

# UNLIKELY MISSIONARIES

Paul E. Grant

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Over a lifetime of reading  
About missionaries of many kinds  
I've come to an understanding  
That God seems strangely inclined  
To choose and use the most unlikely,  
Baffling conventional psychology

Think for example of John Newton  
Slave-trader and profiteer  
"Amazing grace" and sins forgiven  
Transformed this buccaneer.  
Later, a preacher and hymn-writer,  
Evangelist and Jesus-promoter

Mary Slessor with little education  
Became the "Queen" of Calabar;  
Single, she had huge compassion  
For the people of Nigeria  
She worked for almost forty years  
Loved by Africans as their overseer

These two examples illustrate  
A theme of Hebrews Eleven  
That God's missionaries would radiate  
An ethos unique to heaven;  
People whose primary education  
Would be grounded in Christ's revelation

By 'missionary' I mean those who hear  
And respond to the call of Jesus,  
For them he is the dearest of the dear  
Eternally illustrious.  
They know he has sent them as his witness  
For them it is part of spiritual fitness

The noble Christian mission saga  
Has been written by this world's rejects,  
God sees them as his people of wonder  
Heralds of his Eternity project.  
Of them this world has not been worthy  
Though they are God's aristocracy

**Each believer is called to mission  
To dignity, passion, integrity,  
To each is given God's commission  
And his Spirit's power in entirety.  
What an honour! What a calling!  
What a function! So enthralling!**

**By this world's values we are assessed  
As those who are the most unlikely  
To ever "succeed" or achieve the best  
In terms of cultural theory.  
God's messengers scorn temptations  
Of this world's accreditations**

***I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
Where is the philosopher of this age?*<sup>1</sup>  
Jesus' message was Eternity's prize.  
For he had come to set the stage  
For a Kingdom that would never end  
Peopled by those who would learn to transcend**

**Learning and training and all theology,  
Cultural norms and social methods  
Must submit to Jesus' scrutiny  
And be corrected by biblical standards.  
In these ways missionaries are made  
In these ways they achieve God's grade**

**While Jesus' message was counter-cultural  
He sends us back into our social settings,  
There we act in ways that are Scriptural  
To confront and transform with blessings.  
Only the Truth will set people free  
Whatever their cultural identity**

**The Gospel, above all messages, radical,  
In particular ways is a dare,  
It calls me to die and be evangelical  
And submit to the Spirit's flair.  
"The most unlikely to succeed"  
Will, by grace win, in word and deed**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18-26

**So we are forced to reassess  
Our culture's ethics and values,  
Christians as missionaries are sent to bless  
This world with transforming virtues.  
The mission task is not completed  
Will I, Gideon-like, stay self-defeated?<sup>2</sup>**

**But Gideon, the reluctant commando,  
Responded to God's direction,  
By obedience he became a hero  
And experienced a powerful unction.  
In his weakness he became strong  
By Spirit power confronting wrong**

**"Unlikely missionaries" have their trust  
In the Spirit's power, not wisdom<sup>3</sup>  
This is the energy that gives the thrust  
To the testimony of their freedom.  
God chooses and uses those who obey  
Mistrusting their own plan and way**

**The Hebrews Eleven gallery of heroes  
Are those who others would disregard,  
They are shown as God's precious maestros,  
And part of Heaven's vanguard.  
The despised, foolish, humble, and weak<sup>4</sup>  
Shining there in Heaven's mystique**

**The world by its wisdom does not know God,  
He shames and negates its seeming worth,  
He calls and honours the ones rejected  
For they were so destined before their birth.  
To history's great astonishment  
The "unlikely" are used for his accomplishments**

**Paul E. Grant  
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<sup>2</sup> Judges 6-7

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:5

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:27-29

