

Matthew Chapter 9

When nearly everything one reads, hears, and sees is evil, it is easy to become distracted by all the evil people, ideas, thinking and solutions. However, we must not allow ourselves to be distracted by all this Satanic activity. The more we read or listen to this evil, the more we think about it; the more we think about it, the more it is on our minds. If it is on our minds, we will talk about it. What a non-ending cycle of distractions. Rather than spending so much time on Satan's propaganda, we should more time on the solutions found in the Word of God and on executing the spiritual life.

The citizens and the government of the United States needs to take heed of a promise from the Lord to Abraham regarding every generation of his seed. Genesis 12:3a, "And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you, I will curse."

Lamentations 3:22-23, "The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease for His compassions never fail; (23) They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness." Jeremiah weeping wrote Lamentations in 586 BC just after the Southern Kingdom along with Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed by the Chaldeans.

The Ministry of the King:

Verses 1-8: Ministry to the paralytic

Verses 9-13: Ministry to the tax collector and the prostitutes

Verses 14-17: Ministry to the disciples of John

Verses 18-26: Ministry to the Jewish rulers

Verses 27-31: Ministry to the blind

Verses 32-35: Ministry to a demon possessed person

Verses 36-38: Ministry to the disciples

9:1. And having entered into a ship [since there was no ministry

opportunities in the Gadarenes], **he passed over** [the sea of Galilee], **and came to His own city** [the port city of Capernaum: Matthew 4:13, “Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum which was by the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.” Mark 2:1, “When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterwards, it was heard that He was at home.”

Καὶ ἐμβὰς εἰς πλοῖον διεπέρασεν καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν.

9:2. And behold, they [his four friends according to Mark 2:4] **brought to Him, a paralytic, having been thrown** [it began with his guilt which produce a psychosomatic illness] **on a cot. And Jesus, seeing their** [the friends carrying the paralytic] **faith, said to the paralytic, “Son** [a student under authority], **keep on having confidence** [regarding the forgiveness of sins]. **Your sins are forgiven.”**

καὶ ἰδοὺ προσέφερον αὐτῷ παραλυτικὸν ἐπὶ κλίνης βεβλημένον. καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν εἶπεν τῷ παραλυτικῷ, Θάρσει, τέκνον· ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι.

The paralytic was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but he obviously had a guilt problem based on some sin committed. Guilt made him so subjective that he would not use the Recovery Procedure. As a result of his guilt, he developed a psychosomatic illness namely paralysis of his limbs.

According to parallel passages found in Mark 2:1-12 and in Luke 5:17-26, the friends of the paraplegic lowered the cot down through the roof for they couldn't maneuver through the door due to the large crowd.

9:3. And behold, some of the scribes said within themselves, “This one blasphemes [for only God can forgive sins].”

καὶ ἰδοὺ τινες τῶν γραμματέων εἶπαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Οὗτος βλασφημεῖ.

There were many Pharisees and teachers of the Law from every village of Galilee, and Judea and from Jerusalem at this time according to Luke 5:17.

9:4. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts [in your stream of consciousness]?”

καὶ εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν εἶπεν, Ἵνατί ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν;

They were accusing Christ, the God-Man of blasphemy since they did not accept Him as Messiah. Really, they were the blasphemers.

9:5. For which is easier? To say, your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise and walk!

τί γάρ ἐστιν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν, Ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, ἢ εἰπεῖν, Ὑγείρε καὶ περιπάτει;

In Matthew 4:23, 24, Jesus healed every kind of disease and illness including demoniacs, epileptics and paraplegics. So, since He has already healed paraplegics miraculously, he has already proven that He is the Messiah. If He is the Messiah, he is also the prophesied Savior. If He is the Savior, then He has the authority to forgive of sins since He will be the one who would be punished for all the sins of mankind. Logically, it would be easier to heal, since to forgive sins required the punishment of the cross to make the forgiveness a reality.

Jesus Christ knew that healing this individual miraculously would not have solved the problem of guilt in this man's soul. So, He decided to forgive this man of his sins which put the man into fellowship with God and the opportunity to apply doctrine and to appreciate God's grace forgiveness. Once this man started to apply God's word under the power of metabolized doctrine in his soul, his psychosomatic illness disappeared.

9:6. But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, then He said to the paralytic, “Arise [since your psychosomatic illness has been resolved], take up your bed and go to your house.”

ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφιεῖν ἁμαρτίας ἢ τότε λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ, Ἐγερθεὶς ἄρῃ σου τὴν κλίνην καὶ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου.

Since the man was able to get up without Christ performing a miracle of healing implied that the man did have confidence in his forgiveness. He had resolved his guilt and his psychosomatic illness. The command to arise was given to prove that the young man had already been healed.

9:7. And he arose and departed to his house.

καὶ ἐγερθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ.

9:8. But when the crowds saw, they marveled and glorified God [the Father as unbelievers], who had given such authority to men.

ιδόντες δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι ἐφοβήθησαν καὶ ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν τὸν δόντα ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

Amazingly, the crowd did not recognize Jesus Christ as God, nor as the Messiah.

9:9. And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw [the first time in the crowd] a man named Matthew sitting at the tax-office. And He said to him, Follow me! And he [Matthew] arose and followed Him.

Καὶ παράγων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, Μαθθαῖον λεγόμενον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἀκολούθει μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ.

Matthew having heard prior messages liked the grace teaching of Jesus and His understanding of the religious hypocrites. However, since he, an ostracized person, would not approach Jesus himself, Jesus approached him.

Being a Jewish tax collector for Rome meant to be ostracized with social consequences. Cicero in the Senate gave an oration on the corruption of tax collectors. The Romans would assign tax collectors to different provinces. In turn, these tax collectors would collect the required revenue and often an extravagant amount for themselves as well. The Jews in turn, having to pay these taxes ostracized the tax collectors. Being ostracized, no respectable Jewish girl would have anything to do with Jewish tax collectors working for the Roman government. So, if a tax collector wanted a girlfriend or wife, he would have to pick from among the Jewish prostitutes.

9:10. And it happened as Jesus reclined [the formal style at a dinner party] in the house [of Matthew], behold, many tax-collectors and prostitutes [their girlfriends] came and were reclining with Him and His disciples.

Καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἰδοὺ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐλθόντες συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ.

Matthew threw a big party for Jesus Christ for he wanted his friends to hear the gospel. During the party, reclining on a couch, Roman style, the Lord would have an opportunity to present his credentials and the gospel message. Luke 5:27-30; Mark 2:14, 15).

9:11. And when the Pharisees saw, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your master eat with tax-collectors and prostitutes’?

καὶ ἰδόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Διὰ τί μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν;

There was a law in Israel that no one was to eat with a tax collector and prostitute. It carried as much weight as the Ten Commandments due to the influence of religion and was enforced through ostracism.

9:12. But when Jesus heard, He said to them, “The ones who are whole do not need a physician, but the ones who are sick.”

ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας εἶπεν, Οὐ χρειάν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλί οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες.

Even though they didn't speak directly to the Lord, his deity heard them. So, He quotes an old proverb. The proverb in effect says that the doctor goes to the sick, not to the well. As a spiritual doctor, he was going to those who needed the message; the ones who knew that they were sick and would respond to his message. The scribes and Pharisees were equally sick, but due to their self-righteousness were not interested in the gospel.

9:13. But go and learn what this means [quoted from Hosea 6:6], **I desire mercy** [unbelievers interested in God's grace solution to their sin problem] **and not sacrifice** [that day the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees had offered meaningless sacrifices] **For I have not come** [to Capernaum] **to call the righteous** [self-righteous unbelievers who are not interested in the gospel], **but the sinners** [those who know that they were sinners namely the tax collectors and prostitutes].

πορευθέντες δὲ μάθετε τί ἐστίν, Ἐλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν· οὐ γὰρ ἤλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς.

Hosea 6:6, “I delight in love rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

While Jesus was giving the gospel of grace, the religious leaders were involved in ritual without meaning. This last sentence implies that many tax collectors and prostitutes became believers that night at the party.

9:14. Then the disciples of John came to Him saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast’?

Τότε προσέρχονται αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου λέγοντες, Διὰ τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύομεν πολλά, οἱ δὲ μαθηταί σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν;

While Jesus and his disciples were having a party in Matthew’s house with the tax collectors and prostitutes, the disciples of John had joined the religious crowd in fasting and going through the streets asking for alms. To them fasting was spirituality. These disciples of John were born again believers who had become legalists. They apparently thought that fasting accompanied by sackcloth and ashes was a means of gaining points with God. And now they were criticizing Christ, and that takes a lot of gall. In their legalism they were quite subtle in their criticism making an issue out of fasting but avoided making an issue of the Lord’s dinning with prostitutes though that was certainly on their minds as well.

Everything which Jesus did on this earth was done in grace. So, antagonism toward Christ was antagonism toward grace. Since legalists are functioning on the basis of their own merit, they are opposed to grace.

‘We and the Pharisees’ what an unexpected identification! John the Baptizer’s disciples had become legalistic and so they identified themselves with religious, legalistic unbelievers. When the believer gets out of fellowship, he imitates the unbeliever.

The first thing that a believer should do is to separate himself from religious people. However, the disciples of John did not follow this wise advice, and so the self-righteousness of religion rubbed off on them. So, in their arrogance, they actually found themselves criticizing the Lord Jesus Christ. Their mentor, John the Baptist was the greatest possible believer, not in any way a legalist. However, his lifestyle apparently was distorted by his disciples who became legalists.

9:15. And Jesus said to them [the disciples of John], **Can the wedding guests** [guests of the bridegroom enjoying time together] **mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them** [at the Ascension], **and then they shall fast** [giving them time to meditate on the bridegroom].

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος πενθεῖν ἐφ' ὅσον μετὶ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ὁ νυμφίος; ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπὸ αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύσουσιν.

The disciples of Jesus are pictured as wedding guests and Jesus as the groom. This party could last for a week or so. As long as the groom was present, the party continued, but when the groom left, so did everyone else. In other words, they feasted together through the celebration. The wedding celebration was one big house party; it became a synonym for happiness and relaxed gaiety.

No matter how a marriage turns out, most people are happy on their wedding day and feast during their marriage celebration. Jesus then presents this situation as an illustration of true happiness and spirituality. The wedding guests stayed in the home of the bride and bridegroom during the celebration. The party would break up when the bride and groom left. This was the custom at that time. The wedding guests by analogy are believers and the groom is Jesus Christ on the earth.

9:16. No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth [by analogy legalism] **onto an old garment** [the spiritual life which has been in operation a long time]; **for that which is put in to fill it up, pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse** [legalism destroys the spiritual life].

οὐδεὶς δὲ ἐπιβάλλει ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους ἀγνάφου ἐπὶ ἱματίῳ παλαιῷ· αἶρει γὰρ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου, καὶ χεῖρον σχίσμα γίνεται.

The old garment, the ‘chiton’ has been washed many times and so shrunken. So, if one puts a patch which had not been shrunken on an old garment, it will cause a greater tear for when it is washed, the new patch will shrink and tear itself away from the older portion of the garment.

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). When fasting is superimposed upon the Christian way of life, it neutralizes grace and destroys the spiritual life.

9:17. Nor do men put new wine [the spiritual life] into old wineskins [legalism; asceticism]; else the wineskins burst, and the wine runs out, and the wineskins perish. But they put new wine [the spiritual life] into new wineskins [into a grace system], and both are preserved together.

οὐδὲ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μήγε, ῥήγνυνται οἱ ἀσκοί, καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἐκχεῖται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπόλλυνται· ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς, καὶ ἀμφοτέροι συντηροῦνται.

These wineskins were made-out of goat skin which when emptied eventually dried out and cracked. So, if you put new wine with its acid into an old wineskin, it will cause the cracks to break open and all will be lost.

Matthew 9:18-26: ministry to the Jewish rulers:

9:18. While He spoke these things to them, behold, a certain ruler [of the synagogue in Capernaum: Luke 8:41] came and worshiped Him, saying, my daughter [an only daughter: Luke 8:42] has just now died. But come and lay your hand on her and she will live. [This man understood from the miracles that Jesus was the Messiah and he undoubtedly was a believer or would be.

Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτοῖς ἰδοὺ ἄρχων εἷς ἐλθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγων ὅτι Ἡ θυγάτηρ μου ἄρτι ἐτελεύτησεν· ἀλλὰ ἐλθὼν ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ αὐτήν, καὶ ζήσεται.

The ruler's name was Jairus according to Luke 8:40-56; Mark 5:21-43.

9:19. And Jesus arose and followed him. And so did His disciples.

καὶ ἐγερθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

9:20. And behold, a woman, who had a flow of blood for twelve years, [a menstrual problem] came up behind Him and touched the hem of his garment.

Καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ αἱμορροοῦσα δώδεκα ἔτη προσελθοῦσα ὀπισθεν ἥψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ·

Apparently, she was waiting to talk with him, but never had the chance. So, she did the next best thing.

9:21. For she kept saying within herself, ‘If only I should touch His robe, I will be delivered’ [from this problem; a logical conclusion].

ἔλεγεν γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῇ, Ἐὰν μόνον ἅψωμαι τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι.

This woman is expressing a deep faith. Understanding that there is no human solution; she looks for a divine solution. Mark 5:25, 26, “A woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years (26) and had endured much at the hands of many physicians and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all but rather had grown worse.”

9:22. But turning and seeing her, Jesus said, Daughter [she is a believer], keep on having confidence [in the person of Christ and his thinking]; your faith-rest has delivered you [perfect tense: never this problem again]. And the woman was delivered from that hour.

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς στραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν εἶπεν, Θάρσει, θύγατερ· ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε. καὶ ἐσώθη ἡ γυνὴ ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.

9:23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house [Jairus] and saw the flute players [hired to play a mournful funeral dirge] and people wailing [hired professional wailers],

Καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἄρχοντος καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς αὐλητὰς καὶ τὸν ὄχλον θορυβούμενον

They were playing a mournful funeral dirge. Between this and wailing, it was quite a horrible situation.

9:24. He kept on saying to them, Get-out for the little girl is not dead, but sleeps [body sleep]. And they ridiculed him by laughter [as they left].

ἔλεγεν, Ἀναχωρεῖτε, οὐ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν τὸ κοράσιον ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ.

9:25. But when the people [the professional mourners] were put out, he went in [with Peter, James, John, and the parents] and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose [twelve years old: Mark 5:42].

ὅτε δὲ ἐξεβλήθη ὁ ὄχλος, εἰσελθὼν ἐκράτησεν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ ἠγέρθη τὸ κοράσιον.

9:26. And this report went out into all that land.

καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἡ φήμη αὕτη εἰς ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἐκείνην.

Ministry to the blind:

9:27. And when Jesus passed on from there, two blind men started to follow him, kept shouting out and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us [treat us in grace].

Καὶ παράγοντι ἐκεῖθεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠκολούθησαν [αὐτῷ] δύο τυφλοὶ κρᾶζοντες καὶ λέγοντες, Ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς, υἱὲ Δαβὶδ.

The religious leaders were arrogantly blinded so they could not see that Christ was God. Any person with eye sight should have been able to identify Christ as God since they had seen his miracles. These blind believers were demanding mercy as an expression of their faith.

9:28. And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to him [somehow, they managed to follow]. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, Yes, Lord [believers].

ἐλθόντι δὲ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ τυφλοί, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πιστεύετε ὅτι δύναμαι τοῦτο ποιῆσαι; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ναί, κύριε.

9:29. Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.”

τότε ἥψατο τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν λέγων, Κατὰ τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν γενηθήτω ὑμῖν.

9:30. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus warned them sternly, saying, “Beware [stay alert with regard to my command], let no one know.” [Keep your mouth shut.]

καὶ ἠνεώχθησαν αὐτῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί. καὶ ἐνεβριμήθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων, Ὁρᾶτε μηδεὶς γινωσκέτω.

Several reasons for this command:

1. Jesus must present his credential to Israel via his miracles and his messages, not through a couple of emotional believers. These two blind

men are zealous and full of emotion but have little knowledge and little humility.

2. Jesus is faced with maximum negative volition in Capernaum, by contrast Nineveh, Assyria was a city of maximum positive volition during the time of Jonah.

9:31. But going out, they made Him known in all that land [not only in Capernaum, but in all the suburbs].

οἱ δὲ ἐξελθόντες διεφήμισαν αὐτὸν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ γῇ ἐκείνῃ.

9:32. As they went out, behold, they [certain members of the crowd] **brought to Him a dumb man, who had been demon-possessed.**

Αὐτῶν δὲ ἐξερχομένων ἰδοὺ προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπον κωφὸν δαιμονιζόμενον·

Certain handicaps and diseases are caused by demon possession.

9:33. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb one spoke. And multitudes marveled, saying, ‘Never was it seen like this in Israel’! [Jesus did not forbid this man to speak.]

καὶ ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐλάλησεν ὁ κωφός. καὶ ἐθαύμασαν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Οὐδέποτε ἐφάνη οὕτως ἐν τῷ Ἰσραήλ.

The multitudes marveled but did not believe. Amazing! If one is negative at God-consciousness, he will more than likely be negative at gospel hearing.

9:34. But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons [namely Satan]. [The two ‘buts’ connect verse 31 with 34. The first ‘de’ connects the story with the second ‘de.’]

οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἔλεγον, Ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια.

Because the healed blind men disobeyed the Lord's orders, He now has a problem with the Pharisees. Apparently, these Pharisees learned about Jesus' through these two blind men and came to cause trouble.

9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people [His credit card].

Καὶ περιῆγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας, διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν.

9:36. But seeing the crowds, He was moved with compassion [to have a reasonable sympathy based on their need for salvation] on them, because they were fainting [in their souls; having no doctrinal information] and scattered [negative at God-consciousness also at gospel hearing] like sheep having no shepherd [someone to communicate to them].

Ἴδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα.

Reasonable sympathy: You don't beg the unbeliever to believe; you give him information about the Lord and his work. The Lord had compassion on them for three reasons: first, they were fainting in their souls, secondly, they were negative and lastly, they had no shepherd to feed them truth.

The challenge of verse 37.

9:37. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the [skilled] laborers are few.

τότε λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολὺς, οἱ δὲ ἐργάται ὀλίγοι·

He didn't tell his disciples to go because they were not yet ready.

9:38. Therefore, pray [to the Father] that the Lord of the harvest [God the Holy Spirit] will force out laborers [believers qualified in evangelism] into his harvest.”

δεήθητε οὖν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ ὅπως ἐκβάλῃ ἐργάτας εἰς τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ.

The information below on witnessing is taken from R. B. Thieme's booklet, 'Witnessing' pages 22-26.

One of the reasons we remain on this earth after salvation is to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. This principle is stated in both the Old and the New Testaments: He who is wise wins souls. (Prov. 11:30b) You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses. (Acts 1:8a) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. (2 Cor. 5:20a) Whether you witness by the example and impact of your life on unbelievers in your periphery, or by the opportunity to tell the Gospel “by the words from your lips,” or both, your motivation in witnessing is of utmost importance. Does your attitude match that of Paul's in the Book of Romans? I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Thus, for my part, I am eager [ready] to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel. (Rom. 1:14–16a)

“I am under obligation”! As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are mandated to speak about our Savior. We have a fantastic inheritance: a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, plus every spiritual blessing that accrues as a result of salvation. How can others know or receive this inheritance unless we fulfill our obligation and tell them about it (Rom. 10:14–15)?

“I am eager [ready]”! Readiness is our preparation and, consequently, our motivation. We must master the critical doctrinal knowledge for witnessing and present pertinent information to the unbeliever. But most important, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit through the use of 1 John 1:9, the rebound technique. If the above conditions are met, we can say “I am eager!” “I am not ashamed”! How could anyone be ashamed of the One who has saved them for all eternity? But countless people are ashamed of mentioning the Lord or of proclaiming the Gospel. Being ashamed is nothing more than fear of being ridiculed or fear of failure engendered by ignorance of doctrine. When we do not make learning doctrine our first priority in life, we get our priorities confused and lose perspective with regard to the importance of witnessing.

Many Christians cannot endure the pressure that accompanies witnessing. Easily intimidated, they say little to anyone about the way of salvation. However, pressures did not stop the Apostle Paul. Thessalonica was a large city in the ancient world, and thousands of its citizens were open to the Gospel. On his second missionary journey Paul traveled along the Ignatian Way—one of the famous highways of antiquity—and crossed Asia Minor (the area of present Turkey). Upon the apostle’s arrival at Philippi, he encountered adverse circumstances and personal suffering, but he continued to preach the Gospel. He left Philippi and arrived at Thessalonica, where the Lord gave him a tremendous harvest of souls (Acts 17:1–4; 1 Thess.; cf. 2 Thess.). Paul’s perseverance in personal and mass evangelism offers an excellent biblical pattern for your witnessing (1 Thess. 2). Be a Fisher of Men For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. (1 Thess. 2:1)

“Our coming to you” implies contact. Contact suggests approaching and communicating. You cannot witness without making contact. Our Lord Himself cited the perfect analogy to making contact in witnessing when He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19b) What did He mean? First of all, fishermen must have a desire to fish—be motivated. Second, fishermen must be equipped to fish—be prepared and ready. Third, fishermen must go where the fish are located—catch them

where they are. Travel to the locale for fishing may involve seasickness or a strenuous hike through difficult terrain. Once you arrive you cannot sit on the bank and wait for fish to come to you. You must use all your knowledge and skill in the pursuit. As a “fisher of men,” Paul stressed these very principles: when pursuing those who are positive toward Jesus Christ, correct motivation and preparation overcome hardships, fears, and pressures. Once Paul reached his destination, he made certain his contact would not be “in vain.” In vain means hollow, empty, fruitless, or ineffective. He knew fishermen must use the right bait. His bait was the Gospel with the content clearly defined. Confident of his message, he witnessed in the power of the Spirit, never deviating from the real issue. His job done, he stayed out of the Holy Spirit’s way and awaited the results. Thus, Paul fulfilled another analogy to witnessing: fishermen must be patient. Even as fishermen will be rewarded for their efforts, so “fishers of men” can anticipate the fruits of their labor: the joy of WITNESSING seeing souls saved in time to the everlasting glory of Jesus Christ throughout eternity. Paul followed this pattern of making contact in detail and stated: For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men, we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thess. 1:5) Not only by word of mouth did Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, proclaim the Gospel, but also by the way they lived. “What kind of men” they were was well known—honorable ambassadors for Christ. Consequently, their message received a favorable hearing. The old cliché “actions speak louder than words” is all too true when referring to personal evangelism. The unbeliever says, “Show me; then I’ll listen to what you have to say!” (James 2:14–16). If your lifestyle does not match your high calling in Christ, is it any wonder the unbeliever turns away and thinks: “If this is a sample of Christianity, I want no part of it!” To his detriment, the unbeliever judges a potential, eternal relationship with the Lord and the incomparable Christian way of life by the behavior of a poor representative. So, as you encounter the unbelieving world, remember that you are the Lord’s emissary, His personal ambassador on earth with an honor code to uphold.

The Gospel Must Be Clearly Presented: But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. (1 Thess. 2:2) Even in the face of strong opposition, the Gospel must be presented with bold clarity. During their stay at Philippi, Paul and Silas were severely persecuted because of their stand for Jesus Christ. They had been dragged into the marketplace, the open court, where they were severely flogged and cast into prison (Acts 16:16–24). Although they suffered bitterly, they continued to confidently present the Gospel. Fear of additional punishment did not stop them. From the persistence of Paul and Silas a principle arises: opposition and obstacles to the Gospel are to be expected but should never discourage our resolve to witness. Tragically, failure to understand the correct function of evangelism has often dispatched to the mission field ill-prepared people who never should have gone. Many missionaries who experience the rigors of the foreign field refuse a second term. The dropout rate is high. Simply deciding to face the hardship of crossing a mountain range or an ocean does not prepare a missionary. When a Christian will not cross the street to speak to a neighbor about Christ, assuredly he will do no better in a foreign land. The best test of the desire of a missionary or anyone else to proclaim the Gospel would be a positive response to these questions: 1. Do you understand and clearly communicate the Gospel and pertinent biblical doctrines? 2. Do you witness regularly at home? 3. Do you master the language of the land you seek to reach for Christ? 4. Do you manifest maturity and stability in your spiritual life and show concern for lost souls? If a person is reticent about witnessing in his own neighborhood, he would soon become overwhelmed, discouraged, and wither under the fires of opposition elsewhere.

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Based on the scholarly work of R.B. Thieme Jr.

I recommend downloading 'THIEME'S BIBLE DOCTRINE DICTIONARY' from this website: rbthieme.org