

# **BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

## **EXPOSITORY SERMON**

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### **THE CRY IN THE NIGHT**

**Scripture Reading - Acts 16:1-10.**

#### **Introduction**

Paul and his companions were embarked on a mission to preach the gospel across the world of that day. They were responding to the great commission that Jesus left in the hands of His followers. In addition to this they were constrained by the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised them. Paul who discovered Christ on the Damascus road when Jesus had confronted him in a blinding light brighter than the noonday sun, and commissioned him to be His servant in these words, "I will rescue you from your own people and the from the Gentiles and sent you to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God," so that they could find salvation. In that moment Saul was a changed man. From that hour there was planted in his soul, a compulsion – a constraint and a burning fire that thrust him forward to relentlessly achieve what seemed to be the impossible. It appeared that they had been successful, for it was said of the early Christians that "they turned the

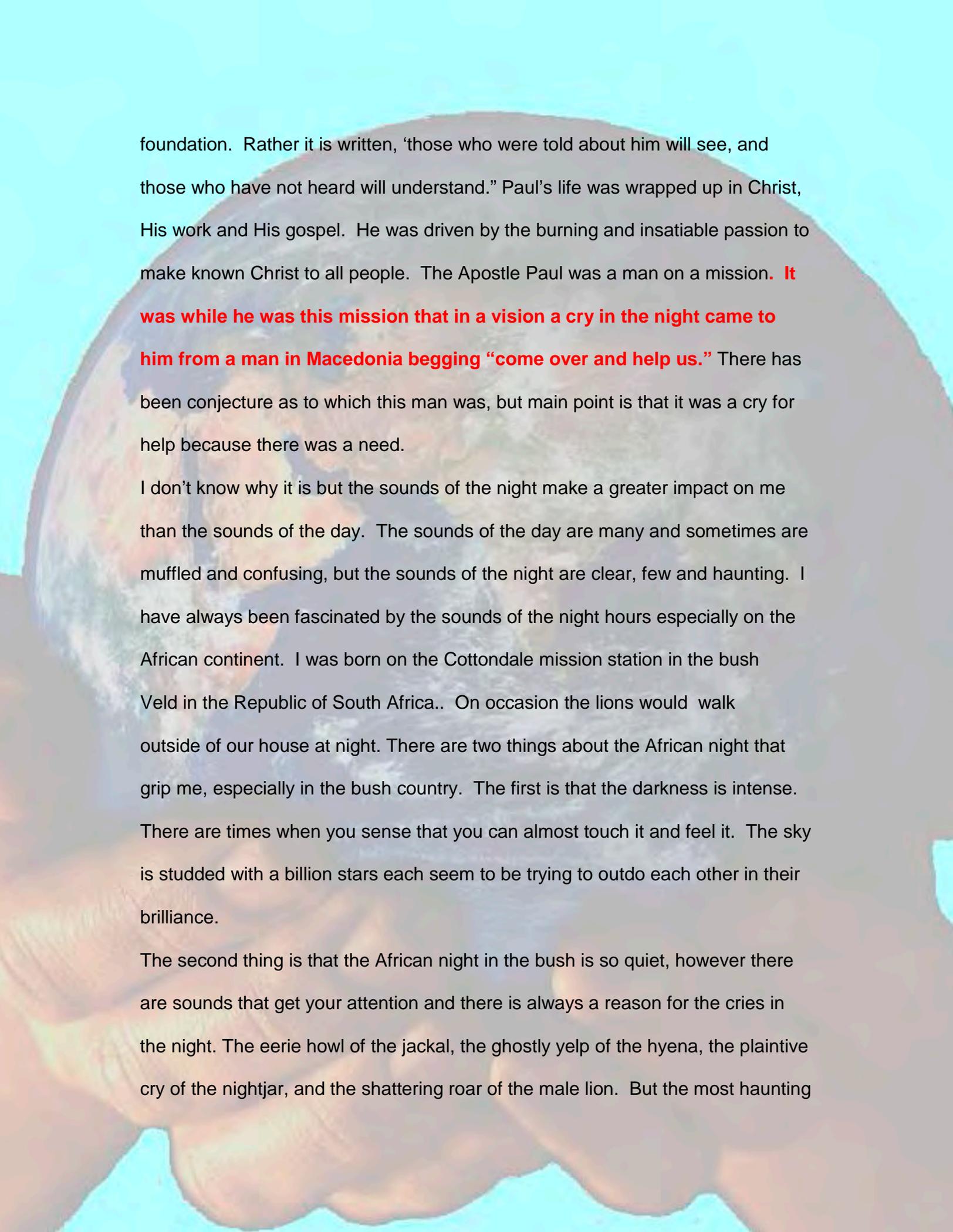
world upside down.”

In the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter we discover Paul in the midst of his missionary enterprise. It is certain that since he met Christ on the Damascus road his priorities had radically changed. These priorities filter through his writings. His first and his most basic priority is summed up in his great testimony **“To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”** Out of this priority he underlines no less than three basic personal ambitions. Dr Oswald Sanders brings them to our attention. First **i. Paul’s ambition with regard to character was to win them approval of the Lord. Paul made this clear in 2 Corinthians 5:9. “So we made it our goal to please Him.”** Paul lived to please His Lord. Everything he did was considered in the light of the Lord’s approval. This should be the first ambition of every Christian and it should not be the exception to the rule, it should be the rule. To please the Lord should be the goal of each follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then note,

**ii. His ambition with regard to conduct. This is contained in his First Letter to the Thessalonians 4:11-12.** “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands as we told you,” v. 12, “so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will be dependent on nobody.” Paul stood up against any inclination to indulge in pious laziness and religious idleness. But note also,

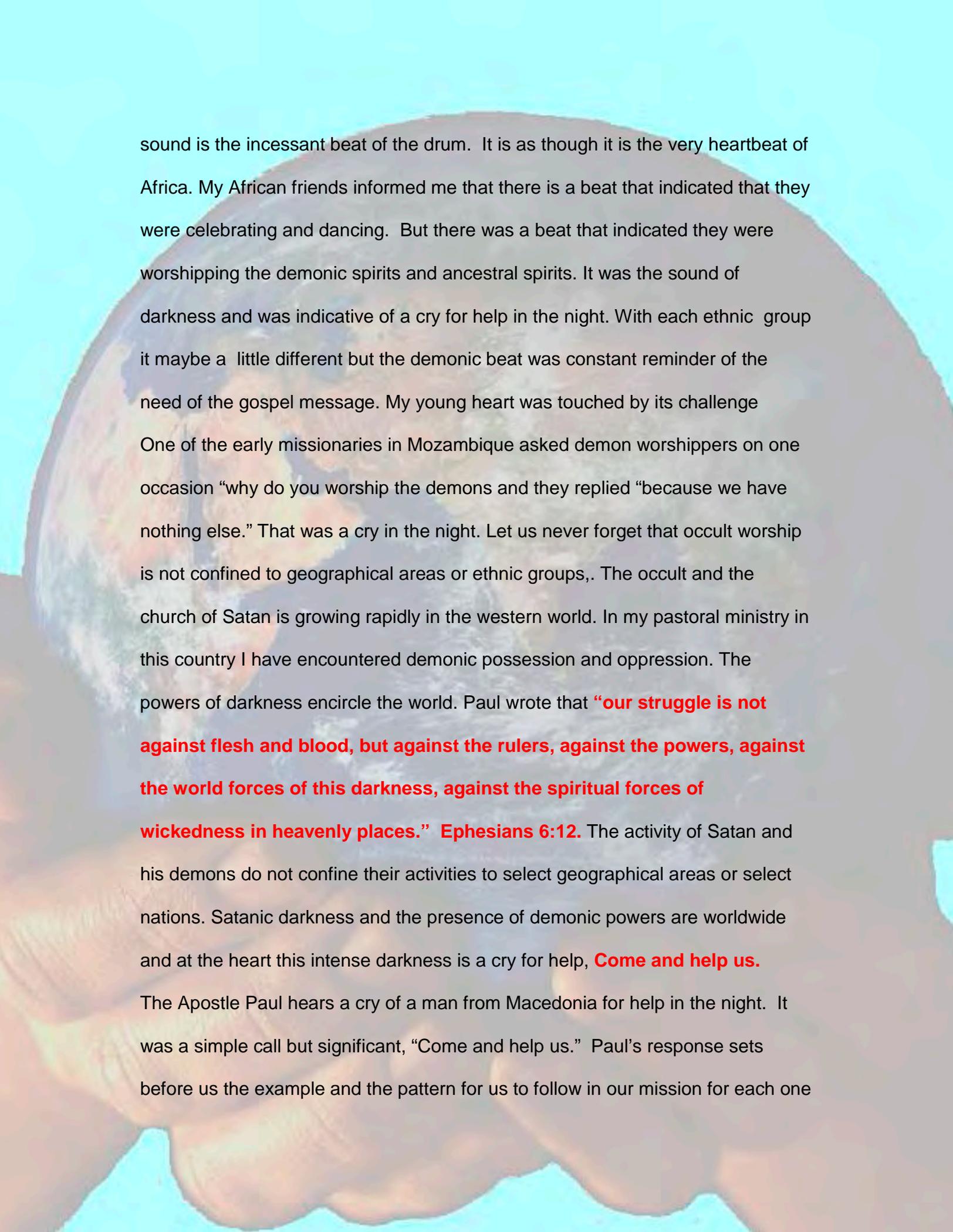
**iii. Paul’s ambition in relation to his career. This is stated in his letter to the Romans 15:20-21.** “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else’s



foundation. Rather it is written, ‘those who were told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.’ Paul’s life was wrapped up in Christ, His work and His gospel. He was driven by the burning and insatiable passion to make known Christ to all people. The Apostle Paul was a man on a mission. **It was while he was this mission that in a vision a cry in the night came to him from a man in Macedonia begging “come over and help us.”** There has been conjecture as to which this man was, but main point is that it was a cry for help because there was a need.

I don’t know why it is but the sounds of the night make a greater impact on me than the sounds of the day. The sounds of the day are many and sometimes are muffled and confusing, but the sounds of the night are clear, few and haunting. I have always been fascinated by the sounds of the night hours especially on the African continent. I was born on the Cottondale mission station in the bush Veld in the Republic of South Africa.. On occasion the lions would walk outside of our house at night. There are two things about the African night that grip me, especially in the bush country. The first is that the darkness is intense. There are times when you sense that you can almost touch it and feel it. The sky is studded with a billion stars each seem to be trying to outdo each other in their brilliance.

The second thing is that the African night in the bush is so quiet, however there are sounds that get your attention and there is always a reason for the cries in the night. The eerie howl of the jackal, the ghostly yelp of the hyena, the plaintive cry of the nightjar, and the shattering roar of the male lion. But the most haunting



sound is the incessant beat of the drum. It is as though it is the very heartbeat of Africa. My African friends informed me that there is a beat that indicated that they were celebrating and dancing. But there was a beat that indicated they were worshipping the demonic spirits and ancestral spirits. It was the sound of darkness and was indicative of a cry for help in the night. With each ethnic group it maybe a little different but the demonic beat was constant reminder of the need of the gospel message. My young heart was touched by its challenge

One of the early missionaries in Mozambique asked demon worshippers on one occasion “why do you worship the demons and they replied “because we have nothing else.” That was a cry in the night. Let us never forget that occult worship is not confined to geographical areas or ethnic groups,. The occult and the church of Satan is growing rapidly in the western world. In my pastoral ministry in this country I have encountered demonic possession and oppression. The powers of darkness encircle the world. Paul wrote that **“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12.** The activity of Satan and his demons do not confine their activities to select geographical areas or select nations. Satanic darkness and the presence of demonic powers are worldwide and at the heart this intense darkness is a cry for help, **Come and help us.**

The Apostle Paul hears a cry of a man from Macedonia for help in the night. It was a simple call but significant, “Come and help us.” Paul’s response sets before us the example and the pattern for us to follow in our mission for each one

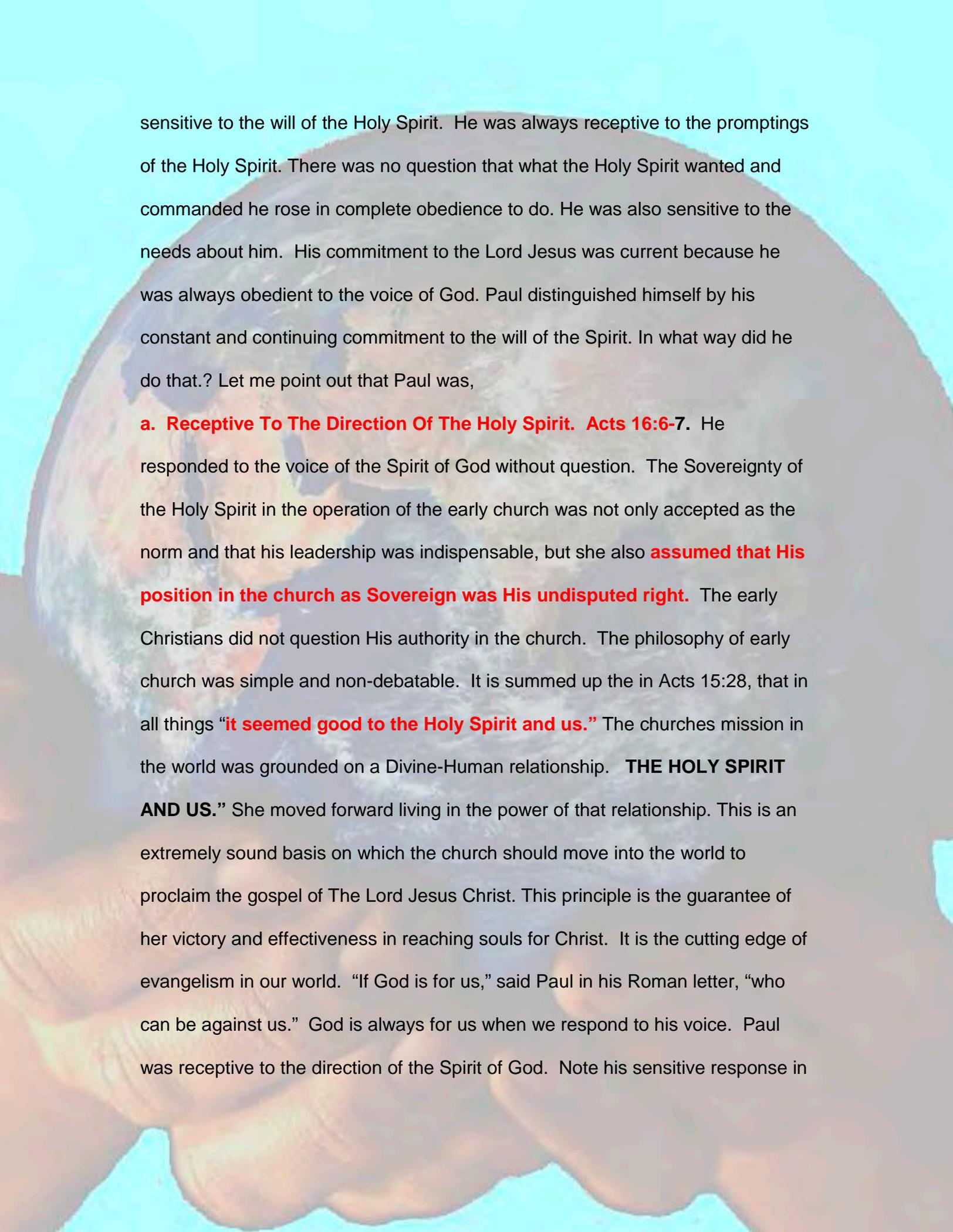
to reach out to the lost with the message of the gospel.

There are three qualities in Paul's responsive spirit that made him an effective witness for Christ. They are basic necessary qualities that will enable us to become an effective witnesses for Christ in our community. I want to look at these responses that are vital fundamental to reaching the lost for Christ. First will you note that Paul had

### **1. THE COMMITMENT THAT DISTINGUISHED HIM Acts 16:6,7,9 - 10.**

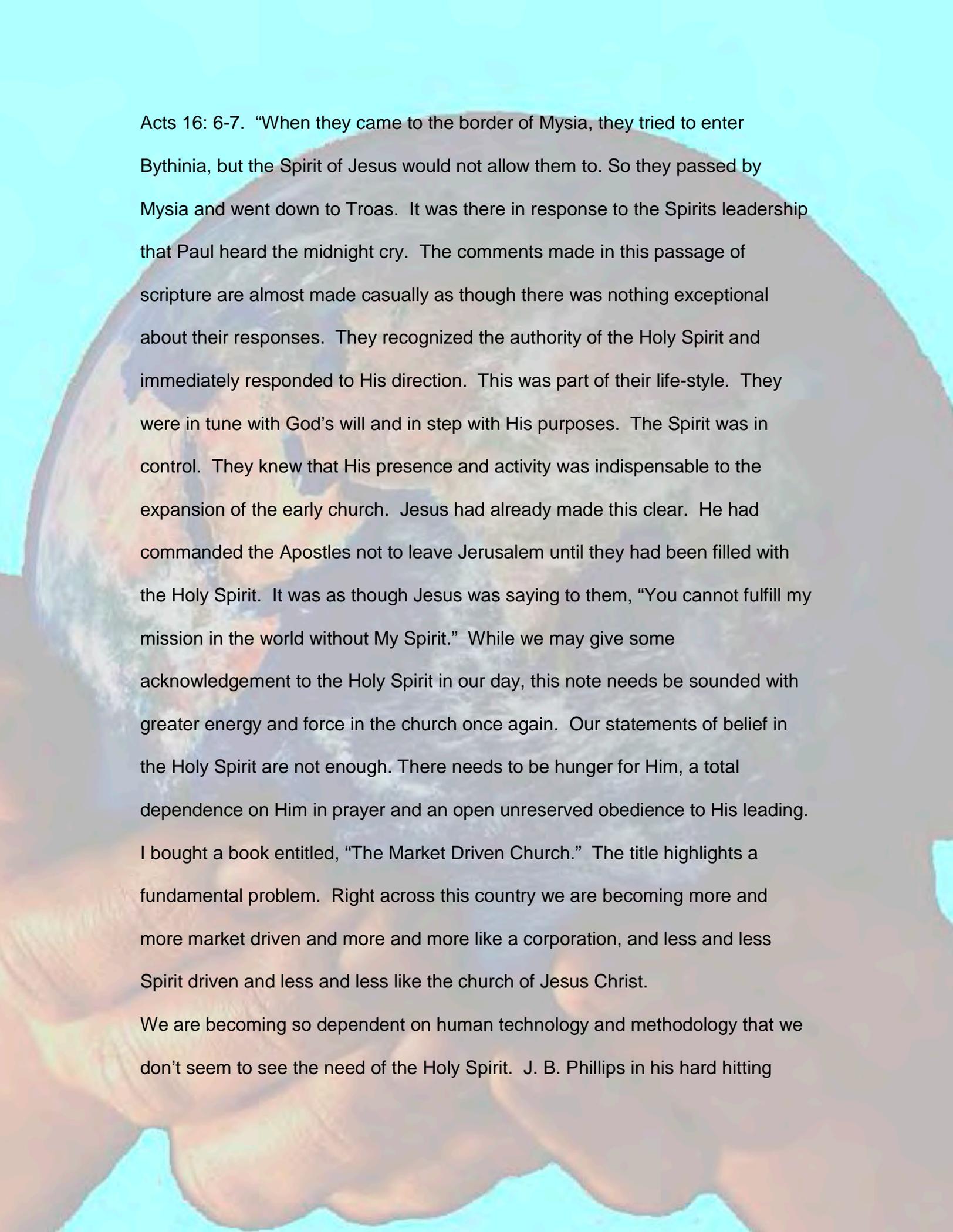
**Paul committed himself to Christ and His mission in a critical moment of his encounter with the living Christ on the road to Damascus. We might say that this was a commitment in general. This commitment would have to be worked out in every test and challenge of his life. The reality of his commitment in a crises moment would be revealed in the details of the daily round of life's tests. He would face daily challenges to that commitment. The depth and extent of his surrender to Christ on the Damascus road is the unfolding and application of all of the principles to which Paul agreed in his full commitment to Christ in that momentous encounter. Subsequent events revealed that Paul was fully committed to the Christ and His mission in the world. It was this constant commitment that distinguished him.**

**Furthermore His surrender to Christ and His mission must always be seen in his relationship to the Holy Spirit and his receptivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This is clearly illustrated in Acts 16 verses 6 to 12. He was**

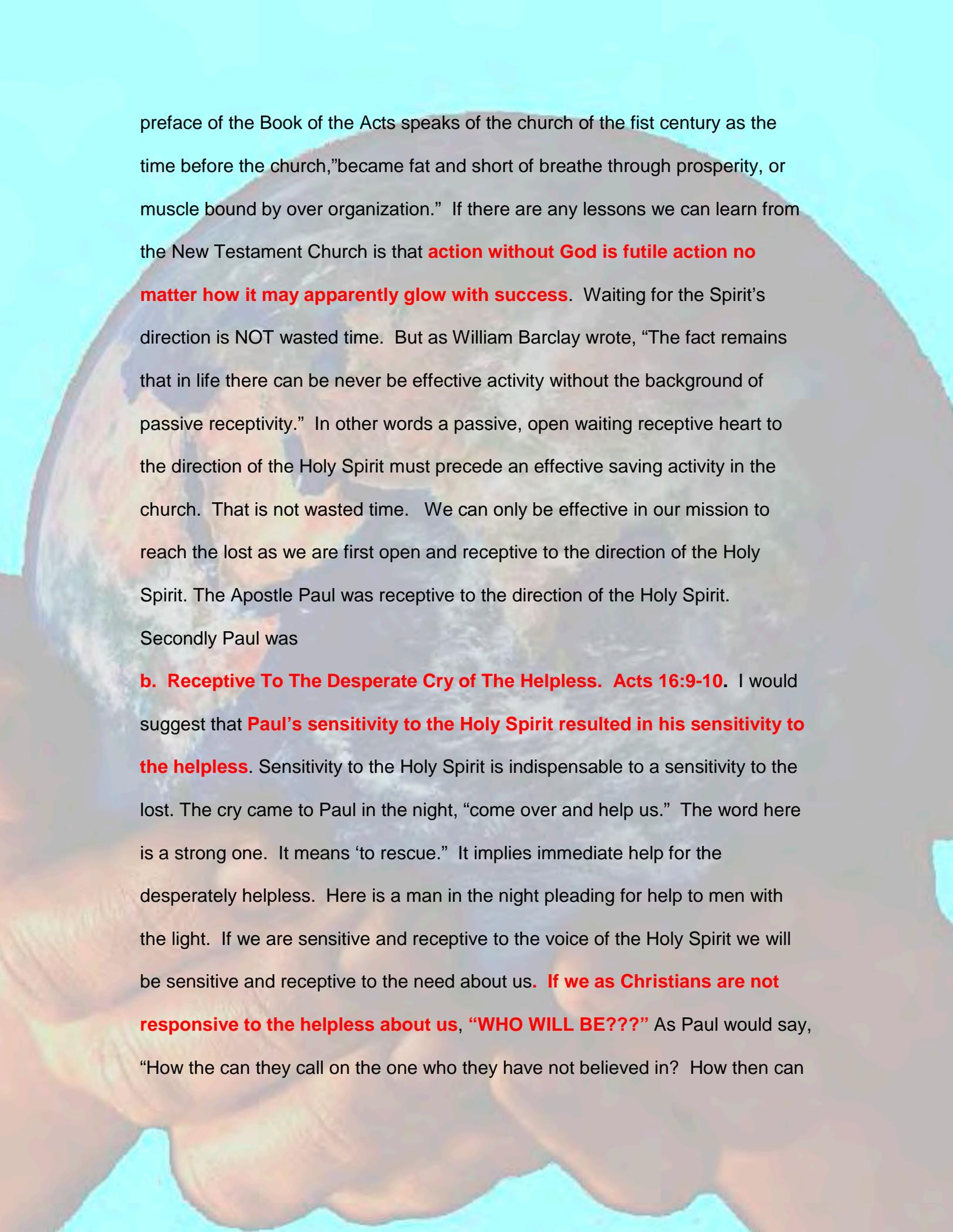


sensitive to the will of the Holy Spirit. He was always receptive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. There was no question that what the Holy Spirit wanted and commanded he rose in complete obedience to do. He was also sensitive to the needs about him. His commitment to the Lord Jesus was current because he was always obedient to the voice of God. Paul distinguished himself by his constant and continuing commitment to the will of the Spirit. In what way did he do that.? Let me point out that Paul was,

**a. Receptive To The Direction Of The Holy Spirit. Acts 16:6-7.** He responded to the voice of the Spirit of God without question. The Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the operation of the early church was not only accepted as the norm and that his leadership was indispensable, but she also **assumed that His position in the church as Sovereign was His undisputed right.** The early Christians did not question His authority in the church. The philosophy of early church was simple and non-debatable. It is summed up the in Acts 15:28, that in all things **“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us.”** The churches mission in the world was grounded on a Divine-Human relationship. **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND US.”** She moved forward living in the power of that relationship. This is an extremely sound basis on which the church should move into the world to proclaim the gospel of The Lord Jesus Christ. This principle is the guarantee of her victory and effectiveness in reaching souls for Christ. It is the cutting edge of evangelism in our world. “If God is for us,” said Paul in his Roman letter, “who can be against us.” God is always for us when we respond to his voice. Paul was receptive to the direction of the Spirit of God. Note his sensitive response in



Acts 16: 6-7. “When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bythinia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. It was there in response to the Spirit's leadership that Paul heard the midnight cry. The comments made in this passage of scripture are almost made casually as though there was nothing exceptional about their responses. They recognized the authority of the Holy Spirit and immediately responded to His direction. This was part of their life-style. They were in tune with God's will and in step with His purposes. The Spirit was in control. They knew that His presence and activity was indispensable to the expansion of the early church. Jesus had already made this clear. He had commanded the Apostles not to leave Jerusalem until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. It was as though Jesus was saying to them, “You cannot fulfill my mission in the world without My Spirit.” While we may give some acknowledgement to the Holy Spirit in our day, this note needs to be sounded with greater energy and force in the church once again. Our statements of belief in the Holy Spirit are not enough. There needs to be hunger for Him, a total dependence on Him in prayer and an open unreserved obedience to His leading. I bought a book entitled, “The Market Driven Church.” The title highlights a fundamental problem. Right across this country we are becoming more and more market driven and more and more like a corporation, and less and less Spirit driven and less and less like the church of Jesus Christ. We are becoming so dependent on human technology and methodology that we don't seem to see the need of the Holy Spirit. J. B. Phillips in his hard hitting



preface of the Book of the Acts speaks of the church of the first century as the time before the church, "became fat and short of breathe through prosperity, or muscle bound by over organization." If there are any lessons we can learn from the New Testament Church is that **action without God is futile action no matter how it may apparently glow with success.** Waiting for the Spirit's direction is NOT wasted time. But as William Barclay wrote, "The fact remains that in life there can be never be effective activity without the background of passive receptivity." In other words a passive, open waiting receptive heart to the direction of the Holy Spirit must precede an effective saving activity in the church. That is not wasted time. We can only be effective in our mission to reach the lost as we are first open and receptive to the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul was receptive to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Secondly Paul was

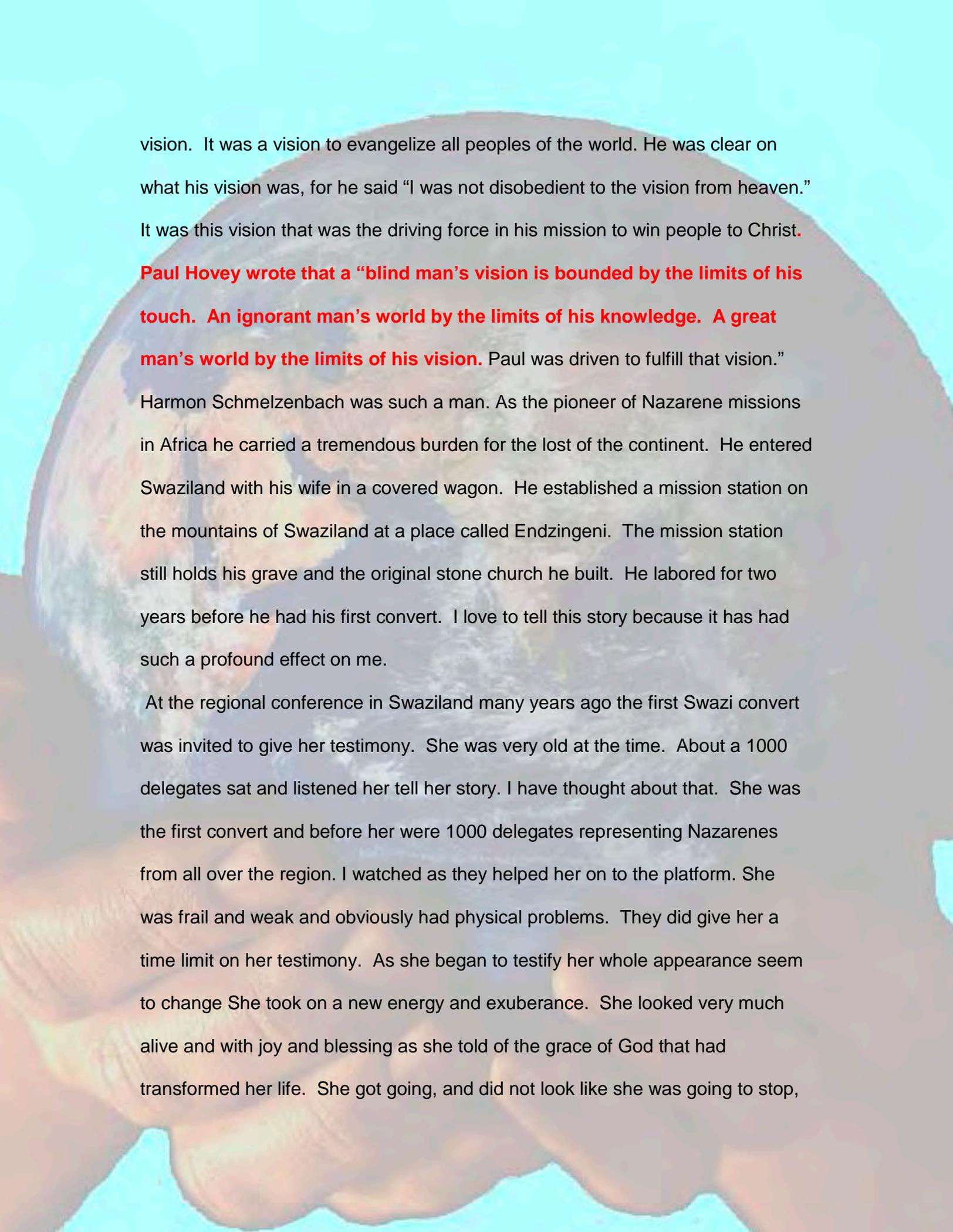
**b. Receptive To The Desperate Cry of The Helpless. Acts 16:9-10.** I would suggest that **Paul's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit resulted in his sensitivity to the helpless.** Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is indispensable to a sensitivity to the lost. The cry came to Paul in the night, "come over and help us." The word here is a strong one. It means "to rescue." It implies immediate help for the desperately helpless. Here is a man in the night pleading for help to men with the light. If we are sensitive and receptive to the voice of the Holy Spirit we will be sensitive and receptive to the need about us. **If we as Christians are not responsive to the helpless about us, "WHO WILL BE???"** As Paul would say, "How the can they call on the one who they have not believed in? How then can

they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without someone telling them? Romans 10:14. If we are to reach our community the first response is to be receptive to the voice of the Spirit and the cry in the night of sin's darkness for help. The second quality I see in the Apostle Paul, is,

## **2. THE COMPULSION THAT DOMINATED HIM. Acts 16:10.**

Paul had a vision of a desperate need in Macedonia . Paul's sensitive perceptive spirit gave birth to the vision of a desperate need. Paul was not on a casual visit to Macedonia. He perceived that there was a desperate need in there. Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing and begging for help. Paul's vision became focused on the need in Macedonia. It was this vision that compelled and motivated him into action. This compulsion dominated him. There are two areas that make vision relevant and necessary in the mission of the church, First,

**a. Vision is Necessary in the Mission of the Church to Win the Lost. Acts 16:10.** “After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia.” This vision constrained and compelled to move from where he **was to meet the need.** There is no substitute for vision in the mission to reach the lost. The body of believers that has no vision is on its deathbed. One has said, **“A vision without a task is a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. A vision and task is the hope of the world.”** The Christian who **has a New Testament vision** of the harvest will be the Christian who has a sense of mission. When Jesus met Paul He gave him a new perspective in life. He gave him new goals, new dreams, new purposes, new passion and a new



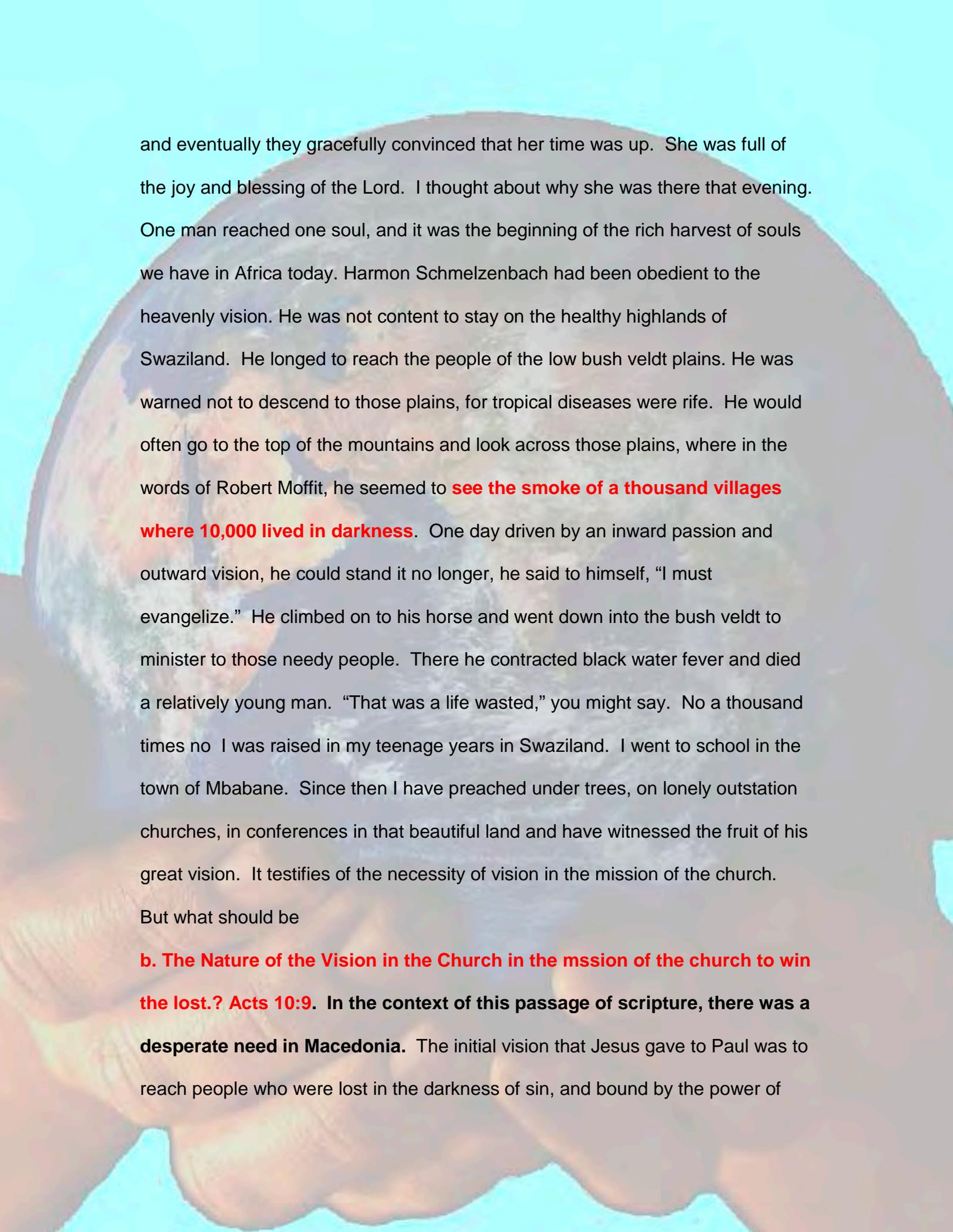
vision. It was a vision to evangelize all peoples of the world. He was clear on what his vision was, for he said “I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.”

It was this vision that was the driving force in his mission to win people to Christ.

**Paul Hovey wrote that a “blind man’s vision is bounded by the limits of his touch. An ignorant man’s world by the limits of his knowledge. A great man’s world by the limits of his vision.** Paul was driven to fulfill that vision.”

Harmon Schmelzenbach was such a man. As the pioneer of Nazarene missions in Africa he carried a tremendous burden for the lost of the continent. He entered Swaziland with his wife in a covered wagon. He established a mission station on the mountains of Swaziland at a place called Endzingeni. The mission station still holds his grave and the original stone church he built. He labored for two years before he had his first convert. I love to tell this story because it has had such a profound effect on me.

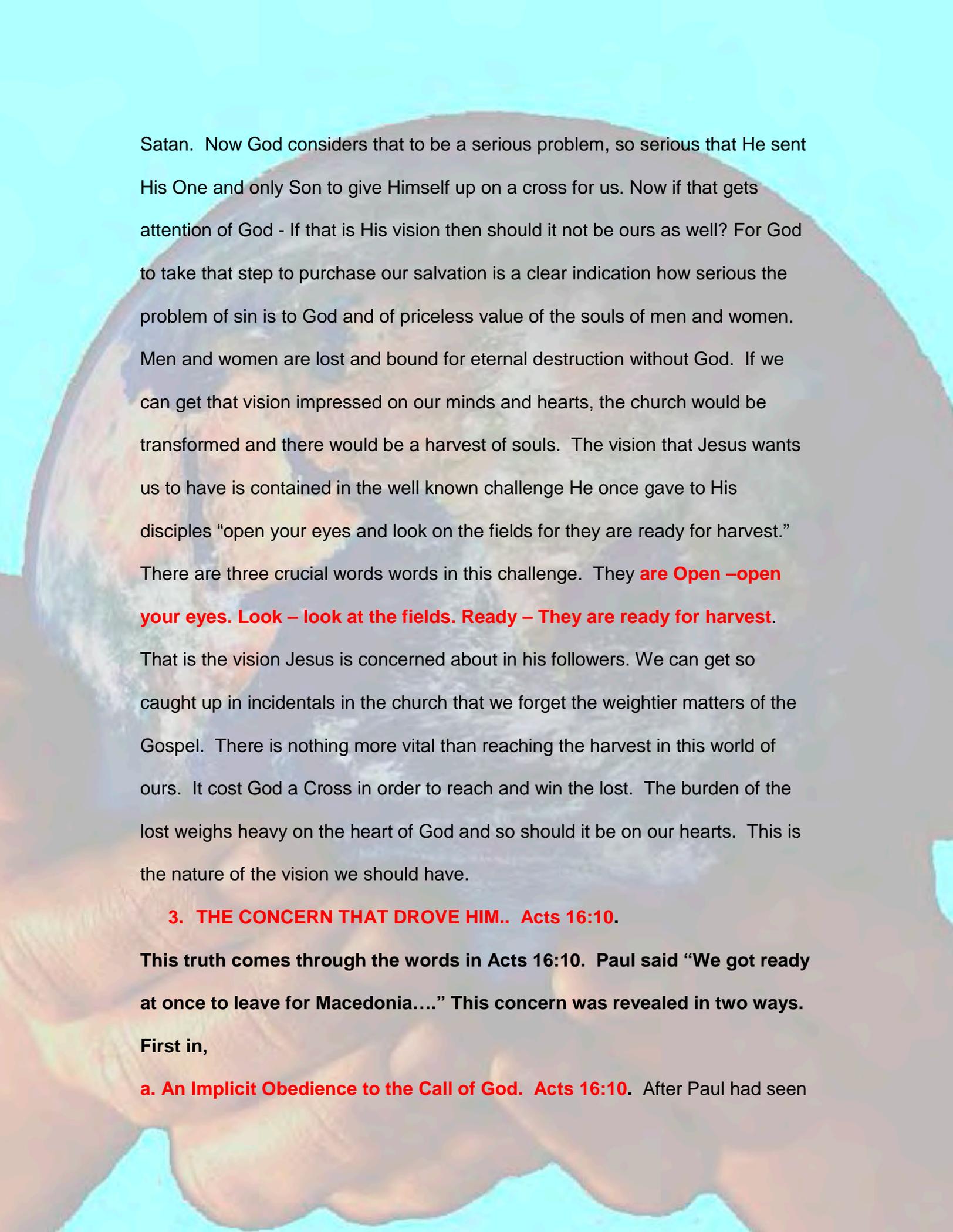
At the regional conference in Swaziland many years ago the first Swazi convert was invited to give her testimony. She was very old at the time. About a 1000 delegates sat and listened her tell her story. I have thought about that. She was the first convert and before her were 1000 delegates representing Nazarenes from all over the region. I watched as they helped her on to the platform. She was frail and weak and obviously had physical problems. They did give her a time limit on her testimony. As she began to testify her whole appearance seem to change She took on a new energy and exuberance. She looked very much alive and with joy and blessing as she told of the grace of God that had transformed her life. She got going, and did not look like she was going to stop,



and eventually they gracefully convinced that her time was up. She was full of the joy and blessing of the Lord. I thought about why she was there that evening. One man reached one soul, and it was the beginning of the rich harvest of souls we have in Africa today. Harmon Schmelzenbach had been obedient to the heavenly vision. He was not content to stay on the healthy highlands of Swaziland. He longed to reach the people of the low bush veldt plains. He was warned not to descend to those plains, for tropical diseases were rife. He would often go to the top of the mountains and look across those plains, where in the words of Robert Moffit, he seemed to **see the smoke of a thousand villages where 10,000 lived in darkness**. One day driven by an inward passion and outward vision, he could stand it no longer, he said to himself, "I must evangelize." He climbed on to his horse and went down into the bush veldt to minister to those needy people. There he contracted black water fever and died a relatively young man. "That was a life wasted," you might say. No a thousand times no I was raised in my teenage years in Swaziland. I went to school in the town of Mbabane. Since then I have preached under trees, on lonely outstation churches, in conferences in that beautiful land and have witnessed the fruit of his great vision. It testifies of the necessity of vision in the mission of the church.

But what should be

**b. The Nature of the Vision in the Church in the mission of the church to win the lost.? Acts 10:9.** In the context of this passage of scripture, there was a **desperate need in Macedonia**. The initial vision that Jesus gave to Paul was to reach people who were lost in the darkness of sin, and bound by the power of



Satan. Now God considers that to be a serious problem, so serious that He sent His One and only Son to give Himself up on a cross for us. Now if that gets attention of God - If that is His vision then should it not be ours as well? For God to take that step to purchase our salvation is a clear indication how serious the problem of sin is to God and of priceless value of the souls of men and women. Men and women are lost and bound for eternal destruction without God. If we can get that vision impressed on our minds and hearts, the church would be transformed and there would be a harvest of souls. The vision that Jesus wants us to have is contained in the well known challenge He once gave to His disciples "open your eyes and look on the fields for they are ready for harvest."

There are three crucial words words in this challenge. They **are Open –open your eyes. Look – look at the fields. Ready – They are ready for harvest.**

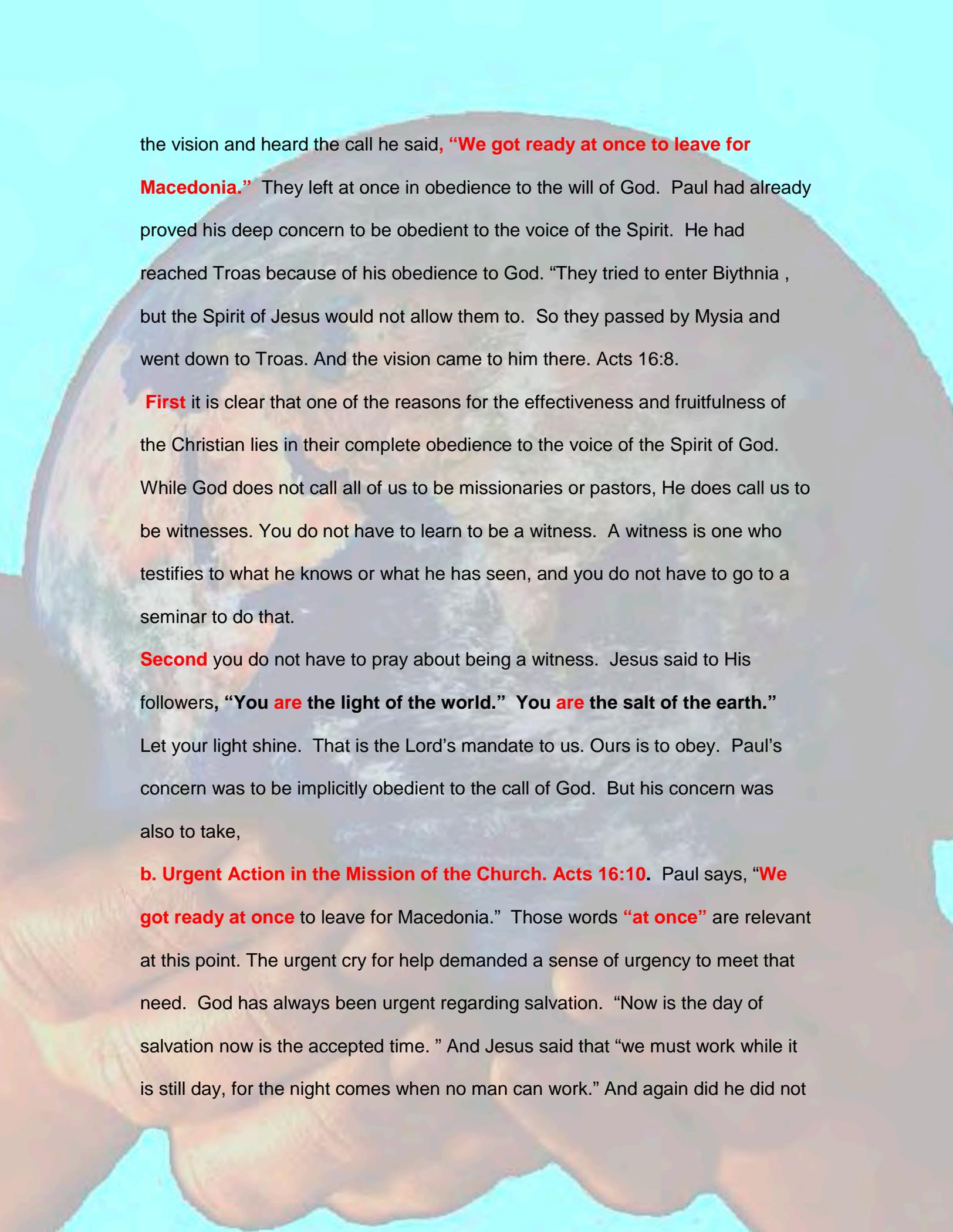
That is the vision Jesus is concerned about in his followers. We can get so caught up in incidentals in the church that we forget the weightier matters of the Gospel. There is nothing more vital than reaching the harvest in this world of ours. It cost God a Cross in order to reach and win the lost. The burden of the lost weighs heavy on the heart of God and so should it be on our hearts. This is the nature of the vision we should have.

### **3. THE CONCERN THAT DROVE HIM.. Acts 16:10.**

**This truth comes through the words in Acts 16:10. Paul said "We got ready at once to leave for Macedonia...." This concern was revealed in two ways.**

**First in,**

**a. An Implicit Obedience to the Call of God. Acts 16:10.** After Paul had seen



the vision and heard the call he said, **“We got ready at once to leave for Macedonia.”** They left at once in obedience to the will of God. Paul had already proved his deep concern to be obedient to the voice of the Spirit. He had reached Troas because of his obedience to God. “They tried to enter Bithynia , but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. And the vision came to him there. Acts 16:8.

**First** it is clear that one of the reasons for the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the Christian lies in their complete obedience to the voice of the Spirit of God. While God does not call all of us to be missionaries or pastors, He does call us to be witnesses. You do not have to learn to be a witness. A witness is one who testifies to what he knows or what he has seen, and you do not have to go to a seminar to do that.

**Second** you do not have to pray about being a witness. Jesus said to His followers, **“You are the light of the world.” “You are the salt of the earth.”** Let your light shine. That is the Lord’s mandate to us. Ours is to obey. Paul’s concern was to be implicitly obedient to the call of God. But his concern was also to take,

**b. Urgent Action in the Mission of the Church. Acts 16:10.** Paul says, **“We got ready at once** to leave for Macedonia.” Those words **“at once”** are relevant at this point. The urgent cry for help demanded a sense of urgency to meet that need. God has always been urgent regarding salvation. “Now is the day of salvation now is the accepted time. ” And Jesus said that “we must work while it is still day, for the night comes when no man can work.” And again did he did not

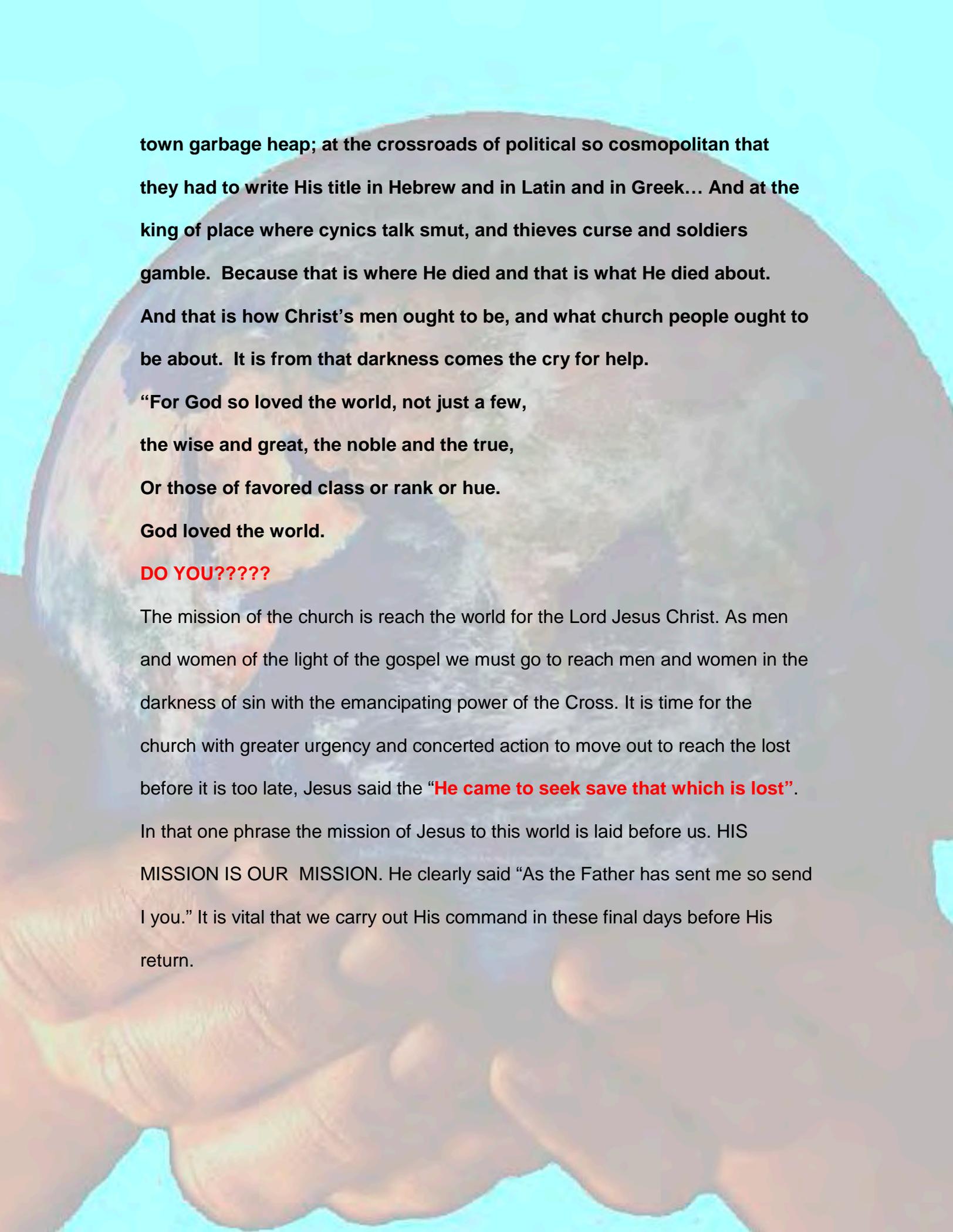
point out, do not say “four months and then the harvest. I tell you open your eyes and look on the fields. They are ripe for harvest.” A ripe ready harvest requires urgent immediate reaping. **If it is not reaped it will rot.**

### **Conclusion**

The Times-Reporter of New Philadelphia, Ohio, reported in September 1985, a celebration of a New Orleans municipal pool. The party around the pool was held to celebrate the first summer without a drowning at the New Orleans city pool. In honor of the occasion, 200 people gathered including certified lifeguards. As the party was breaking up and the four officials began to clear the pool, they found a fully dressed body in the deep end. They tried to revive Jerome Moody, 31, but it was too late. He had drowned surrounded by a 100 lifeguards celebrating their successful season. It is parable is it not? How many in our country who live with the Christian community have never been told about the life saving Gospel. Not long ago at a Christian gathering two men met who worked together. One said to the other “I didn’t know you were Christian,” and they worked together. I wonder how many are lost in eternity, not because there were no witnesses were available, but because they were not witnessed to.

There were those who heard but did not heed to the cry in the night. We must minister to those who are in the darkness. Some wrote that we must,

**“Return the Cross to Golgotha. I simply argue that the Cross be raised again at the center of the market place as well as on the steeple of a church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a Cathedral between two candles; But on a Cross between two thieves: on a**



town garbage heap; at the crossroads of political so cosmopolitan that they had to write His title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek... And at the king of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died and that is what He died about. And that is how Christ's men ought to be, and what church people ought to be about. It is from that darkness comes the cry for help.

**“For God so loved the world, not just a few,  
the wise and great, the noble and the true,  
Or those of favored class or rank or hue.  
God loved the world.**

**DO YOU?????**

The mission of the church is reach the world for the Lord Jesus Christ. As men and women of the light of the gospel we must go to reach men and women in the darkness of sin with the emancipating power of the Cross. It is time for the church with greater urgency and concerted action to move out to reach the lost before it is too late, Jesus said the **“He came to seek save that which is lost”**.

In that one phrase the mission of Jesus to this world is laid before us. HIS MISSION IS OUR MISSION. He clearly said “As the Father has sent me so send I you.” It is vital that we carry out His command in these final days before His return.