

(Missionary Messages) 1. THE MISSIONARY EMERGENCY

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"Redeeming the time because the days are evil" (Eph. 5: 17). "I will tarry at Ephesus * * * for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:8, 9). An emergency is a situation of such extreme need as will brook no delay. It is a case of life or death, now or never. When a hundred entombed miners are signaling from the depths of some exploded coal shaft, and wives and children are sobbing and shrieking in dismay, and the rescuers are rushing to the mouth of the shaft for instant relief: that is an emergency. When on the white fields of the northwest the great harvests are perishing for lack of laborers, and almost any price is offered for harvest hands to save the crops that must either be reaped or rot: that is an emergency. When the signal rockets are flashing over some raging surf and revealing a lot of terrified sailors clinging to the rigging of a tossing vessel, and the life-savers of the shore rush to man the lifeboat and pull with all their might through the angry sea if by any means they may save some: that is an emergency. When the call for reinforcements comes from some faltering band struggling to hold a strategic point and hard pressed by outnumbering foes, and the reserves are rushed to their relief, and brave men fight for the honor of having some part in that forlorn hope to save the flag of their country and the fortunes of some decisive battle: that is an emergency. When the firebells ring at the midnight hour, and lurid flames are bursting from roof and windows, and shrieking mothers and children cling to the window sills while the fire ladders leap like magic from curb to cornice, and the firemen seem to fly up the awful ascent to the rescue: that is an emergency. Who would dare to blame these men for their enthusiasm or call them mad? Their names are honored as the heroes of their country, and these stories of sacrifice light up the selfishness of human life with a glorious silver lining.

But there are greater crises and mightier emergencies in the higher world of our spiritual work and warfare, and one of these is the great task of working and praying and sacrificing for the immediate evangelization of the world. This is not merely a duty, but it is the supreme duty of every Christian. This is not merely one of the questions of Christian privilege and responsibility, but it is the one question of Christian obligation. It is not merely an opportunity, but an emergency, and the voice of God concerning it is, "Redeeming the time"â€"buying up the opportunity because the days are evil." 1. It is an emergency because of the awful need of lost humanity. This is no mere question of temporal, material, or local interest. It is a question of life and death. It is a question of eternal destiny. It is the question of eternal life or eternal death for a thousand millions of our race. It is that question of which the Master Himself has said, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Compared with this tremendous issue the ordinary questions of sanitary improvement, civic reform, municipal

government, tariff legislation, national prosperity, social reform, or even the great question of war or peace are but of transient and trivial importance. These are important, but this is imperative. These are urgent, but this is emergent.

2. It is an emergency because of the vast extent of the need. It concerns the myriads of the human family who if they passed in procession in single file before our eyes would take the lifetime of the oldest living person to complete that progression and hear just once the message of salvation which has been given to us in trust for them. Over those perishing multitudes the heart of the Master yearns with infinite compassion as He cries from age to age, "The harvest is great but the laborers are few." What question can be compared with the question of their need and our responsibility?

3. It is an emergency because these multitudes are swiftly passing beyond our reach. This heathen world of which we speak, while it is ever present in its mass, is ever passing in its individual members, and if we are ever to save our proportion of it, we must save the present generation.

TheyTMre passing, passing fast away, A hundred thousand souls a day; TheyTMre passing to their doom. 4. It is an emergency because of the awful spiritual destitution of the heathen world and the disproportion of their religious opportunities. There are tribes and nations representing more than one hundred millions of people who are yet wholly unevangelized, and the average provision which the Church is making for the heathen populations of the earth would just give one minister each to American cities like Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Scranton, and Wilmington. Is this fair? Is this loyal to the Master? Is this honesty to our trust? Or is this breach of trust, treason against our Lord, and bloodguiltiness for the souls of men? 5. It is an emergency because of the continual increase of these vast myriads of perishing men. Notwithstanding the rapid progress of Christianity in heathen countries and the greater prorata growth of the converts of Protestant missions as compared even with the population, still the fact remains that while in the past decade the mission church is increased by half a million, yet the heathen population increased by twenty millions, and in a hundred years, Dr. Johnson has told us, the Christless population of the globe has grown two hundred millions greater.

6. It is an emergency because of the increased activity on the part of all the leaders of false religions at this time. The very activity of missions has stimulated the adversary to imitate the missionary crusade. Romanism is conducting propaganda today unparalleled in its history. Mohammedanism is sweeping over Africa and the eastern islands, and even Buddhism is aping the Gospel hymns and open air evangelistic services of our missionaries and evangelists, and on every hand there is a reaction and revival of the forces of evil calling for the most strenuous emergency work on the part of the followers of the Lord.

7. The extraordinary openings which the providence of God has brought about in the last half century create an unequalled opportunity and a real emergency. God has answered the prayers of our fathers to remove the barriers and open the doors. Not only are the doors all open, but the hinges are all off, and the walls are all down. The story of Japan, South America, Turkey, Palestine, and above all, China, is a perfect romance of providence. Our God is marching on through every land and opening the way for the entrance of the Gospel.

8. This is all enhanced by the equally wonderful working of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel and in the hearts of the heathen. It is an age of missionary revival and marvelous ingatherings. The names of Madagascar, Hawaii, the Telegus, Uganda, Korea, have become household words of spiritual power and glory. We were told the other day that while the population of India increased in the

past decade about five per cent, the missionary converts increased fifty-nine per cent. While the churches of England are steadily losing ground, and those of America just holding their own, the labors of the foreign missionary in every heathen country are multiplied tenfold more rapidly. If we would invest our lives and our money where God is working most effectually and marvelously, we shall all be missionaries.

9. The extraordinary change in the attitude of the heathen mind toward Christianity creates a new opportunity and emergency. The higher classes of India are ceasing to look with scorn upon the foreigner and are now calling for the missionary and his wife to visit their homes and teach them the new religion. The millions of China have turned their back upon their idols and are welcoming everything connected with Western civilization and even with Christianity. A few days later there came from Peking that astounding call for the prayers of the Christian world to help the rulers of China in this crisis of their history. What an opportunity! What an emergency!

10. But it is a crisis as well as a call. The open doors may suddenly close. The awakened mind of the East calling for bread may be cheated with a serpent and a stone. Western culture is not usually Christian, and if we do not give them Christ, they will soon be found accepting our agnosticism, higher criticism, and cold materialism. The students of Argentine today have almost universally repudiated Romanism which they have tried and found wanting. But they have not accepted Christ. In the University of Tokyo, with five thousand students, a recent census showed less than 150 of them as followers of any of the native religions, and the overwhelming majority avowed agnostics or infidels. The very suddenness of the reaction from the past demands immediate action on the part of the Church of God or the closed door of an unparalleled opportunity. Surely this is a supreme emergency.

11. The signs of the soon coming of the Lord Jesus intensify the crisis and the emergency. If the preaching of the Gospel unto all nations as a witness be the one urgent condition whose realization will bring the end, surely no more powerful incentive to worldwide evangelization can appeal to our hearts. At best our work is only apprentice work preliminary and preparatory to His great finishing touch, and how we long for the Master to come and bring that touch and climax to our poor, imperfect attempts at service. They tell of a gifted artist who was struggling to express on canvas the great vision that had come to his soul, and how at last, discouraged by his inability to do justice to his own ideal, he left the painting incomplete and wrote in his diary a little cry of self-despair. That night his old master came in disguise to the studio to which he still retained a pass key, and as he gazed upon the striking outline upon the canvas and thought of the artist whose inmost soul he understood so well, he seemed to enter into his conception, and seizing the brush he finished the painting as only he could have done, and quietly stole away. When the young artist returned to the studio, he gazed in rapt astonishment upon his finished work, and bursting into tears he cried, "No one but the master himself could have done this." So some day He will come and finish our poor apprentice work with His own glorious touch, and the things which for twenty centuries the struggling Church has been inadequately endeavoring to accomplish, will burst upon the vision of the universe in all the glory of His finished plan. A nation shall be born in a day, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Oh, if it be true that all that the providence of God can do in fulfillment of prophecy, and all that the Holy Ghost has promised in the preparation of the bride, if it be true that these things are in great measure accomplished, and that the advent chariots are only waiting until the last human tribe has heard the message and received the invitation to the marriage of the lamb, surely all this creates an emergency, a responsibility, a supreme incentive sufficient to set our hearts on fire, to redeem the time, and finish our great missionary trust before our generation shall have passed away. But our second text suggests the response of Christian faith and courage to this great responsibility.

"I will tarry," the apostle says, "because there is a great" door of opportunity, and a great mass of opposition. There is a twofold challenge of opportunity and opposition, which calls for immediate and courageous response. The very fact that the work was difficult only awakened a more intense determination on the part of the apostle to face the adversary and finish the fight.

This word "tarry" finely emphasizes the kind of courage and resolution, which the task requires. This work of God calls not for meteoric showers, but fixed stars; not for the forlorn hope merely and the brave advance; but for the men that can stand firm through the battle smoke and flame and be found in their tracks of blood at the end of the fight. A Scottish regiment who held the strategic point through all that dreadful day won the battle of Waterloo. Again and again they asked permission to charge, but the answer came back, "Stand firm." At last the courier who brought the message and took the answer, bowed low to his commander, and said, "You will find us all there." Sure enough, when Waterloo was won, they were all there a mangled pile of bruised and broken bodies, but their rigid fingers were still clinging to their undishonored flag.

The late Dr. Chamberlain, of India, used to tell about a missionary horse on their station that always had to be wound up before he would go steadily. He had a habit of shying, and after many ineffectual attempts, the coachman finally resorted to an ingenious stratagem. He took a long stick with a cord attached, and wound the twine around the horse's ear, drawing it tight by the stick, and then tying it firmly around his head so that the pressure of the cord created a sharp pain which absorbed the whole attention of the animal and drove out of his mind all his nervous sensitiveness about the objects on the road which had disturbed him and caused him to shy. When the winding up reached a certain stage, the horse pricked up the remaining ear and seemed to take notice, and immediately trotted away in perfect form. He became so accustomed to the process that he used to bend his head to get wound up. Dr. Chamberlain complained that the churches of America never seemed ready to give to missions until they were regularly wound up by the excitement of some missionary appeal or demonstration. Surely, we who know and love the Lord ought to give on principle and make our missionary offerings as systematic and regular as our devotions.

How much our own work has suffered from the failure of our friends to tarry at Ephesus. How many have begun well but like the Galatians have been hindered and turned aside. How sad the trail of wreckage along the way. Lives consecrated to the mission field but soon sidetracked. Stewards assuming the support of some foreign workers, and then dropping their solemn responsibility with perfect impunity. Scores and hundreds have thus turned aside, and only a miracle of providence and grace could have carried our missionary work through these tests and discouragements. God give us the courage that can withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand; the love that "bears and forbears," and will not tire; the faith that faints not in the hour of trial; and the fidelity that can look in the Master's face and say, "You will find us there when You come."

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