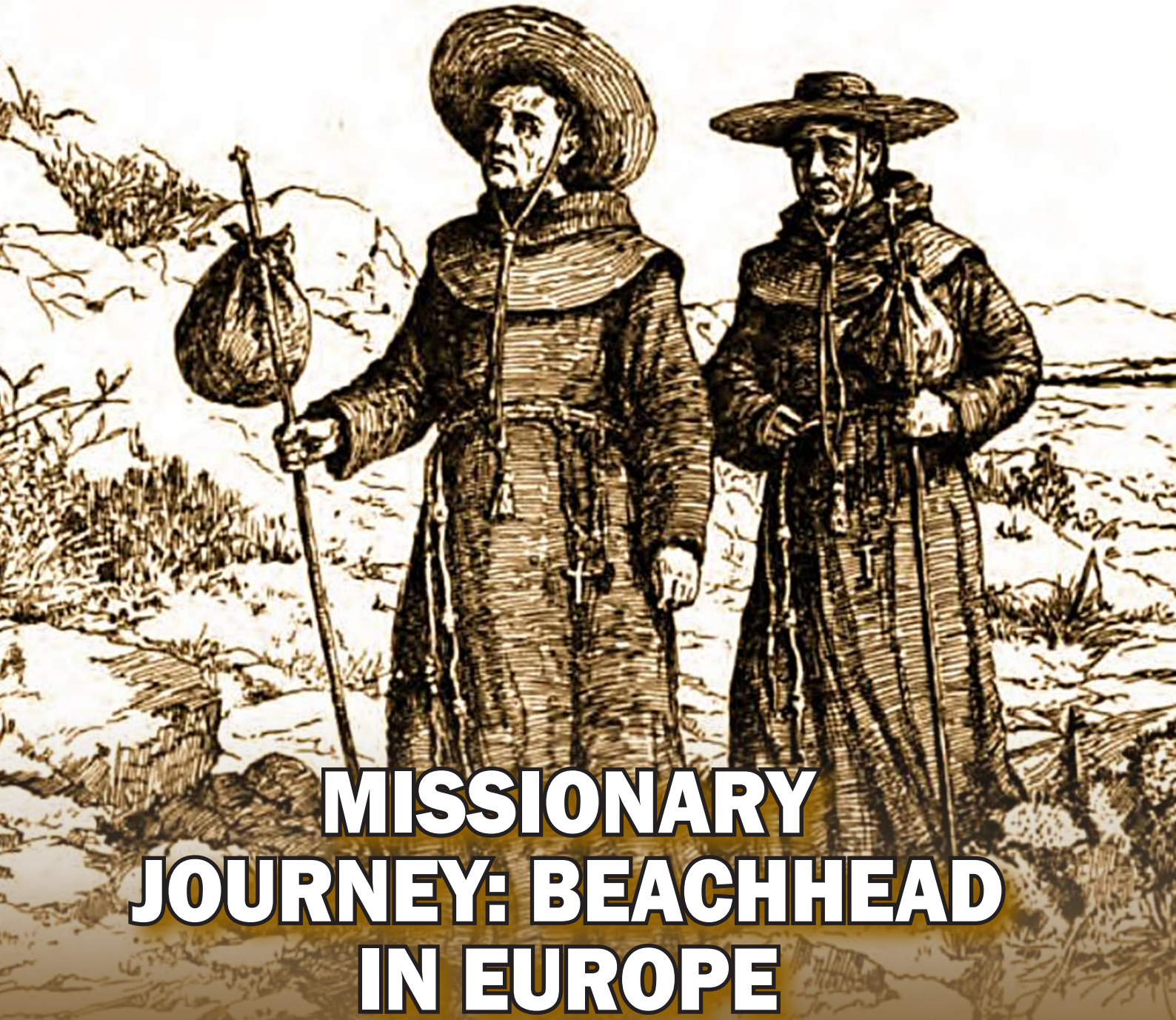


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## MISSIONARY JOURNEY: BEACHHEAD IN EUROPE



**Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham**

Founder/President  
India Gospel Outreach

President  
India Bible College and Seminary

President  
India Pentecostal Church of God

# FULFILL YOUR CALLING

Just as a man is anointed king over a nation, God anoints you and me as His priests and ambassadors to bear the Good News to every person. Just as a king has certain privileges and responsibilities in his calling, so do we.

Not every anointed king fulfills his calling well, nor does every believer take his calling seriously to take the Good News to others.

Both Saul and David were chosen by God as kings over Israel. Saul was God's first choice, but he did not fulfill his divine calling well. He failed to listen to the voice of God. He failed to obey. His position as king loomed larger to Him than the God who called him. He tried to fulfill God's calling in his own way. He failed to repent, and he made excuses, trying to justify himself. He succeeded only in deceiving himself.

Samuel the prophet told him, "Now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for himself a man after His own heart..." (1 Samuel 13:14)

That man was the shepherd boy, David. An average person like most of us, he had serious weaknesses, but he listened to God. When he failed—sometimes miserably—he made no excuses. He owned his sin and asked for God's forgiveness and a new heart. For this reason, God promised him and his descendants a kingdom that would never end.

The contrast between Saul's and David's effectiveness should teach us an important lesson as we consider God's call upon us to spread the Good News—it is always wise to listen to God. God's Word will transform us and our ministry.

Not everyone in Samuel's and David's day could hear the voice of God. In their day, that lack of hearing came from a lack of revelation (1 Samuel 3:1). Today, we have revelation, but too often, we do not hear or listen.

Throughout the Bible, we read story after story of people whose vision and ministry were transformed when they heeded the voice of God. They became mighty spokesmen for God because Jesus' words dispelled the deception that governed their lives. Peter thought he was a failure because he denied Jesus, but a word from Jesus transformed him into a great preacher. Jesus spoke a word to an uncertain Thomas, and he became the apostle to India. The word of Jesus transformed Paul from a hater of Christians to the apostle to the Gentiles.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." If that is so, why don't we hear more than we do? It may be because of sin. Maybe we are too busy to listen—our priorities aren't right. Maybe we mistake religious acts for a daily walk with God. Maybe we try to live out our faith in our own power instead of through the Holy Spirit.

All of these things turn our faith into a burden instead of a blessing. With no energy to think beyond our own concerns, the Good News becomes a weight around our necks. We have nothing to share.

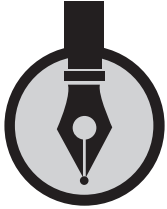
In the scriptures, hearing the voice of God is a "given" for every believer. Paul tells us we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2). Who else renews our minds but the Holy Spirit? This happens when the Holy Spirit dispels the enemy's lies with His truth as we submit to Him in honest prayer and confession.

When we hear the voice of God, we cannot but tell others what God has done in our lives. The Good News really becomes Good News because we continue to experience it daily.

Have you heard God speak to you? Have you experienced His transformation? He is speaking to you all the time. Just as the boy Samuel in the temple, we may not be tuned in to recognize Him when He speaks.

But when we do, the voice of God will change us even as it changed so many in the Bible. One of the first things it will do is transform our attitude toward missions. ●

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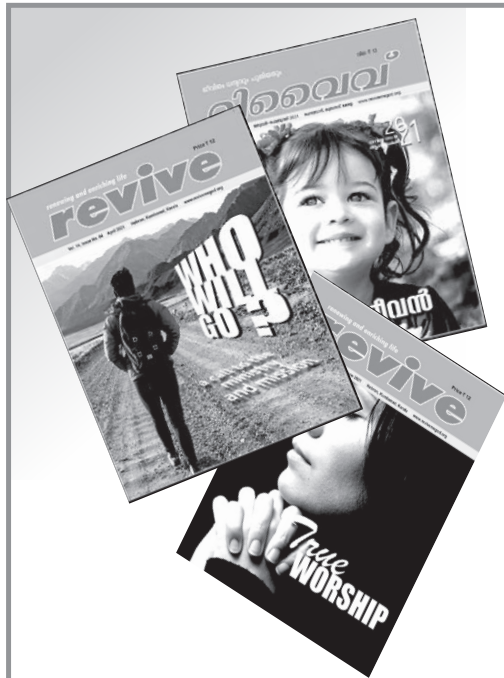
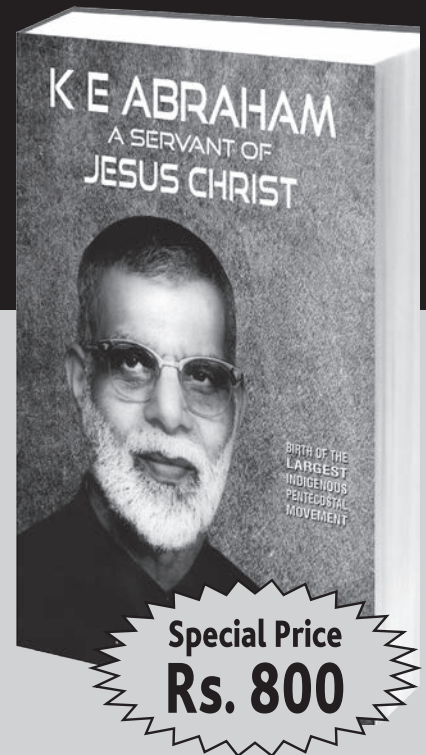
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

# THE MISSION IS GOD'S BUSINESS

**Apostle Paul** wanted to enter new territories for the Lord by traveling east into Asia Minor, after visiting the churches he had already founded. But the Lord closed the door.

In His sovereign grace, God asked Paul to go west into Europe. Because of the new door that was opened for Paul, the destiny of a continent has been changed. We do not know how God reveals His plan and how that affects the future of a generation.

In Acts chapter 16 we see three openings. The first one came in the form of an invitation from a certain man. It reads, *"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying; come over into Macedonia and help us"* (Acts 16:9).

Paul was a man of vision, and he obeyed it and started to Neapolis, the nearest port to Philippi. There was not a synagogue in the city of Philippi; they only had a prayer hall. Paul preached at the prayer hall, near the river, and God opened the heart of a woman named Lydia. When God opens the door for the ministry he opens the hearts of people, because mission, after all, is God's business. The conversion of Lydia was just the beginning. Greater things were in store for them by God Almighty.

But things didn't remain calm and cool for Paul. No sooner are lost people saved than Satan begins to hinder the work. Here, it was caused by a demonized girl who had made her masters wealthy by telling fortunes. Not just that, the apostles ended up in jail. But they were not silent even inside the jail. They started singing and praising God. People with a true vision can never be silenced because, deep in their hearts they know the value of the vision. They may be killed but their fervor can't be quenched.

Bible students do know what happened next. God opened the doors of the prison. Prayer and praise are wonderful weapons. God responded by shaking the foundations of the prison, opening all the doors, and loosening the prisoner's bonds. It is an assurance for all of us that despite the strategies of Satan God is powerful enough to do miracles and bring people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Let us remember that our God opens the way, He opens the hearts, the prisons, and prisoners - only because the mission is God's business. ●



# NEED TO REACH THE UNREACHED TODAY!



**Dr. ABY P. MATHEW**

Aby P Mathew did Environmental Studies and taught in Mahatma Gandhi university, Kerala before he went abroad to work. Went to Bihar in 1999 serving as an evangelist for 25 years. Leading a team of evangelists who planted 1000s of churches in Bihar and UP which is one of the most unreached regions in the world. He is blessed with his wife Preethi and two children, Yovel and Deborah.

**'Reaching** the unreached' is a term related to the mission of the church. 'Unreached' does not mean 'not unsaved'. It refers to people and people groups who have not heard the gospel clearly, even once in their lifetime.

One day, while driving in Kerala, I saw a lady waving towards a public bus, and it stopped. As I don't live in Kerala, I rarely come across such scenes. However, the incident led me to think about the mission of the church. That lady was waiting, but a bus needed to come so that she could reach her destination. If the arrival of the bus is delayed, her waiting will continue, and she won't reach her destination. If the bus driver took the bus to his house to take rest, it would be a crime as the purpose of the bus owner would be unmet and unfulfilled.

We are the vehicles carrying the name of Jesus and we have been assigned the duty to move through the lanes and by-lanes so that people will see Jesus and they will not perish but reach their eternal destination. We are the body of Christ trained to do the work of evangelism. Are we doing it or are we taking rest inside our homes and churches?

## Why we must reach the unreached

**1. It is the Master's command:** Mathew 28: 18–20 is a command. It is not a suggestion or a request. In an army camp when a command is given by the commander, no matter how difficult the task, the soldier has to do it, otherwise he will face punishment.

'Go and make disciples of all nations' is the command. To accomplish this, we must move from our comfort zone, we must go beyond the boundaries of our language and culture, we must go to the unreached people groups, where there are no or very few evangelists to share the word. The commitment should be long lasting.



In 1999, we came to Bihar as a family. At a time, when it was the poorest and most illiterate state of India. The law and order situation was bad, with many cases of murders and kidnappings; the roads were extremely bad; electricity coverage was poor; infant mortality rate was the highest in the country, and the list can go on. I was working abroad, and my wife Preeti was in the Central Government service.

We were qualified professionals with many options and pressures to go to other places. Our first child died here, I was beaten, our children didn't get even average quality education. But God helped us to stay here. In the first 7 years, we didn't see even 7 baptisms. In all, we had 10 churches and believers. But as I pen these words, we have seen 90 baptisms in one of the most difficult states just 3 days ago. In the last one month around 200 people got baptized. Remember, in first 7 years there was barrenness but now there are 3,000 or more worship groups (as per our records). In a recent 10-hour prayer

**In the last one month around 200 people got baptized. Remember, in first 7 years there was barrenness but now there are 3,000 or more worship groups (as per our records). In a recent 10-hour prayer meeting here, a 5000-capacity auditorium was overflowing.**

meeting here, a 5000-capacity auditorium was overflowing. People ask me how this happened. My answer is God's grace to this land, the prayer of God's children, God's time, and God helping us to stay here. We didn't leave, we didn't quit—that too is God's grace. We are not well-known preachers or leaders, but our commitment and perseverance bore fruit.

Many youngsters reach the mission field but a good number of them remain without focus and subsequently they leave the field opting for lesser risky options. This is a tragedy. The command is to go to the unreached and share the gospel.

## 2. The responsibility of the Church

It is the responsibility of the church to go and share gospel to the unreached. If we don't go to the unreached, nobody else will



do that. Only a going church can be a sending church. If leaders don't go, the members also won't go. The Bible asks us, *"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"* (Rom 10: 14-15)

### 3. It is Jesus' model

Jesus was always in search of the lost. The Bible says, *"for the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10). As disciples of Jesus, we are called to do the same thing. It is the pattern that we see in the book of Acts.

The power of the Holy Spirit was given to witness among all the nations (Acts 1:8). The first-century believers began preaching the Word

“  
**Paul went through the cities and taught people (Acts 16: 4). The outcome of his work was that churches were established in faith and increased in number daily (Acts 16: 5). His ministry was directed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16: 6,7). Paul followed godly directions (Acts 16: 9,10) to reach the unreached.**  
 ”

among the unreached (Act 5:4). Peter was focused on reaching the unreached (Act 10:28). Paul, an educated Jew, was appointed to reach the unreached. He was the apostle to the gentiles (Romans 11:13). Paul made many missionary journeys to reach the unreached. He faced many persecutions but did not quit the mission work (2 Cor 11: 23–28)

### LESSONS FROM ACTS 16

Paul went from one unreached town to another preaching the gospel to everyone; he did not focus on what was not essential (Acts 16: 3). Though he was teaching about grace and was trying to correct those who wanted to follow Jewish rules strictly, he arranged for Timothy's circumcision because he didn't want that to be a barrier in spreading of the gospel

Paul went through the cities and taught people (Acts 16: 4). The outcome of his work was that churches were established in faith and increased in number daily (Acts 16: 5). His ministry was directed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16: 6,7). Paul followed godly directions (Acts 16: 9,10) to reach the unreached.

Paul used all opportunities to share the gospel (Acts 16: 13). As he was sitting by the river, he found some women and spoke to them. When submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God opened the hearts of people. A woman with an evil spirit was healed (Acts 16 :16-18).

Reaching the unreached involves the operation of multiple ministries. Faith and gifts of the Holy Spirit are important in reaching the unreached. In our mission field, we have observed that the seed of all churches was some miraculous experience that happened to a person through prayer. In a country like India with vast number of unreached groups, the ministers must pray with thirst for the gifts of prophesy, miracles, healing, authority over evil spirits, and other gifts. Such experiences will attract people to Jesus Christ but opening their hearts is the work of the Holy Spirit. The greatest gift is the gift of love (1 Cor 13: 13). The Bible says it is the most excellent way (1 Cor 12 :31).

Paul faced strong opposition because of the gospel, but his response was worship and prayer (1 Cor 16 :23-25). Because of their strong faith and conviction, Paul and Silas were able to sing and pray inside the inner prison even with their feet fastened.

When we pray, the foundation of the opposition will be shaken, doors will be opened, and chains will be loosened (Acts 16 :26). We see that the opposition turned out to be a great opportunity. The keeper of the prison fell face down before Paul and Silas and accepted the Lord; he and his family were baptised (Acts 16: 27–33). These experiences of Paul are applicable today also. When we go through oppositions and persecution, some of the key things we must remember is that we must always be led by the Holy Spirit and be prepared to go through difficulties knowing that nothing will happen without God’s knowledge and every opposition will sooner or later lead to an opportunity. We must be hard workers and risk takers like Paul to get godly results. It is estimated that Paul travelled over 10,000 km on foot to spread the gospel.

Keeping in mind Paul’s life experiences, we need to ask ourselves some questions. Are we willing to go to the unreached or are we going to the reached only? The most powerful strategy of Jesus was suffering and sacrifice. Jesus’ method of reaching the unreached, facing opposition, winning souls, claiming victory was sacrifice. This is what Jesus taught his followers. If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me (Matt

**One of the greatest challenges in reaching the unreached today is that we preach and teach a lot, but there are few who go and do it. There are many teachers, but few practitioners!**

16: 24). Are we willing to do that? One of the greatest challenges in reaching the unreached today is that we preach and teach a lot, but there are few who go and do it. There are many teachers, but few practitioners! In our 25 years of mission experience, one of the saddest things we have seen is that churches don’t send members for mission; Churches and Bible seminaries have to send more missionaries to the mission fields and also encourage them to stay in the mission field consistently. Paul was in the mission

field till his last breath, so were Peter and Jesus. What about each one of us? If we don’t go and if we are not consistent, the unreached will remain unreached, the reached become overreached and preachers start competing for position, money, etc.

#### 4. It is a question of life and death

If a person remains unreached, it will lead to their eternal death. That’s why Jesus gave his life; that was the very purpose of his coming. That’s why Paul said, ‘but I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God’ (Acts 20: 24)

#### 5. We are in the end times

The Bible says we are in the last days. But we need to understand that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying it power (2 Tim 3: 1-5). The above signs are clearly visible today. And the Bible says that the day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not the son, only the Father (Matt 24:36)

One thing that will happen before the end comes is that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matt 24 :14). In India, for example, out of 650,000 villages and 6,000 towns, 300,000 villages are yet to hear the gospel clearly. Many of these villages are open for gospel but there are no workers.

If the church is serious about the Second Coming of Christ, it must send workers immediately to the unreached areas.

During the last few years, the number of house churches in Bihar increased to 2,000 and then to more than 3,000. Bible School training increased from 10 to 5,000 per year. Baptisms increased from 1 per year to 1,000s per year; children in kids' programs increased from 50 to 50,000 per year; workers increased from 10 to 1,000; this happened in a place with poor law and order and high criminal activities, bad caste system, etc. So, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Jesus was in one of the most difficult mission fields till his last breath. Paul lived and died in the mission field. This is true of Stephen, James, Peter, Polycarp, Sadhu Sundar Singh, Graham Staines and many unknown evangelists. From the mission field, Jesus asked to pray for more workers (Matt 9: 37,38). Only if you have enough experience in the mission field, will you have the burden and power to pray for more workers.

## 6. Persecuted and unreached countries need our attention

Many nations in the world have **high** levels of persecution against Christians—North Korea, China, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Sudan, and Pakistan top this list. Many Indian states passed anti-conversion laws and many innocent pastors and believers are in jail. They have been accused of forced conversions. Many are living in constant threat. As I write this, sentences two of our fellow workers have been put in jail in the past one week; they have been accused of forced conversion. One of them was conducting a church service and the other one had sent one boy for Bible training. In such situations we must pray for them

individually and collectively. We also help them and their families with their daily essentials as well as the court procedures.

## 7. We need to be prepared

We are the people who have an intimate relationship with God. He wants each one of us to be actively involved in reaching the unreached. What can we do? How can we prepare ourselves?

We must pray earnestly; we must pray

**Reaching the unreached is imperative. It is more important than a vaccine for AIDS, more urgent than alleviating world poverty or hunger, more important than man reaching the moon, or providing education and healthcare for all. It is more important than any other urgent work on this planet.**

with proper information about persecution and related matters. We must collect this information and pray in groups regularly.

We must go on mission trips to nearby as well as far off places to see the work and pray. This will make our prayers more relevant; our burden will increase. Many people who came to visit us for a week or so, later stayed here for years, as they saw the real needs in the mission field.

We must help the mission work and the missionaries working in the unreached areas

with our time, talents, and finance. We can come as an evangelist, as a Bible teacher, schoolteacher, musician, prayer warrior, cook, accountant, driver, administrator. There are innumerable ways in which we can help to reach the unreached. We can send a small or big offering to meet the needs of the mission work. Such practices will keep us connected to the work.

## 8. We need to be committed

As a full-time evangelist, reaching the unreached requires commitment. William Carey came India to reach the unreached and remained here for more than four decades. The effect was tremendous. Hudson Taylor went to China; David Livingston went to Africa; Jim Eliot went to the Auca Indians; Pastor Cook came to Kerala, India; Ziegenbalg came to Tamil Nadu, India; Sis Gruce came to Bihar, India; Army Carmichel came to Tirunelveli, India in 1896. They were full-time evangelists. They were involved in different kinds of work including church planting, children's ministry, schools, Bible translation, running orphanages, medical missions, etc. When you are fully involved in mission work, you can do much more than a volunteer does who works along with their other job responsibilities.

In conclusion, reaching the unreached is imperative. It is more important than a vaccine for AIDS, more urgent than alleviating world poverty or hunger, more important than man reaching the moon, or providing education and healthcare for all. It is more important than any other urgent work on this planet.

It is our responsibility. We must do it. We must start doing it now. May God help us to respond to heaven's call.



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# THE HOLY SPIRIT: POWER TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES IN MISSION



## Dr. SHAIBU ABRAHAM

Professor, Dept. of Christian  
Theology, India Bible College  
and Seminary, Kumbanad

**Throughout** Scripture, the Holy Spirit is depicted as God's empowering agent, carrying out special tasks in the world. In the Old Testament, individuals like judges, kings, and prophets were endowed with the power of the Spirit to carry out administration, protect God's people from enemies, and defeat hostile forces. Prophets, in particular, were empowered by the Spirit to deliver Yahweh's messages to the people of Israel during times of disobedience and rebellion. The Spirit acted as God's agent, dispensing power and authority to specially chosen individuals to fulfil God's mission in the world.

There are references to the Spirit of God as a dynamic, empowering force. One of the most significant references is in the prophecy of Zechariah, where the angel's address to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, you shall become a plain; and he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" (Zech. 4:6-7). These remarkable words, addressed to Zerubbabel regarding the postexilic rebuilding of the temple, affirm that it was through the Spirit's empowerment—not human effort—that the "mountain" of obstacles and difficulties only would be levelled and the task completed. Similarly, in the New Testament, we see many instances where the Spirit enables God's people to overcome obstacles and opposition from both human and demonic forces. Whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the Spirit serves as the 'enabler' of God's mission in the world. Therefore, in the following pages, we will explore how the Spirit empowers missionaries to carry out their tasks and bring people to Jesus Christ.



## The Holy Spirit: The Missionary Spirit

As we turn our attention to the New Testament, the missional role of the Spirit is seen more intensely and in greater detail than the Old Testament. John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit to prepare a people for the advent of Christ; the Spirit came upon Mary to bring forth the Son of God; Zechariah prophesied under the anointing of the Spirit concerning "the horn of salvation" God had raised up; and Simeon, led by the Spirit, took the child Jesus and blessed God for His coming salvation.

The work of the Spirit in relation to Jesus and His mission is abundantly portrayed in the Gospels. At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit descended upon Him and empowered Him for the God-given task of His earthly mission. The Gospel of Luke places special emphasis on the Spirit's role in the life and ministry of Jesus. His ministry began just after His baptism and the descent of the Holy

**John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit to prepare a people for the advent of Christ; the Spirit came upon Mary to bring forth the Son of God; Zechariah prophesied under the anointing of the Spirit concerning "the horn of salvation" God had raised up; and Simeon, led by the Spirit, took the child Jesus and blessed God for His coming salvation.**

Spirit upon Him. With the coming of the Spirit, Jesus became the "Anointed One," also known as "the Messiah" or "the Christ." This anointing enabled Him to carry out His ministry and mission. Luke highlights the Spirit's unique influence on Jesus' ministry.

## The Holy Spirit: The Power against Devil

When Jesus began His ministry, He was filled with the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit. Luke writes, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14). He taught with great power (Lk. 4:15-22), healed the sick, and cast out demons from all who were oppressed (Lk. 4:31-41). Jesus explicitly states that the power behind His exorcisms was the Spirit: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28;



Luke 11:20). Jesus, then explains the power of the Spirit in him to overpower the satanic forces, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his house, his property is safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides the plunder" (Luke 11:21–22). He says this in the context of casting out a demon and total deliverance of a mute person (Luke 11:14). Jesus illustrates that unless the "strong man" (representing Satan and his forces) is defeated by "someone stronger" (Jesus himself), his "possessions" (people under his influence) cannot be freed. However, when someone stronger overpowers him, his possessions are plundered (Luke 11:21–22). Furthermore, the "strong man's house" in this context symbolically refers to a city, town,

**The Gospels point out that Jesus came to the world to conquer Satan's kingdom. Besides, Jesus sent His disciples out with the instruction: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Matt. 10:7–8). It is evident that deliverance from demonic spirits, like healing, is one of the attestations of the gospel of salvation.**

neighbourhood, or community. In the highly organized kingdom of darkness, a 'strongman' is often placed in control of such 'houses.' The 'goods' in the house are the people, often under the influence of the devil. Unless the devil is bound, it is impossible to free people from bondage.

The Gospels point out that Jesus came to the world to conquer Satan's kingdom. Besides, Jesus sent His disciples out with the instruction: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Matt. 10:7–8). It is evident that deliverance from demonic spirits, like healing, is one of the attestations of the gospel of salvation. When people are delivered, it serves as an extraordinary sign of God's power, confirming the message of new life in Christ. As stated in Mark 16: "These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons..." (v. 17), resulting in "confirming the message by the signs that accompanied it" (v. 20). When people witness the supernatural power of God in delivering the demon-

possessed, healing and other miracles, they accept the message of salvation.

Moreover, Jesus recognized Satan as the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31). After deceiving Adam in the Garden of Eden, Satan became the de facto ruler of the world and has since manifested great power. He is the reason many are not saved, as he blinds and hardens their hearts (2 Cor 4:4). Satan is the god and ruler of the evil systems and practices in the world. His goal is to prevent people from being saved through deceit and falsehood and numerous other evils. According to Ephesians 6:10-12, there are several categories of evil powers: rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. These evil powers are Satan's minions, bringing evil, violence, death, and other troubles to the world.

### The Power of the Spirit for Mission

The power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the ministry of Jesus alone. Jesus instructed His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem and promised that they would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5). He further assured them, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Why did Jesus ask His followers to wait for the Holy Spirit? The reason was that they needed the Spirit's power to be His witnesses. They could not effectively proclaim His message to the world without the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The moment the Holy Spirit descended in the Upper Room, the fearful apostles transformed into bold proclaimers of Christ's saving grace. The Spirit transformed them from being confined within the four walls of a room to people who turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). The power of the Holy Spirit enabled them to testify about Christ. Peter, "standing with the eleven," lifted his voice and addressed the crowd, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and

give ear to my words" (Acts 2:14). Here, Peter, an uneducated, common man—a fisherman—spoke as he had never spoken before. He addressed an assembly of devout Jews with authority that could only come from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Holy Spirit made a powerful and effective witness possible.

Besides, this witness occurred in an extremely challenging situation. Peter delivered his message to an audience

**The power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the ministry of Jesus alone. Jesus instructed His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem and promised that they would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5).**

that was not friendly and was deeply conservative in their beliefs. Yet, Peter boldly proclaimed that they had crucified Jesus. Remarkably, no one raised their voice against the message; instead, they readily repented of their sins, asking, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Undoubtedly, Peter's message was fully anointed by the Holy Spirit. It is clear that the coming of the Spirit enabled an ordinary human being, in a humanly impossible situation, to become a channel for the radical transformation of human lives. "Jews, devout men from

every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) suddenly realized and accepted their immense guilt for crucifying the Messiah God had sent. They were then baptized in the name of Jesus and joined the church. This amazing transformation could only have been made possible through the tremendous power of the Holy Spirit, who anointed and empowered a human witness to bring about such a change.

### Power of the Spirit in Cross-Cultural Mission

When persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, Philip went to a city in Samaria, where he "proclaimed to them the Christ" (Acts 8:5). The situation in Samaria was more difficult than what Peter had faced in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Jews generally viewed Samaritans as out-castes and untouchables and avoided them entirely, counting them to be outside of God's promises. The Samaritans, in turn, were equally antagonistic toward the Jews, especially those from Jerusalem. Therefore, Philip had to cross a wide cultural barrier to preach the gospel in Samaria. The challenge was further compounded by the fact that the Samaritans of the city were enchanted by an individual - Simon, a magician - whom they regarded as the very powerful: "They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the power of God that is called Great'" (Acts 8:10). It is evident that the people were under the influence of satanic forces through Simon the magician. This was truly a difficult mission field, and humanly speaking, it seemed impossible to reach this place with the gospel. From a human perspective, there was utterly no chance of success. Yet, "they believed Philip as he preached good news" (Acts 8:12).

How could the gospel penetrate the hearts and minds of these people so that they believed in Jesus? The answer is that Philip bore witness to Jesus and he did so in the power of the Holy Spirit, for he was a man "full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Through the anointing from "on high" (Luke 24:49), the miraculous salvation of the Samaritans took place.

### Power of the Spirit in Gentile/ Foreign Mission


A similar empowerment for ministry is described later in Acts, when Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Ananias, the disciple who ministered to Saul, was instructed by the Lord: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the

sake of my name" (Acts 9:15-16). After Saul (Paul) was filled with the Spirit, he "grew more and more powerful" (v. 22). Following his conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul immediately began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). His witness, empowered by the Spirit, was so effective that he "confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ" (v. 22).

Later in the second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-18:22), Paul, accompanied by Silas, Timothy, and Luke, was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel in Phrygia, Galatia, and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). However, through a night vision, they were redirected toward Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). Guided by the Spirit, they travelled for four hundred miles and reached Philippi (Acts 16:11-12). There, through Paul's preaching, Lydia became the first person to convert to Christianity. She and her household were baptized, becoming the first converts in Europe

(Acts 16:13-15). Subsequently, a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination was delivered (Acts 16:16-18), leading to the salvation of a jailor and his family (Acts 16:25-34). Indeed, it was the Holy Spirit who directed and empowered this missionary endeavour, thus Paul and his companion were able to establish a beautiful church in the city.

In a similar vein, in the city of Ephesus, Paul and his companions encountered a spiritual battle of enormous magnitude (Acts 19). Ephesus was a principal centre of magic in the ancient world, renowned for the temple of Diana, a hub of idol worship and evil practices. Many in the city were involved in witchcraft and other occult practices, manipulating supernatural power for their own ends. However, there was a powerful manifestation of the Spirit through Paul, and some disciples of John the Baptist were filled with the Spirit (v.6). In a strange event, some itinerant Jewish exorcists were attacked by a demon possessed man, resulting



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in the extolling of Jesus' name in the city (vv.13-17). Moreover, through Paul's missionary activities, many abandoned their practices and publicly burned their magic books. It is evident that many joined Paul and became Christians, leading to the establishment of the church in Ephesus.

### Power of the Spirit for Contemporary Mission

This truth still applies today. We cannot effectively preach the gospel or penetrate the hearts of those trapped in false teachings, under the grip of evil forces, or influenced by secular ideologies unless the Holy Spirit, both empowers us and softens the hearts of the listeners. The Spirit would bring power, and in that power, we are commanded to bear witness to the entire world. It is not merely energy that the Holy Spirit would provide us but the Spirit Himself is with us. The Holy Spirit would personally empower his people for the mission ahead, and Jesus'

authority would be with them. Luke emphasizes that we cannot succeed in Christ's mission without Spirit's power. Jesus had already set an example of this dependence on the Spirit in Luke's Gospel (Lk. 4:18).

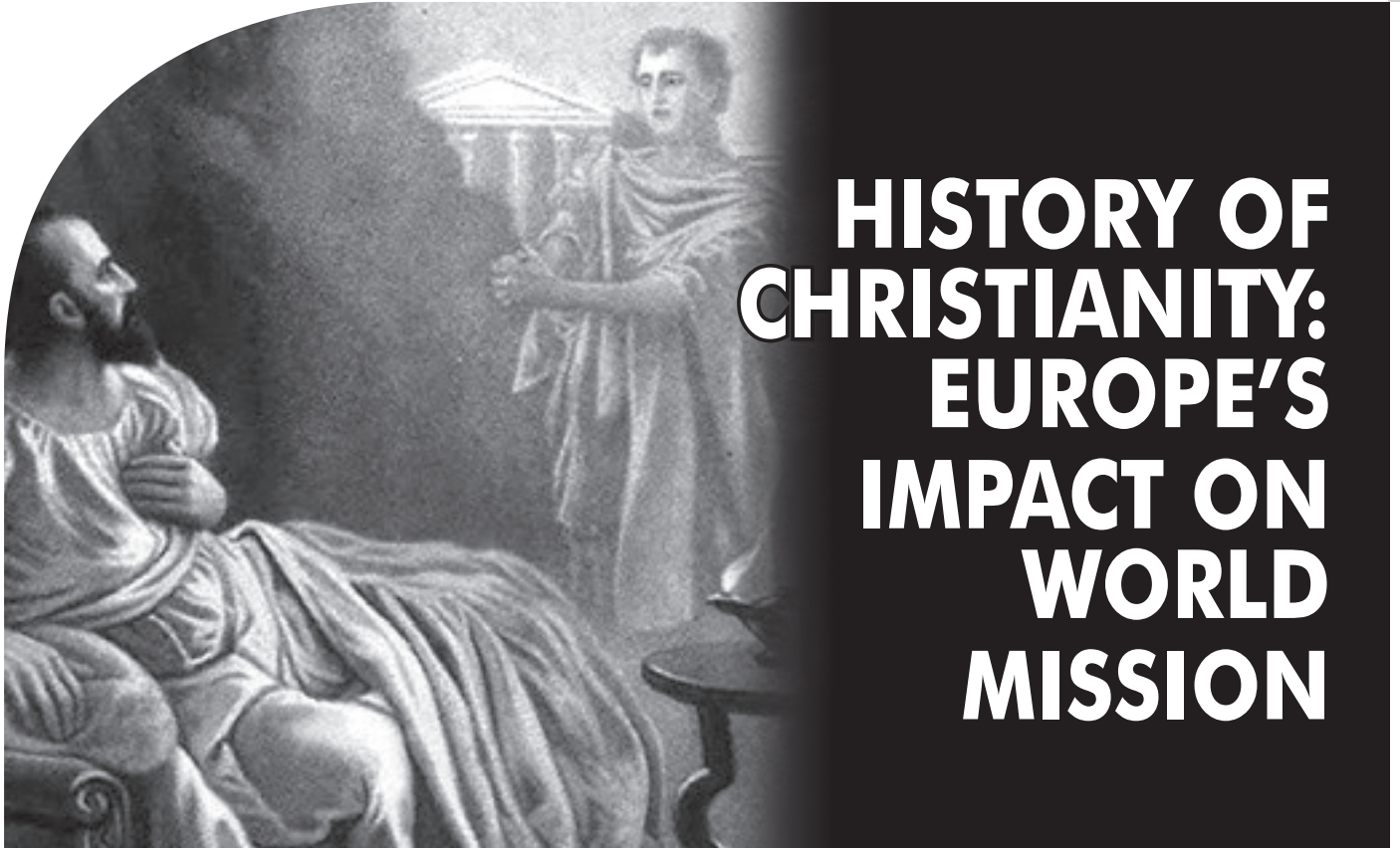
The biblical examples above clearly show that the Holy Spirit is a "missionary Spirit" and an "enabler of mission." This is clearly evident in the contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic context, where mission is carried out in the power of the Spirit. There is a renewed emphasis on the gift of the Spirit as the power for witnessing. Those who receive this gift become Christ's witnesses, and through their missionary activities, they impact others with God's presence and power. They bring healing, deliverance, and comfort to the suffering, drawing many into the kingdom of God.

In summary, wherever the Spirit comes upon people, they are empowered to move beyond themselves and become

witnesses for Christ. The Spirit enables missionaries to overcome obstacles to mission work, including satanic forces that oppose salvation. It is not only missionaries, even believers are empowered by the Spirit and with the authority of the Lord to bind the 'strongman.' By the Spirit's power and the Lord's authority, they participate in the ongoing outreach of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

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# HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY: EUROPE'S IMPACT ON WORLD MISSION



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**The** history of Christianity is a story of faith that transcends geographical, cultural, and temporal boundaries. At its heart lies the Great Commission—to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth—a call that has shaped the Church's mission from its earliest days. While Christianity emerged in the Middle East, its spread through Europe proved to be a crucial moment in the faith's evolution as a global movement. Europe not only became a central location for the development of Christian doctrine, worship, and organizational structures, but it also became the springboard for missionary efforts that would ultimately reach every continent. This article explores the impact of Europe on global missions in the history of Christianity, beginning with the preparations made for the advent of Christianity itself. With the Roman Empire establishing common languages, trade routes, and political stability across vast regions, the stage was set for the Christian message to be communicated widely. The New Testament book of Acts provides one of the earliest records of the spread of Christianity into Europe, particularly in Acts 16, where Paul receives a vision to "come over to Macedonia." This moment signaled a critical shift, directing the gospel westward and eventually establishing Europe as a significant hub of Christian thought, leadership, and missionary zeal. From this moment onward, Europe's influence on Christianity would grow. This article explores Europe's profound impact on the history of Christian missions, examining both the supportive structures and the challenges that emerged as the faith expanded globally.

## Preparing the World for the Advent of Christianity

The emergence of Christianity was influenced by the convergence of several factors in the Mediterranean world, laying the groundwork for its rapid expansion.



**a) Political Stability and the Pax Romana:**

The consolidation of the Roman Empire under the Pax Romana (27 B.C. - 180 A.D.) created a politically stable environment crucial for spreading new ideas, including Christianity. The Roman Road network allowed apostles and early missionaries to traverse vast distances safely. Paul, for example, traveled across these routes during his missionary journeys, benefiting from the legal protections afforded to Roman citizens, which helped facilitate the spread of Christianity.

**b) Greek Language and Hellenistic Culture:**

The spread of Hellenistic culture by Alexander the Great established Greek as the common language, providing a unifying medium for communication across the Mediterranean. The New Testament, written in Koine Greek, reached a broad audience, enhancing the accessibility of Christian teachings. Christian doctrines were also articulated using Hellenistic

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ideas, such as Paul’s address at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-31), where he framed his message to resonate with Greek philosophical concepts.

**c) Jewish Diaspora and Synagogue Networks:**

The Jewish diaspora formed a network of communities across the Roman Empire, establishing synagogues that offered venues for early Christian evangelism. Paul and other missionaries would begin their outreach in these synagogues, engaging both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, creating mixed communities that became the foundation of early churches. Jewish messianic expectations provided theological contexts that facilitated the acceptance of Jesus as the prophesied Messiah.

These preparatory factors

established the early infrastructure that enabled Christianity's expansion, with Europe becoming an increasingly significant focus.

## The Apostolic Era: A Foundation Laid (Acts 16)

The shift to European mission work was a defining moment in early Christianity, captured in Paul's second missionary journey. Initially, Paul and his companions intended to continue their ministry within Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), preaching and establishing churches among familiar populations. However, their plans were divinely redirected when Paul received a vision that would change the course of Christian history.

### a) The Macedonian Call: The Holy Spirit's Directive

In Acts 16:9, Paul receives a vision that changes the trajectory of Christian missions forever. In his vision, he sees a man from Macedonia pleading, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." This divine call was unmistakably from the Holy Spirit, directing Paul and Silas to enter new, uncharted territory for the gospel. Macedonia represented a unique cultural crossroads where Eastern and Western influences blended, making it a strategic location for the spread of the gospel. God was orchestrating His plan to bring the message of Christ into Europe, where it would take root and ultimately transform societies and cultures for centuries to come.

### b) European Evangelism Begins: The Mission to Philippi

Responding to the Macedonian call, Paul and his team set sail, ultimately arriving in Philippi, a

leading city of Macedonia and a Roman colony. Philippi, unlike some other places in the East, was strongly influenced by Roman customs, culture, and governance. Preaching here marked a significant shift as the gospel began to reach the Gentile world in Europe. This mission was no small feat—Philippi would become a foothold for the gospel in the Western world. It was here that Paul encountered Lydia, a God-fearing woman, whose conversion and hospitality laid the groundwork for the first European church. Paul's approach to evangelism in Philippi showed sensitivity to cultural distinctions, adapting his message without compromising the gospel's truth. Through baptisms, discipleship, and the establishment of a community of believers, the Philippian church was born, later becoming a source of encouragement and support for Paul and his missionary journeys.

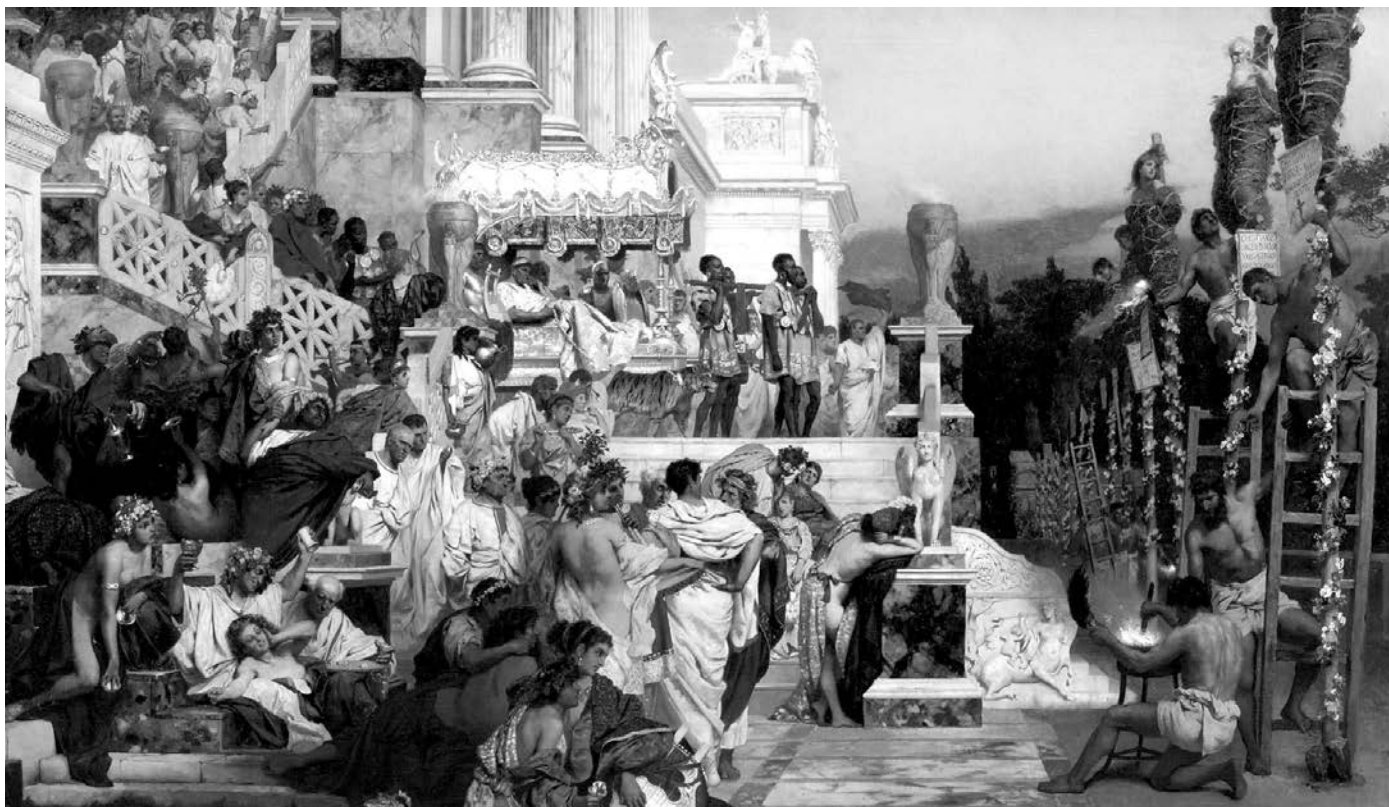
### c) Impact on Subsequent Missions: A Model for Cross-Cultural Evangelism

The Macedonian call and the successful mission in Philippi established a powerful model for future missionary work. Paul's willingness to cross cultural boundaries underscored the gospel's inclusiveness and adaptability across diverse contexts. His experience in Philippi illustrated the necessity of trusting the Holy Spirit's guidance in missions and highlighted the church's role in every believer's life. The Philippian church's strong faith and commitment demonstrated the viability of planting Christian communities in various cultural settings. The success in Europe underscored the global potential for missions and encouraged early Christians to see every nation as a mission field. This foundation, laid in the apostolic era, opened the doors for countless missionaries, past and present, who would continue the work of spreading the gospel across cultures and continents, fulfilling Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations.

The Apostolic Era, as exemplified in Acts 16, reminds us of the importance of following the Spirit's lead, adapting to new cultural landscapes, and recognizing that the gospel is for all people, everywhere. Through obedience and resilience, Paul and his companions laid a lasting foundation that would inspire generations to carry the message of Christ far beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Judea.

## The Early Church: Expansion and Persecution

The early spread of Christianity was significantly influenced by the Roman Empire's extensive road network. These well-constructed roads facilitated travel and communication, allowing apostles, missionaries, and early Christians to journey far beyond Jerusalem. Notably, the Apostle Paul utilized these routes to plant churches and encourage believers, connecting diverse communities and promoting an exchange of ideas. This accessibility was crucial for the rapid growth of Christianity, enabling it to reach both Jews and Gentiles while fostering unity among early Christian communities despite geographical distances. However, persecution also played a critical role in the church's expansion. Intended to suppress Christianity, various emperors' persecutions ironically fueled its growth. Nero's brutal treatment of Christians, including horrific acts such as burning them alive, inadvertently aroused sympathy and curiosity among non-Christians. Similarly, the courage of martyrs inspired conversions, with figures like Domitian exiling Christian leaders and solidifying theological clarity among followers. Trajan adopted a pragmatic approach, punishing only publicly accused Christians, creating a tense atmosphere that reinforced believers' unity and resolve. The empire-wide persecution initiated by Decius, which forced Christians to sacrifice to Roman gods, tested the community's strength, resulting in policies for restoring those who renounced their faith under



duress. Diocletian's "Great Persecution," which sought to eradicate Christianity through the destruction of churches and martyrdom, paradoxically strengthened Christian networks and deepened followers' commitment. As Christians fled to safer regions, they carried the gospel with them, attracting new converts and leaving a legacy of unwavering faith that ultimately contributed to Christianity's establishment as a dominant faith in the Roman Empire.

The witness of early Christian martyrs significantly fueled the faith's spread. Figures like Stephen, who forgave his killers while being stoned, and James, whose steadfastness inspired even his executioner, exemplified the transformative power of faith. Polycarp's resolute stance before execution and the bravery of women like Perpetua and Felicitas broke societal norms, demonstrating that faith transcended gender and status. Tertullian's phrase, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," encapsulates how these

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sacrifices not only reinforced existing believers but also attracted new followers to Christianity. The stories of martyrs circulated widely, providing hope and resilience, and drawing interest to a faith strong enough to face death.

Thus, the early church's expansion was driven by the Roman road system, strengthened by persecution, and emboldened by martyrdom, laying a foundation that would carry Christianity beyond its initial borders. The resilience of these early believers serves as a reminder of the power of faith to overcome adversity and the enduring impact of those who stand firm in their convictions.

## **The Reformation and Counter-Reformation: New Approaches to Mission**

The Protestant Reformation

marked a vital shift in Christian missions, emphasizing personal faith, scriptural authority, and cultural engagement. A key aspect of this movement was the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, exemplified by Martin Luther's German translation and William Tyndale's English version. This democratization of Scripture empowered individuals to engage with their faith, fostering literacy and education. New missionary organizations, notably the Moravian Church, emerged, prioritizing evangelism and education in regions like the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Missionaries focused on preaching and establishing schools while translating religious texts, cultivating informed and self-sustaining Christian communities. The innovative strategies and zeal of this era laid the groundwork for a global Protestant presence, as the Reformation's influence extended beyond Europe, leading to independent churches and fostering local ownership of the faith. Overall, the Reformation marked a significant departure from traditional evangelism, setting the stage for modern missionary practices and contributing significantly to the global spread of Christianity. In contrast, the Counter-Reformation was the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation, bringing renewed focus on evangelism and reform within Catholicism. The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, played a crucial role in this movement. The Jesuits were known for their rigorous education, discipline, and adaptability in missionary work, establishing missions in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. They sought to blend Christian

teachings with respect for local cultures, as exemplified by missionaries like St. Francis Xavier, who traveled extensively to share the gospel in India, Japan, and other parts of Asia. The Jesuits' innovative approach revitalized Catholic missions and significantly contributed to the establishment of Catholicism in various regions of the non-European world.

## The Colonial Era: Missionary Zeal and Imperialism

The Colonial Era was characterized by a complex relationship between missionary zeal and imperialism, as European colonial powers often intertwined their expansionist ambitions with efforts to spread Christianity. European colonial powers frequently used missionary work as a justification for their imperial expansion, portraying missions as benevolent efforts to bring civilization and Christianity to "heathen" lands. Missionaries accompanied explorers and settlers, establishing schools, hospitals, and churches meant to demonstrate European superiority and promote Western values. This alliance between colonialism and missionary activity often led to the suppression of indigenous cultures and religions. Colonialism had a dual impact on mission work. While colonial governments facilitated the spread of Christianity by providing resources and protection for missionaries, tensions arose between missionaries and local populations. In some cases, the association of missionaries with colonial rule bred mistrust and hostility toward Christianity, as indigenous peoples perceived it as part of a broader imperial agenda. In response to the complexities of colonialism, indigenous churches began to emerge, challenging the dominance of European missionaries. These churches were formed by local believers adapting Christianity to their cultural contexts and establishing their own forms of worship and governance. This shift highlighted the agency of local populations in shaping their religious identities.

## The Modern Era: Ecumenical Cooperation and Indigenous Leadership

The Modern Era has been defined by significant shifts in Christianity, characterized by ecumenical cooperation, the rise of indigenous leadership, and a host of challenges and opportunities shaping mission work today. The 20th century saw a notable increase in cooperation among Christian denominations, driven by a desire for unity amid social and political upheavals. Ecumenical movements emphasized shared beliefs and collaborative efforts to address global issues, fostering a more inclusive approach to mission. In recent decades, there has been a significant shift toward greater indigenous leadership within mission work. Indigenous Christians increasingly assert their cultural identities and theological perspectives, taking on leadership roles within their communities. This empowerment reflects a growing recognition of local voices in shaping mission strategies, leading to vibrant indigenous expressions of faith.

## Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century

As Christianity navigates the complexities of the 21st century, it faces several challenges and opportunities.

### a) Secularization

Secularization is a prominent challenge facing Christianity in the 21st century, particularly in Western societies. As people increasingly identify as non-religious or agnostic, traditional church attendance and engagement in religious practices have declined. This trend poses a significant challenge for churches, which must grapple with diminishing influence in a society that prioritizes individualism and skepticism over institutional faith. In this context, Christians are tasked with articulating the relevance of their faith in contemporary life, seeking innovative ways to engage with a culture that often views religion

with indifference or hostility.

## b) Religious Pluralism

The rise of religious pluralism presents both challenges and opportunities for Christianity. In an increasingly multicultural world, Christians encounter a diverse array of beliefs and practices that can lead to theological tensions. The challenge lies in navigating these differences while maintaining a commitment to the core tenets of the faith. However, religious pluralism also offers opportunities for interfaith dialogue and collaboration, encouraging Christians to engage respectfully with others, learn from different traditions, and work together on shared social justice issues. Striking a balance between witness and respect becomes crucial as Christians seek to live out their faith in a pluralistic society.

## c) Global Poverty and Inequality

Global poverty and inequality remain pressing issues that demand a proactive Christian response. Many communities around the world suffer from extreme poverty, lack of access to basic healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. This reality calls Christians to take action, advocating for the marginalized and engaging in mission work that addresses systemic inequalities. The challenge is to not only provide immediate relief but also to work toward long-term solutions that empower individuals and communities. Churches must focus on social justice initiatives that promote dignity, equity, and the flourishing of all people, reflecting the gospel's call to love and serve those in need.

## d) Technological Advancements

While technological advancements offer new tools for evangelism and community building, they also present challenges for the church. The rapid pace of technological change requires churches to adapt their strategies for outreach and engagement. Social media, online platforms, and digital

communication can enhance connectivity and broaden reach, but they can also lead to issues such as misinformation, digital divide, and the depersonalization of community. Furthermore, technology can contribute to the isolation of individuals, even as it enables virtual connections. The challenge for churches is to harness technology effectively while ensuring that it enhances, rather than replaces, genuine community and discipleship.

In summary, the challenges facing Christianity in the 21st century—secularization, religious pluralism, global poverty and inequality, and technological advancements—demand thoughtful engagement and innovative responses from the church. As Christians navigate these complexities, they are called to adapt their mission strategies, articulate the relevance of their faith, and embody the transformative love of Christ in a rapidly changing world.

## Critiques and Re-evaluation of Mission Strategies

The postcolonial period prompted a critical reevaluation of mission strategies employed by European churches. As nations gained independence and as awareness of cultural imperialism increased, many European churches began to recognize the need for a more respectful and partnership-oriented approach to missions. This transition involved acknowledging the historical complexities of colonialism and the unintended consequences that often-accompanied missionary efforts. In response, European churches and organizations have increasingly sought to establish genuine partnerships with indigenous churches and communities, focusing on collaboration rather than control. This new approach emphasizes cultural respect, mutual learning, and shared leadership, allowing for a more equitable relationship between sending and receiving communities. By valuing local knowledge and empowering indigenous

leaders, European missions aim to foster authentic expressions of Christianity that honor the cultural contexts in which they are situated. This evolution reflects a broader understanding of missions as a two-way process, where both parties contribute to the enrichment of the Christian faith globally.

## Conclusion

Europe's role in the global mission of Christianity is a legacy marked by both profound influence and complex challenges. From the Roman Empire's foundational infrastructure and stability, which enabled early Christian expansion, to the powerful waves of missionary outreach sparked by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Europe became a dynamic center for Christian thought and evangelism. The Colonial Era added further dimensions, intertwining missionary zeal with imperial ambitions, which led to both growth and conflict in the spread of Christianity. In the modern and contemporary periods, Europe's mission legacy has evolved, fostering ecumenical cooperation and supporting the rise of indigenous leadership in global Christian movements. Despite facing challenges like secularization, the impact of Europe on Christian missions continues to shape how the gospel is shared and understood across diverse cultures, illustrating the enduring global significance of its missionary contributions. ●

# Fasting Prayer, D. John Daniel, SAIACS

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