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Trying to Fulfil the Great Commission in Madagascar

Rev Richard Ravelomanantsoa
Pastor, Antananarivo and Morarano Churches, Madagascar

We are a missional church. The command of our Lord is to preach and teach **all** that our Lord has given to us. This means that we cannot be satisfied with just profession or faith alone. Our task is to preach and teach full salvation.

Being a missional church in Madagascar and carrying out that command is both a strange and challenging work. It is strange because it is a new concept for people in the ecumenical churches. It is challenging to the 1% who have a concept of evangelism but exclude part of the “all”.

Problems and Challenges

The concept of sin: In both the ecumenical and most evangelical churches the concept is similar: the principle of sin will always be with you and so acts of sin are to be expected. In both cases they are urged to pray and ask forgiveness of their sins continually.

The concept of salvation: The classical churches are not missional. Christian faith is the result of being able to take part in communion. This is granted following infant baptism and one year of catechism received during teenage years. Communion is the confirmation of faith in Christ according to the Apostles Creed.

The challenge we meet from this means that they are “Christianised” but not “Evangelized”. A response of someone like this following the JESUS Film is: “We are already Christians, why must we ask Christ to come into our lives?” In other words, they are saying we already have the truth by the means of baptism and communion.

The churches that are evangelical bring people to be born again, that is, justification, regeneration, and adoption. Sanctification is included theologically with the new birth. Salvation does not include deliverance or cleansing from the sin nature.

Pre-evangelism is necessary to show that their concept of truth regarding salvation is not biblical. Visiting the families in an area where evangelism is to be done and establishing relationships through small groups is essential if trust is to be built. This helps the people to be open to the teaching of the biblical understanding of salvation.

Another aspect we face is among the evangelical churches, which represent about 1% of the population. While they have a concept of mission and evangelism, and so preach and teach the biblical way of salvation by repentance and faith in Christ, they still struggle with sin. They teach that this struggle is natural for this life and the principle of sin will not be removed until death. In other words, they do not teach **all** that Christ has given to us.

Biblical responses to these problems and challenges

Regarding these problems and challenges in Madagascar, we need to see the biblical response to the human problem -- the two aspects of sin: the sinful nature (Genesis 3; 6:5, Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12-14) and the acts of sin or personal sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4).

When we talk about salvation, we deal with the sin problem. In God's disposition, salvation deals with a two-fold solution. Firstly, personal sin is dealt with by being born-again through:

Forgiveness that gives pardon from the guilt and penalty of sin

(1 John 1:9; Acts 10:43),

Justification that gives fulfilment of the demands of the Law

(Romans 3:21-25; 5:1),

Regeneration that gives new life through Christ

(John 3:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17),

Adoption that gives reception into the family of God

(Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 1:5).

Secondly, the sinful nature is dealt with through entire sanctification, subsequent to regeneration, which gives cleansing or purification (Acts 15:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

It is not in God's manner to solve the problem half way. He does it completely and totally once and for all through Christ (Hebrews 7:26-27). The Scripture teaches and we must make clear that the problem is not only the acts of sin but also as Paul says what causes us to sin is the sinful nature

(Romans 7:17). We lovingly teach that the blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin's power (Romans 7:24-25). It is an act of God, what we call His second work of grace, following conversion (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

In this case, as a result, we no longer have to struggle with this sin in the believer but rather he is at "rest" (Hebrews 4:3-11).

When we talk about full salvation, we mean entire sanctification. God makes us free from the root of sin. Full salvation does not mean that we stay at initial sanctification, being forgiven from our sins. God wants to do more until we are delivered from the sinful nature, which is the cause of human-nature problems. That is the complete restoration of the man to the resemblance of God's image.

Our Great Commission in Madagascar: A Holiness Evangelism

With that biblical point of view, we will have a holiness evangelism. Our missions and ministries will be shaped with that biblical concept. The presentation of the gospel doesn't change: the cross, the resurrection, and the indwelling presence of Christ in the life of the person. But we will teach also the concept of sin to convince the believers to experience the sanctified life, to come to the point that we could live free from sin. Confrontation and temptation will still be there but there is no conflict or struggle anyway (James 1:12).

In the Malagasy context, it's hard to point out someone's sin or errors or mistakes face to face; it may close the door to the relationship. Anyway, we need also to tell God's truth in a loving way and not be hard.