

Teaching Sound Doctrine

Spreading of the Gospel

Isaiah foretold of the time when the Lord's house would be established at the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills and all nations would flow into it. He also stated that the law would go out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2: 2-3). He went on to tell about the time when the earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters that cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

Jesus said, "Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."(Luke. 13:18-21). Even though it was small in the beginning, God's kingdom, just like the leaven, spread and grew even to the ends of the world. Paul said that the gospel had been preached to every creature that is under heaven (Col. 1: 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;).

Now the questions we should ask is how do we account for this rapid spread of the gospel? How did it effect the growth of the church in the first century? These questions should be important to every Christian who is interested in the spread of the kingdom's growth today. There were many factors involved in this growth.

Let us consider a just few of them.

First, the spread of the gospel can be directly attributed to the fact of its simplicity of message. Though the fact that the gospel contains the wisdom of God as it relates to salvation, it is not veiled in some strange language nor is it above the comprehension of man. It was not then nor is it now the purpose of God that man's faith should stand in the wisdom of men, therefore, the apostles preaching was not "with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:4-5 And my

speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.). God's message was so simple and plainly taught that only one lesson was needed for the eunuch and those on Pentecost to learn what they must do to be saved. This same simplicity in teaching is very much needed today. There is no benefit to anyone if those that hear Gods message can only say that the lesson was scholarly and the teacher was well spoken if the hearer is not convicted of his sins or edified in the faith.

Second, the gospel spread because it found fertile soil. In his parable of the sower, Jesus identifies the good soil that brought forth an hundredfold as "an honest and good heart" that hears, keeps the word and brings forth fruit with patience (Lu. 8:15). All soil upon which the seed fell was not good ground for some rejected the word of God and put it from them (Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.). Many, like the 3,000 on Pentecost, did "gladly receive the word" and wherever this happened "believers were the more added to the Lord" (Acts 2: 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls) (5: 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

Third, the gospel spread because of devoted and dedicated believers who were not ashamed of its message. Paul is an example of such. He regarded the preaching of the gospel as an honor that had been bestowed upon him (Eph. 3: 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;). To Paul, the message of the gospel was a matter of necessity. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9: 16). Paul's devotion to the gospel was so great that he was willing to count all the things that before had meant gain to him loss "for the excellency of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:7-8 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,). This same devotion and dedication to the word of God by us will again result in the same growth.

Lastly, the gospel was spread to the world because of determined workers who would not be deterred from its defense and preaching by threats or persecutions. We, like Paul, must be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). Just as Paul disputed with Jewish rulers in their synagogues and with philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics in the market place (Acts 17:17-18 Therefore disputed he

in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.).

Peter and John were threatened and commanded to teach no more in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-18) But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.). Their response was "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye " Their determination was to obey God regardless of personal cost.

If the gospel is again to spread, the same simplicity must characterize our preaching. Hearts must be found that are receptive to the truth and we must have the kind of devotion and dedication to the truth. What about your dedication? Are you contributing to its spread of God's word? Be like Paul so you can say as he did.....Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.