



## 31<sup>st</sup> Convention – ESSAY

**1 Timothy 2:3-7** – *This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

### God our Savior Desires All Men to Be Saved We are Appointed to Proclaim that Truth

I have always pictured Paul as a superhero kind of missionary. His adventures are chronicled throughout much of the known world planting the flag for Christ at every synagogue and city which he visited, his cape flowing in the wind behind him as he established church after church. Shipwreck, snakebite, nor death by stoning would deter him on his way. Prison sentences could not contain the message which he was appointed to proclaim. He was simply on a different level than anyone else who would ever follow in this work of proclaiming the truth. Who could hope to follow in those footsteps? Maybe it was a different time and place and we should come to grips with this reality. Perhaps the spread of the truth has come to a grinding halt and it's time to face facts. We are beaten down and wearied by the discouragement of seeing loved ones depart from the truth, the countless hours spent ministering to people who ultimately toss the truth aside, and the heartache of seeing a nation continuing to suppress the truth and do what is right in its own eyes.

Discouragement and defeat dominate us when our eyes are not fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He is the author and finisher of this ministry of proclaiming the truth as well. This Jesus, whom we proclaim, remains faithful despite our flaws and our faithlessness. Even colleagues and fellow Christians may disappoint, but our Appointer never has and never will. The Appointer's promises are as sure now as the day they were given. This is illustrated in the life of the founder of the China Inland Mission, James Hudson Taylor, as he is questioned by his hometown minister.

I learned, however, that the Congregational minister of my native town possessed a copy of Medhurst's *China*, and I called upon him to ask a loan of the book. This he kindly granted, asking me why I wished to read it. I told him that God had called me to spend my life in missionary service in that land. "And how do you propose to go there?" he inquired. I answered that I did not at all know; that it seemed to me

probable that I should need to do as the Twelve and the Seventy had done in Judea – go without purse or scrip, relying on Him who had called me to supply all my need. Kindly placing his hand upon my shoulder, the minister replied, "Ah, my boy, as you grow older you will get wiser than that. Such an idea would do very well in the days when Christ Himself was on earth, but not now."

I have grown older since then, but not wiser. I am more than ever convinced that if we were to take the directions of our Master and the assurances He gave to His first disciples more fully as our guide, we should find them to be just as suited to our times as to those in which they were originally given.<sup>1</sup>

Have we grown wiser as we've grown older? It's far easier to grow more cynical as we've grown older. We find ourselves wringing our hands and wondering "What is this world coming to?" and joining in the long lines of those who murmur about the opposition to the truth. We have been warned, however. This comes as no surprise because our Lord who is already in the future has informed us that people will suppress the truth.

**Romans 1:18-20** – *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

It's popular and even stylish in our society to suppress the truth. Absolute truth is viewed as antiquated close-mindedness. It is supposed that we are at the apex of all human history with more access than ever before to all kinds of information and yet we cannot know anything to be certainly true. Even in purely logical terms this constant questioning and suppression of the truth folds in on itself.

The new rebel is a skeptic, and will not trust anything...but therefore he can never really be a revolutionary. For all denunciation implies a moral doctrine of some kind...Therefore the modern man in revolt has become practically useless for all purposes of revolt. By rebelling against everything he has lost his right to rebel against anything...There is a thought that stops thought. That is the only thought that ought to be stopped.<sup>2</sup>

What else could this be but evidence of the sinfulness of man on display? This is the foolishness of iniquity that would blind many from the truth and keep them in the darkness of unbelief. At the heart of the issue is not suppression of a set of doctrines. It is not a rejection of moral practices. It is not an aversion to statements of faith. The root cause of this is rejection of a Person. Naturally we do not want someone coming in and turning our lives upside down, claiming everything for Himself. We want to call our own shots, do what is right in our own eyes, and be the masters of our fate. The Christ that we proclaim is one who comes in and

<sup>1</sup> James Hudson Taylor, *A Retrospect*, pg. 7, Kindle Edition

<sup>2</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith*, (Doubleday, 1990), pp.33, 41-42

rearranges the furniture in a person's heart, making it his own dwelling place, thereby bringing life where there was only death. This won't happen, however, if we remain silent.

Appointed to proclaim this truth? Me? Surely someone else is better equipped to do this. I'm not ready and I'm not able. Let's once again take our eyes off the appointed and fix them on the Appointer.

When coming before our King, the Appointer, the one who is appointed can't help but be overcome with uncertainty. We are not immune to experiencing the inner turmoil that Isaiah relates to us by inspiration of the Spirit. **Isaiah 6:5** – *"And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!'"*

In the case of Isaiah an angel took a coal from upon the altar and touched his lips, thereby forgiving him and making him clean. The results were immediate and impactful. God had a job for someone to go and proclaim his word to a people that may never listen, nevertheless this was His appointment. There was no more hesitation or grumbling on Isaiah's part, no more talk of "Woe is me!" Now in the peace of forgiveness his spirit was steadfast and ready. **Isaiah 6:8** – *"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'"*

Apart from the question of how we are appointed is the matter of to whom shall we go and proclaim this truth. Jesus in his high priestly prayer sends each of us just as He was sent. He has given us the two components necessary to be on a mission. We are given the truth and love for our neighbor. If we had only the truth and cared nothing for our fellow man then we would not be on a mission. If we cared about our neighbor down to their very core, but had no truth to share and no message to proclaim then there would be no mission. Christ, our great Appointer, has given us both the message of truth which saves and a heart of compassion to share that message with ones who desperately need to hear it. We are all appointed to proclaim this truth in settings that we'd never choose and to people with whom we'd have nothing in common.

I can recall a seminary professor in a candid moment explaining how he had never pictured himself serving a congregation in a heavily populated, urban setting. He had always had an affinity for the country and could relate to those who lived the rural lifestyle. Having grown up there, he was very familiar with that context. However as he planned his way it was the Lord who ordered his steps. The only calls which he was led to accept over the course of his entire ministry were to densely populated cities, far removed from the way of life that was second nature to him.

The apostle Paul could identify with this reality of being sent or appointed to a people and place "out of his wheelhouse" better than most anyone. No one else had excelled to the point that he had in the ways of Judaism and consequently no

one else would have been better suited for the work of evangelism among the Jewish people. He'd have an "in" with them. There would be common ground and shared experiences upon which he could build. Proclaiming the truth among the Gentiles will be an uphill battle, one for which he was not suited, at least not by human estimation.

**Galatians 1:14-16a** – *"And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles"*

One of the concerns that has been raised in the past regarding our foreign mission work, especially in a place like Kenya where a reported eighty percent of the population is professing the Christian faith, is that our time and effort would be better spent in a place where there is an insignificant Christian presence. This is a reasonable objection, and with the limited manpower and material resources at our disposal, it is one worthy of consideration.

We are appointed to proclaim this truth to all people, for the mediating work of Christ he does on the basis of his completed atonement which was for all people. In many cases the statistics don't tell the entire story. In the specific case of Kenya it doesn't take long to discover that the Christ that is professed is not the Christ who has revealed Himself in the Scriptures.

Sadly, this Christ is a projection of sinful humanity's heart. This is a Christ that rewards and blesses those who practice morality, at least to a standard that is attainable and avoids the egregious sins of their rotten neighbor. This is a Christ who gives a sure return on investments by doubling, tripling, or even returning tenfold of what the giver has offered, usually by coercion.

The truth has been suppressed under the guise of Christianity. We are appointed to proclaim this truth to the one who has never heard the name of Jesus and to the one who has been introduced to a fictional Jesus.

This is a daunting task if we are preoccupied with our limitations and shortcomings. God is not telling us to "Go and make disciples of all the nations" for the purpose of feeling exhausted, but for the purpose of feeling exhilarated. He is your partner in this mission for both missionary goers and missionary senders. Take heart, the Appointer is the one who has promised to be "with you always, even to the end of the age." Upon promising this, Jesus knew very well that he was sending the majority of his apostles to certain death. The fact that their Appointer remained with them was the reason they died so well. It was the reason why many wondered at them while they were being killed. It was the reason why they could sing to the very end of their age and while we continue to proclaim this truth to the very end of

ours. The one who holds all authority in heaven and on earth is the Appointer who has forgiven, called, enabled, and strengthened us.

Christ is the Truth that was wrongly put on trial. He is the Truth that Pilate walked away from. **John 14:17** – “even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” The Truth committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth, yet he was killed. In spite of all this, the truth lives! The darkness could not comprehend Him and neither could it suppress Him. We no longer have reason to throw up our hands in defeat or to wring our hands in despair, because the Truth lives! Instead we are encouraged earlier in this second chapter of first Timothy to lift those hands in “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings” on behalf of all people. **Luke 10:2** – *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

This truly is the greatest work on earth for teacher, layman, and pastor alike. While there is much work to do among the 1,569 unengaged people groups (no missionaries or church), and 6,747 least reached groups (fewer than 2% Christian) the word of the Lord continues to increase and prevail mightily.

The pattern of Christian expansion differs from that of every other world religion. The center and majority of Islam’s population is still in the place of its origin—the Middle East. The original lands that have been the demographic centers of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have remained so. By contrast, Christianity was first dominated by Jews and centered in Jerusalem. Later it was dominated by Hellenists and centered in the Mediterranean. Later the faith was received by the barbarians of Northern Europe and Christianity came to be dominated by western Europeans and then North Americans. Today most Christians in the world live in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Christianity soon will be centered in the southern and eastern hemispheres.

Two case studies are instructive. In 1900, Christians comprised 9 percent of the African population and were outnumbered by Muslims four to one. Today, Christians comprise 44 percent of the population, and in the 1960s passed Muslims in number. This explosive growth is now beginning in China. Christianity is not only growing among the peasantry, but also among the social and cultural establishment, including the Communist party. At the current rate of growth, within thirty years Christians will constitute 30 percent of the Chinese population of 1.5 billion.<sup>3</sup>

The proclamation of that truth is not limited to the pulpit, classroom, or counseling session. The work of proclamation doesn’t mean dropping everything and boarding a plane to one of the far corners of the world. The proclamation of the truth can

take place each and every day as we are on the go. Martin Luther was once approached by a man who enthusiastically announced that he’d recently become a Christian. Wanting desperately to serve the Lord, he asked Luther, “What should I do now?” As if to say, should he become a minister or perhaps a traveling evangelist, or a monk. Luther asked him, “What is your work now?” “I’m a shoe maker.” Much to the cobbler’s surprise, Luther replied, “Then make a good shoe, and sell it at a fair price.” Opportunity to proclaim that truth arises while faithfully fulfilling our vocations in a God-glorifying manner.

In seeking to proclaim that truth it “might mean that we go to the same Starbucks to form relationships, workout without an I-Pod to engage those around us, and play in the front yard rather than the back in order to be available for the neighbors.”<sup>4</sup>

“All congregations should be involved in mission work – the pastor and members – we are all “called” and we can be sure of some return for the work that’s done. See **Isaiah 55:10-11** – *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”* I would hope all believers would stand up in all circumstances – for the faith – for what we believe – for this too is mission work”<sup>5</sup>

Yes, we are all appointed to proclaim that truth. Forgiven, called, equipped, and loved even as the Son is loved by The Father, we proclaim this precious truth near and far.

**John 17:20-26** – *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

—Pastor Michael Gurath

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Jenkins, *Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford, 2002), p.56

<sup>4</sup> Geoff Ashley “What does Missional Mean?”

<sup>5</sup> Member of Holy Cross Ev. Lutheran Church of Phoenix, AZ