

SHARING CHRIST WITH OTHERS

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Those majestic words of the Lord Jesus Christ, spoken on a mountain in Galilee, sweep up into heaven, then out across the earth, and on to ages yet unborn. The scope of this Great Commission is worldwide, its content is all-embracing, and its continuance is age-long.

Christianity is missionary in character. The missionary ingredient is a major element in its composition. God is missionary, for of Him we read that He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is missionary, as was evidenced by the fact that he came to the earth "to seek and to save that which was lost." His life was spent in making God known to the sons of men. He did not leave the earth until He had made provision for the proclamation of the saving message. God's Word is missionary. Its message is not geographical, but it is universal. It is not addressed to class or caste, but to all men everywhere. It is applicable to all classes in all conditions, climes and times. The gospel of Christ was not meant for just one tongue, but for all tongues. It was not intended for one class, but for all classes. Not one person is to be deprived of the privilege of hearing it, regardless of color or condition.

It is appropriate for us to examine afresh the command of Christ to give His gospel to the whole world. His gospel is needed by all, is adapted to every person, and is adequate for every one. No New Testament church can function properly that disregards the Great Commission. No ministry can meet our Lord's expectations that disregards His worldwide command. No amount of intensive local dedication can relieve us from our global obligations. The business of every church is worldwide. A church that does not stand supremely for the gospel to all is not entitled to the ground upon which its building stands.

The missionary impulse is imparted to every saved soul. The very first impulse of one who has received Christ is to tell others about Him. When the missionary spirit does not prevail, the child of God is a backslider and needs to repent of his selfishness. Appreciation for what the Lord has done for us should cause us to be missionary. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:2). "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:14). Those of us who are saved are obligated to give the gospel to all, without respect to color, to character, or to condition of life. The love of Christ enlarges the heart in concern about the salvation of others--to members of the same family, to the circle of one's acquaintances, to those of the same country, and to all mankind. Genuinely saved people do not want to withhold Christ from others. We must witness to our relatives, our acquaintances, and those in the regions beyond.

Christ has commissioned His churches to carry His message to the uttermost parts of the world. It is not our task to argue the propriety or the wisdom of missions. That question is not debatable. With the clear, specific and explicit command of our Lord before us, there is nothing for us to do but to obey Him. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is the most militant command that ever sounded in the ears of men. It has in it the ring of challenge, the fire of compassion, the spirit of conquest, the forgetfulness of self, the vision of a world, the call of sacrifice and the abandon of devotion. It begins at home, but it does not stop there. Christ evaded a danger which constantly besets Christianity by refusing to be localized. To localize Christianity is to paralyze it. Christ did not come to be a local leader, but to be a world Redeemer.

Christ reminded His followers that the field is the world, nothing less and nothing more. He is calling upon His people to leap over the geographical boundaries and to catch the vision of what is involved in His statement, "The field is the world." Has that word "world" really dawned upon us in its fulness? Many professing Christians have never had a world vision. Their world is their own little sphere. Somehow that little word "my" is a miserable blanket in which multitudes of God's children have wrapped themselves so far as the missionary cause is concerned.

Do you have a world vision? Do you see things as God has revealed them? Are you wearing the dark glasses of selfishness or the blinders of prejudice? Any church member is out of fellowship with God if he is not concerned about the salvation of lost souls and the propagation of His Word to the most remote parts of the earth. The missionary gap of most Christians is far too small. It is confined to those sections which appeal to their fancy or it excludes those areas toward which there may be prejudice.

Today missionary work must be done in a world of gigantic contradictions. For example, it is a world in which science has made the nations neighbors without making them friends. A century ago nations wanted to communicate with each other, but found it difficult to do so because the means were so limited and so slow. Today, with the means at hand for almost lightning-like communication, half of them do not want to communicate. So we have "curtains" hung between us--the "iron curtain," the "bamboo curtain," and so on. Missionaries must cope with the aroused aggressiveness of non-Christian movements and faiths. As of November 1, 1968, the Foreign Mission Board's overseas staff in 68 countries is divided into the following categories: 2,114 Career Missionaries, 105 Missionary Associates, 124 Missionary Journeymen, and 3 Special Project Medical Missionaries. The total is 2,346.

Christ came and preached. He sent forth His disciples to preach, also. As His present-day followers, it is our inestimable privilege and imperative duty to preach His gospel to all who have not heard it. From this obligation to preach the gospel there is no evasion or exemption. To preach is not merely a suggestion, but it is a divine injunction. Christ has saved us in order that He may, through us, reach others. If a person has proved that a medicine is efficacious in curing a disease of sin and the only cure for it is the blood of Christ; therefore, it would be a terrible thing not to make that fact known. There is no hope for any apart from the gospel of Christ, which has been entrusted to us.

We are debtors to Christ. That we readily understand on the basis of creation, preservation, redemption and salvation. From Christ we have received life, love, light and liberty.

We are debtors to men also. This is true because of what Christ has done for us. Let us not hesitate to acknowledge our indebtedness to all types of people--the wise and the unwise, the intelligent and the ignorant, the learned and the unlearned, the cultured and the uncultured. Possessing that which others do not have, but which they need desperately, and which we can provide, we should have a deep sense of obligation and debtorship.

We may respond to the realization that we are debtors either by a determination to repudiate it or by a willingness to retire it. The latter is the only honorable response for a Christian. It is one thing to recognize and acknowledge a debt, but quite another to be ready and willing to pay it. Paul did both, which causes us to admire and appreciate him all the more. He declared, "I am debtor both to the Greeks,

and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Thus Paul announced his readiness to meet his obligation to the utmost of his ability. His determination to pay his debt by sharing Christ with others corresponded with his sense of obligation.

Paul believed firmly that his debt could be retired or liquidated only by his faithful and fearless preaching of the gospel of Christ. He was exceedingly anxious to share Christ with others around the world. To this end he was ready to serve, to suffer and to sacrifice.

The greatest day in the history of any nation is when the gospel of Christ comes to its shores and is preached by faithful servants of Christ. What could be more wonderful than the entrance of Christian missionaries into a nation, unfurling the glorious gospel banner and lifting high the Word of life?

No day was more significant than when Paul set foot on the shores of Macedonia in Europe rather than turning eastward to preach in Asia. It was a great hour in English history when Augustine set foot on the soil of England and proclaimed the gospel of Christ. The beginning of a new era for the dark continent of Africa took place when David Livingstone started to sail up the Nile River for the purpose of penetrating heathen darkness with the light of the gospel. It was equally true for Burma when Judson landed with a heart of love and longing for the salvation of her millions; and the same applies to India when a cobbler from England named William Carey, carried the Word of God under his arm and started to preach it to her citizens.

Countries held in the grip of heathen religious systems have never advanced, but when Christianity enters them and people are saved physical, intellectual, moral, social and spiritual conditions change immediately. When hearts get right with God, things always change for the better. Therefore, we must carry the message of redeeming love to the people of every nation.

God has been gracious to us in making the gospel of Christ effectual to the salvation of our souls. We shall never be able to express adequately the appreciation of our hearts for what He has done for us. We are indeed grateful for the high honor which He has bestowed upon us in making us stewards of His glorious gospel. In this capacity we occupy a position of trust, of honor, of influence and of responsibility. It is required of us that we shall be faithful to our trust, and share Christ with all whom we can around the world. The gospel has not been given to us merely for selfish consumption or selfish distribution. It is our inestimable privilege and imperative duty to share it with all who have never received it. The open doors of opportunity call for our very best efforts to proclaim the gospel of Christ to all men.

The Call

The great world's heart is aching,
 aching fiercely in the night,
And God alone can heal it,
 and God alone give light;
And the men to bear that message,
 and to speak the living Word,
Are you and I, my brothers,
 and the millions that have heard.
Can we close our eyes to duty?
 Can we fold our hands at ease,
While the gates of night stand open
 to the pathway of the seas?

Can we shut up our compassions?
Can we leave our prayer unsaid,
Till the lands which sin has blasted
have been quickened from the dead?

We grovel among trifles,
and our spirits fret and toss,
While above us burns the vision of the
Christ upon the cross;
And the blood of God is streaming
from His broken hands and side,
And the lips of God are saying,
"Tell my brothers I have died."
O voice of God, we hear thee
above the shocks of time,
Thine echoes roll around us,
and the message is sublime;
No power of man shall thwart us,
no stronghold shall dismay,
When God commands obedience,
and love has led the way.

—Frederick George Scott.