

The Call to Extreme Missions

TEXT: II CORINTHIANS 10:12-18

Introduction

Story of Ae...sitting across from me. I was feeling excited about his interest, wanting to share, wanting prayer. Leadership training among small Christian minorities in a hostile environment is a difficult task. It is a process of years, and there are many failures, drop-outs and disappointments. Background to reaching Ae...his shocking words. Read the note from Renay.

Missionary “failures” and frustration are not usually highlighted in typical presentations.

Ironically it is often the best “missionary” stories we have heard that position us to be the least prepared for what needs to be done in our world today. This is because to report our successes as “mission” successes carries within these victories a subtle piece of unintentional misinformation...that these events are happening where the church exists and where it is strongest.

The result is that you as the receptor of mission reports never get to see the unreached world, the hidden world of peoples and cultures where there is no church, no believers, no witness.

Our success blinds us to the faces of the lost and deafens us to hear the call of the Spirit.

I want to talk to you today about what I call extreme missions.

- It is mission at the margins of the Christian world, at the periphery of the centers of church power.
- It is the pioneer missionary task of crossing out of a culture that has the Gospel to one that does not have it in order to root the Church of Jesus Christ there.
- It is mission from the perspective of God’s great global plan to reconcile a people from every tribe and tongue.
- It is mission that demands your entire life and will tax your mind, body and spirit to their limits, and it is a mission that in its pursuit you will gain your soul as you pour yourself out for Jesus Christ.
- It is worth living for and it is worth dying for.

I am here today to argue the point that this mission and the heart and worldview that power it need to be at the center of every Christian, every church and every endeavor.

I want every person in this room to seriously listen to the voice of God to see if He is calling you to a life of service among the least reached peoples of this globe. At the same time I want every one of you that is not so called to realize that the Great Commission is given to you as well. Not being called does not let you off the hook. So often we live as if the Great Commission were given to someone else. For those who are not called the vision of extreme mission becomes the integrating center around which your lives, families, careers and ministries need to be built.

I cannot sell the idea to you, I cannot convince you, I cannot tell you stories that will move your heart to do it, I cannot make it more palatable, I cannot promise you that it will make your life easier, or more peaceful. It is an unnatural other focused endeavor that takes the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to take part in it. I can promise you this, that if you accept the call to align your life with God's global purpose and join this extreme mission, you will find joy, you will make forever friends that Paul called "You who I love and long for, my joy and my crown," and you will have the satisfaction of laying your head on your pillow every night knowing that you have helped in some way to bring access of the saving message to those who have never heard.

Extreme missions is driven by extreme vision and extreme passion. The extreme mission of taking the Gospel to the least reached and unreached people of our world can only be accomplished with apostolic vision and passion.

Tucked away deep inside a complex passage defending his apostolic ministry is a sentence from the pen of the apostle Paul that we need to hear in a fresh way and that forms the core of the point I want to make to you today.

Vs. 15-16 "Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.

Proposition: We Need Apostolic Vision and Passion to Preach The Gospel Among the Least Reached.

Why?

I. ...Because the Gospel is Still God's Answer to a Broken World. (vs. 16).

A. The Gospel was Paul's Answer

1. When Paul met Jesus that day on the Damascus road, he was never the same again. Chief of sinners, persecutor of the church, he felt God showed mercy to him to make him an example to others, life was Christ, this life in the flesh he lived by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave his life for him. He had been entrusted with the message and made an apostle and herald of this Good News.

2. In Philippians 3 Paul says that whatever was to his profit he now considers loss for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. His heart cry was to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings.

3. Paul was passionate because he was touched personally. He believed that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation because he had personally experienced it.

B. The Gospel is Your Answer and My Answer

1. Passion is not for apostle's only.

1. Paul uses the word *kanon* to speak of the allocation that God had given him. God is still giving specific callings. It is my prayer that many of you will hear the voice of the Holy Spirit with a clarity you have never heard before, and that you will know what God has assigned you to do.

2. Does that fact of Paul's apostolic calling mean that his zeal for proclamation is only for those specially called? No. The abundant testimony of the New Testament is that we are all brought into God's family to be His ambassadors to a lost world.

- Acts 2:17ff. The Spirit comes upon everyone
- I Peter 2:9-10 We are called to a mediatorial role

3. When we find Christ as our answer and our purpose, something very powerful happens.

4. Illustration of Phet and Hai. Gambling and asking God to bless them, lottery tickets. But they started to learn about him, and realized that they are blessed to be a blessing. Hai leading 100 people to the Lord.

C. The Gospel is the World's Answer

1. But oddly enough, for all our protestations and bumper stickers and billboards and church signs and media proclamations that the Gospel of Jesus Christ really is the answer, it seems to me that the apostolic passion to trumpet that message abroad is in danger of fading away.

2. Why?

- Part of the reason is the phenomenal success of the Christian mission. Some parts of the world have so many Christians now that we conceive of the task in other terms based on serving the needs of those Christians. This is all very valid work. However, this means that many of our models of ministry are based on "being in the house."
- A second reason has to do with our affluence in the West. We tend to see mission as moving from affluence to poverty, of "us" giving "them" something. As a result there are subtle shifts taking place that start to put the priority and power of the message on the back burner to focus on tangible needs. Thus "mission" and "missionary" are no longer clear words-there are a plethora of things that missionaries do.

4. Over the years I have spoken with literally hundreds of missionary candidates and called to be pastors. But I have yet to meet a single person who has said, I want to spend time among lost men and women and love them and share with them the life changing message of Jesus Christ and see them become His obedient followers and transform their society.

I don't care what kind of job you wrap it in, or platform you use to do it, I just want to see it be the core motivating vision of people's hearts.

5. I am not talking about a verbal only proclamation that sees people as disembodied souls that need to be pulled from this earth as from a sinking ship. I am talking about the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ as a complete package of the words and works of Jesus and a full exploration of the implications of that message in personal lives and society. Paul would say that is something worth living for and dying for, and it is the power of God to bring salvation to every person of every culture.

4. ILLUSTRATION-Samon, meeting her, sharing Christ, coming to church, Siripha reaching out, her sharing her faith, incident with her husband, perseverance.

II. Because the unreached and least reached are still waiting for the Gospel.

A. Paul's Vision was for the Regions Beyond-the Least Reached.

1. Denney (309) cited by Ralph Martin:

“Two feelings are compounded all through this message: an intense sympathy with the purpose of God that the Gospel should be preached to every creature-Paul's very soul melts into that; and an intense scorn for the spirit that sneaks and poaches on another's ground, and is more anxious that some men should be good sectarians than that all men should be good disciples.”

2. Paul could not conceive of working on another's territory (Romans 15:20). He was under divine compulsion to proclaim the Good News where it had not yet been heard.

3. We have heard much about renewal, but what is greatly needed is a renewal of this apostolic passion to proclaim the Gospel to those who have never heard.

B. My Vision

4. There are lots of ways to get that passion, God uses a variety of different methods to touch our hearts. He knocked Paul off his ride, he touched my heart with a chart.

5. ILLUSTRATION-story of my call to missions. The Chart

6. Quote from Nelson Mandela

I cannot pinpoint a moment when I became politicized, when I knew that I would spend my life in the liberation struggle....I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment

of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments, produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise (Mandela, 1994, Long Walk to Freedom, p. 83).

B. Your Vision for the World

1. This is what I call missiological reality-the state of the world in terms of the completion of the Great Commission.
2. I want this data to haunt you. I want somehow to break the bubble around this isolated and protected North American world we live in so that you can realize there are people living here and around the world who will never “hear” the Gospel until someone is willing to cross into their world and lay their life down for them. I want you to have a vision of missionary service that is not being support staff somewhere, doing a myriad of helpful things, but rather a fire to proclaim Christ among those who have never heard.
3. “ *It comes more natural to us to shout the gospel at people from a distance than to involve ourselves deeply in their lives, to think ourselves into their culture and their problems, and to feel with them in their pains.*” (Stott, 1975, Christian Mission, p. 25).
4. We need career cross-cultural missionaries to go the least reached peoples of this world. We need pastors and everyday Christians who will purpose in their hearts to reach truly lost people here in North America. We need believers who will live in relentless pursuit of lost people and be a co-seeker with Jesus Christ to bring them home to the Father.
5. This is not a short-term, temporary task, but one that engages our entire lives. I want this apostolic lens-the heart to proclaim the Gospel among the least reached-to become the guiding framework for every decision that you will make. You are going to pursue something, you are going to give your life to something, I pray that you will give it to telling this story, participating in God’s redemptive purpose for every people on this planet.

Relentless pursuit of the lost brings us near to the heart of God and allows us to be a part of the greatest privilege on earth. It is the greatest feeling to stand as an ambassador of the living God and plead with people to come home. Do not ever feel sorry for career missionaries who have paid the price to learn language and culture and who share the story. It is the greatest joy because it brings you into direct contact with the heart of God himself.

6. ILLUSTRATION-Story of Phi Nikom.

Conclusion

Video Clip of People: They are waiting...

Exegetical Notes II Cor 10: 12-18

Plummer, Driver Briggs ICC II Corinthians

Whatever view you take of the final 4 chapters the last section starts here. "Having with much tenderness and affection effected a complete reconciliation between himself and his rebellious converts at Corinth (1-7), and having felt his way, with diffidence amounting almost to misgiving, to an urgent request for bountiful support to the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem (8, 9), he now, without any explanation of the change of topic and tone, suddenly begins a vehement assertion of his Apostolic authority as superior to that of those who oppose him,..."

There are 3 main divisions:

1. 10:1-18 The Apostle's authority and area of his mission
2. 11:1-12:10 The glorying, a folly that has been forced on him.
3. 12:11-13:10 Credentials and Final warnings

10:1-6 Reply to the charge of Cowardice "When I come to Corinth, I may be obliged to take strong measures against those who disturb the peace of the Church.

10: 7-11 Reply to the charge of weakness "My Apostolic authority will be found to be as effective in fact as it looks on paper."

10:12-18 The area of his mission includes Corinth "Self-praise is worthless, but I do claim that Corinth lies in the sphere of the work God has assigned to me."

Ralph Martin WBS II Corinthians

The form and style of these 4 chapters is an "apology" It is polemical, a personal apology. Paul's status as an apostolic figure and teacher is under fire. People have appeared at Corinth who insinuate Paul is not a true apostle and not even a true Christian. It is both a defense of himself and the Gospel which are inextricable bound together.

Structure of 10:1-11

1 and 1 are intelligible only if they cite the actual estimate of Paul by his opponents, and vs. 10 shows that Paul is using their words as catch-phrases or slogans. They use the word tapeinotes-humility but it is meant in the sense of servility, timidity, or even obsequiousness or sycophancy. They say he took on a mock humility when in Corinth and when at a safe distance he became arrogant and insolent. This is reckoned by them as daring boldness to them.

There are 2 charges against Paul

1. Living as a worldly person 2
2. Deny him authority as an official leader of the congregation 8
3. Scorn his bodily weakness that he can't heal himself (dealt with in 12:1-10)
4. He claims to be Christ's person (7) but they claim that and deny it to him-because their estimate of Christian living and service exclude him.

Paul uses their derogatory names and descriptions and re-mints them and gives them a novel twist.

10:12-18 Starts a section dealing with the assertion of Paul's boldness to them

It has a double meaning here, for Paul there was his apostolic calling and his competence under God (3:5) that gave him boldness *parresia* of speech. But the intruders say Paul's boldness is self-advertisement and proud display, which they call boasting *kauxesis* and recommending oneself (10:17-18).

Other charges are made-12:16 cunning craftiness, weakness as a sick man unable to heal himself 12:7-10; and here in 10:12-18 is his right to be a missionary to Corinth.

"The allegation centers on "the measure of the province God dealt out to us as our measure" " These are difficult words as metron and kanon are being used in a semitechnical sense. The notion of measurement is critical, particularly the geographical area assigned to apostolic leaders (Gal. 2:7-9). They said Paul had no jurisdiction at Corinth. See v 15 and Rom 15:19-20.

The conclusion is drawn that Paul's mission is illegitimate and his converts thus are the followers of a pseudo-apostle and charlatan. Paul offers a rationale for his initial evangelism and church building at Corinth (I Cor 3:6-10).

Here is the order of argument:

1. He refuses any standard of ministry other than the measure given him by God. His opponents are foolish v 12 for making an appeal to their own authority (which was based on their awareness of spirit and the enjoyment of charismatic powers as signs (12:12).

2. He appeals to the church's past history v 14-he got to Corinth first and staked a claim there in Gentile territory which was given to him by the concordat of Gal 2:6-10 (see Rom 15:17-20).

"But as Barrett observes(167), this allocation and agreement of ministry is not a personal matter; it was an entente involving the Gospel as Paul knew and proclaimed it, i.e., good news intended for the Gentile world (Rom. 1:13, 16; 3:29, 30; 15:16; all these texts say virtually the same thing, that Paul's mission to the non-Jews carries divine sanction and is to be recognized as valid, since it is grounded in God's all embracing regard for all peoples who have come to share in the promise to Abraham, the father of many nations; so Rom 4:9-25; Gal 3:28-29) and centered in reconciliation (R. P. Martin, Reconciliation, 153, 154).

3. Paul hints he established Corinth as a home base to launch out to other regions in evangelistic exploration (16). Same as Rom 1:1-15; 15:23, 24,28). So, his mission work has the sign and stamp of God's approbation. It is this conviction that proves the basis of his boasting (17). He appeals with confidence because it is the Lord's approval he seeks (18).

Detailed notes on verses:

Vs. 12 The immediate context comes from vs. 10 and 11. The issue is self-recommendation and that Paul is too cowardly and weak (vs. 10 asthenes) to make a bold assertion about himself as an apostle and leader.

Paul in vs. 11 had alluded to his plan to deal strongly with them, and so now in vs 12 ff he is warding off the accusation that he cannot follow through on that threat because he has flawed character. He refuses to boast and push himself forward. Later in 11:10 through 12:10 he is forced to play the fool in boasting, but paradoxically does so in his weaknesses.

The teachers at Corinth were making the metron measuring rod of their own service their own self-judgment and thus found themselves praiseworthy and qualified-but Paul says they are without understanding.

Vs. 13 The language here and train of thought is very complicated he piles up ametra, metron, emerisen, metrou to emphasize strongly the point that he has not transgressed his allocated area of service which was apportioned by God.

Paul says that his opponents have used the wrong metron measuring rod . The proper use is to define one's kanon specific sphere-Paul was given this sphere and allocation as Apostle to the Gentiles and it included Corinth. God's kanon was drawn to include even you.

Vs 14 Paul's defense is that such a mission did not overreach his apostolic calling. His opponents have arrived in Corinth, but Paul says he was there earlier by design Romans 15:17-20 and by concurrence of the pillars of the Jerusalem church Gal. 2:6-7.

Paul needed to defend Corinth as his home church if he was going to use it as a base of operations to go to other regions.

Vs. 15-16 Paul did not build on others work-the others Rom 15:20 or unknown.

The enlargement of the faith of the Corinthians-could mean their faith in Paul's Gospel, faithfulness to his mission so they give him support in his future service, or an increase in the outreach of mission. Martin prefers the second option

Vs. 17-18 He binds this together from vs. 12 with sunisten commend/recommend.

"The issue at stake is kanon and its demarcation, whether it is (1) the product of human endeavor and so it deserves the praise or blame that a person seeks either to gain or avoid for the work done in mission service, or (2) an assignment from "the Lord" who gives it validity and so is the only one who can rightly commend it as "approved""

"The conclusion drive home Paul's chief thrust: only a Christian enterprise, which is both originated from God's plan, according to the divine kanon, and aims to promote his honor (of which the antithesis is self-praise) can stand ultimate scrutiny."