

The Modern Crusade

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HOW TO ENLIST A CHURCH IN GIVING FOR MISSIONS.

By REV. J. M. WELLS, D. D., *Wilmington, N. C.*

How to enlist a church in giving for missions, is the question I am asked to answer. That we want all our churches enlisted in this enterprise, goes without saying, and the way to find out how to enlist a church, is to find out how other men have enlisted their churches. What I bring to you this afternoon, is just a plain statement of how other men have succeeded in this.

Not that any have already attained, for I do not believe there is a church in the Southern Presbyterian Church, nay more, in the whole United States, that is yet enlisted in giving to missions. There are churches that give large gifts; there are churches in which a large proportion of the membership is giving generously; but there are no churches as yet, that are really giving to missions.

Now, as I have studied the churches here and there, that are partially enlisted in giving, I am more and more impressed with this fact. Generous giving is influenced more by motive than machinery. Back of any plan; back of any method, must be the motive. When you have hearts with love kindled, with faith deepened, with zeal intensified, and with vision lifted; there you have a church that will give no matter what may be the methods used, or the machinery adopted in securing the gift.

We heard that magnificent address this morning on the Dynamic of Missions, and the opening address here this afternoon. Such addresses as these furnish the key to the whole matter. Faith, love and zeal are vastly more important, than envelopes and mite boxes. The heart on fire with new love, and the soul roused into new life, are the true secrets of giving to missions.

But how are we going to secure this strong faith, this deep love, this burning zeal? How are we going to get men to catch that vision glorious that will stir their inmost souls?

As I see it, it resolves itself into two things. One of these is preaching, and the other is praying. There are other things that have their part and place, but as compared with preaching and praying, they sink into insignificance. These are the two great influences we can bring to bear upon the hearts and lives of our people.

1. There must be a preaching that is inspired by a deep and fervent love—love for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour; love for our church, and love for the souls that are dying in darkness.

When we have such love as a mighty flame in our own hearts, we cannot help but preach with all the energy, zeal and fervor of our souls, to our congregations. And God will use such preaching to plant in the hearts those spiritual forces that will lead them to give largely and cheerfully. But it must be not only a preaching inspired by love, it must be preaching of Christ crucified. The preaching of politics, sociology, of ethics, of mere dry systematic theology, will not avail. It must be the preaching of Christ, and of Christ, not merely as a great peerless exemplar, not merely as the world's supreme teacher, but as a crucified Saviour. A Saviour who through His atoning, expiatory sacrifice saves us from sin and death.

I want to call your attention to this fact. I do not know of a single church in our whole land, that is giving at all adequately, that has even learned the A. B. C. of giving to foreign missions; that does not have preached from its pulpit the pure gospel of an atoning Saviour, making an expiatory sacrifice for sin. We must stand under the shadow of the cross, and we must preach Christ and Him crucified, if men are to catch the spirit and learn the true motive of giving.

And then we must preach missions. Not only preach Jesus Christ as a Saviour, but as a Saviour sufficient for the sins of the whole world. The need of the world, the Saviour of the world, the hope of the world, must be presented clearly and strongly. And our Christian duty of carrying that precious Saviour to those lost millions, must be laid with all the power we possess, on the hearts and consciences of our people.

Missionary giving follows missionary preaching.

2. The other great influence is prayer. Here is the power that can move the hardest heart. Here is the power that can change the coldest, dearest and most selfish life.

There are officers, some of whom may be aged men, feeling that their years of service and usefulness are over, who are yet princes with God in prayer. Get them to praying day by day, and hour by hour for this consummation.

There are the godly women. We know the power of their prayers. What would our church have been through all these many years, when the fires have burned so low on the altars of men's hearts, if it had

not been for the prayers of these women. We need to enlist in still greater measure their prayers for missions.

Then there are the shut-in ones. Those whom God has caused to turn aside from the turmoil and confusion of life, and shut to the door. Here is something they can do far better, perhaps, than those who are cumbered with the business affairs of life. It may be that their loving Father has brought them in, that they may learn the better to lift their hearts to Him, and bring down the blessings their church needs. Oh! the power there is in those prayers!

I want to tell you of one instance that came under my observation of one of these shut-ins. She had been an active worker for the Master, and far and wide her influence had been felt. And then there came into her life that dread disease, cancer, and shut her in. Shut within that little room, suffering fearfully day by day, she felt that the Lord had given her, her opportunity. He had stopped those busy hands from work, and placed her where her heart could more freely turn to Him. Many a night long as the pain kept her from sleeping, I found out that she was praying. During those long night watches, she was pouring out her heart in prayer for her pastor, that his heart might be aflame with zeal for souls. Now her prayer was for the officers by name, that they might do a glorious work in extending the kingdom. Again she prayed for the men of influence in the congregation, that they might dedicate their talents and means to the cause of missions, or she prayed for the work and the workers with a magnificent faith. She prayed for weeks, months and years. And the little upper chamber became a Bethel and a place of power. Then the Lord called her home. While she prayed, the interest grew, but after she went home, God opened the windows of heaven and poured out a blessing upon the cause of missions in that congregation, above anything they had dreamed of. Men's hearts were opened, their interest enlisted, their gifts laid on the altar. And why was this? Because of her prayers. She prayed. God kindled new faith and wider love, and with such a motive, gifts of service and money inevitably came.

But even when the love is kindled, there has to be a certain amount of machinery, that the love may be transformed into service, and devotion into generous giving. How may we secure this? I will touch briefly on three ways:

1. Through Information.

There needs to be preaching that enlightens. There should be visits from the secretaries, and from these missionaries that really instruct and enthuse. There should be judicious use of church calendar, extensive circulation of the missionary, and the receiving and circulation of the best missionary books and leaflets. There should be the systematic teaching of missions in classes, societies and bands. When Christians have faith and love, they need only to see their duty. Information reveals their duty clearly.

2. Through Organization.

Organization is very much decried in this day and generation, and when it is carried to too great an extent, it may become an evil. Men denounce machinery, but what is machinery for? Is it not to take the power of the engine and transform their power into some useful product? In a factory, you want all the machinery that you have the power to handle and turn. You want machinery that will use your power, otherwise, that power is wasted. So in church life, you want machinery or organization enough to transform the faith and love of your people into useful service. You must have the Missionary Committee. You need societies or organizations for women, young women, boys and girls. Every individual should be helped to turn his love into service, activity and usefulness.

Give your men the opportunity, and you will find them willing and anxious to work and give. Pick out the key men; the men of influence. Bring all the influence you can to bear on them that their eyes may be opened and their hearts fired. Inspire them, and they will be the leaven that will leaven the whole lump.

3. Through Method in Giving.

Every one in the church ought to be asked to give, and ought to have an opportunity to give. Whether you canvass by card, or by personal interview, there should be a canvass. Whether they give weekly, monthly, twice a year, or in one great collection (as has been successfully done in one of the churches of Elizabeth, N. J.), there should be system in giving. Get your best men to plan as earnestly for the best way, as they plan for the great business enterprises, and they will

find the best method of subscribing, and the best system of giving for your church.

Give your people a definite work to do. Plan large things for them. Show them a vision of glorious things waiting to be done.

Preach with all your soul. Use the prayers of your godly people. And God will enlist your church in giving for missions.