

(Missionary Messages) 3. NEW TESTAMENT MISSIONARY TYPES

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"Count me therefore a partner" (Phil. 17). Let me present to you a group of New Testament missionaries which stand out in bold relief in the story of early Christianity. These we will find are types of character and represent some special feature of missionary life and service.

I. PHILIP, THE MISSIONARY EVANGELIST

Philip had been greatly honored of God as a soul-winner and an evangelist. In the City of Samaria he was in the very height of a great revival and thousands of souls were being added to the Church, but suddenly there came a call to him to leave his fruitful work and go down to the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. If ever a man could have been excused for staying at home and taking care of an over-flowing harvest of souls it was he. Not a moment did he hesitate, but promptly left his work and started out like Abraham, not knowing whither he went. Suddenly a cloud of dust on the distant horizon betokened a coming cavalcade, and soon he was facing the chariot of a great Ethiopian prince who was returning from Jerusalem to his distant home with a hungry and disappointed heart. He had sought in vain in the great metropolis of the religious world to find a healing balm for his broken heart. He had the Book of God, but he needed a living voice to interpret it. "For how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?" We need more than even the Bible to evangelize the world. The good seed is, not the principles of the kingdom, but the children of the kingdom. It is not a long interview, but how momentous and decisive. A simple question, a simple sermon to a single hearer and all about Jesus, a simple confession of faith, and then the solemn act of baptism, and, lo, the first heathen convert of the ages has been won and not only won but sent on his way rejoicing to the millions of Africa.

That is the first picture of the missionary page of Church history. How much it expresses. How many its lessons. These are some of them: the need of a missionary call, prompt obedience when it comes, faith even if it seems to lead into the wilderness and the darkness, courage and discernment to meet the opportunity when it comes, personal work for souls, the Word of God and the story of Jesus as the instrument of our missionary work, personal work for the winning of souls, gathering them one by one, hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart, and then when they are won, trusting them to the Lord and leaving them to go on their way rejoicing.

But above all other lessons, the chief lesson of Philip's story is the supreme claim of foreign mission work above all other work, all other claims, all other calls, all other needs, a claim so supreme that Philip

was justified in leaving the greatest work of the home field for the sake of a single soul down yonder on the desert way groping in darkness and seeking after God. In the light of this example, is there anything so important, so supreme, so transcendent, so overshadowing all other obligations, occupations and commissions as the evangelization of the heathen world?

II. BARNABAS, THE CONSECRATED BUSINESS MAN

We have sufficient glimpses of the personal circumstances of this noble Christian missionary to justify us in concluding that he was probably a successful businessman, certainly a man of wealth and property. Our first introduction to him tells us that, "having land he sold it and brought the money and laid it down at the apostles' feet." The first fruit of his consecration was the giving of his means to the cause of Christ. How gloriously God honored him by not only taking his gifts but himself and making him a little later the friend of Paul and the first missionary sent out by the Church in Antioch to inaugurate the great works of foreign missions. Philip had gone as an individual pioneer, but it was the mission of Barnabas and Paul to begin the first organized missionary work of the Church. Barnabas stands, therefore, for all that is most practical and devoted in the work of the Christian layman.

How God had used such men in every age in the Church. It takes more than ministers to constitute the missionary army. Philip of Saxony was as necessary to the Reformation as Martin Luther. Robert and Alexander Haldane were as essential figures in the Lord's work as Knox and Peden. Lord Shaftsbury, Wilberforce and Count Zinzendorf were as much the anointed of the Lord as Wesley, Baxter and Spurgeon. Today, many of the most useful and honored missionaries in foreign lands are men that have gone abroad from secular callings and taken into the Master's work the strength and sterling qualities and the practical experience and wisdom which a business life teaches to earnest men. Some one has said with great truth, that the greatest thing in our modern commercial life is not so much the colossal fortunes of our wealthy men as the splendid genius and force that have accumulated and invested these fortunes. The chief assets of a successful businessman are not his money but himself. Barnabas, the Lord Jesus wants you even more than your money. He wants your ability, energy, wisdom, influence, and experience in the counsels of His kingdom. The chief value of the gift of your means to Him lies in the fact that it is the proof that you belong to him unreservedly and completely. Beloved brethren of the world, captains of industry and business, are you doing your best for your Redeemer and the cause of the world's evangelization? "The Lord hath need of you."

III. GAIUS, THE MISSIONARY HOST

There is no more attractive figure than the noble Christian gentleman whom the Apostle John introduces to us in his third epistle. He tells us in these strong and striking words what kind of a man he was. "The brethren testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church." Then we have a glimpse of the relation of this good man to the missionaries of Christ. "For his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We, therefore, ought to receive such, that we may be fellow helpers to the truth." This evidently refers to the early Christian missionaries who had gone forth in a spirit of self-sacrifice and faith in God, asking nothing from the heathen to whom they carried the message of the Gospel. But now the apostle reminds good Gaius of the duty of the brethren to such missionaries, "Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." This is a fine picture of the duty of the home church and Christian to the foreign missionary. Their part is to go forth in self-sacrificing

love and simple faith in God "taking nothing of the Gentiles," our part is to "receive such" to be "fellow-helpers" and to "bring them forward on their journey after a godly sort." This is what we do when we help an earnest consecrated student through his training course on his way to the field and then supply his outfit, his transportation and support. This is what is meant by "tarrying by the stuff," not to grab all the stuff ourselves and stick it in a saving bank or stock company, but to pass it on to our brother and help him on his journey after a godly sort. Surely this is plain and practical enough for a plain businessman to understand. This is the trust which the Lord has committed to the great body of His people in home-lands. Are we fulfilling it like the beloved Gaius, the missionaries'™ host, fellow-helper and supporting friend?

IV. EPAPHRAS, OR THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

What a fine picture we have of this man in Col. 4: 12-13. There is no missionary force more prevailing than prayer. The great art of prayer in all the fullness of its power has been learned only by a few. God has His priests and priestesses who stand with holy hands at the footstool of the throne, sharing the intercession of the great High Priest, and some day it will be found that these are the greatest missionaries of all. The language used about Epaphras is extremely strong. There are several Greek words used for prayer, but the one used about his prayer is the strongest of all. It expresses the kind of entreaty which presses its suit until it has "prayed through" the most difficult situation. "Laboring fervently for you in prayers" is the strong language used to describe this importunate prayer. Beloved, have you found your place at the throne of intercession? It was the Master's™ special commission to His disciples, "pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust forth laborers into his harvest." This is the ministry which will bring workers of the right kind, which will bring means for consecrated hearts and hands, which will open the doors of every land and the hearts of every race, and which will send down the latter rain in floods upon the dry ground. This is a ministry from which none may be barred. You may be too old to go to the field, you may be too poor to give much, but if you will dedicate your heart to Christ for the priesthood of prayer, you may bring blessings upon the world that will make your single life worth a thousand lives. Charles Finney tells us of an old man in Ohio who had finished his public ministry and was laid aside by infirmity, but who received a baptism of the Holy Ghost which took the special form of prayer for the world and the work of God. It was his custom to take up individual congregations, ministers and mission fields in turn and pray for a special revival to be sent to each. He kept a diary of these seasons of prayer, and, after his death, it was found that a wave of revival had traveled around the world in the exact order of his recorded prayers. Oh, Epaphras, the Lord hath need of thee. Some modest maiden, some aged mother, some wornout preacher, some humble illiterate disciple you may be, but to you it may be given to touch the wire that will set the world on fire and bring back our returning Lord.

V. LUKE, OR OUR MISSIONARY LITERATURE

There is no more effective instrumentality today for awakening missionary interest for summoning the workers to the harvest field than the printed page and the consecrated pen. The past quarter of a century has almost created the present splendid array of missionary

periodicals. Luke was the pioneer of the missionary press. It was he that gave us the Acts of the Apostles, and after he had written twenty-eight glowing chapters he left the book unfinished for us to add in coming generations the remaining chapters of this story, not so much of the acts of the apostles as the acts of the Holy Ghost and the ascended Christ. Do not take refuge with the mean fellow who had only one talent, in the fact that you are not gifted as a writer. We do not want writers so much as readers. It is the missionary reader that creates the missionary literature. You can perform no greater service for the cause of missions

than to take several missionary periodicals, if for no other reason than to encourage and sustain them in their fruitful ministry in calling candidates and gathering means for the work of evangelization. Better still, you can circulate these periodicals and pass them on to others to whom they may prove as great a blessing as they have to you. A few months ago a fragment of one of our Alliance papers, floating by the roadside, was picked up by a plain Christian man who was hungering for the sort of truth that page contained. This led to his subscribing for the paper, and this in turn brought several thousand dollars from his grateful heart into the treasury of our work. A few months before a quiet Christian lady in the far South, who had never heard of our work before, picked up a little leaflet, describing the work, and this was used of God to lead her to contribute to the work within the next few days an amount sufficient to support two missionaries for a whole year. Beloved, are you doing your part in the beautiful ministry of the missionary press to publish the Gospel and scatter the leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations.

VI. AQUILA AND PRISCILLA, OR THE CONSECRATION OF HOME LIFE TO MISSIONS These two people are in a class of their own. They were not sent by any society; they were not dependent upon support by the churches; they were just plain business people who took care of themselves, and as the providence of God moved them from city to city and land to land, they just let their light shine wherever they happened to be, and the result was a glorious fruition in the living of other lives and the calling of some of the most honored of the servants of Christ to their holy ministry. It was through them that Apollos, second only to Paul in his splendid gifts, was led into the fullness of Jesus. Speaking of them Paul says that they had "for him laid down their necks and that, not only he, but the whole Church of Christ gave thanks to them." They represent what we might call the self-supporting missionary and the Christian family transported to the heathen world, and there reflecting the beauty and glory of Christ to all around. When Commander Perry was asked by some one what he thought of missionaries, he answered, "I myself am a missionary." We do not need holy orders to set us apart for God. The orders of the Holy Spirit are enough. It would be a glorious ministry for the Gospel and the world if a large number of men and women who have ample means for their own support and no pressing need to remain in the homeland, would simply move out to the heathen world and live there as witnesses for Christ at their own expense. It was something like this that Pastor Harms and Gosner initiated when they sent out a colony of several hundred farmers, blacksmiths and other artisans to the heathen world, just to live their holy lives among these people, and present to them the object lesson of a Christian family and a Christian society. The result today appears in a great multitude of souls gathered around the name of Jesus in these stations and forming self-supporting missions in Africa and India.

VII. TIMOTHY, THE HUMBLE HELPER

Timothy was not a principal but willing to go second and be a humble helper of his greater master Paul. When Marshman offered himself to China, his uncouth mien and his clodhopper boots dismayed the committee, and they told him he was not enough of a gentleman to be a missionary. Then they ventured to ask if he was willing to go out as a servant. He was only too glad of the opportunity, and as the servant of Doctor Morrison, that illustrious career, in which he rose ere long to as high a place of service and honor as his leader and master. There are too many captains around. God wants more private soldiers who are willing to follow in the ranks and take the lowest place. Only such men can be leaders themselves, "for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

VIII. EPAPHRODITUS, THE MESSENGER

Paul gives this fine description of this noble missionary in Phil. 2:25, 26, 30, "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

"For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

"Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."

He was one of those all-round workers that was ready for any ministry that was most needed, not only to preach the Gospel, but to go and hunt up a suffering prisoner in a Roman dungeon and wait upon him with his own hands. So unselfish was he that when he himself became ill through exposure and over-exertion, instead of asking for sympathy, his one concern was to keep his friends from finding out, lest they should be unduly anxious about him. How much we need, upon the mission field, these all-round people that can turn their hands and adjust their hearts to wait by the sick bed of a suffering missionary, to minister to a heathen child, to help in the housekeeping of the station, to assist in the building of the mission premises, and to be "general utility man or woman" wherever the need is greatest. God give us more of the Epaphroditus™ type of missionaries.

IX. MARK, OR THE BACKSLIDER RESTORED

Mark was one of those ardent and enthusiastic young fellows who are eager to go under the first impulse of his heart, but when the real difficulties of the field confronted him was just as eager to get home to his mother. He stands for such people in every age. We get discouraged and sometimes disgusted with these missionary failures, and like Paul with Mark, feel like letting them go as worthless materials. But the story of Mark is instructive and reminds us that we must be as patient as Barnabas, as patient as Christ, and some day, like even Paul himself, we shall be glad to take Mark back again and say, "he is profitable to me for the ministry." There are some of us who never learn anything well until we have failed and started again at the bottom. It takes a good tumble to bring us to the bottom, and the second chance is sometimes the best. Thank God there is a second chance for a humble heart.

X. PERSIS, OR THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

We must not forget the women. The only person that gets a double mark of commendation in Paul's catalogue of his friends at Rome is "the beloved Persis who labored much in the Lord." The others labored, but she labored much. It is usually a woman who reaches the superlative degree. Beginning with Mary Magdalene, the first missionary of the cross, what a glorious chain of loving, consecrated women leads on through the ages. We might pick out Mary of Jerusalem, the mother of Mark and sister of Barnabas, who seemed to have been the hostess of the Apostolic Church. We could not pass by Priscilla, the spiritual mother of Apollos and the trusted friend of Paul. We also find in this glorious company Lydia of Philippi, little Rhoda, Phebe of Cenchrea, Mary of Rome and many others. Thank God, the race is not extinguished, but the missionary work of women is wider, deeper and more glorious today than ever before. No one can do more in promoting the idea of missions at home, no one can be such a recruiting agent for volunteers, especially in her own family, and no one can give and sacrifice as women do. God help you, "beloved Persis," still to "labor much in the Lord."

XI. PAUL, THE PIONEER MISSIONARY

How shall we in a few sentences attempt to picture this prince of missionaries who summed up in himself all qualities, characteristics and types of spiritual power and missionary service. The one feature on which alone we have time to dwell is the fact that he, above all others, was a missionary pioneer. He was the great Pathfinder in an unexplored realm in the heathen world. It was his to blaze a road through the dark recesses of earth's benighted regions. His one intense and instinctive impulse was to preach the Gospel "where Christ had not been named" and to press on to the regions beyond. He had no time to linger with cherished friends or in congenial surroundings so long as there was a human being within his reach to whom the story of Jesus had never been told. It is almost amusing to hear him say to the Romans, "having now no more place in these parts, whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you." He could not take the time even to go to Rome until he had the heathen field immediate around him and could say, "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." What a glorious type for the young men of today, when God is opening up new worlds for the soldiers of the cross to conquer and the voice of a sublime ambition is summoning us as never before to march on behind His banner and occupy the world's open doors for the last campaign of the Christian age and the final triumph of the Lamb. This is the one theme in connection with which the apostle uses the word "ambition." All other ambition had been counted loss for Christ, but this ambition lures him on like a great and shining star, "having an ambition to preach the gospel in the regions beyond." God fire the young men and women of today with this noble ambition and make us missionary pioneers and heroic pathfinders through all the neglected wilds of this dark world of sin and sorrow.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/missionary-messages-3-new-testament-missionary-types/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net

