

## Article of the Month – May 2012

### Missiological Observations in the NT (10) – 2 Timothy

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Paul constantly prayed for Timothy.<sup>1</sup> Especially now that he was in prison, knowing he would not come out again, the success of his 'son's' ministry became even more important to him. Do we pray for mission colleagues as fervently as for our own ministries?

Paul's tears might be about Timothy's ministry in Ephesus where he faced opposition, and seemingly had difficulty operating his gifts.<sup>2</sup> Paul repeatedly encouraged him to join him in the suffering for the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> Paying that price may have been hard for

him.<sup>4</sup> Timothy, used to work in Paul's team, possibly found it difficult to work alone.

The verses 'fan the gift into flame', 'God didn't give us a spirit of timidity', 'do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord' and 'join with me in suffering'<sup>5</sup> suggest that Timothy was not as bold as Paul and may have felt inferior.<sup>6</sup> The encouragement to do the work of an evangelist<sup>7</sup> suggests that he lacked in that area. Was this because 'all ... in ... Asia had already heard the Word of the Lord', or because Paul had preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum?<sup>8</sup> Did Timothy consider the Great Commission as already finished? Did he forget that there were still 'regions beyond'<sup>9</sup> to evangelize?

Then we find a beautiful example of member care.<sup>10</sup> Onesiphorus may have been one of the Ephesian house church leaders. He desired to bless missionaries with whatever they needed: physically, spiritually or emotionally. He provided such refreshment when Paul was present, but even travelled as far as Rome to ensure that he was well cared for. These verses teach us that: missionaries need member care ('he helped me'); the Lord rewards it ('show mercy, because...'); member care persons identify with workers ('not ashamed'); it should happen regularly ('often'); member care people sacrifice for it ('he searched hard'); they persevere ('until he found me'); member care costs time and money.

Paul not only evangelized and planted churches, but also recruited missionaries, e.g. Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, etc. He set the example that one should not only minister himself – which *adds* fruit – but also encourage others to do so, which *multiplies* fruit. When he wrote 'the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 1:3b

<sup>2</sup> 1:4a; 1 Tim. 4:12a; 1:18; 4:14,15; 2 Tim. 1:6-8a; 4:5

<sup>3</sup> 4:8b; 2:3; 3:11,12

<sup>4</sup> In 3:11 Paul reminds Timothy of what happened, with regard to persecution, in Acts 13 & 14

<sup>5</sup> 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. 4:12a

<sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. 4:5

<sup>8</sup> Acts 19:10 and Rom. 15:19 respectively

<sup>9</sup> 15:23,24; 2 Cor. 10:16

<sup>10</sup> 2 Tim. 1:16-18

things you heard me say ... entrust to *reliable* men, ... *qualified* to teach *others*’,<sup>11</sup> he also pointed to church mobilization and personnel recruitment for local evangelism and cross-cultural *missions*.

Paul gives three analogies with missions ministry.<sup>12</sup> *First*, about a soldier he says that he should not be involved in civilian affairs, but focus on pleasing his commander. Too many missionaries have to become involved in civilian affairs, i.e. in a secular job, because their churches insufficiently support them. *Second*, an athlete should ‘compete according to the rules’. Many rules can be broken in missionary practice, e.g. building one’s own empire,<sup>13</sup> taking credit for ministerial success<sup>14</sup> and abusing the ministry for financial gain.<sup>15</sup> In other words, things *taken* instead of graciously *granted by the Lord*. *Third*, a farmer should be the first to receive his share of the crops. This is often understood as receiving a heavenly reward, but it may also indicate a reasonable *material* reward.<sup>16</sup>

Paul says that the Word is not chained.<sup>17</sup> This is true in a spiritual<sup>18</sup> *and* in a physical sense: he was chained but his co-workers were not, and thanks to his vision to multiply his fruit by recruiting colleagues, the Word still spread freely through *their* ministry.

Some of Paul’s co-workers – Demas, and possibly Phygellus and Hermogenes – had given in to temptations,<sup>19</sup> which were strong in Rome’s secular, urban environment.

In spite of the fact that Crescens, Titus and Tychicus had left for other areas and Luke was with Paul, he nevertheless missed them as friends, and asked for more company.<sup>20</sup> It is pleasant to see that he asked for John Mark, whom he had not wanted to work with anymore, after Mark deserted the ministry 18 years earlier,<sup>21</sup> but who had now been restored to it. Tychicus, another faithful servant<sup>22</sup> was sent on several missions by Paul, carrying his letters to the churches. He had travelled with Paul on the latter’s last trip to Jerusalem;<sup>23</sup> was sent from Rome to Ephesus during Paul’s first imprisonment<sup>24</sup> and – probably during the same trip – to Colossae, with Onesimus<sup>25</sup> to deliver Paul’s letter to Philemon. He may have visited Titus on Crete.<sup>26</sup> Paul’s version of mission logistics!

‘Alexander the metal worker did ... great ... harm’. Paul warns Timothy for him.<sup>27</sup> Is it right to warn colleagues against opponents on the mission field? Jesus warned His disciples against

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<sup>11</sup> 2:2 (italics mine)

<sup>12</sup> 2:4-7

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Acts 8:13-24: Simon, formerly sorcerer, now Christian, wanted power – but received a rebuke instead. The principle comes out also in Philip. 1:15,17a: ‘preaching Christ ... out of envy and rivalry’

<sup>14</sup> Is. 42:8 ‘I will not give My glory to another’

<sup>15</sup> 1 Tim. 6:5b ‘... who think that godliness is a means to financial gain’

<sup>16</sup> This is in line with the preceding v. 4 as well as with 5:17,18. See also 1 Cor. 9:7-14

<sup>17</sup> 2 Tim. 2:9

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Is. 55:11 & Eccl. 11:1

<sup>19</sup> 2 Tim. 4:10; 1:15

<sup>20</sup> 4:10-12

<sup>21</sup> Acts 15:37,38

<sup>22</sup> 2 Tim. 4:12

<sup>23</sup> Acts 20:4

<sup>24</sup> Eph. 6:21

<sup>25</sup> Col. 4:7-9

<sup>26</sup> Tit. 3:12

<sup>27</sup> 2 Tim. 4:14,15. This Alexander may have caused the riot in Ephesus 12 years earlier (Acts 19), but was not likely the one Paul mentions in 1 Tim. 1:20. The first A. was not a Christian, the latter, though an apostate, was

the Pharisees.<sup>28</sup> Is it wrong to say ‘the Lord will repay him ...’? No, since revenge belongs to the Lord.<sup>29</sup> Yet, we may ask forgiveness for our enemies.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Matt. 16:6,11b,12

<sup>29</sup> Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19; Hebr. 10:30

<sup>30</sup> Luke 23:24; Acts 7:60