

WORLD-WIDE EVANGELIZATION

THE URGENT BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH

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THE goal of history is the redemption of the world. The consummation of all missionary endeavor will be when the knowledge of Jesus Christ has become universal. Hence the aim of missions is to make Jesus Christ known to every creature, so that he may have an intelligent opportunity to accept Him as his Savior. We ought to be thankful at the very beginning of this conference for the knowledge of Christ which already prevails throughout the world. We think of the multitudes out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, who have received the message of life and rejoice in him who is the Truth. Let any one consult the "Centennial Survey of Foreign Missions," which Dr. Dennis has just completed, and he will certainly conclude that the Church has not been altogether idle, but on the contrary has done nobly in many particulars, and he will agree that the missionary achievements of the past century should lead us to thank God and take courage. And yet it must be admitted that the past triumphs of the Church in the way of missionary endeavor represent the work of a few for the rescue of the many, and not of the whole Church at work for all people. The obligation to make Christ known has been felt by a comparatively small number of the thirty or forty millions of evangelical Christians. The work of the Church has been thus far too particularistic, and there is need to-day of a broad missionary universalism. The duty of making Christ known to all people has its corollary in every Christian's making him known. We cannot discriminate between those who should and should not have the knowledge of Christ, for the need of it is universal; and if the Church has the Savior's compassion for the lost, she will love the people of Africa or China as much as the people of Canada or the United States. Nor can we differentiate between the Christians who are responsible for sending the gospel to the unsaved and those who are not. The impression is common that only the more pious and zealous Christians should be witnesses, and that active personal work cannot be expected of the average church member. But I am here to maintain that to make Christ known should be the commanding purpose in the life of every Christian.

The great commission should bear directly upon the life purpose of every disciple of the Lord. The command of Christ, Go and make disciples of all nations, if it means anything to us to-day spells the duty, not of those who are called to be leaders but of the whole Church. The early Christians understood their Master's meaning, and when they were scattered abroad, they carried out the instructions of their risen Lord. This was the interpretation which the Holy Spirit put upon our Savior's last words; and to-day whenever He moves mightily in any community, and the Church is conscious of His presence and power as led by Him, Christians begin at once to think of the unevangelized, and devise means for making Christ known unto others. When we grant that it is the duty of the Church to carry the gospel to every creature, we lay a burden of responsibility upon every Christian. The Church is the body of Christ and every regenerate man is a member of it, so that what affects the whole touches the several parts. We are taught by the Scriptures, and our own observation confirms the teaching, that there are diversities of gifts to be found among the people of God, the Holy Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. Each has received a gift or gifts which he holds in stewardship for the Lord, and which are to be used in carrying out the divine purpose. This means that each can contribute something, however small it may be, to the work of the Church. Christians with their gifts correspond to the different members of the body, some more important than others, yet each indispensable to the perfection and highest efficiency of the whole body, the Church.

Christ furnishes the mind which plans and the will which directs. He is the seat of authority, of intelligent volition. The activities of the Church are under His control, and when He says "Go," every member must move forward. It often happens that the hand or the foot lacks the strength to carry out the mind's intentions; but Christ through the Spirit imparts to every member of His Church the power needed to obey His orders. If this be true, no Christian can be exempt from any service which Christ requires of the whole Church. When He, our Sovereign Head, to whom all authority has been given, commands, the whole body must respond at once, and for any one to fail of co-operation, argues that he does not stand in right relation to the Savior, that something is interfering so that the mind of Christ is not properly communicated, or that he has become a lifeless or a paralyzed member of the Church.

What is the great thought of Christ with reference to those who know Him not? What is the supreme purpose which He would have His body carry out? We find it in that categorical imperative which sums up all other injunctions and commands, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." To escape from these marching orders of the Church, one must separate himself from the very body of Christ and wilfully disregard the mind of the Master. When we

think of Christ's commanding purpose that all men should know Him; when we think of the world-wide work of missions which President Harrison has called "the most influential and enduring work that is being done in this day of great enterprises"; when we think of the consummation toward which all things are tending, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea, we realize that every Christian must come into line with Christ's plan and thus serve his day and generation according to the will of God. The Prince Consort Albert is reported to have once said: 'Find out the plan of God in your generation. Do not cross His plan, but drop into your own place in it.' What is the plan of Jesus Christ for the world to-day? Is it intellectual development and advance in human knowledge as an end in itself? Is it the increase of commerce and wealth which will exhaust themselves in making men rich? Surely not. His supreme and ruling purpose is to regenerate mankind; and your aim in life, whatever it may be, is worthy in proportion as it contributes to making Christ everywhere known.

More than this, if one be really joined to Christ and is a member of His body, the authoritative command of the Lord should take internal form and become an inward impulse of love to Him who has redeemed us. We should have not only the mind of Christ, but His desire. What He requires us to do we wish to do. His love constraineth us. That is to say His love dwells in us, floods our very souls so that we have the heart of Christ, and our desires have their natural expression in the doing of His will. Christ's longing to redeem ought not to seem strange or foreign to us, but should have its counterpart in a compassion for sinning, suffering men, who are scattered as sheep having no shepherd. If the love of Christ constrains each Christian as it should, the need of the unevangelized millions will appeal to him as it did to the man of Galilee, and will turn his life purpose in the direction of making Christ known. This will certainly be so, if he really appreciates what the knowledge of Christ means to him. Paul counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He would rather know Christ than apprehend anything else, and when the risen Savior was revealed to him, he began immediately at Damascus and then at Jerusalem, and throughout the coasts of Judea, and then everywhere among the Gentiles, to communicate his God-given knowledge, so as to turn them from darkness to light. Such is the Christian's chief possession and the world's greatest need.

The knowledge of Christ is what the soul craves, and it alone can satisfy our religious needs. When any one learns to know Christ, makes His personal acquaintance, there comes a joy into his life, which no secular learning, no earthly gain can impart. We know something perhaps of the joy of discovery, of the mental

satisfaction which comes with the consciousness that we have found what we long have looked for. It is related of the great Scotch surgeon, Sir James Simpson, that he was once approached by a young man who wished to compliment him by asking what he regarded his greatest discovery, and the simple reply of this eminent scientist was, "My greatest discovery is that I am a great sinner, and that Jesus is a great Savior." Most of us here have made this same precious discovery, and we know the joy and the peace of believing on Him. But do we realize how dark and dreary, how wretched and helpless this world would be to us, without the knowledge of Christ? The joy of this saving knowledge should make us break the bonds of isolation and selfishness and publish everywhere what great things Jesus hath done for us. If He is everything to you and to me, He may be everything to any man, and who-so needs to hear of Christ has an inescapable claim upon us. We have something to impart, and the woe is upon us if we do not give it to our brothers who are perishing for the want of it.

If the love of Christ is a constraining power in any man's life it will compel him to give of what he possesses to satisfy his brother's need. Of this appalling need, no Christian can long remain in ignorance in these latter days. Fifty years ago the ordinary church member had some excuse for not knowing the condition of the heathen world. There were few missionary books. The opportunity to hear a returned missionary was rare, and even the clergy knew comparatively little of the regions beyond. But that is not true to-day. The information at hand is adequate. Every Christian student who claims to be an educated man, ought to be well acquainted with missionary fields and know the helpless, hopeless condition of his brothers across the sea. And the Christian in these days who has never had placed before him the needs of the great world-wide mission field, has either lived in hermetical seclusion, or his pastor has been guilty of criminal neglect. Knowing the need and knowing the remedy, the love of Christ should fill up the breach and bring every Christian into sympathetic and helpful touch with the humanity which awaits redemption.

There is another consideration to be added which is, that the life of each Christian, in order to be vigorous and fruitful, needs to go out in service to those for whom Christ died. Napoleon once said, "It is a maxim in the military art that the army which remains in its entrenchments is beaten." The non-missionary Church sins against its own best interests and is inviting defeat. A stay-at-home Christianity is not real Christianity at all. The guaranty of Christ's abiding presence is consecration to the world's evangelization. The "Lo, I am with you always," is conditioned upon, "Go ye, and disciple all nations." The Church which disobeys this command insults Christ and cannot survive. This has been illustrated over and over again in the history of the Kingdom.

The Churches even of Apostolic foundation, which became self-centered and disobedient to the Master's will, decayed and died, and only those have continued, which have heeded the commands of their risen Lord. It is ever so, for "there is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty"; and in the whole economy of grace no provision is found whereby a Church can be made healthy, strong and prosperous when the world's evangelization is neglected or ignored.

What is true of the Church is true of every Christian. He has been redeemed by and lives in and exists for a missionary Savior, whose example he strives to imitate, and whose commands he professes to obey. How can he be loyal to his Lord and grow in grace and secure spiritual wealth, if by his indifference and inactivity he is crossing the divine purpose, resisting the divine call and running counter to the clear line of development in the Kingdom of God? Indeed we may unhesitatingly assert that if the spiritual life of any Christian does not flow out in streams of blessing and power to the unsaved, it becomes sluggish and stagnant. It is a serious question how the heathen can be saved if we do not send them the gospel. But a more serious question still is, how can we be saved if we do not make Christ known to them. It requires active service for Christ to keep the spiritual life strong and vigorous and our religious experience fresh and fruitful. This great truth of the Kingdom is illustrated in the saintly lives and holy characters of missionaries in all ages. Those who have attained to the highest spiritual stature in Christ, who have made the nearest approach to the measure of his fulness, have been the men and women who, filled with the true missionary spirit and enterprise, have been instruments in making him known to others. Since the obligation rests upon every Christian to grow in grace, to become like Christ, to apprehend that for which he was laid hold of by Christ Jesus, it follows that this indispensable means must be used, and that every disciple of the Lord must tell to others what he has heard and seen and knows to be true.

There is still another reason why every Christian should be actively engaged in making Christ known. This would so multiply agents as to speedily accomplish the missionary task of the Church. To carry the gospel to every creature is indeed a formidable undertaking. There are at least 750,000,000 people who have not had an opportunity to learn of Jesus Christ, and we cannot ignore the difficulties which are in the way of reaching many of these. Where the proclamation of our King has gone, the forces of darkness are arraying themselves against the further spread of Christianity; and instead of a guerilla warfare, there is a great conflict between the antagonistic forces, whose battle cries are "for or against Christ." But if the whole Church comes up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, the issue cannot be doubtful. As Principle Cairns said

in the closing hours of his life: "We are engaged in a great conflict, in which, if we all unite, there will be a great victory." When we compute the whole membership of the Church to-day and contrast it with the small number of early disciples who turned the world upside down; when we estimate the resources now in the hands of Christian people, and all the facilities at their disposal; above all, when we think of the divine equipment of the Church, the Word of God, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, the Holy Spirit with us to-day and able to shake whole communities with Pentecostal upheaval, we are convinced that if every Christian made the missionary aim the commanding purpose of his life, it would hardly take the twenty years which Simeon Calhoun estimated would be sufficient to utter the story of the Cross in the ears of every living man. George Fox used to say, "Every Friend ought to light up the community for ten miles around him." Surely every Christian should have that amount of illuminating power, and instead of congesting this light in a few places, let it be properly distributed throughout the world, and as a result the sunshine of heaven's revealed love would penetrate to the darkest corners of the earth. When Christ said, "Ye are the light of the world," he surely meant that every Christian should be a luminary, and combine with every other Christian to chase the shades of night away.

We may not expect to see all the older Christians, whose life purposes have become fixed, rally to the idea of world-wide evangelization. Our hopes must turn very largely to the younger generation, whose plans for the future are now being determined. It is estimated that there are throughout the world 600,000 students who are going to exert a tremendous power for good or for evil in their day and generation. Of this number about 70,000 are associated in the World's Student Christian Federation, one purpose of which is to enlist students in the work of extending Christ's Kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth. When we think of the power there is in the consecrated endeavors of educated young men and women, we may well regard this alignment of forces one of the most significant and hopeful signs of the times. But where are the nine? Probably not one-tenth of the number of professing Christian students feel a burden of responsibility for making Christ known to all people. Every Christian student, if he wishes to make his life tell on the ages and tell for God, must take an intelligent, active, aggressive interest in the missionary enterprise, which is indeed the greatest work in the world. That this Convention may lead every student in attendance to make it the commanding purpose of his life to carry the gospel to every creature is our earnest prayer, and if through you the impulse of this assembly is carried to every institution of higher learning in our land and to every student gathered there, the evangelization of the world in this generation will be not only a hope but a blessed certainty.