

A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S METHOD
OF MISSION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCHES IN
REHOBOTH BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,
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ABSTRACT

This study focused mainly on Paul's method of mission and the possibility of effective mission endeavors by the churches in Rehoboth Baptist Association. In the build up of the study, which is divided into five chapters, biblical foundations of mission, Apostle Paul's background, life and ministry were discussed.

The first chapter discussed the background to the study, leading to the statement of the problem, it also outlined the purpose, the methodology and delimitation of the study. The second chapter, extracted from Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament and some extra-biblical sources to capture Apostle Paul's background, his life, conversion and his missionary journeys. The third chapter discussed biblical foundations of mission starting from the Old Testament, through the intertestamental period to the New testament. From these materials, It was evident that God takes initiative in mission as revealed by the Abrahamic promises, the Davidic kingship and the Isaianic servant of Yahweh that culminated in Jesus' coming and mission. The fourth chapter contained detailed examination of Paul's method of mission, the nature and reason(s) for the method. A brief evaluation of the method was done considering its effectiveness and defects. It was observed that there can be little doubt that insofar as we have in the New Testament an example of sound method of mission, it is in the strategy of Paul. The fifth chapter looked at the implications of this method for the churches in Rehoboth Baptist Association.

Recommendations were made towards realization of effective church mission endeavors by the churches in Rehoboth Baptist Association and by extension churches in contemporary Nigeria. It is recommended firstly, that in mission, attention should be directed to the cities where bulk of the people domicile. Secondly, churches in an area must unite with each other for effective mission of their areas. Thirdly, today's church must be globally aware in her mission endeavors and lastly the church must understand herself (theologically) while grasping her double identity of worship and mission.

It is concluded that if followers of Christ today can be obedient to the command of Christ, and if they can have more zeal for God, and if they can be more compassionate for a world perishing in sin, certainly, they will do such work as Paul did, that is, work of planting living, self-propagating churches.

A. Recommendations

Methods of missions can be described as universal truths. That is, they are in a general way acceptable to all Christians. Examination of these methods reveals that some of them are indeed biblical principles that have been used in Christian churches, including those of Rehoboth Baptist Association, for many years. As the writer attempted to evaluate Paul's methods of mission, one important question was kept in mind: can these methods be modified so that they are consistent with contemporary realities and provide new missiological techniques acceptable to Pastors and congregations as they strive to carry out the great commission?

The concern is that the mission methods themselves be in accord with Scripture and the Baptist Confessions. They must also be used and applied to human needs in a manner that is consistent with the clear teachings of the Bible. The writer therefore offers the following statements as a way of assisting pastors, teachers, and congregations for a discerning evaluation and use of Pauline methods of mission.

Firstly, Our modern world has added a new dimension to the growth of cities due to industrial revolution, when most of the economies moved away from agrarian economy to industrialization. Consequently, cities have become centers of cultural and religious dominance; this has tremendous implications for missionary strategy. It means that even in those countries where the majorities are still living in small towns or on farms, urban ministries

ought to receive top priority. In mission, attention should be directed to the cities where bulk of the people domicile. Such attention may include, among others, house churches, mass evangelism, crusades, etc.

Secondly, God's grace calls us into mission, guides us in forming a disciplined church for mission, and impels us to join together in obedience to Christ to proclaim this grace.¹ Mission is the action of the God of grace and church responses in gratitude.² Therefore a missionary church is composed of congregations that in their own locality are mission societies. A primary role of the church is to kindle, nurture and live out a vision of God's mission intention, that is the reign of God. It must therefore seek to live in cooperation and communion with other authentic Christian communities that God in grace calls into existence. Consequently, it is recommended that cooperating churches in an Association like that of Rehoboth Baptist Association must unite together for effective mission of their areas (i.e. Rivers State)

Thirdly, today's church must be globally aware in her mission endeavors, our world increasingly is a global village. What happens in the local community makes an impact upon the global community and vice versa. One of the greatest needs in today's church is for a greater sensitivity to the world. As true servants of Jesus Christ, believers should keep their eyes open, as He did to human need and their ears cocked to the world's cries of pain. They should respond, as again as He did, with compassion to the real

¹ James C Logan "Grace upon Grace; God's mission and ours", In Quarterly Review, Vol 8 No 1, Spring 1988, 3.

² Ibid., 11.

issues of the day.³ Otherwise stated, churches in the Rehoboth Baptist Association must be in tune with happenings globally and around them in order to remain relevant and consistently open up avenues for mission.

Fourthly, the church must understand itself (theologically), grasping its double identity, that is, a church structured for worship and mission. The missionary church is not concerned with itself – it is a church for others. Its centre lies outside itself; it must live “ex-centredly”.⁴ The church has to turn itself outwards to the world. We have to recognize that the churches have developed into “waiting churches” into which people are expected to come. It is therefore recommended that all the local assemblies within the association be encouraged to actively go outside the church premises to the waiting worlds outside with the message of the Lord. For example, the Etche mission field (Rivers State) is a mission field crying for people and assistance; Rehoboth Baptist Association should be at the forefront of this mission field.

B. Conclusions

The church faces the challenges of the future in a "world-come-of-age" in the confidence that God has given her the resources necessary to carry out the mission to which He has called her. Faithfulness to God's Word requires that Christians accept their God-given tasks willingly and with the confident expectation that the church will continue to grow. The church belongs to God. He has purchased it with the blood of His Son. He preserves and protects it.

³ Stott “The World’s Challenge to the Church”, In *Biblio Theca Sacra*, vol 145, April – June 1988, No 578, 123.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147

