Areopagus, yet there was no great result from his preaching, except that "certain men cleave unto him and believed." So, Paul departed from among them, (Acts 17:33, 34).

Compare this example with what happened at Corinth. Paul was also alone there for a time and reasoned with the Jews and the Greeks every Sabbath, but nothing happened. But "when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:5). As a result of this preaching, emanating from a team of ministries, a great revival started which stirred the whole city! The chief ruler of this synagogue was converted, many people were baptized, persecution arose (which God restrained), and a new church was born!

It is very important that this principle of team ministry be reintroduced into missionary work today. It was through a team of ministries (the twelve apostles) that the Lord originally established the church at Jerusalem. We find these apostles operating there as a body in all

leadership capacities (See Acts 1:26; 2:14,37,42; 4:33; 5:2,12,18; 4-42; 6:2-4). It was through a team of ministries that the missionary efforts in Acts were therefore so effective in bringing new churches to birth.

May the Church of our day realize this principle of revival, using a full formation of a circle for Body Ministry in evangelistic outreach, and may the Lord grant to the Church now the same results as in New Testament days.

Preaching the Word In Demonstration and In Power

"And I, brethren . . . came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power . . ." (I Corinthians 2:1-4).

Paul did not trust in the art of human oratory or persuasion. He trusted in God's ability to draw people's attention to the Word. Of the revival in Samaria, we read that "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did . . ." (Acts 8:6). The Early Church expected God to substantiate His Word with mighty miracles, and they prayed to this end: "And now, Lord . . . grant unto you servants, that with all boldness they may speak you word, by stretching forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the Holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30). God answered their prayer, for we read that "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people . . ."; and the result was that "the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women (Acts 5:2-16).

The miraculous power of God fasten people's attention on what was being preached and caused them to turn to the Lord. We see this pattern over and over again in the Book of Acts. Two notable examples were the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the healing of the lame man at the temple gate. In both cases large crowds gathered and about

three thousand were saved in former instance and about five thousand in the latter, (Acts 2:41; 4:4).

The miraculous power of God was very evident in Paul's ministry. On the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas ministered in Iconium, "speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:1-3). God's power remained in Paul's ministry throughout his life so that he could afterwards declare: Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God . . . I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:17-19).

Sometimes the power of God brought judgment as well as healing. The power of the Spirit was directed against those who were hindering the extension of the Kingdom of God. Such manifestations of judgment brought great fear upon all who heard about them. Such was the case when Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by the Word of the Lord through Peter; and when Elymas, the sorcerer, was struck blind by Paul's ministry, (Acts 5:1-11; 13:4-12).

The miraculous power of God stirred up great reactions in the populace whenever the apostles ministered. Some received the Word favorably and turned to the Lord in repentance and faith. Others rejected the Word (usually the religious leaders or others in position of authority as in Acts 5:17-19) and reacted against the power of God by outbursts of wrath directed against the servants of the Lord. In each case, the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God forced a decision about the Word that was preached. It was this type of preaching, demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit, which was able to turn cities upside down and bring many to faith in Lord Jesus Christ.

Separating the Disciples into Churches

Once the ministry of the Word had produced a company of believers in a city, the next principle of church establishment naturally followed: the separation of the new converts into

a local assembly (*ekklesia*: "called out ones") or church. Usually this separation was brought about by persecution. During Paul's first missionary journey through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, great persecutions had forced a division between those who received the Word and those who rejected it. In this manner groups of believers had been formed in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. These believers were revisited by Paul several times as they grew into strong churches, (Acts 14:19-21).

The pattern of separating disciples into churches was clearly demonstrated in Paul's ministry at Ephesus. Paul had preached in the synagogue there for three months until the ministry of the word had reached a "saturation point." But when some were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus, (Acts 19:8,9). Paul knew by the Spirit that the time had come to begin the work of building the church and training leadership; so he took his converts out of the synagogue and moved them into Tyrannus' hall. For two years he preached daily to establish them in the pattern of the Lord's commandments for the Church. (See Acts 19:9, 10)

The apostles manifested much wisdom in their decision to build strong local churches. They realized that these churches could carry on their ministry long after they had departed.

Training the Disciples to Be the Church

New converts must be taught and trained to flow together in the Spirit of God, to edify one another, to exhort one another, and to comfort each other. In short, they must learn to function as the Body of Christ.

Paul and Barnabas were eager to instruct each new body of believers about their role as the Church of Jesus Christ. On their first journey, after they had been expelled from the region of Galatia, they returned again to the same area to teach the disciples who remained huddled together in the aftermath of the persecutions. "They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of disciples, and exhorting to continue in the

faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 21, 22). The "confirming" of the souls of the disciples established them in the truth. Paul's "exhortation" encouraged them to continue on in the will of God in the future.

The careful instruction of young churches was a taxing and a time-consuming process. Paul ministered to the new church in Ephesus for two years, disputing "daily" in the school of Tyrannus. "You know . . . how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house . . ." (Acts 20:17-21; 19:8-10). In Corinth also, Paul labored tirelessly to build the church of God: "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11).

Paul was certainly not wasting time by establishing strong, self-supporting churches. We have already noted how the Word of God later spread out from these churches into all the surrounding territories. The church in Ephesus evangelized all of Asia (Acts 19:10), and the church in Corinth, along with the church in Thessalonica, evangelized all of Achaia and Macedonia. (II Corinthians 1:1; Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Ordaining and Training Leadership over the Churches

In order for local churches to be self governing, there must be trained leadership ordained to oversee the churches. Paul realized this fact; for on the return trip to the Galatian churches mentioned in the previous section, Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every church," and after prayer and fasting, "commended them to the Lord" (Acts 14:21-23). Titus also remained on the island of Crete to "set in order the things that are wanting (lacking) and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you" (Titus 1:5).

After ordaining leadership ministries in each local church, Paul realized that this ministry had to be given room to operate. Maturity would only come as each church accepted full responsibility for its own growth. Too often in modern missionary enterprises, young churches have been made dependent upon foreign offices rather than upon the Lord of Glory. The Apostle Paul demonstrated a different approach. Even after having spent years in

establishing churches, he nevertheless sensed the time to depart from their midst and commend them unto the Lord. Before leaving however, he was careful to instill in the leadership of each new church the burden of their pastoral ministry. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Paul's most effective method of training leadership was by example. As a leader himself, he manifested a compassionate heart, a good conscience before God in all things (II Corinthians 4:2), and an unflagging zeal for the ministry in which he labored more abundantly than anyone else. "Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears . . . I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' " (Acts 20:31, 33-35).

Continual Oversight of the Churches

It could never have been said of Paul's concern for the churches , "out of sight, out of mind." The burden of all the churches was constantly on his heart and mind, and he continually mentioned them in his prayers to God. (See Ephesians 1:15-16; 3:14-21; Philippians 1:3-5, 8-11; Colossians 1:3, 9-11; I Thessalonians 1:2-3; II Timothy 1:3-4; Philemon 4-6) After listing the burden of his many persecutions and tribulations, he is careful to add: "Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches . . ." (II Corinthians 11:24-28).

Paul often revisited each church to correct what might have gone wrong and to further teach and establish them in the Word of God. He revisited some churches as many as four times. In addition, we have recorded in the New Testament a few of his many letters of instruction and guidance to the churches. We see his love manifested often in the Book of

Acts. "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do" (Acts 15:36). "And after he had spent some time there (Antioch), he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples," (Acts 18:23).

As the scope and burden of his ministry increased and more churches were established, Paul commissioned other ministries to exercise apostolic oversight in the Body of Christ. In Ephesians 6:21-22, he recommends Tychicus, "a faithful minister in the Lord," who was also sent to the Colossian Church to learn of their "estate" and to comfort them. (See Colossians 4:7-9)

Paul entrusted an even more important ministry to Titus. He commissioned him to an apostolic ministry in Crete, specifically appointing him to "set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:4-13). He was to exercise the apostle's ministry there by instructing bishops, by teaching the various age groups in the churches, and by maintaining church discipline. Titus also fulfilled an important ministry to the Corinthian church. (See II Corinthians 8:15-24)

Perhaps the greatest share of Paul's apostolic ministry was committed to Timothy, whom he called his "dearly beloved son" (II Timothy 1:1-2). Timothy was exhorted by Paul to teach bishops, deacons, elders, widows, young men and young women. He was to publicly rebuke elders who had sinned. (See I Timothy 5:19-20) He was instructed on the proper principles governing the laying on of hands, (I Timothy 5:21-22). He was to initiate a teaching program in the churches which would produce ministries who could themselves teach others, (II Timothy 2:1-2). In spite of his apparent youthful age, he was to command with authority, (I Timothy 4:11, 12).

Timothy helped Paul greatly in the oversight of all the churches. He co-authored the letters to the Philippians, the Colossians, both letters to the Thessalonians, and the second letter to the Corinthians. He was sent by Paul to the Philippians, to the Corinthians, to the

Thessalonians, and possibly to other cities in Macedonia besides Thessalonica. (See I Thessalonians 3:1-5) He traveled with both Paul (Acts 20:4) and Silas (Acts 17:14,15; 18:5). Paul told the Corinthians that Timothy would minister in complete agreement with himself "as I teach everywhere in every church" (I Corinthians 4:17). Timothy was also left in Ephesus to straighten out matters of false doctrine there. (See I Timothy 1:3, 4)

Paul was so concerned that all the churches be adequately cared for that he multiplied his own ministry in the lives of capable helpers. These helpers were trained not only for leadership within a local church, but also for apostolic leadership which could oversee other churches as well. To the Corinthians, he wrote: "whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ. Wherefore show you to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love" (II Corinthians 8:23-24).

The care of the churches was so constantly upon Paul's mind that he tried by every means possible to keep in touch with all of them. Epaphroditus was his link with the Philippian Church, bringing offerings to Paul while he was in Rome and taking back his epistle to them. (See Philippians 2:24-30; 4:18,23) Onesimus and Tychicus were sent by Paul to encourage the Colossians, (Colossian 4:7-9). Stephanas (who had "addicted himself to the 'ministry of the saints' "), Fortunatus, and Achaicus came to Paul from Corinth, refreshed him in spirit and were sent back to the Corinthian Church with high commendation, (I Corinthians 16:15-18). Phebe, a woman who was a servant of God in the Cenchranean Church, was highly recommended to the Romans by Paul who instructed them to "assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you . . ." (Romans 16:1, 2).

Therefore through much prayer, through many letters and personal visits, and through ambassadors trained in the principles of his ministry, Paul sought to do the utmost to promote the growth and development of all the churches. This oversight of the churches was as orderly and as methodical as a modern business inventory, and more so, for Paul knew that he

was dealing with resources much more valuable than the riches of this world. He was working with eternal jewels and stars in the Kingdom of God, and what diligence he manifested in all aspects of his ministry!

His intense love for the people of God is manifested in a letter to the Thessalonians: "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God against for you, for all the joy where with we join or your sakes before our God: night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking your faith? Now, God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you . . ." (I Thessalonians 3:7-13).

Unifying All the Churches

Not only was Paul concerned about the condition of each individual congregation, he was also active in bringing all the churches into fellowship and unity with each other. As "top-level" decisions were reached in the Church, Paul sought to bring each congregation into unity with these principles. At one point, we find that Paul, Silas, and Timothy visited the churches in Galatia and "delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostle and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:1-4).

Paul recognized the importance of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, and although his ministry was to the Gentiles, he worked with the apostles in Jerusalem to establish all of the Gentile churches in the apostolic tradition. God greatly blessed this ministry of unification: "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).

Paul was always eager to unity the Gentile and Jewish churches in any possible way: "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achala (Gentile areas) to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily: and their debtors they are. For if the Gentile have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto

them in carnal things" (Romans 15:25-27). Paul never forgot that the Jewish Christians first brought the Gospel to the world. Although this ministry was to the Gentiles, he was careful to teach the Gentiles about their spiritual indebtedness to the church in Jerusalem, which they were to acknowledge by sending them the only means of blessing which could add to the work of the Lord there: material relief for the poor.

Not only was Paul careful to bring unity between the Jewish and Gentile segments of the Church, he also endeavored to maintain unity among the churches under his care by teaching the same principles to each one. To the Corinthians, he spoke of "my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (I Corinthians 4:17). He ordained certain things in "all churches" concerning relationships between believers and unbelievers in marriage. (See I Corinthians 7:17) He also taught peace through order "in all churches of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33).

Unity was also maintained through the sharing of his epistles and his constant visits to the churches. The letter to the Galatians was intended for the churches in at least three cities in Galatia: Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. The Laodiceans were to exchange letters with the Colossians. (See Colossians 4:16) In addition to the teaching provided by these epistles, Paul personally visited the churches as often as possible in his continuing effort to bring them all into a unity of understanding and fellowship in Christ. A study of his missionary journeys reveals that he visited the Galatian churches at least four times, the churches in Macedonia (the Philippians and the Thessalonians) probably at least three times, and the Corinthians and the Ephesians at least twice. When he could not personally visit the churches, he often sent emissaries to them who communicated with him concerning the state of affairs in each assembly. (See previous section: "Continual Oversight of the Churches.")

Paul recognized that unity was essential to the life of the Church of Jesus Christ, and he was careful to work out this unity on at least two levels : that of the local church and that of

the Church Universal. Each local body was to be at unity within itself, and there was also to be harmony and unity flowing among all the individual churches in the Body of Christ.

His Ministry Fulfilled

Paul was able to accomplish the saturation of whole nations by the Gospel of Christ because he used the proper principles in his ministry, principles which he had received from the Lord Himself. Any other program would have produced sporadic revivals which would have burned in the space of a few years, leaving no strong church to continue the work of the Kingdom of God.

In summary, these are the principles for the development of local churches which were manifested in the ministry of the Apostle Paul:

- A Foundation in Body Ministry
- Preaching the Word in Demonstration and in Power
- Separating the Disciples into Churches
- Training the Disciples to be the Church
- Ordaining and Training Leadership over the Churches
- Continual Oversight of the Churches
- Unifying all the Churches

These principles of ministry need to be recaptured by the Church of Jesus today. How much time and effort is fruitlessly spent by Christian groups who have a desire and "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). Let those of us who love the Lord learn to know His ways revealed in the Word, so that we may perform "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Let us follow the pattern revealed in the life of the Apostle Paul. Then we can share the satisfaction that Paul must have felt in God when he was able to declare to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul was able to declare to the Roman Christians: "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed . . . so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum (the western coast of Greece) I

have fully preached the Gospel of Christ . . . now having no more place in these parts . . . I will come to you" (Romans 15:17-24).

Imagine Paul not having any more place to work in the area from Jerusalem to Illyricum - equivalent today to all of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and part of Yugoslavia! If one could reach this area with the Gospel in his lifetime, then there is hope for the missionary task of the Church today. The world can be reached with the Gospel, churches can be established which have responsibilities over geographical areas, and the job can be done - IF the Church today follows the same principles of ministry as were manifested in the life of Paul, a "pattern" apostle.

Chapter Four

The High Calling of God

A Confusing Issue

Much has been said about Paul's decision at the close of his ministry to visit Jerusalem in spite of the many prophetic warnings concerning the bonds and afflictions which awaited him there. Many of his brethren tried to persuade him not to go, but he went anyway; and as was prophesied, he was arrested, imprisoned, and finally sent to Rome. Theologians have maintained that Paul should not have gone to Jerusalem. They have insisted emphatically that he should never have engaged in the act which led to his arrest there, namely the undergoing of the Jewish rite of purification on the advice of the elders of the Jerusalem church. It is argued that Paul should not have compromised his position on the grace of God by coming under the dictates of the law.

Was Paul wrong when he went to Jerusalem against the advice of many brethren? And was he in error when he submitted to the request of the church elders and was purified according to the law?

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

Paul had the unusual experience of having the Holy Spirit speak to him prophetically in many churches concerning his pending visit to Jerusalem: "I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide (or wait for) me" (Acts 20:22, 23).

In the first place, it should be noted that these warnings of the Spirit came through the voice of prophecy in the churches, as in Acts 21:10, 11. Paul knew this voice of prophecy well. His own ministry had been initiated in this manner, as the Holy Spirit spoke prophetically during a time of fasting and prayer in the church at Antioch: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them" (Acts 13:1-4). At the close of his ministry, the Lord was speaking to Paul in every church in every city concerning the persecutions awaiting him at Jerusalem.

Earlier in his ministry, the Spirit had warned him to flee from Jerusalem to avoid persecution. (Compare Acts 22:16-21 with Acts 9:26-30.) But now, in his last visit to the Holy City the situation was different. The Spirit was simply warning Paul about the persecutions which were waiting for him there; he was never told not to go.

There is one Scripture however, which seems to cast doubt on this thesis. In Acts 21:4, Paul is told by disciples in Tyre "through the Spirit" that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Many expositors have seized upon this verse as evidence that Paul disobeyed the Spirit of God and was in error when he went. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that such an

interpretation of Acts 21:4 violates many other New Testament passages and therefore cannot be the correct understanding of the situation.

The exposition which follows will lead the reader to alternative interpretation of Acts 21:4. Namely, the disciples in Tyre received alarming revelations "through the Spirit" of the persecutions awaiting Paul in Jerusalem and they warned him not to go. In like manner, the disciples in Caesarea, the prophet Agabus, and even Luke himself pleaded with Paul not to go, (Acts 21:10-12). But Paul saw an extremely important purpose in his going and he would not be persuaded otherwise.

Paul knew that the bonds and afflictions which awaited him in Jerusalem would usher in the completion of his ministry and the "finishing of his course." He declared to the elders of the Ephesians church concerning these persecutions: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).

Ananias had earlier been told concerning Paul's ministry: ". . . he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:13-16). It was the imprisonment in Jerusalem which enabled Paul to fulfill his ministry by bringing him before the kings and rulers of Jews and Gentiles alike! During the time of his imprisonment, Paul was able to do the following:

- He preached to a large crowd in Jerusalem. Acts 21:39, 22:23
- He was allowed to speak to the chief priest and the Jewish council in Jerusalem. Acts 23:1-10.
- He testified before Felix, the governor, the high priest, and the Jewish elders in Caesarea. Acts 24:1-22.
- He testified further to Felix, the governor, and to his wife. Acts 24:24-27.
- He was examined by Porcius Festus, the governor who replaced Felix in Caesarea, and by the Jews from Jerusalem who accused him. Acts 24:27; 25:12.
- He preached eloquently before the Governor Festus and before Agrippa, and his wife Bernice, who were assembled with the "chief captains, and principal men of the city". Acts 25:23; 26:32.
- He brought the gospel of Christ to Caesar's own household in Rome, Philippians 4:22.

- He testified before the Emperor Nero at least twice in Rome, I Timothy 4:22

In the midst of this glorious fulfillment of his ministry, while still a captive in the Roman castle in Jerusalem, the Lord "stood by him" in the night and said: "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:10-11). The Lord encouraged Paul in his ministry and indicated His will for him in the future.

Not only did the Lord encourage Paul in his testimony before the ruling powers of his day, He let him determine his own course by appealing to Caesar for trial. Faced with another hearing in Jerusalem, which certainly would not have gone well for him, Paul used the right to a fair trial which every Roman citizen possessed by appealing to "Caesar's judgment seat" (Acts 25:9-11). It is interesting too that had he not made this appeal, he might never have had the opportunity to declare the gospel before Caesar. After his last trial in Caesarea, King Agrippa himself declared to Festus, the governor: "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." The general consensus among the Roman rulers was that "this man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds" (Acts 26:31-32).

God's Purpose for the Kingdoms of this World

Some have found fault with Paul concerning his appeal to Caesar, maintaining that he otherwise would have been set free. However, such an interpretation of the facts overlooks the main issue involved in the will of God for his ministry: **PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS HAD TO BE TESTED BY THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.** It was the Lord's intent that Paul testify before the ruling powers of his day, both civil and religious, so that their natures and their intentions toward the truth of God could be exposed. Paul knew that God was in control of these powers (Romans 13:1-2), and he knew that His righteous judgment would be against them because of their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was therefore

necessary to present them with the decision of what to do with Jesus Christ and His Church in order to bring about their judgment.

The principalities and powers of this earth were on trial before the Word of the Lamb. Jesus Himself spoke of this fact, and the Apostle Paul was now fulfilling it: ". . . they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." God had promised to be with His messengers in a special way in such situations: "But, when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you," (Matthew 10:17-20).

It was the express will of God that Paul stand trial before the Jewish councils and the Roman government so that he could testify to them of the grace of God. As they heard the Word of God, the spirits of all the rulers were exposed by their various reactions of the Word. Felix, the governor, at first trembled at Paul's message and then later tried to obtain material again from him, (Acts 24:25, 26). The governor Festus mocked Paul with a loud voice in Acts 26:24, 25. Agrippa the King was nearly convinced of the truth of what Paul proclaimed, (Acts 26:27, 28).

In the same manner, Jesus stood before the rulers of his day (the high priests Annas, and Caiaphas; the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate; and Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee) and brought forth from them responses according to their nature and spirit.

In actuality, it was the rulers themselves who were on trial! Paul was simply the servant of the Lord (as were Stephen and the apostles and prophets before him) through whom God was bringing down high places and judging the strongholds of the enemy.

Paul's ministry was the high calling of God! He could have declared to his judges and accusers exactly what Jesus had said: "You could have no power at all against me, except it

were given you from above," (John 19:11). God had given Paul this ministry of testifying against the principalities and powers, and he was in the center of Divine Will.

Viewed from the proper perspective therefore, the conclusion of Paul's ministry, like that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, was not an inglorious defeat brought about by lack of wisdom or by a refusal to follow the proper principles of ministry. Quite the opposite! It was the manifold wisdom of God being made known to the "principalities and powers in heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:9-11). If these ruling powers had known the wisdom of God, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (I Corinthians 2:6-8). For in crucifying Him, they condemned themselves and the kingdoms of this earth were transferred to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. (See Revelation 11:15; 19:14-16.)

In the light of all that had been presented, it is perfectly understandable and no longer shocking to see him rebuke those who would dissuade him from his "high calling of God": ". . . there came down from Judea, a certain prophet named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said, Thus says the Holy Ghost. So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when he heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not go up to Jerusalem. Then, Paul answered, What mean you to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not persuaded, we ceased saying, The will of the Lord be done " (Acts 21:10-14).

Paul knowingly went up to Jerusalem, following in the footsteps of his Lord and willingly suffer affliction for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Is this not a perfect pattern of the ministry of Jesus Christ? "From that time forth, Jesus began to show unto his disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, and be raised again on the third day. Then, Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you. But he turned and

said unto Peter, Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me; for you do not savor the things that be of God, but those that be of men " (Matthew 16:21-25).

A Man of Principle

The submission of Paul to the Jewish rite of purification which led to his arrest in Jerusalem is a complex matter. As previously stated, many Bible expositors have emphatically maintained that Paul violated the principles of the Gospel of Christ by engaging such "works of the law." It is widely held that Paul reversed his position on the grace of God in his eagerness to please the Jewish believers in Jerusalem and therefore rightly deserved persecution and imprisonment. A closer view of the situation however, leads to a different appraisal of Paul's actions.

Paul Practiced what was Valid in Jewish Tradition

Not everything that the Jews observed was contrary to the New Covenant Christianity. The Jewish principle of fasting was often practiced by Jesus and the Early Church (See Matthew 6:16-18; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; 13:1-3; 14:23.) Tithing was taught by Jesus in Matthew 23:23 - it was not to left "undone.") Regular services and times of prayer were observed by the New Testament community. (See Acts 3:1; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:23-25.) Circumcision was also practiced among Christians. Paul had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews which were in those quarters", (Acts 16:3).

Paul obviously saw nothing out of character with the gospel in his observance of the Nazarite vow, for he had taken the vow at least once previously during his second missionary journey. (See Acts 18:18.) Involved in the Nazarite purification was a separation from wine or any other product of the vine. In addition, no razor was to be used and at the end of the period of vow, the head was shaved as an indication that the purification was complete. (See Numbers 6:1-21). The purposes of the vow were similar to that of fasting.

In the case of his purification in Jerusalem, Paul himself did not participate fully to the extent of shaving his head (as he had done in Cenchrea - Acts 18:18). Instead, he was involved by proxy with four men who had taken the complete vow (see Clarke's commentary on Acts 21:23); and he bore the "charges" or expenses, of their offerings with them. This was simply a token gesture at the request of the elders of the Church in Jerusalem: ". . . purify thyself with them and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads. And all may know that those things, where of they were informed concerning you, are nothing; but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law", (Acts 21:17-26). (Note that the four men were Christians: "We have four men which have a vow on them . . ." Acts 21:23.)

The leadership of the Jerusalem church wanted it to be made clear that Paul, while not forcing the Gentiles to observe Jewish ceremonial law; at least, was not guilty of turning away Jews from the legitimate practices of their own religion - a charge which had been made by Paul's enemies and which had confused the "many thousands of Jews there are which believe" who were all zealous of the law, (Acts 21:20, 21).

Paul Submitted to the Leadership of the Jerusalem Church

In Paul's case, the matter of the vow was not the central issue. What was at stake was the principle of his submission to the "apostleship of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7,8). Paul was ordained an apostle to the uncircumcision, the Gentiles; his apostleship was not to the Jews. (See Galatians 2:9.) Therefore when he was in Jerusalem, he was obedient to the apostolic authority there. In his obedience to the elders of the church in Jerusalem, he was simply following his own principle of recognizing the God-ordained authority in the Church. At the end of his ministry, as at its beginning, he was submissive to the will of God as it was manifested through Church leadership (see Appendix: "Paul's Periods of Preparation.").

Through his obedience, God was able to start in motion the chain of events which ultimately led Paul into the high calling for which he had been commissioned, to testify of the grace of God to the ruling powers of his day. "Then Paul took the men, and the next day,

purifying himself with them, entered into the temple . . . the Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, 'Men of Israel, help!' This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place . . ." (Acts 21:26-28).

His High Calling Fulfilled

This glorious completion of Paul's ministry has not been fully understood by the Christian Church. The persecutions and imprisonments which resulted from his arrest in Jerusalem have been interpreted by many as evidence that he made a mistake. Yet the situation was quite the opposite. What appeared to be a defeat at the hands of his accusers was actually a great victory for the Kingdom of God.

God granted him the opportunity by means of his imprisonment to preach the gospel before the religious leaders of Judaism and before the civil authorities of the Roman government. Paul knew beforehand that this final journey to Jerusalem would bring about this glorious fulfillment of his ministry: "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But, none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus . . ." (Acts 20:22-24).

At the completion of his testimony before kings, governors, and even before the Roman Caesar, he could look back on the way God had used him with the utmost satisfaction of a job well done. In his second letter to Timothy, "written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time: (II Timothy 4:22) Paul confidently surveyed his past ministry. After having preached the Gospel fully "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum" (Romans 15:19), after having established many churches in the faith, and after testified to the grace of God before the ruling powers of the world, he was able to declare to Timothy: "I

am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6,7).

The time drew near when Paul would reach the goal toward which he pressed during his entire ministry: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3;13-14).

In the face of the whimsical malice of the Emperor Nero, Paul's hold upon this high calling of God was made even more sure: ". . . the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (II Timothy 4:18).

Appendix: Paul's Period of Preparation

- Acts 9:1-18. Converted on the road to Damascus: Repentance (verse 6), water baptism (verse 18), and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (verse 17). See Acts 2:38.
- Acts 9:19-22. Preached mightily with the church in Damascus.
- Galatians 1:17. Departed for a time into Arabia.
- Galatians 1:17-18. Returned to Damascus and remained there with the church for three years.
- Galatians 1:18. Fled to Jerusalem as the disciples
- Acts 9:23-26. Helped him escape persecution from the Jews.
- Galatians 1:18-19. Preached with the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27-28) for a period of time.
- Galatians 1:21. Sent away to Tarsus by the Jerusalem Acts 9:29-30 church because of persecution (See also Acts 22:17-18).
- Galatians 1:18. Remained in Tarsus for an indefinite period (14 year period?)
- Acts 11:25-26. Brought by Barnabas to the church in Antioch for one year.
- Acts 11:27-30. Sent by Antioch church to Jerusalem with Barnabas. Took relief money for the saints there.
- Acts 12:25. Returned to Antioch after an indefinite period in Jerusalem.
- Acts 13:1. Remained with the church in Antioch for indefinite period.
- Acts 13:1-14:26. Sent out by the Antioch church with Barnabas on the first missionary journey.
- Acts 14:27-28. Returned to the Antioch church and remained there a "long time" with the disciples.
- Acts 15:2-6. Sent by the Antioch church to Jerusalem with the apostles there the matter of circumcision, etc. (Galatians 2:1-5).

Conclusions

1. Paul faithfully served the Lord for more than seventeen years *before* his apostleship to the Gentiles was fully recognized by the church in Jerusalem. Included in this time period was his first missionary journey (the shortest of the three), which served as Paul's initiation into the missionary task and provided him with evidence for the apostles in Jerusalem that God had indeed been working with him mightily, (Acts 15:3-4,12).

2. Paul's main periods of preparatory ministry were spent in fellowship with the churches in Damascus, in Jerusalem, and in Antioch. (The three years usually attributed to his stay in Arabia was actually spent with the disciples in Damascus). (See Galatians 1:17, 18.)

3. With the exception of his brief sojourn to Arabia, Paul's movements between cities and timing of his first missionary journey were entirely governed by either decisions of the churches or by the apostolic ministry of Barnabas. (See Numbers 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, and 14 on the preceding page.)

4. "But, I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ", (Galatians 1:11, 12). Because of the preceding statement, many have visualized the Apostle Paul as an individualistic, independent person, unrelated to any church. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In spite of the great volume of his direct revelation from Jesus Christ, he remained submissive to and in vital relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ. His ministry was a perfect balance of charismatic anointing and organic unity within the Body of Christ.

Principles of Missions Assignment

Go through the material carefully and find seven practical principles that the churches in your country could follow to improve and develop a mission outreach:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Principles of Missions Final Exam

1. Give 2 examples to show that the vision for world mission outreach was first revealed in the Old Testament:

2. According to the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), what is the twofold purpose of God in the world today?

3. What was Peter's surprise at Caesaria?

4. In Paul's pattern for ministry, what was Paul's first step in evangelizing an area?

5. What principle of ministry is clearly demonstrated in the missionary journeys of Paul and others (relating to the role of the average Christian)?

6. What enabled the preaching of the apostles to turn cities upside down?

7. How did Paul demonstrate his daily concern for the churches?

8. What was one of the primary things that maintained unity in the early church?

9. According to this course, was it God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem before he visited Rome?

10. Was Paul's calling fulfilled?

International Educational Fellowship School of Ministry

Principles of Missions

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