

GOD And Missions Today

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Chapter 4

GODLY MOTIVES

THE GREAT PRACTICAL PROBLEM, whose solution demands the prayerful, prompt attention of every believer, is this: How may the Church of CHRIST carry the good tidings round the world during the lifetime of this generation? For the present generation of the saved to reach the present generation of the unsaved is the one question of the hour that leaves all others far in the distance. To the solution of that problem in GOD's own way, the Church, and every member of it, should bring all the brains, heart, conscience, will, money, intelligence, and enterprise at command. To aid so far as we can in the accomplishment of this work it behooves each of us solemnly to give ourselves and our substance, our tongues and our pens, for whatever time may be left us, To this work let us once more earnestly invoke others.

The solving of this problem is not a matter of method, or means; but primarily of a mind and heart and will like CHRIST's. All machinery, however complete, depends for effectiveness upon its motive power. Here force is generated. Wheels and levers are only the channels through which power has play; and, however intricate and complicated the mechanical adjustments, there cannot even be motion, much less efficient action, until force is created or applied. And all our best, wisest, most complete methods of mission work will stand like a motionless machine until the Spirit of GOD becomes in disciples a spirit of missions, and generates spiritual force adequate to move and to keep moving the wheels of Christian enterprise.

1. Of course, the *spirit of Faith* is the secret of all other Christian attainment. This we assume as beyond the need of argument. What the root is to the plant, what the spring is to the stream, that faith is to all the beauty and growth and power of a child of GOD. Not only in prayer but in all our work, "**without faith it is impossible to please him.**" We must first of all receive CHRIST by believing, and in believing He must receive us, so that we are His and He is ours by the mystic bond of unity. When we are in Him by faith and He in us by love, all else becomes possible. Without Him we can do nothing and are nothing.

Taking this as granted, we proceed to ask what are the real fruits of faith, which the true spirit of missions reveals and ripens in us?

2. We answer, first of all, the *spirit of obedience*. There is no justification for missions that is

either possible or needful, except the explicit repeated command of CHRIST. We have our "marching orders"; that is enough. **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."** That settles the matter and leaves no argument or vindication to be added. The question, "Do missions pay?" is both irrelevant and irreverent. It always pays to obey authority, especially when authority is supreme. And so clear is our Lord's command that the process by which it can be made of none effect would make void the whole Word of GOD. Eyes that are so dim as to see no such duty enjoined on the Church must be blind. Only in the dark ages, when the very candlestick of GOD almost ceased to shine, was the debt of a Christian to a lost world even doubted.

Our obedience to our Lord's will should be immediate. It has been long enough delayed, and the time is short. The conviction enters into the very marrow of our being that the disciples of CHRIST should at once organize efforts and occupy the whole world; that the whole field should be mapped out and the whole force be massed together; that we should then proceed carefully to divide the field, so that no part should be overlooked and to distribute the force so that no part should be unprovided for.

This lesson is taught in the miracle of the loaves; the first command of CHRIST was to make the multitude to sit down in companies of fifty and a hundred. That showed the disciples just how many people there were to be fed, and helped them to make sure that each company and each person should have provision for his needs.

Our obedience should be implicit as well as immediate. We should mark even the smallest details of our Lord's command, and follow exactly as He leads. For example: He indicated an order, **"to the Jew first and then to the Gentile."** **"Beginning at Jerusalem"** is a phrase constantly perverted to mean that home work is to take precedence; and we forget that its true meaning is that, first of all, GOD's chosen people were to be sought and taught.

Those early disciples everywhere began with the Jews; whether at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, or Constantinople. Wherever Paul went, from Antioch in Syria, to Antioch in Pisidia, to Salamis, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Troas, Miletus, Rome, he first went into the synagogue of the Jews; or, if there was no synagogue, sought out and spoke to the Jews wherever they resorted and he could get a hearing. Only after they rejected his message did he turn to the Gentiles. Has it nothing to do with our comparative failure in modern missions that the despised Jew has been perhaps more shamefully neglected than any of the worst heathen, lowest pagan, or most bigoted Moslem peoples? Missions among the ancient Israel of GOD, as an organized movement, are of recent date, and even now the eight millions * of GOD's chosen nation are scarcely approached by us. Here and there a few scattered laborers have been all that GOD's people have sent to open the blinded eyes of those who see the Messianic prophecies as yet through a veil. The grandest epoch of missions will not begin until GOD's Church undertakes to do as CHRIST bade her, beginning at Jerusalem.

** In 1955, about 11 million*

Nothing will be so irresistible as the Church of GOD when her obedience to her LORD is absolute.

In the 277th year of the Hegira and in the vicinity of Cufa, that famous Arabian preacher Carmath assumed the imposing titles of Guide, Director, Demonstration, Camel, Representative of Mohammed, John Baptist, Gabriel, Herald of Messiah, the Word, the Holy Ghost. After his death his name was even more revered by his fanatical followers. His twelve apostles spread themselves among the Bedouins, "a race of men equally devoid of reason and of religion"; and so successful was their preaching that all Arabia was threatened with a new revolution.

The Carmathians were ripe for rebellion, and the secret of their power was a vow of blind and absolute submission to their Imam; a secret and inviolable oath was their bond of brotherhood. Leaving tracks of blood, they moved along the Persian Gulf, and the province of Bahrein bowed before them; far and wide the desert tribes lowered their standards before the sword of Abu Said and Abu Taher, his son, until they could muster on the field a force of over 100,000 fanatics. Their approach was like that of an avalanche - they neither asked nor accepted quarter, and bore everything before them. Even the Caliph trembled as they advanced. They crossed the Tigris and with desperate daring, with only five hundred horses, knocked at the gates of the capital.

By special order the bridges were broken down, and the lieutenant, in behalf of the Caliph, told Abu Taher that he and his force were in danger of annihilation. "Your master," replied the fierce commander, "has thirty thousand soldiers but, in all his host, not three such as these," Then, turning to three of his followers, he bade one plunge a dagger into his breast, a second leap into the Tigris, and a third fling himself from a precipice. Without a moment's waiting or a murmur of discontent, each one obeyed. "Go," said he, "and tell what you have seen; and before the night falls, your general shall be chained among my dogs," It was so; before the sunset, the camp was surprised and the threat executed! (Gibbon, v. 323-4).

What could not our LORD do against the most defiant strongholds of Satan if He had even a little band of followers who without hesitation, questioning, or reasoning, simply obeyed? Nothing can stand before a Church whose only law is the will of GOD and the motto of whose crusade is "Deus Vult."

3. It is almost superfluous to say that the spirit of missions is a *spirit of love*, for in love it finds both its cornerstone and capstone.

Only as we understand such love can we know the spirit of missions. GOD loved us when we were enemies, and in this commends His love both to our gratitude and our imitation. We are to love as He loved, without respect to the character of the object, or any recompense even in kind.

Such love embraces, of course, all people. It is absolutely a stranger to caste and all invidious distinction. To such love, no human being is remote. Selfishness counts all who are not neighbors and friends as barbarians; and even those who are geographically near are often sympathetically remote, as the Samaritans were to the Jews. Selfishness will have no dealings with those who give no promise of a return in temporal advantage or reciprocal favors.

No barrier between man and man has ever been so formidable as caste; and whether based on blood and birth, brute force or brain force, money or culture, social position or religious pride, it still remains the most persistent foe to human brotherhood. Against its walls of adamant, Love arrays her mightiest artillery, and, could Love sway all our hearts, those walls would fall like

those of Jericho.

In the brotherhood of faith, which is the Church of CHRIST, GOD meant that for once the world should find a true democracy with no barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male or female - all, one in CHRIST JESUS. Where Love's law rules, the least and lowest, the worst and most worthless, actually take precedence in her holy ministry. All lines of color, race, blood, birth, clime; all differences of intellectual development, emotional life, or even moral purity, are to fade away before the charity that, like the mantle of snow, falls from Heaven to fill up all inequalities and cover over all defects. The caste spirit, wherever it prevails, is the fatal foe of Christian missions and of Christian brotherhood. It is vain to abolish slavery and serfdom if this survives. It is possible to hold men in slavery by fetters of prejudice as well as of iron. There may be "**uttermost parts of the earth**" not a stone's throw from our churches and homes, because their inmates are absolutely strangers both to our acquaintance and sympathy.

All this is impossible where Love sways her golden scepter. She makes all mankind one brotherhood and all the world one neighborhood; and every human soul that needs help becomes on that account our neighbor and brother.

That anonymous proverb, "Charity begins at home," if not invented by the Devil is appropriated by him to serve his ends. Love counts every needy soul a neighbor, and counts no cost in relieving with heart and hand every want or woe. If love begins at home, it is only a beginning, a starting point for the farthest goal of service. But selfishness begins at home, and stays there.

It takes but little experience of worldly society to see how hollow and shallow it is. Even its courtesies and attention, its generosity and cordiality, have selfishness at the root. The perfection we are to aspire to is the perfection of love, of unselfish benevolence. Ah, yes, that is the perfection of the missionary spirit. No bargaining for returns in kind or otherwise, no thought of personal gain. It asks only, Who has need of me, my money, my witness, my ministry?

- The Church that leaves a dying world to die, a lost race to wander in the dark, feeling after the GOD whom the Gospel would reveal as not far from every one of us;
- The Church that turns the very privileges which GOD gives her into a silken hammock of selfish ease, and the very means of a world's evangelization into the provision for worldly indulgence; leaving a world in destitution while she furnishes and garnishes her palaces;
- such a Church would do well to read the Epistle to Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-19) which contains perhaps the most terrible rebuke which GOD has ever administered to His professed people.

We need this warning note to sound all around the horizon like a thunder-peal: the Church that does not take up her work for a world of lost souls is already a dying Church. There is nowadays a Laodicean tendency to undue self-congratulation. We talk of our world-wide organizations for missionary work, of our millions of money given for Gospel triumphs; but how little do we think of the disgraceful disproportion between our opportunity and our endeavor, the laborers we send to the field and the immense multitude of disciples that remain at home; the millions we give to missions and the billions of wealth we keep in selfish coffers or spend in selfish luxury.

4. The spirit of missions is the spring of *tireless and ceaseless endeavor*. May we not call it

passion for souls and for CHRIST's conquest of the world?

The Moravians led the whole missionary host in their devotion to a world's redemption. Their leader, Count von Zinzendorf, like John the Baptist, fell heir to a legacy of grace, and his whole life bore the seal of a peculiar consecration. When only four years old he covenanted with CHRIST: "Be Thou mine, dear SAVIOUR, and I will be Thine"; and from the window of his grandmother's castle he used in his childish simplicity to toss out letters to the LORD in which he told Him all that was in his heart.

When at ten he was Franke's pupil at Halle, he formed little prayer circles and instituted the "Order of the Grain of Mustard-seed," whose members were bound by sacred pledge to seek the souls of others. When he wedded a countess, it was still only in the LORD, and they two cast away all rank and riches and girded themselves like pilgrims, ready to start for any field if GOD should show them His will. The world became his parish; and his property, the Lord's offering.

No wonder that Dober and Nitschmann, at St. Thomas, were ready to sell themselves as slaves to reach slaves; that Stach and Boemish were ready to go to the ice-bound pole, Schmidt to the Bushmen and Hottentots at the Southern Cape, and that Pagell and Hyde and Jaschke laid siege to the stronghold of the Grand Lama on the frowning heights of Tibet. Pagell and his wife spent at Poo a quarter century of toil, and then in death were not divided. The brethren at the Nicobar Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, perished after sufferings that were even more extreme, and with not even a native catechist or solitary convert to close their eyes. Such are the men and women of whom the world was not worthy; of whom even a worldly Church is not worthy.

5. The spirit of missions is the *spirit of absorption in GOD*. And, strange to say, we are never so strong and forceful in our own individuality and personality as when we are lost to ourselves because absorbed in Him. We find our lives in losing them, and find ourselves in losing ourselves.

Even so, ***when we surrender our will to GOD, there is no loss of human will-power, but only the gain of divine will-power.*** Through the narrow channels of our uncertain choice, He pours the mighty flood of His resistless resolution - the will of GOD energizes our will; and the wheels of action move with a firmness, fullness, force, and fervor to which we were before strangers. In our weakness we are strong; in our folly, wise. We can do all things and bear all things through CHRIST, who strengthens us. The youths faint and grow weary and the young men utterly fall, but we wait on the LORD and renew our strength; mount upon wings as eagles, run and are not weary, walk and do not faint.

There is no higher seal and sanction put by GOD on missions than this, that those who work in this great field manifest His SPIRIT in a marked degree. Here is the apostolic succession because here is the apostolic mission and spirit. Faith begets implicit obedience, self-sacrifice, consecration, absorption in GOD, the marks of the highest heroism and loftiest unworldliness.

As I stood on the highest tier of seats in the Colosseum at Rome, one scene of past ages stood most vividly, almost visibly, before my imagination. Beneath the canvas canopy a vast throng of 80,000 spectators is gathered. Yonder on his raised marble throne sits the Emperor Trajan, and near him the proud senators and vestal virgins with their lamps. Amid the surge and swell of this

sea of human voices, impatient for the sport, an old man comes, trembling with age, into the arena, his long white hair falling to his waist and mingling with his beard.

It is Ignatius, the disciple of John; and if tradition be true, the "**little child**" of Mark 9:36. He bears the second surname Theophoros, or the CHRIST-bearer; and in his interview with Trajan showed himself so utterly unworldly that the emperor condemned him to be led a prisoner from Antioch to Rome, and there fed to the wild beasts for the delight of the people.

As the fierce lions are let loose upon him, the old saint falls on his knees and is heard to say: "O ye Romans, know ye that not for any crime am I brought here, but that by this means I may attain to the fruition of the glory of GOD, for love of whom I am made prisoner. *I am as grain of GOD's field, and must be ground by the teeth of lions that I may become bread for His people, fit for His table.*"

How long, think you, the world would wait for the knowledge of this salvation, if the spirit of that martyr burned in Christian bosoms! Such a flame of holy zeal consumes all greed, all pride, all ambition, all selfishness, while it burns and glows and shines with celestial fires, and makes life itself a reflection of Shekinah glory! When GOD's people would rather be ground between lions' teeth than that the hungry souls should go without bread, the world will soon find spread from pole to pole the banquet board of Redemption.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
