

Chapter 10

To All Nations

- *God's mission mandate in Scripture* -

What was Jesus' and the apostle Paul's Bible ? The Jewish scriptures of the Torah, the Prophets and the Psalms. This is the scriptural base Jesus uses to teach his disciples the major truths of Christianity. And what were those truths ? These same truths can sow the "*Joseph spirit*" of world mission into us as well. Let us look at *Luke 24 :44-47*.

"Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms..."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them.

"This is what is written" :

"The Christ will suffer..."

(This is a major truth of Christianity. The atonement of Christ. We might imagine Jesus citing *Isaiah 53* or *Psalms 22* to make His case.)

"And rise from the dead on the third day..."

(Again, Jesus may have cited *Hosea 6 :1-2*, *Isaiah 26 :19* and *Jonah 1 :17* to illustrate this other major foundation of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ.)

And the third major truth Christ mentions :

"And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Jesus himself underlines mission, reaching all nations with the gospel, as being a major element of Christianity. The Church is badly lacking when she possesses no missionary identity!

The apostle Paul in *Acts 26 :22-23* uses the same argument with Festus and Agrippa as he explains the major truths of Christianity.

"... I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen - that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

But what may have been the scriptural position Jesus and Paul would have used to underscore the missionary mandate of the Old Testament ? There is little doubt that

Genesis 12 :1-3 would have figured strongly and we will look at **five missionary mandates** springing from this in Genesis. The important thing to note here is the **two tiered** blessing.

"I will bless you' so that 'you will be a blessing to all peoples on earth" (or all the 'families' of the earth).

Unfortunately both Israel and the Church too often put the full stop behind "*I will bless you*" without looking to be a blessing to the nations. God's ability to bless His Church is often limited by the Church's unwillingness to cross her borders to reach others. Often she is fearful of losing out if she commits herself to mission. In fact the very opposite is true. In giving out our best to the world we make space for God to be able to bless us. More giving equals more blessing. The lack of missionary zeal and endeavour in the body of Christ today is probably the major reason for lukewarmness and decline in the churches. Each new generation has to face up to the missionary mandate given to Abraham, the Father of nations.

Genesis 18 :17-18 re-emphasises the two-tiered promise and sets it in the context of prophetic revelation of God's will for nations and the need to intercede for such nations as Abraham illustrates in interceding for Sodom (1)

"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do ? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on earth will be blessed through him..."

The **two-tiered** blessing mandate is carried over into the episode of Abraham offering up Isaac in *Genesis 22 :15-18*.

"I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

This promise is given in the context of sacrifice and obedience and points us towards Christ's own sacrifice and obedience in going to the cross. Not withholding and obeying are attributes which will bring God's blessing on the nations. In contrast, our disobedience and fear of giving will slow down the advance of the reign of Christ on the earth. God is committed to sacrifice. He even takes an oath of commitment to bless. As the writer of Hebrews emphasises, God did this,

"to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised confirming it with an oath."
Hebrews 6 :7

God's unchanging purpose is to bless the nations! The sacrifice of Christ and the oath of the Father himself make this purpose indestructible and eternal.

Isaac himself takes up the same promise in *Genesis 26 :4*.

"I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed..."

Jacob, the next generation in *Gen 28 :14*, inherits the same promise :

"Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring..."

Just as the promise was passed down each generation line, so each generation up till our present age has the privilege and responsibility to take up its challenge. God speaks about the descendants being as numerous as sand on the shore, dust on the earth and stars in the sky. Ever tried counting ? No-one could even begin the task which backs up the prophetic statement in Revelation concerning the mighty blessing which was to extend north, south, east and west out from Abraham's descendants and into the world. Great multitudes from every nation which,

"no-one could count."

Revelation 7 :9

Five covenant promises already and we are not yet out of Genesis! The entire Old Testament contains elements of this **two tier blessing**. We've already looked at *Psalms 67 :4*, but *Isaiah 49 :6*, expresses the same thing. In God's foresight He called his chosen to be not only his

"servant to restore the tribes of Jacob,"

but also to be,

"a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

The Israelite Kingdom, like the Church today, was intended to be missionary in character. They were indeed God's

"treasured possession"

a *"kingdom of priests and a Holy nation"*

Exodus 19 :5

destined to *"declare his (God's) glory among the nations his marvellous deeds among all peoples."*

Psalms 96 :3

Unfortunately, far from fulfilling their missionary vocation to the nations, Israel became absorbed with internal strife, corruption and apostasy. A state of affairs which

eventually brought the judgement of God and the dispersion upon them. The book of Jonah gives a vivid picture concerning what should have been the vocation of Israel in bringing repentance and salvation to the gentile nations. As David Clifford writes in the Moorlands' missions course :

"Jonah is a rebuke to the intense nationalism and a picture of what Israel should have been in the purposes of God." (2)

Jesus called Peter to be a *"fisher of men"*. We the Church are to carry on the call and catch men for God. However the book of Jonah teaches us that if we refuse this vocation, if we run away from the fish, the fish will run after us! Be a fisher or be eaten by a fish! Because Israel didn't go out to the Babylonians God sent the Babylonians to them; and they sacked Jerusalem! It may be that as we have been so slow to reach out to the Muslim lands God is sending them to us. For the church in many nations this is a very present challenge as Islam takes a stronger hold on society, dominating the economy and influencing politically. The fundamentalist push from Sudan, Chad and beyond challenges us to take the Islamic *"jihad"* for Central Africa very seriously. Will we at last respond to the call to go out and fish for our Muslim neighbours or will we wait to be swallowed up by a *"big fish"* ? Without wanting to raise the spectre of xenophobic racism, perhaps the current influx of Muslim Arabs, Turks and Pakistanis into Europe is also a sign of our indifference in the European Church to move outwards to fish in these dangerous waters ?

Jesus himself cited Naaman and Elisha and Elijah and the widow of Zarephtha, (*Luke 4 :25-26*), to illustrate how God wanted Israel to reach out to the alien and yet the nationalistic and violent response he received in Nazareth illustrates how far Israel had slipped from her vocation. Jesus also speaks about the Queen of Sheba and Nineveh coming to Israel for salvation (*Luke 11 :29-32*). As he continued his *"missionary Bible study"* to the disciples he may well have made mention of Ruth, a gentile Moabite, loyally coming to Israel and being included in the Messianic line or have quoted from the last book of the Old Testament which gives preview to the greatness of the gospel era :

"My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun; In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations... says the Lord Almighty."
Malachi 1 :11

It is clear that both Jesus and the apostle Paul would have found ample evidence to back up the church's missionary vocation from the Old Testament. We have looked at the five missionary mandates at the beginning of the Old Testament. Let us now turn to the five missionary mandates which we find at the beginning of the New Testament, in its first five books. We will look at four endings and one beginning ! Each gospel mandate reflects something of the diversity of the Church.

Perhaps the most well known call to mission, often cited in our Bibles as “*The Great Commission*”, is found in Jesus' words at the end of the gospel of *Matthew*, 28 : 18-20 :

"Then Jesus came to them and said : "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (Greek - ethnos), baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age..."

It is the mandate of the four “alls”.

All authority - Jesus went to the lowest place in ultimate intercession and identification with lost humanity. In so doing he gained the place of ultimate authority. The name above every names raised

"far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given."
Ephesians 1 :21

The Gospel message has authority and the power to save. Mission work begins not in man's ability or endeavour but in the delegated authority of Christ to his Church. Because of this authority we are summoned to ***therefore go !***

All Nations - The Bible has a different concept of “nations” than our geographical boundaries. The Greek word used “ethnos” gives us our word “ethnic” and defines the word “nation” as being each separate “ethnic group”. The ex-Soviet Union and Yugoslavia illustrate this difference well. Political and geographical barriers made two nations in the past but as we see today they represent many people groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Kazaks and Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims) each with their own specific linguistic and cultural identity. Jesus is calling us to reach each ethnic group with the gospel. It is estimated that there are about 5.000 “unreached” people groups in the world today. This requires a specialist, dedicated approach by a Church committed to cross cultural divides, learn new languages and give herself long term and wholeheartedly to the hidden people groups still without the gospel.

Everything (All) I commanded you - Again it's not just a question of “*giving someone the gospel*” but of teaching all that Jesus passed on, making disciples of nations just as Jesus made disciples of the twelve. We have already seen how Jesus used the Old Testament in his teaching and the New Testament gives us the rest. Hence, the Bible itself is central to the teaching with the action of the Holy Spirit convicting and bringing the required obedience to the Word of God. If we are serious about seeing the nations restored we need to be serious about getting God's word in us and then through us into the world.

I am with you always - Jesus has not left us as “*orphans*” (*John 14 :8*) but is with us by His Holy Spirit.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14 :27

His presence is the key to world mission. We are not called to be worried workers, stressed out and burnt out like business executives in the world. He does not give as the world gives! We need to find His presence and seize His peace (the satisfying fullness of 'Shalom'), even in the most difficult circumstances. Jesus' presence puts faith in our hearts and chases away fear! We must not allow our hearts to lose His presence. His presence brings a victory celebration, a new song exalting the Lamb's victory. As Count Zinzendorf so rightly said when asked to define the essentials of the gospel :

"The worship of the Lamb, and the cross applied to every man's heart."

Worship of Jesus in word, work and life is key to the missionary thrust. King David knew the Lord's presence and it was probably this that enabled him to reign and win his battles and receive grace and forgiveness.

*"I will fear no evil, for you are with me; Your rod and your staff, they comfort me...
Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Psalm 23 :4-6*

The emphasis of the Matthew missionary mandate is on cross cultural mission. It speaks of tribes, nations and teaching which implies a more specialist, long term strategic approach to world evangelisation, where the power of intellect, administration and communication are very important. Ralph Winter, Cameron Townsend, Donald McGavran and others would be good examples of how these verses have incarnated themselves in the Church of today.

Mark's ending is less specialised and more about reaching as many individuals as possible with its emphasis on quantity, *"all creation"*, and power! J. Herbert Kane expresses this different emphasis between the two mandates in another way :

"Evangelism has a two fold purpose, one immediate and the other remote. The immediate purpose is the conversion of the individual and his incorporation into the Christian church. The remote purpose is the proclamation of the lordship of Christ over all creation and extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the earth. The first is emphasised in Mark's account of the Great Commission... the second is found in Matthew's version..." (3)

Reinhard Bonke, John Wimber and other leading Pentecostals represent these verses from *Mark 16 :15-18* in the Church today.

"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation... And these signs will accompany those who believe : In my name they

will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well..."

Although it is absolutely right to be concerned with the unreached tribes it is also absolutely right to get as many converted right where I am now! "All creation" spreads the net as wide as possible and Mark's gospel is all about action and doing the job.

The Pentecostals have certainly got on with the job since their explosive beginning in Azusa Street at the turn of the century. According to the 1989 Lausanne II official statistics the top ten largest churches in the world are all either Charismatic or Pentecostal and it is estimated that soon the largest 100 will all be Charismatic or Pentecostal too.(4) The major growth has been in the 2/3 world countries where the power of the gospel to overcome disease and demonic powers has been a vital element in bringing folks to the Lord.

"Demons, snakes and deadly poison" are much more everyday affairs in an Asian or African context than in a Western environment.

A French missionary from *"La Porte Ouverte"*, M. Claude Moser who pioneered a work amongst Tuareg and Fulani peoples in Agadez (Niger) spoke to me about the relevance of Mark's commission in his own ministry. He remembers how several snake charmers set loose their venomous snakes upon him. As they advanced he pushed away the fear and commanded them to leave. They turned and fled, but one later attacked him from a roof clinging to his head and face. He was able to pick it off and throw it down without sustaining injury. (5)

Charles Marsh (6) who worked for many years in Muslim countries recounts the threat of poisoning of the early converts as does the pioneer missionary to North Africa Lilius Trotter in "Until The Day Breaks" :

"We are coming to the conclusion that many of these backslidings among the converts out here are due to drugging... We think that datura is largely used, as it can be introduced unnoticed into food and drink; it seems to excite the emotions and paralyse the will-power..." (7)

It would be unwise to suggest a universal panacea in these verses going beyond God's sovereignty in the matter of life and death but Mark certainly gives strength and promise to those who find themselves working amongst unreached Muslims, on the cutting edge of world mission. John Wimber in his book "Power Evangelism" presents a strong theological and historical argument for 'signs and wonders' being an integral part of the gospel message and argues that, :

"Western Christians must undergo a paradigm (or perception) shift to become involved in a signs and wonders ministry. This is a shift towards a worldview that makes room for God's miraculous intervention. It is not that we allow God's

intervention; he does not need our permission. The shift is that we begin to see his miraculous works and allow them to affect our lives." (8)

The African "Worldview" (9) obviously has an enormous advantage over the Western one in respect to "allowing" signs and wonders in ministry and is another argument in the favour of the establishment of indigenous African world missions.

J. Herbert Kane in "Life and Work on the Mission Field" emphasises 3 forms of evangelism.

"Presence evangelism,"

"Proclamation evangelism" and

"Persuasion evangelism" (10)

It seems that the Marken postscript introduces "*Power evangelism*" to that list.

As we have already seen, the third mandate in Luke is based solidly on Old Testament scripture. It appeals to the classic evangelistic approach of say a Billy Graham with its emphasis on "repentance" and "forgiveness of sins". It is a call to conversion, a call to turn "*from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from idols to God*" (11). Both Jesus and John the Baptist preached repentance, *Matthew 4 :17 & Matthew 3 :2*. Strong's gives the Greek for repentance as "*metanoéo*" translating it "**to think differently**", "to reconsider". Repentance is a re-alignment of our thoughts and necessarily a re-alignment of our lives, so that they line up with God's intention for us. Most of mankind is presently dislocated from God's desires and love for them. Luke calls for this possibility of re-alignment to be heralded to all nations. Jesus spoke about being "born again":

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."
John 3 :5

Much has been written about these words concerning Christian initiation (12) and David Pawson's book on the subject, "The Normal Christian Birth" goes into detail concerning this passage and the other passages in Matthew and Mark that we have looked at concerning their application to Christian initiation. Pawson himself makes this conclusion.

"In a nutshell, I believe that the 'normal Christian birth' consists of true repentance and genuine faith, expressed and effected in water-baptism, with a conscious reception of the person of the Spirit with power." (13)

Mathew Henry, in commenting on the Nicodemus passage sees in Jesus' mention of water, not only an image of the Holy Spirit - his interpretation is dismissed by Pawson (14), but also "*the baptism of repentance.*" (15)

Pawson goes as far as seeing the “water”, as the necessary process of water baptism and “the Spirit” (or spirit without the article) as being the necessary process of spirit baptism (16), both being the expression of “true repentance” and “genuine faith”.

For a man and woman to have a child there has to be some agreement to come together. If they are on opposite sides of the Channel no new life will be possible unless they agree to meet. For the miracle of new life to happen to man he has to change his position and come alongside God. This is the “repentance”, the “thinking differently” and the “agreeing with God” which, when mixed with the faith that the Holy Spirit brings to the heart of man through the living word of God, creates the conditions for “new birth” in man. Luke's ending here is commissioning the Church to call the nations to re-align with God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer considered it “cheap grace” to preach “forgiveness without requiring repentance,” (17) so he would probably have appreciated the requisite pairing of Luke who places the repentance before forgiveness. However the forgiveness of sins is the heart of the gospel message. J.I. Packer in “Knowing God” says that :

“The gospel centres upon justification; that is, upon the remission of sins and the acceptance of our persons that goes with it...” (18)

King David celebrated the happiness man experiences in knowing the remission of his sins in *Psalms* 32 :

*“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not
count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit...”*

and the Lord Jesus himself in *Matthew* 26 :28 introduces the atoning gift of His blood :

“This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins...”

This is indeed the good news the nations of the world need to hear. So many are bound in guilt and need to know the message of forgiveness. John Noble in “The Forgiveness Equation” shares how the Lord brought home his own personal need for forgiveness in a powerful way during a visit he was making to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. He was particularly outraged and shocked by the memories of the horrors which were on view.

“I'd finally had enough. Thoroughly sickened, I went to leave... Then I cried out in anger and confusion to the Lord : “Am I part of the same race of beings as the monsters who committed this horrendous crime against humanity, Father ?” And he didn't leave me in silence; The Lord spoke clearly to me, in an almost audible

voice : "Yes, son, all those seeds of sin were in you, only the ground was different; what's more, I would have had to suffer and die on the cross in just the same way if you had been alone on earth and these wicked men had never existed!" It suddenly dawned on me that sin was sin..." (19)

Because sin really is sin and because all mankind carries its evil seeds and fruits, the message of forgiveness is essential. As we leave Luke to move on to John the obligation upon ourselves to also forgive those who have sinned against us cannot be forgotten. Our message of forgiveness carries weight only in as much as we ourselves are able to forgive. In fact our own unforgiveness separates us from God's forgiveness to us. Forgiving always leads us to the cross.

John's gospel begins with *"the word"* and ends with a great *"world library"*,

"if every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written..." John 21 :23

This in itself might be seen as a prophetic statement concerning the multiplication of Jesus' life into a world Church. One word becomes many books! However the key missionary passage in *John* is found in *chapter 20 :19-22*.

Bonhoeffer's famous words from "The Cost of Discipleship" sum up the cross-centred consecration this mandate demands.

"...When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time - death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call." (20)

Jesus appears and greets his disciples.

"He then showed them his hands and side."

Amid the joy of receiving the glorified risen Christ the disciples were clearly shown the fruit of His passion. His pierced hands and ruptured side.

"Hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered" (21)

we often sing, contemplating the wounds of our Saviour's love. Having seen the cost of His service, having contemplated the physical manifestation of a life gifted to the Father for service, the disciples hear the following words :

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

One missionary leader has summed this up in the following way :

"If you come back without wounds that is a bonus!" (22)

The apostle, the missionary, the "sent one," goes in the same sacrificial reality as Christ himself, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World.

Having confronted them with the reality of sacrifice, he

"breathed on them and said 'receive the Holy Spirit.' "

It is as if the disciples needed the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to lead them into consecration.

As we personally are led into moments of suffering, identifying with Christ, we too need Christ to breathe on us to see us through. Luther himself reckoned suffering among the marks of the true Church, and one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg Confession similarly defines the Church as the community of those

"who are persecuted and martyred for the gospel's sake." (23)

We too must reckon on suffering and identification with Christ as part of the missionary mandate. This is far from being a sad dour thing! The book of *Revelation* reveals to us the slain Lamb right at the heart of God's throne. Far from being a subject of sadness, far from being weeping wounds of despair, these scars of love are transfigured as emblems of worship and celebration, emblems which,

"purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..."
Revelation 5 :6-14

Bridges and Thring in the wonderful hymn "Crown Him with many Crowns" capture the 'mysterious beauty' of such sacrifice.

"Crown Him the Lord of love :
Behold His hands and side.
Those wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified :
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight
But downward bends his burning eye
At mysteries so bright." (24)

Men of God throughout the ages have followed Jesus in suffering on the mission fields of the world. They too will wear their scars as trophies of victory shining in heaven.

The prophet Isaiah echoes the same mandate as he shows how the father sows into the ground the precious seeds he loves. He presents us with a kind of “missionary contract”.

*"Since you are precious and honoured in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give men in exchange for you,
And people in exchange for your life.
Do not be afraid, for I am with you..."*

Isaiah 43 :4-5

Men in exchange for your life!

There are no short cuts, no hidden clauses. Be loved and give yourself away for others. Real mission is as simple as that! Before moving on to Acts, we come back to Bonhoeffer to write the final words concerning such self denial and cross-centred living.

"... Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification or asceticism. It is not suicide, for there is an element of self-will even in that. To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self-denial can say is : "He leads the way, keep close to him." (25)

From looking at four endings we finish with a “beginning” mandate for missions from *Acts 1 :8*. It is fitting that Acts is a beginning, as the book with its rather unfinished ending invites us to join in and take up our part in action for world evangelisation. (26)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Following on from our analysis of John's commission to sacrifice it is fitting to note William Barclay's comment that

"... in Greek the word for witness and the word for martyr is the same (martus). A witness had to be ready to become a martyr..." (27)

The book of Acts, the history of the early Church and even recent Church and missionary activity give ample testimony to the reality of martyrdom throughout the centuries. This reality is often overlooked in the Western world with its protective comfort zones but so clearly lived out in the emerging missionary nations. China is a prime example and Danyun's book "Lilies Amongst Thorns" is a moving account of the many martyrs for Christ in China. The author himself challenges us as he writes in his preface :

"Are you living in a democratic, free country relishing real freedom; as you are sitting in your comfortable churches worshipping God; as you are in your warm

homes cherishing family happiness, do you realise that the Christians in China are today still confronting extreme brutal persecution ?"(28)

Jesus calls us to be his witnesses. For the natural man these are "hard sayings" and martyrdom and service of Jesus are not dependent on our own strengths but on him who gives us the ability to follow. Often it is when we reach the point of saying "*I can't*" that He steps in to give us the faith to say "*I can!*". (29) The apostle Paul understood the principle of weakness and brokenness leading to ability when he wrote in 2 *Corin12 :9-10*, that he,

"will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me... For when I am weak, then I am strong."

The power of God rests on the brokenness of His people. His power is not the iron fist or the crusader's sword but the power of a slain Lamb, the perfume of sacrifice, the power of Love. For true love to be expressed it requires release from a broken jar of clay.

God promises us power, "dunamis" (30), to do the impossible, to become like Jesus and to become witnesses to the world. The power (we get our words dynamite and dynamo from this) is not an end in itself but an essential means for the missionary task. The power rests on our own weakness and our desire to tell others about Jesus. The power is for evangelism. John Wimber's "Power Evangelism" gives many examples of specific supernatural equipping for reaching the lost.

"Everyone, according to Acts 1 :8, can receive power from the Holy Spirit. Power is the ability, the strength, the might to complete a given task..." (31)

The "given task" that Jesus presents to His Church is that of reaching the world. Paul talks of :

"Incomparably great power for us who believe." *Ephesians 1 :19*

What is the Church doing with such power ? I once had a picture from God concerning this. There was an immense hydro-electric dam holding back millions of tons of water with generators and turbines turning at full speed. From this there were cables branching out in several directions. I followed one cable which led to an individual's power point. From the power point someone was using an electric toothbrush! All that potential power, power to light up hundreds of cities being used simply to brush teeth! The power God has on offer must be for more than our cosmetic church services and speaking in tongues! We must "plug in" to the nations. God's power is for lighting up the towns and cities of this dark world with the love of Jesus.

"For God, who said : 'Let light shine out of darkness', made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." *2 Corinthians 4 :6*

The prophet Isaiah felt it *"too small (qâlal - easy, trifling, vile!) a thing"* to only restore Jacob's tribes :

"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."
Isaiah 49 :6

Jesus, echoing Isaiah's words, lets the disciples know where he wants the power to flow to: *"... the ends of the earth"*.

Local church alone is not enough for the flow of the Holy Spirit's power.

The current is pulling us to move out. Should we abandon all local work and move to the world's edges? Or should we build things up in stages starting with a strong base in our *"Jerusalem"* and then - probably after many years or never!, reach out to the other stages ? David Hesselgrave in *"Planting Churches Cross Culturally"* gives us some helpful advice here :

*"Grammarians are quick to point out that the Greek construction in Acts 1 :8, binds **"Jerusalem"**, **"Judea"**, **"Samaria"**, and the **"uttermost parts"** together in one inseparable entity... The field is the world, and its parts are tied together here in a way that will not allow us to think of one part to the exclusion of another. It seems that in most cases, a world vision is required to win our Jerusalems!"* (32)

The lighthouse beam which reaches out the furthest is all the more bright at its source! When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost God truly birthed the Church in an explosion of missionary passion from His own heart. *Luke* tells us in *chapter 6 :45*, that :

"Out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

God himself spoke out the "light", the trees, flowers and stars of creation from His own inner abundance and made a beautiful world. The ultimate beauty and mystery was highlighted when God spoke out the lamb-like love that was within the Godhead, this word of love becoming flesh in Christ. On the day of Pentecost the disciples' little human hearts were invaded by a powerful infusion of the Father's heart. They could not contain such abundant love for the world but were overwhelmed, rushing out into the streets, their mouths overflowing with heavenly harmonies.

"We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

was the crowd's commentary on such a thing. The tongues and wonders were born in a powerful Holy Spirit baptism into World Mission. Don Richardson in his book *"Eternity in their Hearts"* expresses it well :

"Seen in the context of Jesus' ministry and His clearly calculated plans for the whole world, the bestowal of that miraculous outburst of Gentile languages could

have only one main purpose : to make crystal clear that the Holy Spirit's power was and is bestowed with the specific goal of the evangelisation of all peoples in view!" (33)

How can it be possible to seek the power of the Holy Spirit without having with it a passionate commitment to the evangelisation of all peoples!

Richardson goes on in his discussion of Acts to show how reluctant the early church was to press on to the ends of the earth because of their cultural ethnocentric conditioning. He shows how God used persecution (*Acts 8 :1*), and the “*chosen instrument*” Paul, before they finally got the message.

What will it take for our own churches to grasp the priority of World Mission ?

We have had quite a long plod through the five Old Testament and five New Testament mandates for reaching the nations (34). The Bible is clear. How can we as Christians disobey such clear commands. His love compels and persuades us. Allow scripture to birth a “*Joseph spirit*” in you. There is no conscription, we go as volunteers. To conclude this section we will hear from Don Richardson again from his Perspectives essay “*A Man For All Peoples*”, as he looks at God's ultimate missionary mandate from the perspective of man's ability to choose or disobey.

“...Persuasion, not compulsion, is what even He must rely upon! And persuasion, by its very definition, must be resistible! Yet the God who thus renders Himself resistible is so intelligent that He can overrule every consequence of His own self-limitation with ease! Working around and through human resistance as easily as through response, He still achieves His own eternal goals!

Ultimate suspense, then, does not hang upon the eventual success of God's design; for that success is assured. Ultimate suspense hangs rather upon questions like, who among the sons and daughters of men will recognise the day of God's privilege when it dawns around them ? And which men and women, among those who discern the privilege, will choose to scorn it as Esau scorned his birthright ? And finally just how will God accomplish His goal when even the men and women who love Him and make His purpose theirs turn out to be spiritually vulnerable, physically weak, and oh so limited in understanding?”(35)

Endnotes

- 1) It may have looked as if Abraham's intercession was a waste of time as the city was still destroyed. Nothing is further from the truth! Abraham's prayer certainly saved Lot and his daughters. Lot's offspring became the Moabites, the most famous Moabite being Ruth. Ruth married Boaz who begot Obed who begot Jesse the Father of King David which brings us directly into the earthly line of Christ Himself. Abraham's intercession for Sodom contributed directly to the incarnation of Christ upon earth!
- 2) Hebrews 6.17
- 3) Revelation
- 2) Clifford, David, History of Missions Course Paper, Moorlands Bible College.
- 3) Kane, J.H., The Work of Evangelism, Perspectives, Paternoster Press, London, 1992.
- 4)

1. Yoida Full Gospel Church, Korea	700.000 members
2. Jotabeche, Chile	350.000 members
3. Vision of the Future, Argentina	145.000 members
4. Brazil For Christ, Brazil	80.000 members
5. Deeper Life, Nigeria	65.000 members
- 5) The present author is also on the advisory board of the French Mission "La Porte Ouverte" and the recorded story was told during a committee meeting on the 2nd of March 1995 at Châlon Sur Saône.
- 6) Marsh, C., Streams in the Desert, Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, 1984.
- 7) St. John, P., Until The Day Breaks - The Life and Works of Liliias Trotter, O.M. Publishing, Kent, 1990, P.P.91-90.
- 8) Wimber, J., Power Evangelism, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1986, P.89.
- 9) We will give greater explanation of this term in chapter 8.
- 10) Kane, J.H., The Work of Evangelism, Perspectives, Paternoster Press, London, 1992, P.P.35-47.
- 11) Ibid, P.D.32.
- 12) Henry, M., Commentary, 'Vol V Matthew to John', Revel, New York, 1958, P.P.880-891

- 13) Pawson, The Normal Christian Birth, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1989, P.5 - see P.P.93-99 for Matthew 28.19-26 and P.P.100-102 for Mark 16.9-20.
- 14) Ibid, 110-111
- 15) Henry, M., Commentary, 'Vol V Matthew to John', Revel, New York, 1958, P.885
- 16) Pawson, The Normal Christian Birth, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1989, P.115.
- 17) Bonhoeffer, D., The Cost Of Discipleship, Macmillen Pub. New York, 1963, P.47.
- 18) Packer, Knowing God, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1976, P.148.
- 19) Noble, J., The Forgiveness Equation, Harper Collins, London, 1991, P.7.
- 20) Bonhoeffer, D., The Cost Of Discipleship, Macmillen Pub. New York, 1963, P.99.
- 21) Kendrick, The Servant King, available on many cassettes, Kingsway.
- 22) Evans, R., founder of '*World Horizons*'. Heard many a time in the course of his life and teaching.
- 23) Augsburg Confession
- 24) Redemption Hymnal, Crown Him With Many Crowns, N° 157, Victory Press, London, 1951.
- 25) Bonhoeffer, D., The Cost of Discipleship, Macmillen Pub., New York, 1963, P.97.
- 26) William Barclay in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles offers a more down to earth reason for the curtailed ending. "This plan of Acts answers its most puzzling question, why does it finish where it does ? It finishes with Paul in prison waiting judgement. We would so much have liked to know what happened to him and the end is wrapped in mystery. But Luke stopped there because his purpose was accomplished; he had shown how Christianity began in Jerusalem and swept across the world until it reached Rome. A great New Testament scholar has said that the title of Acts might be "How they brought the Good News from Jerusalem to Rome.
- 27) Barclay, W., The Acts of The Apostles, St Andrew's Press, Edingburgh, 1982, P.5.
- 28) Danyun, Lilies Amongst Thorns, Sovereign World Ltd, Kent, 1991, P.5.

- 29) Literally - When I can't (*astheneo* : the negative of a positive) I can! (*dunatôs* - from root '*can do*' - '*be possible*'.)
- 30) Dunamis - From *dunamai* 'to be able or possible' - ability, abundance, might, worker of miracles, power, strength, violence, mighty (wonderful) work.
- 31) Wimber, J., Power Evangelism, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1986, P.24.
- 32) Hesselgrave, D., Communicating Christ Cross- culturally, Baker, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991, P.34,94.
- 33) Richardson, D., Eternity in Their Hearts, Perspectives, Paternoster Press, London, 1992, P.111.
- 34) See appendix Hesselgrave's diagram C.C.C.C. - Complementary statements of the Great Commission, P.54.
- 35) Richardson, D., A Man For All Peoples, Perspectives, Paternoster Press, London, 1992, P.P.108-109.