

An Unwritten Letter to Paul

THIS LETTER COULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN TO THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD HE APPLIED TO A MODERN FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE.

Dear Mr. Paul:

We recently received an application from you for consideration of mission works under our charge. It is our policy to be as frank and open-minded with all our applicants. We have made an exhaustive survey of your case. To be plain, we are surprised that you have been able to “pass” as a bonafide missionary. We are told that you are afflicted with a severe eye trouble. This is certain to be a handicap to an effective ministry. We require 20-20vision.

Do you think it seemly for a missionary to do part-time secular work? We heard that you are making tents on the side. In a letter to the Church at Philippi you admitted that they were the only church supporting you. We wonder Why?

Is it true that you have a jail record? Certain brethren report that you did two years’ time at Caesarea and was imprisoned at Rome.

You made so much trouble for the businessmen at Ephesus that they refer to you as ‘the man who turned the world upside down.’ Sensationalism has no place in missions! We also deplore the lurid over-the-wall episode at Damascus. We are appalled at your obvious lack of conciliatory behavior. Diplomatic men are not dragged out of the city gate, or assaulted by famous mobs. Have you ever suspected than gentler words might gain you more friends?

In one of your letters you refer to yourself as “Paul the Aged.” Our new missions policies do not anticipate a surplus of elderly recipients. We understand, too, that you are given to fantasies and dreams. At Troas, you saw “a man of Macedonia” and at another time you were “caught up into the third heaven” and even claimed that “the Lord stood by” you. We reckon that more realistic and practical minds are needed in the task of world evangelism.

You have written many letter to churches where you have formerly visited and worked. In one of these letters, you accused a church number of living with his father's wife, and you caused the whole church to feel badly and the poor fellow was withdrawn from.

Your ministry has been far too flighty to be successful. First, Asia Minor, then to Macedonia, then Greece, then Italy, and now you are talking about a wild goose chase to Spain. Concentration is more important than dissipation of one's powers. You cannot win the whole world by yourself! You are just one little man. In a recent sermon you said, "God forbid that I should glory in anything save the cross of Christ." It seems to us that you also ought to glory in our heritage as well.

Your sermons are much too long for the time. At one place you talked too long for the time. At one place you talked until midnight and a young man was so sleepy that he fell out of the window and broke his neck. Nobody is saved after the first 20 minutes.

Dr. Luke reports that you are a thin little man, bald, frequently sick and always so agitated over the churches that you sleep very poorly. He reports that you pad around the house, praying half the night. A healthy mind in a robust body is our ideal for all applicants. A good night's sleep will give you zeal and zip so that you wake up full of zing!

You wrote recently to Timothy that you had "fought a good fight." Fighting is hardly a recommendation for a missionary. No fight is a good fight. Jesus came not to bring a sword, but peace. You boast that "I fought with wild beasts of Ephesus." What on earth do you mean?

It hurts me to tell you this, brother Paul, but in all of the 25 years of my experience, I have never met a man so opposite the requirements of our Foreign Missions Committee, If we accepted you, we would break every rule of current missionary committee thinking.

Most sincerely yours,
Foreign Missions Committee