

Why Missions?

In our household, missions were as accepted, embraced as normal as Corn Flakes for breakfast. My dad was always a mission minded pastor - he taught Missions in seminary, was chairman of the Mission's Committee of the American Baptist Association and practiced missions beyond his pastorates in the United States, Korea, India and Africa. So as often is the case, children in a household take their parents' vocation for granted. It wasn't until I had been pastoring for a few years that I finally "got it." Perhaps there are some reading these words that may be thinking, why are we placing such an important emphasis on missions? I am encouraging us to please not write off missions as someone else's responsibility. My prayer this week is that we will all get a heart for missions. Why missions?

1. We are under heavenly orders to fulfill an earthly obligation.

Jesus said, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Our Lord gives us no wiggle room to get out of missions. The command is direct, to the point and easy to understand. Also, we see missions was the last subject on the lips of our risen Lord just before He ascended back to Heaven. He said, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight*" (Acts 1:8, 9). The argument against aggressive missions is sometimes given that when we have evangelized our Jerusalem, we may then go to Samaria and then after that, on to Judea and finally when we have thoroughly evangelized our local and not too distant regions we are permitted to go to the uttermost part of the earth. This logic breaks down mainly because of one word in our text, the word "both." We are to be evangelizing in our Jerusalem and other areas, even to the uttermost part of the earth until Christ comes back. Not everybody in our Jerusalem will be saved, but some will. Not all who live in our surrounding Samarias and Judeas will believe, but some will. Not all will believe in the uttermost parts of the earth, but some will. Therefore, we are on a mission from Houston to the uttermost part of the earth to find those who will believe and give them an opportunity.

2. There is an eternity.

"*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*" (Luke 16: 22, 23). Every hour and minute of this day someone will breathe their last breath and enter into eternity. For many years I have heard of the work of one of the most amazing missionaries of the twentieth century by the name of Garland Cofield, who blazed a trail in the wilderness of Northern Canada, 1200 miles northwest of Toronto on the Hudson Bay. The nearest town was 200 miles away. Brother Cofield, like his close friend, Dr. Buffington was a pilot. Dr. Buffington and Mrs. Buffington took many mission trips up to that remote area of the north to visit their friends. I wanted to get one of his famous stories right, so I called Mrs. Buffington who told me, "Brother Johnny, just call him yourself; he would love to hear from you." So after receiving his number I called and received a blessing indescribable. I just got off the phone and I'm going to tell you what this 83-year-old veteran missionary told me. "It was January of 1965 or 1966. We were visiting the Indian tribes over an area of 150 to 200 miles. While flying through a blizzard the conditions had gotten so bad that my small piper airplane was scraping the tops of the trees. I told Stephen, a young Indian with me, we must land. We found a clearing and landed and tied down the plane. We were going to have to bed down for the night and it was 40 degrees below zero. We found a cabin and there we met an old, old lady lying on a sway back cot. The young Indian man began to ask her questions and witness to her of the Gospel of Christ. She said she had heard that story 70 years earlier around the turn of the century. That night Mary Sugarhead accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior." Think of it! She had waited for the rest of the "story" for 70 years. Brother Cofield went on to say, "God had led us to the exact spot (allowing the storm to get them to Mary), at the exact time, to the exact person." By now Brother Cofield was moved as he reminisced the story

and he closed by saying, “Her cabin was 35 miles from our mission station and we discovered two months later she died.” Saved, just in time! I wonder how many more need to hear the story and are waiting for you and me to make sure it happens?

There is a real Heaven and a real Hell. God said through His prophet, “*When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand*” (Ezekiel 33:8). In the New Testament Paul said, “*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men*” (Acts 20:26). God declares those who do not repent and believe in Him will go into perdition, but we are the ones who need to be shamed if we do not try to prevent it. Oh, how stirring the thought that everyone is going to spend somewhere forever!

3. Missions help us arrange our priorities.

Jesus said, “*Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*” (John 20:21). We all need to be witnesses in the Jerusalem where God has planted us. Yet we are still responsible for Samaria, Judea and the uttermost part of the earth. In other words, everybody should be a missionary, either going missionaries or sending missionaries. It is hard to think of anything closer to the heart of God than missions. Missions are about people and these are they for whom Christ died.

If we personally are not going to the mission field, how do we send them? The answer is “by giving.” We have inculcated the wonderful faith promise plan of giving to missions in the philosophy of Christchurch. Faith promise says, “Dear Lord, I will give as you provide. As You provide, I shall give.” Giving starts with tithing. Tithing is not a matter of generosity, it is matter of honesty, because the Bible says, “*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*” (Malachi 3:10). When we give a tenth of our income to God, He blesses us. When He pours out the blessing, it is so great in response, that it exceeds all expectations. So we cannot give properly to missions until we tithe to the church. And when we tithe to the church, more blessings follow. We give to missions from the overflow and the cycle of blessings follow because our priorities are right. We have found if we participate in Faith Promise mission giving this becomes one of the greatest boosts in our stewardship for the year. Missions Conference is like a spiritual tune-up. Let’s all come and be part of our Missions Conference.

- Pastor Pope -

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