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Church Planting
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Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?

Summary

Roland Allen's book *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* gives a detailed look at the ministry of Apostle Paul. Apostle Paul's ministry was heavily marked by his pursuit of spreading the gospel wherever he went, even in jail. It is evident in the Epistles that Paul planted churches wherever he went and it was his desire to see them stay the course so he tried to stay in contact with them. The book is not so much about doctrine but of methods. From cultural considerations to finance, Allen shares Paul's ministry and church planting methods, and compares it to the methods of his time.

Chapter 2 explains how Paul carried out his ministry. Paul's missionary journey consisted of four major regions: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.¹ As he went spreading the gospel, Paul established churches and stayed until they were "fully equipped with orders of ministry, sacraments and tradition."² Paul's focus was to spread the gospel and advance the kingdom of God as quickly as possible. In order to achieve this, he targeted central locations of cities and established Christian communities. "All of the cities, or towns, in which he planted churches are centers of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence, or of some commercial importance."³ Targeting these areas allowed Paul to have greater influence and was advantageous in getting the gospel to more people. Wherever he was led, Paul seized the opportunity to be at a central location where the gospel could flourish.

¹ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours?* (Cambridge, U.K.: Lutterworth Press, 2006). 6 Kindle Reader.

² Ibid, 8.

³ Ibid, 14.

Social class was very prominent during Paul's time. However, Paul did not only preach to the high class but to whoever was willing to listen which often happened to be the lower commercial class. Although he did not particularly seek after a certain class, it was through the leadership of the educated and willingness of the lower class that made it possible for the churches to be planted in those cities. Paul also challenged the moral, social and cultural beliefs of his day. Belief in the rule of evil spirits, religious rites of passage, slavery and wrong entertainment, Paul addressed the corruption and taught Kingdom standards to the believers.

Chapter 6 talks about how Paul handled the finances to run his ministry. The rules were pretty simple, he did not ask for or take financial support, nor gave financially to any church.⁴ How Paul's ministry could be effective can also be found in the way he trained the first believers to pursue a life with the Holy Spirit by themselves. Paul prioritized four things when establishing churches: tradition of the Creed, the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, Orders, and the Holy Scriptures.⁵ Although miracles happened during Paul ministry, he never used it to attract people. If anything, miracles were used as a display of divine power, which combated the beliefs of dark powers of the day. The display of God's divine power was an evidence of salvation⁶ but for Paul, it was the work of the Holy Spirit displayed in the lives of the believers that was the most important. The contents and characteristics of Paul's preaching is what really brought transformation to the cities. Paul preached the truth of God's Kingdom and applied it to their current circumstances. He never wavered to teach sound doctrine and asserted that faith is not another set of philosophical knowledge but a transformed way of life.

Paul's sense of authority was rooted in the Lord and he did not threaten them with anything but directed them to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. The discipline he laid out was

⁴ Ibid, 42.

⁵ Ibid, 85.

⁶ Ibid, 39.

accountability with Christ and with the church in which they belonged. Unity was very important to Paul as for Paul, it was a “fact of their Christian experience.”⁷ Despite the heresies and schisms of the day, Paul urged the church to communicate between churches and engage in mutual acts of charity.

Interaction

This book made me question if ministers, pastors and missionaries alike, have taken on too much or added to our church programs more than necessary. Paul’s ministry was not simple, but his strategy was very dialed into his purpose of bringing the gospel wherever the Holy Spirit sent him. The change in location called for contextualization but his method for establishing churches remained the same. If the Apostle Paul was ministering in the 21st century, how would his method change?

Apostle Paul did not have a conventional method of ministry that a person living in the 21st century can understand or replicate. Paul did not have a ministry fund his missionary journeys and did not have a home church that he was affiliated with. To think someone could do such a ministry without financial support in the 21st century is pretty much unheard of. Paul could be seen as a bivocational pastor in today’s terms as he was both a minister and tent-maker (Acts 18:3). The ability to support oneself through an avenue besides the church is both daunting and liberating at the same time. It is liberating because there is a freedom that comes from not being paid by someone or some organization. There is no obligation to fulfill an expectation and it gives you the freedom to move as you please. The lack of financial support is daunting as it becomes the responsibility of the minister and would most likely mean they would have to take on another job. I think the fact that Paul was in full-time ministry and did not receive compensation from the church or anyone else. This probably freed him up from feeling entitled

⁷ Ibid, 105.

to something and made him stay dialed in on his purpose even more, knowing that it was not the people that made him move but the call of God.

Paul engaged the culture of the day with the supremacy of Christ was eye opening and bold. Many cultures, like Ephesus, were heavily influenced by spirits and witchcraft. Paul preaching addressed these beliefs by teaching on the Holy Spirit and the supremacy of Christ “that enabled Christians to banish these demons from their hearts and from the world in which they lived.”⁸ By doing this, Paul refuted the dominant narrative of the culture with the truth of Christ.

I believe the demons that people face today are anxiety and depression. It is said that this generation is experiencing the highest level of anxiety compared to the past. Some of this is due to the unrealistic standards social media and testimonies of productivity has unintentionally imposed on people. People are curing this fear driven symptom through occult practices and medication. These are all self-reliant methods that will ultimately increase pressure on the person who cannot, by themselves, restore confidence and assurance. It is in knowing and believing that there is something greater and more powerful than the demons we face that will bring the healing this generation needs.

Allen makes a great point that Paul did not come to preach judgement so that people could continue to live heathen lives while observing the law; Paul preached salvation so that everyone knew that salvation was the way to escape the wrath of God, not the law.⁹ “Faith was not a mere intellectual assent to a new theory of religion which could be held whilst the life remained what it was before.”¹⁰ Giving their lives to Jesus was not about behavior modification but an inward transformation. When someone gives their life to Christ, they open their lives up to

⁸ Ibid, 27.

⁹ Ibid, 62.

¹⁰ Ibid, 61.

the work of the Holy Spirit and are born again in Christ. It takes an active choice to put off the old and choose to walk in the new way of life as a child of God. This truth is so vital to evangelism in today's context because so much of what people think of Christians are tied to their actions or a particular political party. Vulnerability and authenticity is very important to this generation when it comes to facing the brokenness in people's lives. If the gospel presentation of the past consisted of believing in Jesus to avoid hell or for moral purposes, now the gospel presentation should consist of the picture of Jesus taking all the shame and brokenness of the world to bring healing and transformation that only He can bring. The heathen, as Allen puts it, cannot stay and this does not pertain solely to moral choices but the person inside.

The way Paul trained the converts to be a functional church without him is different from the traditional model of church. Most churches today are heavily dependent on one leader who preaches, teaches, trains, and shepherds the congregation. If one day this leader was to move on, the church would potentially fall apart because this person was holding many important tasks in their hands. Instead of having his followers wait for him, Paul taught them the Old Testament, how to baptize and carry on the sacraments so that they could continue the progress of the gospel without his help.

Allen says, "The fatal mistake has been made of teaching the convert to rely upon the wrong source of strength. Instead of seeking it in the working of the Holy Spirit in themselves, they seek it in the missionary. They put him in the place of Christ, they depend upon him."¹¹ This might possibly be the reason why so many churches are not seeing fruit in their congregants' lives. Being a "Sunday-centric" church where Sunday is the main game makes it easier for people to rely on the Sunday worship experience more than their personal relationship with God. This is a misconception that converts will adopt if they are not taught to pursue God on their own

¹¹ Ibid, 66.

because the same God who speaks to the pastor speaks to them. What if the congregants were given the tools early on in their journey to pursue their relationship with God? What would our churches look like? There would probably be less overgrown spiritual babies in the church and less frustrated pastors.

Application

Missionary Methods really made me rethink the way I think about ministry. The two things that stand out the most is how Paul trained the converts and his perception of financial support as a minister. When I think about full-time ministry, I think about receiving a salary from the church. If I am putting all of my time and energy, and if this is my vocation, of course I should get paid by them. One thing I wrestle with a lot as a pastor is the guilt of getting paid to do what I used to do as a lay leader. I felt like I was more happy serving the church when I was not a pastor because I did not have any strings attached other than my commitment to the Lord and the church. Now, my commitment has a dollar amount and a contract to go with it which puts pressure on me to perform. This, along with the different thoughts that run through my head have become the strings that attach me to this church. Even if I do not plant a church, I will seriously consider not solely relying on the church for my finances.

Paul's ability to disciple the church from near and far is very impressive. Reading this book made me realize how important the discipling method is and how vital it is to train believers to pursue their relationship with God right away. Raising disciples who make disciples is vital to the life of the church and it lessens the unhealthy dependence on the lead pastor and Sunday worship. I will build a strong discipling program and discipling culture to lead the church closer to the Lord.

Bibliography

Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours?* Cambridge, U.K.: Lutterworth Press, 2006.