

FAITH PROMISE MISSIONS - A FAITHLESS FALLACY

Faith Promise Missions Giving is a concept taught in many Baptist Churches. It is a method by which the churches raise money to give to missionaries who desire to go to a mission field but cannot afford to go of their own accord. Basically, missionaries go from church to church seeking financial support to help them get to the mission field. These churches typically hold annual "mission conferences" where church members make pledges in advance as to how much they will give in the next year in support of missionaries. These pledges are then taken, and based on the pledges, the pastors (and maybe the people) decide which missionaries they want to support and how much they want to send to each missionary. This "faith promise methodology WILL be shown to be biblically wrong. Additionally, this method is most certainly NOT taught in the bible.

Enabling people to go around the world to preach the gospel to "all nations" is an honorable endeavor. Individuals who desire to spend their lives to reach the lost in other countries surely have a love for God and a love for the lost. But the methodology currently employed is not taught in the bible, it is far from efficient, and it wastes vast amounts of resources that could no doubt be used in a better way to spread the gospel. Under the Faith Promise "System", Missionaries typically spend 2 or 3 or more years traveling back and forth across the country trying to raise support to get to the field. And then ... many times ... they have to return years later to seek more support as churches fail to give what they promised or as the cost of living continues to rise. Surely God has a better way. Indeed ... HE does ... please continue reading:

To address Faith Promise Giving, the premise(s) from which this teaching comes from must first be addressed.

Mat 28:19 -20 Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

This verse is used in the churches to teach Christians that they are responsible to teach and preach the gospel to the whole world. It has been taught in many churches that, since we as individuals, cannot personally go to every nation to preach the gospel; we must send missionaries to do the job for us. In other words, according to what is currently being taught, Christians should pay someone to do what Jesus commanded ALL Christians to do. **Or to put it even more bluntly, it is OK for Christians to not fulfill their own "personal responsibility" if they can get someone else to do it for them.** This philosophy is completely contrary to any bible teaching. God has never said it was OK for anyone to not obey his commands if we can get someone else to obey them for us. (and even though Christ died for our sins, God still expects all Christians to "obey".) This statement alone disproves the current teachings about missions and missionaries. In reality this paragraph makes the rest of this writing unnecessary.

There is no doubt that Matthew 28:19-20 commands everyone to teach and preach the gospel. There is no doubt that this command is given to every person that is saved. (though some say this command is limited to just the Jews) There is no doubt that Christians have a personal responsibility to preach the gospel to ALL "nations." But does this verse say that Christians need to send missionaries to foreign fields to fulfill a responsibility that is given to every individual Christian? Does it mean that every Christian is required to go to every country in the world in order to teach every nation? **It does not!**

If Matthew 28:19-20 was intended to mean that each individual is supposed to travel the world to "teach all nations", then that would mean that each individual Christian would be required to travel to every nation in the world. This quite obviously is not, nor could it ever be the intent of this verse. Such a command is physically and financially impossible for virtually everyone in the world. So then, what is Matthew 28:18-20 really talking about?

Matt 28:18 -All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Jesus is speaking to His disciples and tells them that He (Jesus) has the power and authority to command them. He then says, **"Go ye, therefore..."** Again, it is a personal responsibility for every Christian. **"And teach"** The Greek word for "teach" is "math-ayt-yoo'-o" which means (depending upon its usage) both to be a disciple and to make disciples. In order to make disciples, one must first be a disciple. This fact of actually "being a disciple" is largely overlooked during the times churches attempt to raise money for missionaries. And yet it is just as important. Many, if not most, churches fail to emphasize being "good disciples". Most churches primary focus is making disciples. Making disciples is certainly a great emphasis to have but if those in the church are not first "good disciples" themselves, it is

unlikely that they will succeed in making disciples ... even if they support missionaries.

Consider what would happen if a bible was given to someone who knew absolutely nothing about the bible and asked that person to read the bible. Then, after that person reads the bible, ask that person to explain, based on the bible, how God intended men to win this lost world to Christ. It is absolutely certain that the answer given would NOT be "faith promise missions or anything that even remotely resembled such a system". In considering this topic, one must ask: 1. Why is there no command given in the bible to "send men" to the mission field? 2. Why is there no biblical example of any man "raising support before he goes to the mission field? 3. Why is there no biblical example of a specific person choosing a specific nation to go to in order to serve as a missionary to that nation? 4. **Most importantly, why is it that 4 to 6 men were able to evangelize the then known world in a matter of a few years ... but today ... with thousands of missionaries on the field for over 100 years ... the world as a whole ... still seems to lie in darkness?** Is it God's fault or is it that "man's" plan to evangelize the world is at fault? The answer should be obvious to the reader.

Getting back to Matthew 28:19-20, consider the phrase "**all nations**" in verse 19. The Greek word for "nations" is "ethnos" and it means race or ethnicity. In other words, "**All nations** **IS NOT talking about Geography.** **All nations** **IS talking about Genealogy.**" The word "nations" is talking about evangelizing all races of people. It is NOT talking about going into every country of the world.

In Matthew 10:6 Jesus told his disciples to only go "**to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" At that point in time, the apostles were NOT allowed to preach to the Gentiles. But now, in Matthew 28, Jesus is removing this restriction and He is basically saying, "preach to everyone, both Jew and Gentiles. In fact, the word "ethnos" is translated "Gentile(s)" 93 out of 164 times. Thus the "great commissions" says that individuals are responsible to teach and preach to people of any and every race, religion or creed. Christians are not to be prejudice, especially when it comes to teaching and preaching the gospel. The gospel was and is still meant for everyone in the world. There is no evidence that Matthew 28:18-19 means or is intended to mean that anyone is required to travel to a different part of the world to preach the gospel. It also obviously does NOT mean that we are required to send missionaries to fulfill a command that God has commanded all of His disciples, including US, to do. (Note: The parallel passage in Luke also uses the Greek word "ethnos")

Mark 16:15- And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** Some might say that this verse commands all Christians to travel the world to preach the gospel because the Greek word for "world" in Mark 16:15 is "kosmos" which literally means "world." But John 3:16 also uses the same word "kosmos" when it says: "**for God so loved the world...**" So, this question must be asked: In John 3:16, did God love the physical "world", or did God love all of the people in the world? The context and intent of both verses is very clear. Jesus was talking about a "world" of people and not the physical world. Again, in this context, He was talking about genealogy and NOT geography.

The following verse is also used to convince Christians to give to missionary endeavors: **Acts 1:8** "**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**"

It has been taught that this verse shows us that we should go into the entire world. But that is not what this verse says. In fact, Acts 1:8 is not even a command, it is a prophecy! The text of Acts 1:8 must be considered in context with the question asked in Acts 1:6: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? " Verse 8 is the answer to the question in verse 6. In verse 8, Jesus does NOT tell his disciples to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or to the uttermost parts of the world. Essentially, this verse only says that the disciples, who were with Jesus when he spoke these words, **would be witnesses** "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Again, Acts 1:8 is a prophecy and not a command. History shows that this prophecy was fulfilled by the apostles.

Now, the primary bible text that seems to be used the most to teach the "faith promise" missions system is found in 2 Corinthians 8. 2Corinthians 8:1-3- Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were willing of themselves...* "

This portion of scripture is said (by some) to teach that Christians are to "give more than they can afford." One

illustration this writer was given basically says that the tithe comes first, (the tithe is also "falsely taught as being required in many churches) then offerings,(which includes faith promise), and then the believer is to use whatever is left to pay the bills and put food on the table. It has also been taught that if the tithe and offerings leave you without enough to cover your regular obligations, then just trust God for it. While this sounds good and "spiritual", in reality it is pure "heresy" and it certainly is NOT taught in 2 Corinthians 8 or anywhere else in the bible. This **heresy** is taught based on the phrase in verse 3: "beyond their power".

Read 2 Corinthians 8:3. What was "beyond their power?" The thing that was beyond their power was not the amount that they gave but their **willingness** to give. It was not their faith or their financial ability to give. The people's financial situation had nothing to do with how much they promised to give. Nowhere in this verse or in any other verse did anyone commit to give more than what they had or thought they might have in the future. Paul simply stated that "their willingness to give" was beyond their power. A lot of Christians are willing to do a lot of things but they are not always able to do them. A person may be willing to give a million dollars to a good Godly cause but if that person only has ten dollars, then only ten dollars can be given. It is beyond the power of any person to give anything to anyone because without God given faith, (and grace) all men (and women) are all selfish and self-willed. Only God can cause or encourage one to be willing to give anything to anyone. Additionally, in 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, there is no indication that the people committed to give any particular amount at that time. To say otherwise is to read into the scripture something that is clearly not there. God never asked anyone to promise to give more than what they have. The widow woman in Luke 21:2 gave all that she had. The widow of Zarephath was asked to give her last remnant of food. The church in Acts 4 sold all that they had and gave. But, nowhere does bible command or ask anyone to commit to give anything that they do not have. In support of this statement, consider the following verses:

2Corinthians 8:11-12 "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, **so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.** For if there be first a willing mind, **it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.**" Notice how Paul talks about the "readiness to will." Again, Giving is about willingness. It is obvious that the church here had promised to give. But the phrase "out of that which ye have" and the phrase "it is accepted according to that a man hath" makes it perfectly clear that no specific amount was previously specified for this offering. God accepts a person's willingness to give, and when the time for the offering actually comes, God expects one to willingly give of what one has, especially if a previous commitment to give was made. (See Numbers 30:2) Verse 14 says, "that "your abundance may be a supply for their want." Again, the people gave from what they had. This next statement is amazingly miraculous: At this point in time the Corinthians had an "**abundance.**" **But in the year prior they were in deep poverty. (2 Cor 8:2) But now, they were in abundance...Glory to God:** Is it possible that **God provided abundance because** that even though they were in "**deep poverty**", **they were willing to give** a year prior?)

Consider the following bible verses (and comments) about giving:

Exodus 25:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering." Again, in this instance, God did not force anyone to give anything. They offered "willingly. See Exodus 35:21-29

Deuteronomy 16:17 –"Every man ***shall give*** as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee." Here it is **commanded** to give from what God has already provided. There is no command for men to promise something they do not have.

1 Corinthians 16:2 –"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." It cannot be clearer. None of these verses even imply that we are to give money that we do not have or cannot afford. In fact, in regards to offerings, these verses seem to teach that the people gave out their "abundance."

No one can possibly know how much money one will have to give in a year. One may have millions in the bank today, and be broke tomorrow. Pro 27:1 –"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." It is not wise to make a promise that one is not fairly certain one can keep.

This is not to say that it is wrong to make commitment to give a specific amount at some time in the future. People do this all the time when they borrow money to buy a house or a car. The point is that a commitment for a specific amount is not taught in any of the previously quoted passages or in any passage in the bible. To teach

the current system of Faith Promise Giving is contrary to what the bible teaches about giving. In fact, in verse 8 of this same chapter, Paul says, "I speak not by commandment." If God puts it in ones heart to make a commitment for the future, then one should make that commitment. But, at the very least, it should be based on what one currently has (or earns) and not on what one thinks what may happen in the future. And even then, one should be very sure that God is in it because "Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." (Ecclesiastes 5:5) (See also Deuteronomy 23:21-23)

This writing is not intended to minimize giving or the exercise of faith in giving. "Giving" is a New Testament command and faith is important in every aspect of the Christian life including giving. But making promises for specific future amounts based on something you may or may not have is not faith. In many cases it would be considered presumptuous. It cannot be unequivocally stated that promising a specific amount for a future offering is wrong, but it also cannot be unequivocally stated that this practice is right. Many people make similar promises when they buy a house or when they buy something using a credit card. Is this wrong? Is it right? **The answer depends on whether or not it was done in faith.** The point is: the current methodology being taught in churches is not taught in the bible. The verses being used to teach this method are taken out of context, misinterpreted & misapplied.

It is certain that "giving" should be an important part of every Christian's life. It is evident that faith should play a key role in giving for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin". (Romans 14:23) It is also clear that giving should be "sacrificial." Jesus says that the widow who gave two mites gave more than all of the others. Why? Because she gave "all". **But, Jesus never condemned the others for giving out of their abundance.** Some may say His condemnation is implied in the context of the passage. And maybe it is. Or maybe God did not tell the others to give "all". (See Mark 12:42-44) For a person with weak faith, it is sacrificial just to give out of abundance. For others, faith is exercised only when giving requires a great sacrifice. It has already been shown that, ultimately, what pleases God in a Christian's giving, is the "willingness" and the "faith", and the "obedience" exercised in giving. "To obey is better than sacrifice". (1 Samuel 15:22) The church in 2 Corinthians 8 was first willing, and then a year later they obeyed.

Finally, in regards to faith promise giving, many times, it seems to be implied by teachers and preachers that the offerings given in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 were for the apostle Paul's missionary work. (Philippians 4:16) **It was not.** In fact, the offerings were given to Paul and Titus (2 Corinthians 8:4, 5, 16, 24) so that they could deliver it to Jerusalem to supply the "want of the saints." (2 Corinthians 9:12) This fact leads to the second topic of this discussion.

The current methodology for getting missionaries to field cannot be found anywhere in the bible. And while many would say that it is not necessarily wrong, it most certainly is not the way it was done in the bible. The current method is laborious, time consuming and wasteful. In addressing this issue, the issue of "teaching all nations" must be reconsidered.

It has already been shown that "all nations" is talking about ethnic backgrounds or races of people. It is not talking about different countries or locations. **Since this is true, is it even necessary or required to send missionaries to the field?** There is not a single mandate given in the bible that commands churches to send out missionaries. There is only one example shown in the bible (after Christ's Resurrection) where men (Acts 13) were sent out to preach the gospel.

Many teach that The book of Acts is a "transitional book". The Gospels precede it. In the gospels, the LORD Himself spoke and lived according to heavenly precepts and principles. The epistles follow the book of Acts, is where the writers lay down more principles and precepts for the Church and for individuals to follow. The book of Acts is essentially a history of the early church. **It is NOT a doctrinal book.** It has been said that, as a rule, the book of Acts should not be used to try to establish principles and precepts to follow because it is a transitional book. That being said, and since the only example in the bible of Missionaries being sent out is in the book of Acts, that one example will be examined here.

In the book of Acts, Chapter 13 gives the account of Paul and Barnabas being sent out to preach the gospel. In verse 3 of this chapter "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." What work were they called to? ... Acts 9:15 - "But the Lord said unto him, **Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.**" Paul was called to preach Jesus to the Gentiles, to the kings and to the Jews. There is no indication of when Barnabas

was called or what he was called to do except the one given in Acts 13. Verse 5 says Paul and Barnabas were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost."

1. There is no doubt that God intended Paul to do what he did. But there is also no doubt that, in context, there is absolutely no indication that God expected or commanded churches or other men to follow this example. Therefore, is it not possible that Paul and Barnabas (and maybe Silas and Mark) were "transitional" missionaries with a special calling for the purpose of "establishing" (organizing) the NEWlocal church? If this were not true, then why aren't there any other examples or commands given to send gospel preachers around the world to establish local New Testament Churches? We find several examples of men being sent to assist and encourage existing churches. We would call them evangelists. But there are no other examples in the bible of men being sent out as missionaries to establish churches.
2. The current methodology of getting missionaries to field has already been described. This method, in most cases, takes years and countless resources before the missionary actually even sets foot on the field to begin the work of evangelizing. Then in many cases, the missionary spends even more time, training with another missionary on the same or nearby field. This time is spent learning the language, learning the customs of the land, and getting established on the local economy. Finally, after potentially 3-5 years, sometimes longer, the missionary begins the attempt to "establish" a local church in the area he has gone to. This is how "missionary" work is commonly practiced today.

Now, let us look at how the Apostle Paul did it. Look in Acts 9:19 and Galatians 1:17. In these verses Paul is found abiding with the brethren many days and then in Arabia for up to three years. There is no account given in the bible about what Paul did during this time. Most scholars agree that Paul spent this time preparing for "the ministry." The next time the Apostle Paul is mentioned is in Acts 13 where he and Barnabas are sent out by the Holy Ghost. When he was sent out, he was already prepared for the task at hand. When Paul got to the field, he knew the language, he earned his own keep, and most importantly, he allowed God to meet his every need and guide his every step. **There was no deputation, no fact-finding trips, and no training on the field.** Paul went, he preached, he established a church, and then he moved on. The modern-day church preaches: "live by faith". Yet when it comes to "evangelizing the world", the church exercises very little or NO faith. Instead, they employ the current inefficient methodsthat omit the use of any faith, to raise money for missionaries that we never commanded in the bible to go to a foreign field.

If the modern-day churches insist on following the example in the book of Acts of sending out missionaries, then why don't they follow the example given in Acts? Why are years and years spent getting ready to go after "being separated?" (Acts 13:3) Paul did not go on deputation. He never went on a fact-finding trip. There was no monthly support given to or expected by Paul. Again, if Churches desire to imitate Paul's missionary work then why not follow the example he set for us in the book of Acts?

It should be noted here that Paul did receive some support from a few local churches. (Philippians 4:16) However, there is absolutely no indication that he ever asked for any kind of support. In fact, Paul himself said: "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you." (See also 1 Corinthians 11:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:6) In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul goes into detail about how he had the "power" to "live of the gospel" (vs14) but he says, "We have not used this power". (Vs. 12, 14) Paul never asked for a single penny but he was certainly thankful for what God provided through the churches.

It has been said that the fact that Paul was "sent" implies that being sent also means he was sent with "provisions". Indeed, Paul was "sent": not by any person but by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 13:1-4) There is no indication that the local church "supported" Paul on a regular basis. It is possible that they did but it cannot be definitively proven nor can the fact that Paul was "sent" be used to justify the current method.

That being said, Paul did say: (1Cor 9:14) "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." There is no doubt that a preacher of the gospel is allowed to "live of the gospel". But It should also be noted here that when Jesus sent out his disciples, he said: (Matthew 10:9-10) "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat." One must ask: were the disciples considered missionaries in this case? If they were missionaries, then this example clearly shows that "deputation" is NOT the bible way. If

they were not missionaries, then at the very least this passage teaches that “disciples” (and missionaries) should live by faith.

In conclusion, one must ask: is there a clear BIBLE way to evangelize the world? Yes. We should do it the way Jesus and Paul and the Apostles did it. They preached and taught whenever and wherever possible. The best way for everyone to carry out the great commission is to be faithful in witnessing to friends, relatives and neighbors. If every Christian were faithful in this endeavor, the literal “world” would be evangelized without ever sending a missionary to a foreign field. This is especially true in modern times given the ease of communicating with distant friends and relatives via telecommunication networks. If everyone were faithful in witnessing to those they come in contact with every day, there would be no need to spend years in bible college, and more years on deputation, then more years on the field training ... all in order to do something that can already be done right at home. Most everyone has friends from different ethnic groups. Most everyone knows people in distant states, if not in distant lands. A faithful witness can literally evangelize the world without ever leaving his or her own home town.

Some would object by saying, not all countries have modern telecommunications. Not all countries even have a gospel witness. Could it be that just like the Amalekites, God leaves people (countries) “in the dark” on purpose? (Genesis 15:16) Maybe this is why God never sent Paul “East”? (Matthew 2:1) If there is a country (or area) without a Gospel witness then this may be a case where sending a missionary might be justified. But again, it should be done in accordance with Paul’s example. He went to countries where there was (initially) no gospel witness. And he went with no prior experience, no financial support and most important of all no “manmade plan.” If it is believed that missionaries must be sent out, then why can’t Paul’s example be followed? But ... it must again be asked: Where in the bible is it commanded that the church send out missionaries?

Ultimately it boils down to this: God can accomplish His purposes, with or without human wisdom or interference. If the modern church is going to insist on using a transitional book as justification for sending missionaries to the field, then the modern church should, at the very least, follow the example set forth in that transitional book. God will send light to anyone who seeks light. (Matthew 7:7) It does not matter that the one seeking light is in some distant and remote and inaccessible land. God will send them light if they seek it. No one knows how God can or will do it. It does not matter how. Christians should carry out their own personal duty of “teaching all nations and every creature” and allow God to take care of the end result.

Final thought: Ephesians 4:11 ... “how come “missionaries are not on the list in this verse”?

THIS IS A TRUE STORY: Leroy is a Perfect Example of a modern day “biblical” missionary:

Leroy is a former Pentecostal Preacher living in Guyana. At one time, he had a local assembly that met in his back-yard. He is also a RETIRED government security employee. When he was offered a job as a “gate guard” he felt led by God to take the Job. (Leroy did NOT ask for or NEED the job or the money) My Company was recently contracted to do some work in Guyana. The apartment complex where we stay has about 24 apartments and can house about 30 people. Leroy provides the night security for this apartment complex. Some people stay here for a day or two, some stay for a week or more, some have stayed for a few months, while others, like my company will be staying indefinitely. People, from literally all over the World, stay at this apartment complex because there is a small airport located across the street. Since I have been staying in these apartments, I have met people from England, Trinidad, the U.S., Ireland, Jamaica and I am sure several other places that I cannot remember. I have personally seen that, a vast majority of people that stay in these apartments, even for just a day or two, end up spending time talking to Leroy. I can also state for a fact that Leroy will make every effort he can to “witness” to those who talk to him ... But, Leroy does NOT force himself or the Gospel on anyone. People are attracted to him like ants are to honey. It is (to me) a supernatural attraction that draws these people to Leroy. He, in turn, follows the leading of the Spirit. So ... even though Leroy works out of a little guard shack ... God has enabled him to “go into all the world” and preach the gospel. He has never been to a bible college, he never went on a fact-finding mission, he never went on deputation, he never asked for any kind of support, and he never even expected to be a missionary... AND YET ... He has become a GREAT MISSIONARY ... and he has accomplished in just a few years ... more from His little “guard shack” ... than many missionaries will ever accomplish in a life time. But Leroy did NOT do this ... GOD DID IT!!! ... and God is continuing to do it. This true story has been told for the sole purpose of saying this: DON’T GET HUNG UP on the modern-day methodology or system. Pray and ask God for Great things ... and most

importantly ... BE WILLING to do what God may ask you to do. Most of all ... LIVE AND WALK IN THE SPIRIT.