

Articles by Cyril H. Brooks

Cyril H. Brooks

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Call to Missions

The book of Acts has rightly been called the “Missionary Manual of the Church.” There are two things to remember in studying this fifth book in the New Testament. First, here are Scriptural and spiritual principles for us to follow in our missionary work. Second, while these principles will not change, yet the strategic methods of carrying out these principles will vary. Before studying Missions in the book of Acts, there are a few characteristics of this book that deserve our attention.

- (a) There was complete dependence upon God the Holy Spirit, so that this book is often called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”
- (b) There was a simple and natural development of the work, for God’s work is frequently depicted as a growth.
- (c) Following evangelism, there was an emphasis upon establishing local churches so that believers could meet together for worship, fellowship and instruction.
- (d) There was an absence of organization, board, or councils exercising authority over local churches.
- (e) There is little mention about financial support of workers and no record of the number of converts (except in round figures in two cases – 2:41, 4:4).

In this study we will consider the Call to Missions. We are all familiar with the Great Commission given by Christ to His disciples. Its importance may be gauged by the fact that it is found in different words in each of the four Gospels and in the first chapter of Acts. His final

words, His parting blessing before He ascended contained this: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

At that time, as indeed through all the history of the Church, there seems to have been hesitancy in fulfilling that last phrase. It was not until there was persecution in Jerusalem that they went further afield (8:1, 11:19). Then some "traveled as far as... Antioch" and this led to the establishing of a church in Antioch which became the base for missionary expansion. No doubt God had a purpose in using Antioch as such a base rather than Jerusalem. This church was composed very largely of Gentile believers and the choice of Antioch would dispel any idea that Jerusalem was the "parent" or head church with authority over others.

Let us study this call from three aspects:

(a) The Call of the Holy Spirit; (b) The Consent of the Local Church; (c) The Consecration of the Missionaries.

In connection with the Call of the Spirit we note that it was His prerogative to call and it was by His power the workers were sent forth. While there are many different gifts or abilities given to the members of the body of Christ, yet in apportioning these gifts, the Holy Spirit is sovereign. He divides to every man "as He will" (I Cor. 12:11). Believers should earnestly desire the best gifts but the designation of these rests with the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who said: "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul." There were not simply following their own inclinations, nor were they stirred by the emotional

appeal of some other worker. It was not the church, nor the elders and teachers in that church who called them, but the Holy Spirit. We are not told just how the Spirit spoke to them. Did they hear a voice? Or see a vision? Or was it simply an inward conviction in their hearts concerning the will of the Spirit? The details are not revealed lest we should think it would have to be that particular way. The Spirit of God has different ways of making His will known. It is also important to note the words of verse 4: "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed..." As the Spirit of God had called them, so also He sent them forth on their mission. They were not sent by any organization; not even by the church in Antioch. A different word is used at the end of verse three to indicate the action of the church in letting them go. In the case the Tagalog Bible has a better translation than the English King James version.

The church at Antioch which thus gave its consent was in many ways rather a model church. They had been taught well by Barnabas and Saul (11:26) and had a variety of teachers (13:1). It was an active church as they ministered or served the Lord. Their fasting indicated their concern and exercise of heart so that they readily recognized the call for the Spirit. We wonder if they were fasting because they were burdened about the needs of those who had not hear the gospel! When they heard the call of the Spirit, they fasted and prayed, for it was not easy to give up their best men. For some time they had been edified by the teaching ministry of Barnabas and Saul. Their leaving would mean added responsibility for those left in Antioch. Yet even as they prayed, they could hardly have realized how important a move this was in the history of the

Church, nor how far-reaching its outcome would be. When they laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, this was not in the sense of conferring on them any ability or authority. These two had already displayed their ability and authority as teachers in Antioch. The laying on of hands was an act of identification. Just as the Israelite of old identified himself with the animal sacrifice, so the church in Antioch through their leaders indicated that the missionaries were going forth on their behalf to carry out a task which was common to all. So they commended them to the grace of God for the work of the Lord (14:26). It is worth noticing that this was done altogether apart from the apostles and church in Jerusalem.

Now let us briefly notice the consecration of the missionaries. This was not something official on the part of the church but rather the personal dedication of these workers. These men were promptly obedient to the Spirit's call and devoted themselves completely to the work to which they had been called. They were men who had already proved their ability and thus were shown to be fit and ready for the call to a wider sphere of service for the Lord. No doubt it was not easy for them to give up the work they had been doing in Antioch nor to leave the happy fellowship with the brethren. However, the authority of the Holy Spirit was supreme, the call of God was unmistakably clear, so they set forth. Like Abraham of old—"By faith Abraham, when he was called... obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

How important to be sure of God's call when setting forth in missionary work. Barnabas and Saul took a companion with them, the young man John Mark. It was not long before this young man returned home. Various

reasons for this have been advanced. Was it because he was not fortified by the conviction that he had been called of God? A brother from the Southern states encountered a worker of whose call he had some doubts. Finally one day, in exasperation he said: "Brudder, was you sent or did you just went?" Barnabas and Saul were called by the Spirit but it looks as if Mark "just went."

Daily Church Growth

Considerable attention has been given in recent years to Church Growth and Church Planting. This is most commendable because it is also scriptural. However, sometimes the proponents of Church Growth sound as if they had just discovered some new approach and some new objective in missionary work. It is not new to those who have studied missions in the light of the New Testament.

On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas evidently encouraged the new believers to gather together in local church fellowships. This must have been new truth to those believers, yet we find that on the return part of their journey, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:23).

Later on, Paul, along with Silas, started on a second journey and one of their objectives was to visit many of those young churches. At Lystra there was a young man, Timothy, who had probably been saved on their first visit there. With the commendation of the brethren at Lystra and Iconium, Paul took Timothy as his companion and fellow worker. Then we read, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (Acts 16:5 NIV).

Many of the commentaries seem to pass over this verse as self-explanatory but it does merit some consideration. In fact it is quite a remarkable statement! We have no idea what period of time is covered here, whether days, weeks or months. We can only surmise what a great amount of missionary energy and effort was expended. No doubt there were many hours of faithful teaching of

the Word of God. On another occasion Paul wrote, “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20 NIV). Paul and Silas had been obedient to the Great Commission – “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 26:20 NIV).

What is impressive in Acts 16:5 is the word “daily.” As in the first days of the church souls were being saved regularly and daily, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). What a challenge this presents! Is this happening anywhere today? Here was church growth on a daily basis. No doubt, as the churches grew in numbers, there would be hive-offs with new churches established. Yet church growth is not simply a matter of statistics. Reports of churches with thousands of members may be largely meaningless in terms of spiritual growth. Possibly many in such churches are merely church joiners or pew warmers – people lost in the crowd without any active participation in the work of the Lord.

There can be no real church growth without spiritual growth in the lives of individual believers. Driving past a church building I saw this on the bulletin board— “What does C-H-R-C-H spell without U?” Are you involved in the growth of your local church? Is there even weekly or monthly growth in your assembly? Sad to say, some seem to have no growth at all. An elder from an assembly in the Philippines recently visited the United States. On his return he wondered, whimsically, if we shouldn’t be sending missionaries there! The key to church growth is the personal, spiritual growth of each member, growth

that will result in serving the Lord in witnessing and winning souls for Christ.

Such spiritual growth is suggested in the first part of this verse, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith.” A strong church will be a growing church. There can be little growth where there is weakness. This is often seen in the physical realm. Children who are weak through malnutrition do not grow and develop as they should. Spiritual malnutrition is far too common among God’s children. They are not being strengthened in the faith and so the church is not strong and is not growing. Systematic Bible teaching is needed, along with application of the truth to the daily life.

Sometimes spiritual malnutrition is due to lack of appetite for the Word. An interesting illustration of this is found in 2 Samuel 13. Amnon, one of David’s sons, was asked by his friend Jonadab, “why do you, the king’s son, look so haggard morning after morning?” It was evident that Amnon was not eating much, even though, as the king’s son, ample food was available. The effect of this was obvious in his appearance! Then the truth came out! He was in love with his half-sister, a forbidden relationship. So some Christians, the King’s sons, are weak and haggard spiritually. Is it not because of lack of appetite for the bountiful provision for them in the Word of God? That lack of appetite is often due to an illicit love, a desire for something which is not according to God’s will.

Cause and effect! When believers are feeding on God’s Word they will be “strengthened” or “made firm” in the faith. “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter

2:2 NIV). Thus the churches will be strengthened in the faith and the effect of this will be church growth. Is there any reason why there should not be daily growth, as in Paul's day, if each one does his part?

Discipline --Part 1

Discipline

Part 1

Cyril H. Brooks

Mr. Cyril H. Brooks has faithfully served the Lord for over fifty years in the Philippines. We welcome this first of three articles on "Discipline," a subject largely neglected among professing Christians of this day and age.

The Meaning of Discipline

To begin this series of studies on discipline, it is first necessary to define what is meant. What is discipline? We shall limit our study to discipline in the local church or assembly. Therefore, we shall not be considering self-discipline wherein the child of God disciplines or regulates his own spiritual life. It must be noted that there would be little need for church discipline if believers would discipline themselves. Nor shall we be thinking about God's discipline or chastisement of His children, except to point out that He may sometimes discipline a believer through the discipline of the local church.

The English word "discipline" is, of course, related to "disciple" who is a learner or a follower. So discipline is one of the means by which a believer in Christ learns to follow Christ as a disciple. It is part of the teaching that goes along with discipleship. Therefore, in the local church, teaching the truths found in the Word of God is a part of discipline; in fact, it is a very important and

primary part of discipline. If we do not teach believers how they ought to live for Christ, what right have we to judge them when they do not live as they should? Too often we tend to think of discipline in the local church as only judging those who do wrong, and then taking steps to put them right. These phases of discipline would be less needed if we paid more attention first to teaching. In that letter which Paul wrote to Timothy regarding conduct in the local church, we read, 'Command and teach these things...attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching...take heed to yourself and to your teaching' (1 Timothy 4:11, 13, 16 R.S.V.).

However, what happens in the local church when some believers do not listen to the teaching, or having listened to it, yet do not follow it? Or what about those believers who will not discipline themselves nor heed the discipline of their heavenly Father? Then the church, through its elders, will need to go on to the next step in discipline, for 'The time is come for judgment to begin at the household of God' (1 Peter 4:17). There will need to be warnings, rebukes or perhaps even a strong reprimand. (We will examine these in more detail later.) Generally not all of the believers in a local church will need such warnings or rebukes, and certainly only a few will have to be reprimanded by the elders. There will therefore be many instances where such will be done personally and privately to the persons directly concerned (Galatians 6:1).

Occasionally, even these fail to achieve the desired purpose so that it then becomes necessary to proceed to other phases of discipline. However, in all phases of discipline one thing must be kept clearly in mind. The

purpose of discipline is not, and never should be, simply to punish or humiliate a wrong-doer. The aim must always be to help believers to be better disciples. If they have gone astray, we want to restore them to a closer walk with the Lord and to a happier fellowship in the church. If a child of God has done wrong we want to help him repent and turn away from his wrong-doing.

Some Christians seem to resent any form of discipline, possibly because they misunderstand its aim and purpose. Discipline should never be vindictive or punitive. Always the aim should be to help the Christian live a better Christian life. God's discipline shows us two things — His love and our relationship to Him as His children (Hebrews 12:5-6). In the same way, discipline in the church ought always to be an evidence of Christian love. Through it, the elders can show their loving concern and godly care for the spiritual welfare of their fellow-believers. As bishops or overseers they are responsible to "take care" of the church where God has placed them (1 Timothy 3:5), so they take care of it as fathers take care of or rule their families. A good father will discipline his children because he loves them. He teaches them by example and by word; sometimes he has to warn or rebuke them; sometimes he may need to spank them. Faithful elders ought to have such a genuine love for those in the church. In love they will teach the Word; in love they will rebuke or warn when necessary; and, if more stern measures are needed, these will be carried out in love and humility, with fairness and much prayer.

The Need for Discipline

Let us now think why it is necessary to have discipline in a local church. There may be some who think it is not really needed and that elders should not interfere in the private lives of church members. They may say, "After all, the way I live is my own responsibility; or, it is something between the Lord and myself." I want to suggest five reasons why discipline is needed in the local church.

First, God desires that there should be order or proper arrangement in the church. Without such order there will be confusion or disorder and God is not the God of confusion. Therefore 'all things should be done decently (becomingly) and in order' (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Without discipline we shall not have the order or arrangement that God desires. This chapter, 1 Corinthians 14, is a good example of this for it gives regulations as to the use and exercise of some gifts. This is part of discipline so that our services will be conducted in an orderly manner and according to the teaching of Scripture.

Second, God has appointed authority in the church and discipline is one of the functions of those He has placed in authority. We recognize that Christ is the Head of the Church, so that His Word and His Will are the supreme authority in the church. The New Testament also teaches that under Him who is the Great Shepherd there are under-shepherds who are to pastor the flock. Thus the elders who are also called bishops or overseers are responsible to take care of the church. The Holy Spirit has made them overseers so that like shepherds they can take heed of and feed the flock (Acts 20:28). Elders

have a major responsibility for teaching which, as we have seen, is an essential part of discipline.

Third, discipline is needed so that the assembly will have a good testimony for Christ in the local community. Even unsaved people expect Christians to live more honestly and better morally than they do. When a believer sins he not only brings reproach upon the name of Christ, but also upon the church where he is attending. So an assembly which tolerates careless living or sinful habits in its members will not retain the respect of people in the community. Discipline of erring members will be an indication that we do not treat such conduct lightly. Then others around will be more easily convinced of our sincerity and also of our faith in the gospel message which we preach.

Fourth, we all recognize, surely, that God desires His children to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:14-16). Since a local church is made up of individual believers, it stands to reason that the church should display holy living which is pleasing to the Lord. The spiritual power of any church depends upon the lives of its members. The question is sometimes asked, "What would your church be like if every member was just like you?" We should live holy lives because God wants us to and not because we are afraid of being disciplined. However, sometimes we need the help of church discipline so that we will live as we should.

Fifth, church discipline not only helps us to live as believers should, it helps to maintain harmony and fellowship within the church. One of the most frequent problems in any church is the friction caused when members cannot get along happily with each other. One

way that the devil uses to hinder the Lord's work is through sowing discord among believers. Sowing discord among brethren is an abomination that God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19). Too often such discord is sown by brethren rather than by the unsaved outside the church. Since discord can cause so much trouble in the church, the elders will be alert to lessen or eliminate it, if possible. This is part of needed discipline. Erroneous teaching is sometimes a cause of discord. Those who bring in wrong teaching must be disciplined. However, there are times when the trouble is not something that can be labeled as definitely error or unscriptural teaching. It may be something about which there may be legitimate differences of interpretation. Yet some brother may insist on harping upon his own interpretation or upon some minor matter. Some seem predisposed to "majoring on a minor." Such insistence of one's own viewpoint may disturb the minds of some or lead to factions within the assembly. When such things are persisted in, they need to be dealt with by the discipline of the elders.

Some Forms of Discipline

As mentioned earlier, there are different forms of discipline. Some seem to think that by discipline we only mean putting a person away from the fellowship of the local church; in other words, excommunication. But this is only a last extreme when all other forms of discipline have failed.

At first it was stated that teaching the truth from the Word of God must be a primary part of discipline. This is clearly exemplified for us in First Corinthians, in which there is so much about order in the church. We just

mentioned briefly some examples which the reader may study more fully by himself. There were dissensions and quarrelings in that church at Corinth, so Paul pointed out the error of such things (ch. 1). He taught them the wrong in going to law against a brother (ch. 6), the right approach to marital problems (ch. 7), about such problems as eating meat offered to idols (ch. 8), about the support of Christian workers (ch. 9), about head covering and observance of the Lord's Supper (ch. 11), the use of gifts or abilities in the church (ch. 12 & 14), and the truth of resurrection (ch. 15). All such teaching is an essential element in discipline.

Human nature being what it is, even in believers, there will probably always be some who do not respond to the teaching. The next step in discipline would be admonition, rebuke or warning. Later on we will consider how to administer discipline but right now let us look at some verses that go a step further than teaching. Elders should be respected because they labour among us, are over us and admonish us (1 Thessalonians 5:12). These elders are to admonish the idle (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The word for "admonish" or warn literally means "putting in mind" or a firm reminder. The idle or "unruly" are those who are disorderly or insubordinate, for this word means "not keeping in step." There are those who are uncooperative or unwilling to work amicably with others. In Thessalonica some believers were idle and unwilling to work for their living. They had to be warned that if they did not work, they should not eat. Any brother who is lazy and unwilling to earn his own living ought not to be helped materially or financially by his brethren (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13). The expectation of the Lord's

imminent return, a truth prominent in the Thessalonian epistles, is no excuse for such conduct. While we should live as if He may come at any moment, we can plan and work as if it might yet be a long time. Such people were called “busybodies” which is paraphrased by W. E. Vine as “some who are not busied in their own business, but are overbusied in that of others” (see also 1 Timothy 5:13).

Paul realized that some would not heed such admonitions. So he says that we are to keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and have nothing to do with him (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14 R.S.V.) So where admonition fails there has to be avoidance. Such unruly Christians are to be taken note of so that others may dissociate from them. This seems to mean that we show our disapproval of such behaviour by our attitude toward these men. Or that we refrain from being too friendly with them in a social way. Yet this attitude is modified in that we are not to treat him as an enemy but should continue to warn him in a brotherly way (2 Thessalonians 3:15).

Those who create dissensions and difficulties with regard to teaching are also to be noted and avoided (Romans 16:17). As we have said, there are those who insist on their own point of view on some unimportant matters. We are to avoid stupid controversies, discussions about genealogies, dissensions and quarrels over the law which are unprofitable and futile (Titus 3:9). Such people magnify the importance of some minor issue out of its true proportion. By insisting on their particular viewpoint on some lesser matter they cause dissension and division in the church. They are described as heretics or factious (Titus 3:10). They keep

harping on one detail or on the interpretation of one verse and are unwilling to listen to what others have to say. If after two admonitions, they still persist in propagating their peculiar views, they are to be refused. The elders have a right to stop such men from spreading their ideas in the assembly. Such insubordinate men must be silenced (Titus 1:11).

It is sad but sometimes true that it may be an elder who has sinned. This is more serious because as a bishop or overseer he should have been an example to others. Any accusation against an elder needs to be verified by adequate testimony. An elder should not be condemned on the word of one man, no matter who he is, for two or three witnesses are required. Such an elder who sins must be rebuked publicly so that this will serve as a warning to others (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

It will be seen then that there are several forms of discipline short of excommunication. This is a last resort needed only in cases of serious, open sin. Such sins are immorality, greediness, idolatry, reviling, intoxication or theft (1 Corinthians 5:11). As we consider some examples of discipline in the New Testament we will take up the outstanding case in this chapter and see what is involved.

Discipline --Part 2

Discipline

Part 2

Cyril Brooks

Some Examples of Discipline

It will be helpful in our study of church discipline to look at some examples in the New Testament. There are not many such examples. For one thing, we do not have a detailed history of the early church and what examples are given are to reinforce the teaching on this subject. Possibly there was not much need for discipline in those apostolic days when the Christians were often persecuted. Persecution does have a purifying effect.

Ananias and Sapphira

The case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) was exceptional in several ways. Though it affected the church and concerned church members, yet it was carried out by Peter alone. As an apostle, through the Holy Spirit, he had unusual discernment to recognize the insincerity and deception of that couple. Today we are not able to discern motives or intentions, though we may have some suspicions. If the secret was well-hidden, we would more likely have commended such a couple for generous giving! The penalty also was unusually severe. It was an act of God rather than of Peter and so was a warning to all believers throughout the history of the Church. God looks for sincerity and honesty in our giving.

Differences between Brethren

In Matthew 18:15-20 our Lord tells what steps should be taken in regard to differences between brethren. This is an illustration rather than an example of discipline.

When a brother feels he has been wronged or sinned against by another, he should first go directly to the offender. If he makes this approach with love and in humility, certainly not in a belligerent manner, he may be able to clear up the misunderstanding, effect a reconciliation and win over his brother. Verse 19 makes it clear that if the two agree and are brought into harmony, then their prayers will be answered. If that fails, the offended one should make a second approach in company with one or two others as witnesses and arbitrators. If these two or three effect a reconciliation, because they gather in the name of Christ, then there will be a realization of the Lord's presence (v. 20). (Of course, verses 19-20 do have a much wider application but we should not overlook the immediate context). If the offender refuses to listen, then the third step is to take the matter to the local church, no doubt through the elders. If this third step fails, the church must act in discipline. Whatever the first offence may have been, there has now been added to it the sin of obstinacy, if not of rebellion (cf. 1 Samuel 15:23). For this he is to be treated as an unbeliever, that is, he is to be deprived of the privileges of church fellowship. Yet there is also here an implication that some effort should be made to bring him back to repentance.

Hymenaeus and Alexander

Paul refers to two men who had been disciplined (1 Timothy 1:19-20). These men, Hymenaeus and

Alexander, had made shipwreck of their faith because they had rejected the promptings of conscience. Careless conduct often leads to doctrinal error. (Note how Paul links “faith” and “conscience” in 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3-4). Evidently there was a group of persons involved in some kind of sin. These two men were singled out, either because they were leaders of that faction, or because they went further and blasphemed. Presumably it was one of these two, Hymenaeus, who is mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:16-18. For these verses it would seem they were guilty of “godless and foolish discussions which upset the faith of others.” They also erred in teaching that the resurrection was already past (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12).

Paul wrote that he had delivered them unto Satan. Commentators do not agree on the meaning of this. The same expression is used in 1 Corinthians 5, which we shall consider later. A.G. Nute writes: “It might suggest adversities supernaturally inflicted, or simply excommunication. The phrase would then describe the removal of the, person from the sphere where God rules, to that where Satan has sway.” It is remedial discipline so that these men, through it, might learn not to blaspheme. It certainly does not mean a loss of salvation. Whether or not these men were truly the Lord’s, they had named the name of the Lord, at least as professing believers, and therefore should have turned away from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19). The experience of Job may throw some light on the meaning of this phrase. Satan complained that God protected Job by putting a hedge around him (Job 1:10). Then God permitted Satan to attack Job within the limitations set by God. Could we say that Job was “delivered unto Satan”? While

discipline was not the primary purpose in Job's trial, yet he did learn more about his wrong ideas of God and about the sinfulness of his own heart.

Another hint as to the meaning of "delivered unto Satan" may be gleaned from our Lord's words in Luke 22:31, "Satan demanded to have you (plural), that he might sift thee (singular) like wheat." Satan wanted the bars lowered so that he could attack and tempt the apostles. In the case of Peter it led to his denial of the Lord (vs.34), but in Judas it resulted in betrayal (John 13:27). God used this attack of Satan as a sifting experience so far as Peter was concerned for it removed from him the chaff of self-confidence and boasting.

Diotrephes

In his third epistle, the Apostle John mentioned a man who needed to be disciplined. In the unknown church to which John referred there was a man named Diotrephes. This church leader was evidently a domineering man who liked to put himself first, one who "affects primacy" over the church. He refused to recognize the authority of John as an apostle and spoke evil against him. He asserted such power in that church that other elders seemed powerless to deal with him. John wrote that if he went there, he would bring up this man's deeds. We are not told the outcome, but we may presume that John's presence and authority did enable the elders to deal with that man.

Incest

No doubt the outstanding example of discipline is what we find in 1 Corinthians 5. When Paul wrote this letter to the church in Corinth he was greatly perturbed by

what he heard had happened there. He was specially shocked that a case of gross immorality was being tolerated. In those days the city of Corinth was notorious for vice and immorality (6:11). Yet in the church there was a case of immorality at which the heathen people would have raised their eyebrows. One of the members was living with "his father's wife." Apparently this referred to the stepmother and possibly the father may have been dead or divorced. Such an incestuous relationship was forbidden under the law (Leviticus 18:8) and certainly called for firm discipline in the church.

Paul strongly criticized the church for being puffed up with pride, for being arrogant when they should have been mourning over such a situation in their midst. The guilty man's conduct was inexcusable, but he might have been restrained had there been a more spiritual attitude in the church. Let it be emphasized here that when such sins occur it is not the time for self-righteous condemnation of the offender. Rather we ought to grieve over our own failure. Believers do not suddenly fall into such depths of sin. There must have been a gradual departure from the Lord first. Those who are spiritual ought to have detected those first signs of weakness so as to help a weak brother. If the Christians in Corinth had not been so occupied with their party rivalries, their petty jealousy, strife and pride, they would have been more ready to help one another and to pray for one another. They should have mourned, not only over the erring brother, but also over their own laxity and carnality.

Paul reminded them that their boasting was not good (vs.6) for they had nothing of which to boast. The leaven

of malice and evil needed to be removed (vs.8). They needed to deal with their own carnal ways which like leaven were having a permeating effect on the whole church. Not only did they need to discipline the guilty man, they needed some purging in their own lives.

A threefold authority was invoked for disciplining that guilty member. First, the apostle Paul, the one who started the work in Corinth, had already made his decision on the basis of the information he had received. Second, the church was to gather together with regard to this matter. While the elders would no doubt have to verify the facts and make their decision, the discipline was imposed by the assembled church, acting as if the Apostle were physically present. Third, the authority of the Apostle and of the local church was reinforced by the authority of Christ. He is the Head of the Church and they decided and acted in His name and under His power (vs. 4; Matthew 18:18).

We have previously considered the meaning of “deliver this man to Satan,” but note this added word, “For the destruction of the flesh.” Two interpretations of this may be suggested. “Flesh” seems to be used here in contrast to “spirit” so could refer to bodily suffering or even physical death (cf. 11:30). The body was the vessel or ‘instrument used in this sin (cf. 6:18). Or, “flesh” could mean the carnal nature, meaning that the man would learn through this discipline not to yield to fleshly lusts such as immorality. It could not mean, of course, the eradication of the sinful nature. Nor would it mean the loss of salvation for the man’s spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (cf. 3:15). This discipline also involved excommunication, for the guilty man to be “removed from among you” (vs.2); they were to drive

out the wicked person from among them (vs.13). Furthermore they were not to eat with such a person (vs. 11). Thus he would be debarred from partaking of the Lord's Supper, and possibly from normal social occasions. They were not to associate with anyone who "called himself a brother" who was living in such sin. There is a hint here that there was perhaps some doubt as to the reality or sincerity of that man's profession of faith.

In a previous letter, which is not of the New Testament, Paul had warned the Corinthians about associating with immoral people. Here he clarifies his meaning. In the normal course of life, in business or in government, we may be compelled by circumstances to mingle with and perhaps eat with some unsaved people of dubious morals. This cannot always be avoided and we are not called upon to judge such unbelievers, much as we may disapprove of their conduct. However, with those who are believers or who claim to be, things should be different. Disciplinary action must be taken by the church against those who are practising open sins before others. Besides the immoral, Paul mentions such as covetous or greedy, idolaters, railers or revilers, drunkards and extortioners or robbers. These would not be cases of a single lapse into such sins when a child of God might be suddenly overtaken by some temptation, and then immediately afterwards be filled with remorse. A brother who before his conversion had been addicted to liquor might through weakness yield to temptation. If he showed real contrition, he should not be disciplined for that one failure. However, if he continued that way, it would call for discipline. For such open sins bring

reproach upon the name of Christ and upon the testimony of the local church.

Discipline --Part 3

Discipline

Part 3

Cyril Brooks

The Way to Discipline

The way in which discipline is exercised is most important if it is to be effective. A surgeon performing a delicate operation needs to be careful lest he cause harm instead of healing. Discipline carried out in a wrong spirit or in a wrong way may harden rather than soften an offender, or it may cause strife or division in the church.

Permit me to suggest five essentials required in the way we should discipline. Surely love must come first of all. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Not that love condones or excuses sin, but that it does not expose it to public view by gossiping about it. "For lack of wood the fire goes out; and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases" (Proverbs 26:20 R.S.V.). This verse comes back to me over more than half a century because it was read after an announcement of discipline in the assembly where I grew up as a young man. Just as Shem and Japheth covered the drunken shame of their father, Noah (Genesis 9:23), so we ought not to publicize the guilt of an erring brother. Our love in regard to discipline may be displayed in three ways. First, because of our love for the Lord and for His honour, we want to be faithful to His Word in the administration of discipline. When we are motivated by love for Christ we will desire that He should be glorified, even in the

unpleasant matter of discipline. Second, there must be love for the church and for God's people as a whole. Our aim will be to maintain the spiritual purity of the church. Our prayer will be that the Lord's people may be built up or edified through such discipline. Third, there must be love for those who have done wrong, even though we hate what they have done. The one being disciplined is to be treated as a brother and not as an enemy (2 Thessalonians 3:15). Where it is evident that several are going astray there should be teaching to show them their error. However, where only one or two are involved, the first stages of discipline should be done privately with those concerned. In this way we can possibly spare them some public shame and avoid gossip by immature or unspiritual Christians. When only a few have done wrong, they ought not to be criticized or attacked from the platform in public preaching. Even if no names are mentioned, others will probably know who is being referred to. It is a cowardly use of the pulpit to publicly attack another through the sermon, especially when the preacher is not willing to talk personally with the person concerned. Reproofs should first be administered privately (James 5:19-20).

If there is love, there will also be humility. Much harm has been done by those who tried to put others right in a proud, censorious and self-righteous spirit. Our self-righteous pride may be a greater offense in the eyes of God than the sin we want to discipline. It may be the "beam" in our own eye that prevents us seeing clearly the "speck" in our brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5). If we are spiritual in our endeavour to restore our erring brother, we shall approach him in a spirit of meekness, in humility, considering our own weakness and

shortcomings (Galatians 6:1). Such reproof will be like healing oil and not like a cudgel (Proverbs 27:5-6; Psalm 141:5).

Then too there must be faithfulness in following God's Word in these matters. Through this we shall avoid indifferent discipline or an unwillingness to do what needs to be done, just because it will be unpleasant and irksome. Elders then will not shirk their duty even though it involves some special friend or relative. When we are faithful to the Scriptures, we shall avoid dilatory discipline, a failure to act promptly when the facts are unmistakable. On the other hand, we need to avoid unwarranted discipline by going beyond what the Scriptures teach. There are some matters of conduct that are left to the personal decision of the individual believer (Romans 14:4-5). Where such things are clearly not against principles set forth in the Word, they are not cause for discipline. We may not always agree with what others do, but there has to be some latitude in some areas of Christian conduct. Things like this could be discussed privately to clear up misunderstandings among believers.

Another essential in discipline is impartiality (1 Timothy 5:21). There should be no bias or prejudice on account of social standing (James 2:1-4), or personal relationships. We should act only on the basis of reliable evidence as to the facts of the case, so far as these can be determined. It is good to follow the biblical rule of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16). This is particularly true when accusations are brought against an elder (1 Timothy 5:19). Elders should try to be objective in their decisions. Sometimes it is good to think if we would make the same decision if

some other person were involved. It is well to beware of the extremes of being either too lax or too severe. Needless to say the offender should have every opportunity to hear the accusation and to defend himself.

Finally, there should be no discipline without much prayer. Pray for wisdom to sort out the facts upon which a decision must be made (James 1:5). Pray for a right attitude that will include all the above-mentioned essentials. Pray that God's will may be known so that we will do what He desires with regard to His children. Only the Lord knows everything for He alone knows our thoughts and motives. So much prayer is needed for His guidance. It is important that elders pray for all concerned in cases of discipline, and better still, if they are able to pray with them. Of course, there will be prayer that the erring one may be restored to the Lord and to the fellowship of His people.

The Objectives in Discipline

There needs to be some definite objectives and aims in church discipline. We should know what it is we are trying to accomplish, what purposes we have in mind. Some of these aims have already been mentioned, but will stand repeating. We will think of them in four ways; with regard to the disciplined person, to the elders, to the local church, and to the Lord.

So far as the one being disciplined is concerned, our aim should be his restoration, first to the Lord and then to the fellowship of the church. It ought to be our constant prayer and desire that he repent and come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25). By bringing back one who has wandered from the truth we can keep

him from going further into sin and from a more severe chastisement (James 5:19-20). Previously we have seen how the immoral man in Corinth was disciplined (1 Corinthians 5). We cannot be sure whether he repented and was restored, though this is a definite possibility. Commentators are not agreed whether this man is referred to in 2 Corinthians or whether it was some other opponent of the Apostle. Some statements there do not seem altogether applicable to the immoral man. Some suggest another letter was written by Paul between those in the New Testament and that this is the one referred to in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4. However, even if the immoral man is not the one mentioned, the principle still holds true. The punishment by the many was enough, for it had accomplished its purpose. So now they should rather forgive and comfort the man lest he be discouraged and overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. They were to reaffirm their love for him. Just as Paul had acted with them in discipline, so now he stands with them in forgiveness. In discipline they had acknowledged the presence of Christ and also now in forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

When there is evident repentance and a sincere confession of guilt, we must forgive the erring one, for that is what the Lord does (1 John 1:9). He then can be restored to the fellowship of the local church and again take his place at the Lord's table. If the discipline was publicly announced, then the restoration should also be announced publicly. Then everyone can show their love for the restored brother or sister by the warmth of their welcome. Let us try to forget the unhappy past and not talk about it any more. However, it takes time for wounds to heal. Also, we must consider the testimony of

the assembly. So for these reasons, the restored one should not expect to immediately take any public or prominent part in the services, unless it would be a personal testimony. Later on when others have a renewed confidence in his spiritual restoration he may take a more active part.

The exercise of discipline is a solemn responsibility for the elders. They are not engaged in a “witch-hunt,” looking for wrong-doers, nor are they seeking opportunities to show off their authority. But on the other hand, neither dare they ignore wrongdoing which affects God’s people. They are to take care of the church (1 Timothy 3:5), to tend the flock of God and be examples to it (1 Peter 5: 1-3). When there is need for discipline, it should be a challenge for them to search their own hearts. Have they failed to fulfill their duties or to be the kind of examples they should be? They are guides or leaders who are to keep watch over the souls under their care (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Another objective in discipline already mentioned is to maintain the purity of the testimony of the local church. We cannot expect to have an effective witness for Christ where sin is tolerated. The sin of one man, Achan, brought defeat to the nation of Israel (Joshua 7). We have seen how Paul referred to purging out the leaven in connection with discipline (1 Corinthians 5). The leaven of malice and evil must be put away. Though Paul’s rebuke hurt and grieved them it was a grief that led to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-16). He had been concerned, not only about those directly affected by the discipline, but about the whole congregation (v.12). So discipline should make us all realize more fully that sin is no little thing, not something that can be excused or

glossed over. God demands holiness from His people (1 Peter 1:15). Since we are all members of the Body of Christ, we must have a mutual care for each other (1 Corinthians 12:25). None of us can live just for himself and his own interests (Romans 14:7-9).

The ultimate objective looks forward to that day when our Lord will come again. We are to seek His honour and glory now because of His purpose at His coming. Then He will “present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27 R.S.V.). May we not anticipate that day by taking out some of the spots and wrinkles now through loving care and wise discipline? In all phases of discipline, our concern will be for the greater glory of God and for the honour of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In all our deliberations and decisions the paramount thought must be—How may God be glorified and Christ honoured in spite of all our failures and shortcomings?

Some Practical Suggestions

It has been suggested that this series of articles on discipline might be concluded with some practical suggestions. Let us suppose there is an actual case needing discipline in a local church. Let me emphasize at the outset that the following is an imaginary case. If it in any way seems to resemble some real situation, this is just a coincidence. In writing this I have no particular person or place in mind. We will suppose that the elders in a certain church have received a report that a brother (or it might be a sister) there has been guilty of immorality. This is chosen because it is a sin which is unfortunately much too common, but it could have been

something else, like gambling or crooked business practices. Let's call the suspected person "A" for "anonymous."

"A" has not been attending the services very regularly in recent months and he has been seen with unsaved companions quite frequently. At this point nothing more is known, though there are rumours. Following what we learned about forms of discipline, the elders will no doubt suggest some teaching on the need for attending services regularly (Hebrews 10:25) and the danger of unsaved companions (1 Corinthians 15:33). Even if "A" is absent, the teaching will be a helpful reminder to others. Of course, this teaching will be general so no names will be mentioned or suggested. Yet more specific warning will also be needed. So the elders should arrange for two brethren (or possibly sisters in the case of a sister involved) to visit "A" to talk with him and counsel with him. Perhaps he has some personal or family problems which have become a stumbling-block in his spiritual life. With prayer they should show him the teaching of the Scriptures and counsel him to live for the Lord and point out the spiritual dangers of careless living.

Later on there are reports that "A" has not paid any attention to those warnings. The reports seem to indicate the possibility of immorality. The elders will need to carefully and prayerfully look into these reports. It may not be easy to sort out the facts from gossip, but an honest effort must be made to learn the truth. The elders will need much spiritual wisdom and discernment. They themselves should avoid discussing these matters with others except where it is necessary to learn the truth. Their decision as to the discipline has

to be based on the facts in the light of scriptural teaching.

While it is the elders who ascertain the facts and make the decisions, the discipline is imposed by the church as a whole. The elders should have gained the respect and confidence of the believers so that they will be ready to endorse the decisions made. The discipline should be announced when the church is gathered together (1 Corinthians 5:4), and usually the best time for this is at the close of the Lord's Supper. Such announcements of discipline should not be made in a public meeting where unsaved people and outsiders are present. This is a family matter and should be kept within the family, meaning the local church.

The manner of making such an announcement is important. It should not be included with or tagged to a list of other announcements. There must be an atmosphere of solemnity so that everyone will realize the seriousness and sadness of such open sins. It should be strongly emphasized that there should be no gossiping about the matter. Rather there should be much prayer for the sinning member that he may be restored to the Lord through repentance and confession. Also, there should be much heart-searching by each one. Did I contribute to my brother's failure by my carelessness or by my lack of love and of prayer for him? Sin in the congregation is an occasion for mourning and grief (1 Corinthians 5:2), certainly not for condemnation or criticism. I vividly recall one such sad occasion when there was possibly not one dry eye among those present. It is not surprising that the brother disciplined soon repented and was restored.

It is quite likely that “A” has stopped coming to the meetings and may even have told someone that he no longer considers himself a member there. In this case, should the elders just drop the matter as if no further action is needed? Personally I do not think so. Though it may seem futile to put away one who is no longer there, there ought to be some record of a decision in the matter. In announcing the discipline taken, it could be mentioned that “A” is no longer attending the meetings, yet the elders felt they could not overlook what had happened. This would make clear the position of the assembly. Then, too, if “A” ever comes back desiring fellowship again, there would be grounds for finding out if he truly repented of his past misdeeds. He should not be permitted to slip back in as if nothing wrong had ever happened.

We live in an age of permissiveness and in a world where just about any kind of conduct is condoned. So discipline is unpopular and is often subject to protests of various kinds. The spirit of rebellion and self-will is rampant all around us. In the church there may be a tendency to be lax with regard to discipline. It is one of those unpleasant duties that most of us would prefer to avoid. Yet godly order in the church requires it. Some of the sting may be lessened if we remember our Lord’s example—“For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:6 R.S.V.).

Let all concerned recognize that discipline must be an evidence of love for those who are in the family of God.

Early Days of Gospel Broadcasting in the Philippines

The time: evening of December 7th, 1941. The place: radio studio in downtown Manila. The half-hour program of the "Gospel Messengers" was just about to go off the air but the clock showed they still had another minute. The broadcaster picked up a card, handed to him earlier that day, - "A perfect Convoy of Dreadnaughts". On this card were printed seven verses, each with "Fear not". In that remaining minute the broadcaster read: "Fear not, I have redeemed thee." "Fear not, I am with thee." "Fear not, I am thy shield." "Fear not, the Lord thy God will not fail thee." War was raging in Europe and rumours of war abounded in the Far East. With those words of assurance the "Gospel Messengers" went off the air - for good, stopped by outbreak of war in the Pacific and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Unknown to those in the radio studio, at that very moment, convoys of carriers and planes were already on their way to bomb Pearl Harbor and points in the Philippines.

The recent 25th anniversary (1948-1973) of Gospel broadcasting from Manila by the Far East Broadcasting Company reminded the writer of those Gospel programs before World War II. Since not so many are around to recall those days, it may be of value to recall and record the beginnings of Gospel broadcasting here in the Philippines. My memory has been refreshed by going through copies of "The Philippine Evangelist", a monthly magazine published in Manila from 1932 to 1941. Possibly this article may stimulate further research into

the early days of missionary radio broadcasting. In that connection, may I digress for a moment to an island far removed and very different to the Philippine Islands.

Radio, or wireless (as it was often known then) was in its infancy in 1923 when Mr. Arthur Gook, a Brethren missionary in Iceland, had a vision of using it in his work, where it was very difficult to visit outlying churches. With a wireless transmitting outfit in either Reykjavik or Akureyri, and receivers in other chapels, Gospel services could be held simultaneously all over the island. "A very satisfactory licence" was granted by the Icelandic government in 1927, and after a number of delays, broadcasting began in December, 1927. While the primary purpose was to reach listeners in Iceland, the transmitter proved to be very efficient and reception was reported from as far away as England, New York, and even California, 4300 miles away. Broadcasting continued in spite of problems with electrical power until 1929. In that year the license was revoked because of the opposition of an unfriendly government official.

In an article in "Echoes of Service" March 1959 (from which these facts are culled) it is stated, "We believe the pioneering efforts of Mr. Gook and his helpers were one of the things which encouraged the erection of HCJB in Quito, Ecuador which went on the air in 1931."

In January 1934, Dr. Paul G. Culley, then a missionary with the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, commenced a fifteen-minute, Sunday evening program over KZRM, Manila. So far as we know this was the first live Gospel program here in the Philippines. Some programs from the United States, such as Old-fashioned Revival Hour and Lutheran Hour were released but

these were, I believe, a few years later. The managers of the radio station were apprehensive of adverse reaction from listeners or from Roman Catholic hierarchy. So at first there was to be no preaching. However each hymn was introduced by a brief comment and possibly those sermonettes were more effective than a sermon would have been at that point.

A note in "The Philippine Evangelist" in April, 1934 indicates the response: "Many expressions of appreciation have been received for the program of the Gospel Singers, broadcast from Radio Manila. Not only from all parts of the Philippines but also from other lands, letters have been pouring in. One card from the Colonial Secretariat, Hong Kong, the writer 'regrets that the time allotted is not longer.'" After a break during the hot season, the program was resumed as a half-hour program in June, 1934. In August a lady wrote from Australia, telling of excellent reception - as clear as Bendigo, a hundred miles away!"

The following year the Culley's left for furlough and the program was taken over by Dr. Russell Bradley Jones, then pastor of the First Baptist Church, Manila. Since Dr. Jones was a gifted speaker but not a singer like Paul Culley, he insisted there would have to be preaching. By that time the program was popular and there had not been the unfavorable reaction, so this was approved. Some of Dr. Jones' early messages were published in "The Philippine Evangelist." The issue of September, 1935 has a message by this writer, delivered over station KZRM on February 24th, 1935. I recall that Dr. Jones had asked me to give the message that evening. My nervousness at facing a microphone for the first time was aggravated by a sore throat and husky voice but Dr.

Jones wouldn't let me beg off! It wasn't a very auspicious start to radio broadcasting and little did I then foresee the future share I would have in radio ministry.

At the Manila Carnival in February 1936 we had a Bible booth. One of the visitors there was an American visiting from Guam. He reported that a large number, about a thousand people, there wait for the Sunday evening broadcast of the Gospel Messengers from Radio Manila. Dr. Jones left for furlough in March, 1936 and turned over the responsibility for the program to me. This was continued until that Sunday in December, 1941, except for a little over a year of furlough, 1937-1938, during which time other friends carried on the program.

Only the Lord knows the real results of these broadcasts in the lives of men and women. The files of correspondence from those days were lost or destroyed during the war. However two instances of encouragement still linger in the memory. One was a letter from a young wife who had become very despondent because of many problems and was about to take her life. Then she heard the "Gospel Messengers" quartet singing, "All this I have borne for thee, what has thou borne for me?" It was the voice of God to her and she found peace and joy trusting in Christ. Shortly before the war, contact was made with another young lady. When we visited her we tried to lead her to Christ as the One who could help her in her problems. It was all too new for her to come to a decision then. After prayer with her, we saw the tears flowing as she exclaimed, "Never in my life have I heard a prayer like that!" I was a bit ashamed that it sounded so ordinary to us but she was accustomed to formal, memorized

prayers. Contact was lost because of the war but twenty years later, after a Gospel service a lady approached me. Her face seemed familiar but I could not place her until she told me of that visit and also that now she is a believer in Christ.

A note in "The Philippine Evangelist" in November 1938 shows there had been no charge for radio time until then when the station began charging religious programs. It was a work of faith and the Lord always supplied the needs, whether of finances or personnel. For a time three nationalities were represented in the mixed quartet. That was before the days of tape-recorders so all programs went on the air live. One evening the station advanced our program time by fifteen minutes at short notice. It had not been possible to notify all the participants. As a result the pianist and some of the singers sauntered in quite casually just before we were given the mike. I thought we would have to change the format and start with the message!

One Sunday evening in 1940 an American sailor on a submarine in Manila Bay tuned into the Gospel Messengers. He was a discouraged Christian because he hadn't found Christian fellowship on shore nor a Gospel program on his radio. The spiritual uplift from our program that evening caused him to write to us. That contact later led into another area of Christian service for the Brooks family as their home became a servicemen's home. One who was helped spiritually at that time was a young Air Force man, named Jesse Miller. After World War II, Jesse and his wife were led into work among U.S. servicemen overseas. This developed into the forming of Overseas Christian

Servicemen's Centers Inc., with centers in different countries in Asia and Europe.

During 1941 there was usually a contingent of servicemen in the studio when "Gospel Messengers" went on the air. Their interest, prayers and fellowship were a great encouragement. So that evening of Dec. 7th, 1941 we did not realize how much we were all soon going to need the assurance of those "Fear not" verses. The fellows left the studio to go back to their ships and stations. For some of us, civilians, there was to be Japanese occupation and internment camp. For some of them, the three years of war in the Pacific; for others, the horrors of Bataan, the Death March and Japanese prison camps; and for others, death or missing in action. Whatever happened, the promise was true - "Fear not; I am with thee."

One closing footnote - the Japanese took control of the radio stations that had been built again under their direction after being silenced before they entered Manila. Some Filipino pastors were invited to preach on Sundays and of course they were expected to conform to the Japanese propaganda. An old friend and a former student in my classes, the late Dr. Santiago Crusperio had taken a most courageous stand for Christ. He was ready to preach the Word but not to give out propaganda. Once he was invited to give a radio message and the first he submitted was disapproved by the Japanese. Unknown to them he then came to me for advice. I thought it rather ironical that I, an "enemy alien", should help him in that situation. Without compromising the truth of the Word, we succeeded in preparing a message which was approved for broadcast.

THINK IT NOT STRANGE

Think it not strange then, pilgrim neither faint, much less indulge in murmuring and complaint, if what you meet with in your heavenly road is hard to bear; since all is planned by God His child to train in wisdom's holy ways, and form a chosen vessel for His praise.

Now we are slow those ways to understand; but let us bow beneath His mighty Hand, sure that His wisdom over all presides, His power controls and love unerring guides. J.G. Deck.

This article also appears, with photos, in Volume 8 of the series "Lord, Give Us This Mountain" →

His Word Runs Swiftly - Bible School of the Air History (Philippines) - 1981

Cyril and Anna Brooks have been serving the Lord in the Philippines since 1922, with few interruptions---a total of 59 years! Their three children, Len, Ken, and Rose, are all in full-time work.

September's article on Emmaus Bible School's outreach, "These Forty Years," mentioned the use of Emmaus correspondence courses by The Bible School of the Air. This article is a fitting sequel.

Some missionary-minded parents watched their little son, perched atop a wooden sawhorse, lustily singing, "Speed away, speed away with the life-giving Word." They had dedicated their youngest son to the Lord for God's service and named him "Cyril" after a missionary who had died in Central Africa. None of them realized how prophetic were the words sung in innocence.

When the Psalmist wrote "His Word runs swiftly" Psalm 147:15 (N.I.V.) he was thinking of the rapidity of God's commands throughout His creation. In this modern age we may apply those words to the swift spread of the Gospel by means of radio and literature. Here are a few dates significant to us as having a personal part in the dissemination of God's Word.

February 12, 1922 in Hackensack, N.J. For the first listened to a sermon on the radio but never dreamed that radio would play a large part in our ministry in the Philippines for which we were then preparing. Incidentally, the sermon wasn't very good, being more about Abraham Lincoln than about Jesus Christ!

February 24, 1935 in Manila. Spoke for the first time on the radio as a guest of The Gospel Messengers program. The message, "True Satisfaction" was later printed in the September issue of The Philippine Evangelist.

March 15, 1936. Took over as the regular speaker of The Gospel Hour on KZRM, a commercial radio station in Manila. Apart from furlough time, 1937-1938, continued this ministry with many interesting and fruitful contacts. Heard of a large group in Guam who listened regularly. Received many testimonies of souls being saved. Twenty years later we met a lady who had been saved through that program.

December 7, 1941. Spoke on Four Freedoms with a spiritual application, unaware that Japanese bombers were already on the way toward Pearl Harbor and the Philippines. Thus was terminated that phase of radio ministry, during the years of Japanese occupation and rehabilitation at home until our return to the Philippines.

April 17, 1950. The first program of the Bible School of the Air over the facilities of the Christian radio station of the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) in Manila.

THE BIBLE SCHOOL OF THE AIR

As we prayed about the type of radio program to offer and whether we should use FEBC or a commercial station, we received in early 1950 a copy of a new course published by Emmaus Bible School. The Lord's guidance became clear as we read through What The Bible Teaches. A program of Bible Study based on a correspondence course which would be offered free to listeners. The guidance was confirmed by the

cooperative response of Mr. Robert Bowman of FEBC. The station had been in operation then for nine months. With his help we came up with the name Bible School of the Air because the significance of “Emmaus” would be lost on prospective listeners.

1950 was not the most auspicious time to launch this new project. Tension was high throughout the Far East. The Korean War was soon to start. Insurgency was rife in the Philippines. The U.S. Embassy had warned U.S. citizens not to travel at night outside of the city. Gunshots were often heard as we drove out to FEBC to air our programs on Monday evenings. But the Lord was leading, of that we were sure, though we little realized where He was leading. Had we known we would not have had the faith to start! This work has developed in two directions: radio programs and correspondence courses.

The Radio Ministry

This has consisted mainly of a half-hour program once a week. At the beginning my wife had a part in reading letters and questions. In 1951 there was the welcome arrival of Kenneth Engle with his radio experience at WMBI as a student at Moody in Chicago. The next year our son Kenneth also arrived to help in this work. All of the programs (1600 plus to date) have been based on Emmaus courses with varying formats. Part of the time there was a forum type when three or four would spend a few minutes discussing questions on the lesson. In recent years it has been thought advisable to have just one speaker so listeners would identify a voice with the program. For some years we also had a fifteen-minute

program three times a week in addition to the half-hour program.

The advent of tape recorders was a great boon. Programs could be prepared ahead of time at our convenience. The recordings could be preserved for use at some future time. While on furlough I could record programs wherever it was possible to get the use of good quality equipment. It also made it possible to air the programs over some commercial stations in other parts of the Philippines. This was being done prior to the time of the institution of martial law in September 1972. Then all stations were temporarily off the air. FEBC was one of the first to resume operations after a few days. However as commercial stations resumed broadcasting they raised their rates considerably. Since the response had been rather meager it was thought inadvisable to negotiate new contracts.

For some time the feasibility of a Tagalog program was considered. In March 1978, it was commenced with one of the national workers, Brother Rey Cervantes, as speaker. Naturally this is more limited in its outreach than English but the Lord has richly blessed these Tagalog programs. They have been well received and in fact have drawn more letter response than the English programs during the last three years!

It was time for a change in the English program, for a younger voice and preferably a Filipino voice. Recording sessions were proving rather tiring at my age. Our fellow missionaries were already so busy they were reluctant to take on this work. One of the national workers, Mr. Rudy Ponce de Leon returned last year from three years of study in Bible college in New

Zealand. With extensive radio experience and spiritual qualifications he was well fitted. However he became deeply involved in other aspects of the work and didn't feel free to devote time to preparation. (I find it takes at least a day to prepare a 16-minute radio message.) Rudy suggested he could read a script if someone else prepared it. This arrangement has been working well for some months now. I prepare the script of the message. Rudy reads it and his nephew, Pete Barotilla, puts the whole program together.

The Correspondence Course Ministry

At the beginning, the only way of advertising the courses was through the radio program. How thrilled we were with the initial response---before long 500 requests and soon it was up to 1000. Students were soon asking for the course for their friends. We printed a form where they could list names of others. Christian workers would send lists of church members and interested friends. Though direct response from the radio program decreased, total requests rose. It was not uncommon to get over 3000 in a week. Advertisements placed in weekly magazines brought a good response though this was rather expensive.

What The Bible Teaches was soon translated into Tagalog. A curious mistranslation was caught before it went into print. The word "deliver" as in deliverance from sin, was translated with a word meaning to deliver a package! Later on this course was also translated into Cebuano, Ilocano and Hiligaynon (Ilonggo). These four are the principal Philippine languages. Courses are also offered in Chinese.

After seventeen years a million requests had been received. A rally was held and Bibles were given to five Manila students enrolled in that week. Rallies held on other occasions were not very encouraging. They were attended mostly by interested friends but not by correspondence students. In March 1975 the total responses passed the one-and-one-half million mark. Since then growth numerically has been slow because of a change in our methods. Now enrollments average between five to six hundred a month. However the percentage of completions is higher.

The earlier method was an evangelistic outreach. So even if students did not return their test papers, they still received a booklet with a clear gospel message. After using various booklets, such as *The Reason Why*, and *Here's How*, we wrote a booklet specially suited to local conditions and problems. Many have written to testify of salvation through this booklet. Now a shorter course, *Men Who Met The Master*, is being used as the introductory free course in the place of *What The Bible Teaches*.

The introductory courses and also the Philippine language courses are all printed locally. The advanced courses are purchased from Emmaus Bible School. Some of these advanced courses have been translated into Tagalog. We are trying to encourage Christians to use these in their own personal Bible study. Some local churches are also using them for home Bible study groups, and Sunday Schools.

THE SPIRITUAL RESULTS

Only in eternity will we learn the true spiritual results of all the effort and expense that has gone into the Bible

School of the Air. Yet the Lord allows us to see some of the fruit now. The Gospel has gone forth to all parts of the Philippines with its 45 million population and also to many other countries. No count has been kept but hundreds, possibly thousands of letters have testified of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many Christian workers in different groups have testified of the help received from the courses, either in their salvation or in the enriching of their spiritual lives.

On a large sugar estate in Tarlac, Central Luzon, a few men were saved through courses. Seven or eight certificates adorned the wall of one home. We contacted them after they had been meeting for Bible study. What a hunger they had for the Word! On a Saturday evening, a couple of us met with them from seven till midnight. The meeting stopped then because we had a three-hour drive home and a busy Sunday ahead. Now there are two assemblies in that area with an outreach to other places.

In the Candaba swamps, a rich rice-growing area north of Manila, there was little gospel witness, if any. Insurgency was rampant and night travel was risky. Now there are five assemblies there; a result of a young woman being saved as she studied What The Bible Teaches. The first meeting in her home in Bahay-pare in 1963 is unforgettable! Twenty to thirty neighbors were invited in. it wasn't a formal meeting just a friendly talk. For an hour I explained our mission and the way of salvation. When I invited questions, one man said, "We have seen a change in Tessie and we want to know what it's all about." It was three hours before they finally left to get their evening meals.

In the central part of the archipelago, in Guimbal, Iloilo, a man was saved and began witnessing to others. From their studies they learned about the local church and built a chapel in which to meet. Their only outside help has been from occasional visits of national workers. Reports of other such groups have been received and they have linked up with other groups of evangelicals. God's Word runs swiftly and does not return to Him empty.

Another spiritual result has been to see God's faithfulness in supplying the needs. One morning in my quiet time I was praying about the immediate need of about \$500.00. Later while eating breakfast, Ken Engle brought in the mail which contained a gift for just that amount. Like everywhere else, costs have been rising. Bills for printing have increased; postage has risen from two centavos to forty on each piece of mail. In 1980 operational costs were somewhat over \$22,000.00 but God has not failed---He cannot fail.

The actual operation of the Bible School of the Air is now in the hands of a Filipino staff. The office manager is Mr. Elinio Aragon who is an elder of the assembly in Binangonan and actively engaged in other phases of the Lord's work. Working with him are Miss Luz Lazaro who has been with us in this work since August 1950 and two sisters, Misses Letty and Nelly Licera who have also been with us for several years. These devoted workers are serving not only for the salary they receive but also as a service for the Lord. An advisory committee meets periodically to oversee the work in general and to set policies.

Pray for the Bible School of the Air in its radio outreach and use of correspondence courses. Praise God that its voice “has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” “Thy Word runs swiftly.” Psalm 147:15 (N.I.V.)

This history also appears, with photos, in Volume 8 of the series “Lord, Give Us This Mountain” →