

CHRIST'S MARCHING ORDERS

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

It is encouraging to recall that in the midst of all the rapid and startling changes of these days there stands the Christ. Through the centuries He has satisfied the demands of life, not only as the object of faith itself, but as a sufficient inspiration to the demands that faith makes upon life in the heroism of its struggle, in the sacrifices of its service, and in the sufficiency of its reward. Christ is adequate for the needs of every individual, whether the need be that of a Saviour, an example or a teacher. He is the only inspiration to holy living, to heroic endeavor, and to high achievement. He is the same in His work yesterday, in His grace today, and in His glory tomorrow.

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 His saving message. God's Word is missionary. Its message is not geographical but 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.

Moreover, 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 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.

I. A World Verse.

Farewell instructions always demand attention. It was on a mountain in Galilee that our Lord gave His last message to His church, saying, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 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." Those majestic words are worthy of both the speaker and the momentous occasion on which He uttered them. They sweep up into heaven, then out across the earth, and on to ages yet unborn. The scope of the Great Commission is world-wide, its content is all-embracing, and its continuance is age-long. In giving it, Christ did not have in mind just one race, but all races. It 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 left out, regardless of color or condition.

It is time 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 world-wide. A church that does not stand supremely for the gospel to all is not entitled to the ground upon which its building stands.

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 a world Redeemer.

II. A World Vision.

Christ reminded His disciples 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 professed 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? Christians are out of fellowship with God if they are not concerned about the salvation of lost souls and the propagation of His Word to the most remote parts of the earth. The missionary map of most Christians is far too small. It is confined to those sections which appeal to their fancy or excludes those areas toward which there may be prejudice.

Our 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 hard 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.

Our workers must cope with the aroused aggressiveness of non-Christian movements and faiths. There is a training school in Egypt, which is maintained by the Mohammedans, where for several years 2,000 young zealots of Islam have taken short courses each year, and then gone out as doctors, nurses, traders, shopkeepers, and the like, to spread the faith of Mohammed. Now this school is expanding its facilities so as to turn out 2,500 per year. It is doubtful if that sort of thing can be matched anywhere in Christendom. The very mention of Communism brings before one's eyes the dark specter of more than half of the earth's population now under the domination of the "hammer and sickle." Missionaries are facing an aroused and aggressive anti-Christianity.

Think of the appallingly small contribution of manpower we are willing to give to missions as compared with the amazingly huge out-pouring of men and money for war and the preparation for more war. There are approximately 25,000 missionaries in the world. World War II cost \$190,000,000 a day. Just the price of one day's fighting in that war would pay for six years of continuous missionary work of all denominations. So fantastically much for destruction! So pitifully little for the salvation of others.

Southern Baptists are now facing the greatest missionary opportunity and obligation they have ever had. There is a growing concern that we shall do more to evangelize a lost world. To this end a period of world mission emphasis has been set from October 1956 through December 31, 1957. In 1955 Southern Baptists gave \$335,000,000, of which 82.6% was spent at home and 17.4% was spent away from home. The per capita gifts of Southern Baptists for all mission causes in 1955 was \$6.89. The per capita gifts for missions in our church was \$14.05 for the same year. Whereas Southern Baptists gave 82.6% for work at home and 17.4% for missions, our church spend 64.8% of our total expenditures for the local work and 35.2% for missions.

The needs of this world are tremendous. Millions are in need of food and clothing. Poverty and hunger are evident in so many places. Arab refugee camps and tents dot the hills of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. There is a dire need for educational missionaries to teach in the schools. The existing theological schools need strengthening. The world needs medical care. There is only one doctor for every 50,000 people in Indonesia and one nurse for every 150,000. The need for hospitals is acute. Appeals have come for more than 350 evangelistic missionaries. The Foreign Mission Board has urgent requests for 539 missionaries to serve in the 35 countries where we already have a missionary program.

Observations of religious situation in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Israel, Athens, Rome, Zurich, etc. When one visits the churches, schools, seminaries, orphanages, hospitals, publication agencies and relief undertakings sponsored by Southern Baptists throughout the world, it makes him feel that he has made an investment in the most fruitful enterprise to be found. This world is going fast. We will have to move rapidly or be run over. A plane went over. What kind was it? A jet fighter making over 500 miles per hour. Another went over very slowly. What kind was it? A life saving plane going to rescue people who had fallen into the ocean. It was making 150 miles per hour. What a difference! Over 500 miles per hour on a mission of destruction, but only 150 miles an hour on a mission of mercy. God is certainly calling upon us to expand our witness where we have work, and to enter vast areas where our voice has never been heard.

III. A World Vocation.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." I like that word "preach." It is at the very heart of this command. Christ came and preached. He sent forth His disciples to preach, also. It is our inestimable privilege and imperative duty to preach His gospel to all who have never heard it. From this obligation to preach the gospel there is no evasion or exemption. To preach is not merely a suggestion, but 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, he will gladly tell others about it. The human race has been stricken with the terrible disease of sin and the only cure for it is the blood of Christ; therefore, it would be a crime not to make that fact known. There is no hope for any apart from the gospel of Christ, which has been entrusted to us.

IV. A World Victory.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." None are excluded. Of the more than 2,600,000,000 souls who people the earth, it is quite probable that nearly 92% are ignorant of Christ. And yet, God wants to save everyone and to bring all into a vital relationship with Himself.

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 so 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 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 immediately changes take place physically, intellectually, morally, socially and spiritually. When hearts get right with God, things always change for the better. Therefore, we must carry the message of redeeming love to every nation.

An artist was once asked to paint a picture of a decaying church. Instead of putting on the canvas an old tottering ruin, he painted a stately edifice of modern grandeur. Back of the open portals could be seen the richly carved pulpit, the magnificent organ, and beautiful stained windows. Just inside the grand entrance, which was guarded on either side by a "pillar of the church" in spotless apparel and glittering jewels, was an artistic shelf containing an offering plate of goodly workmanship for the offerings of the fashionable worshipers. Directly above the offering-plate there hung a simple painted square box, bearing the words, "Collections for Foreign Missions." But right over the slot through which contributions ought to have gone, he had painted a huge cobweb. The fullest and richest joys of church membership will never come to those who have no prayerful or practical interest in taking the gospel of redeeming grace to the uttermost parts of the earth.

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