

Staying by the Stuff

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of staying by the stuff, or serving at home, to support the missionary work and evangelization of the world.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 30:24

Topics: "Missionary Work", "Support for Missions"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the importance of those who 'stay by the stuff' in the context of David's victory over the Amalekites, illustrating that both the front-line soldiers and the rear guard share equally in the spoils. He argues that the home guard is just as vital as those who go into battle, and that God calls some to support missions from home, contributing through prayer, finances, and encouragement. Simpson encourages believers to embrace the missionary idea, propagate it, and actively support those who are sent abroad, highlighting that every effort counts in the mission of evangelizing the world. He calls for a collective commitment to prayer and support for missionaries, asserting that the work at home is equally significant in advancing God's kingdom.

Transcript

"As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day." [1 Samuel 30:24-26]

DAVID had just achieved a glorious victory over the Amalekites, and defeated the invaders of Ziklag, and recovered his beloved family and the spoils which the enemy had taken. It had been necessary, in the pursuit of the enemy, to leave some of his force behind, in order to protect their rear and guard the feeble ones.. When the spoils were to be divided, the soldiers, flushed with victory, were unwilling that any part of the booty should be shared by the rear guard. But David nobly refused to yield to their unjust demands, and ordered that an equal share of all the booty should be given to those who had tarried behind; and he made it a rule in his army that henceforth those who remained behind should share alike in the day of victory.

This rule applies as well to the army of the Lord. The home guard is as necessary as the advance guard. The men that stand by the stuff are serving as truly as those who go to the front and directly face the foe, and God has also made it a rule that they shall share alike, in the day of recompense, with the soldiers who fight on the high places of the field.

As we have listened during these recent days to the story of the need of heathen lands, many of us have been prompted to go. God has been pleased with the response, and doubtless has said of us, as He did of David of old, "It is well that it was in thy heart." [IIChronicles 6:8] But at the same time, He may call some of us to remain at home, and serve the same great cause by our influence here.

David longed to build the temple, but God accepted his will, and gave the work to another man, allowing David, however, to contribute the means and cooperate in the work, and David gave as liberally and worked as loyally as though he alone were to have the whole honor of the undertaking.

So God has not called some of us to go to the field, but has given us a work to do at home by which we have been able to advance the cause of missions much more than if we had gone.

It is one thing to be a home missionary; it is quite another thing to be a missionary at home. God wants many of us for the latter calling; to stay in this land for the express purpose of getting others to go abroad; to "stand by the stuff" for the purpose of being a soldier just as truly as those who go to the front.

There are two ways of standing by the stuff. One is, to remain at home and eat up the stuff, -- to be a mere camp follower; the other is to remain by the stuff as a fellow-worker with those who fight the battle.

The greatest need of missionary work today is not the foreign, but the home end. If the people of America were one-quarter as true to the great work of evangelizing the world as the workers on the field, the work would be accomplished in a single generation. It is one thing to stay at home because we do not go; it is another thing to stay because we are called to remain as workers for the foreign field. No minister of the gospel can do the highest work at home until he has become consecrated to the evangelization of the whole world. No Christian can do his best in this land until he has in spirit obeyed the commission: "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." [Mark 16:15]

How can we, in the highest sense, "stand by the stuff" and work for the world's evangelization, at home?

I. We can be baptized with the missionary idea.

Every great movement comes through an idea. The Crusades crystallized around the stirring thought of rescuing the Holy Cross from the hands of the infidel. The Reformation was the expression of the idea of salvation by faith. The great movement of the Wesleys started in the idea of experimental religion and the work of the Holy Ghost. And so today, every organization which is accomplishing anything, started with a conception of truth or duty which possessed the mind of some man, and then became the joint inheritance of his followers. Now, the idea of this missionary work, and especially of the form in which we are most interested, is a very definite and important one, and if we do nothing more than intelligently grasp and diligently diffuse it, we shall be starting a fire which will reach thousands of hearts, and inspire potential movements.

What is the specific idea of this work? It is not merely the conversion of many souls, or even of whole nations; but it is the publication of the gospel equally, fairly and speedily, to all the people and nations on the face of the earth during the present generation of living men: so that every one may have the opportunity of salvation, and the Bride of Christ may be gathered in from all nations, tribes and tongues, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, and the way fully prepared for the Lord's return. We believe literally in the prophecy contained in the last words of Jesus: "This gospel of the kingdom must first be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." [Matthew 24:14]

This is the idea of the missionary movement. It is not a movement for the universal salvation of the race, but for the quick evangelization of all the nations, with a special view to removing the last condition that hinders our Master's return.

Its success is not gauged, therefore, by the number of converts, but by the complete evangelization of all people and nations. We believe Christ has a remnant in every land that must be gathered in before He can return, and we go to find them. They are His sheep which are not of this fold, whom He must bring. There may be but a very few, compared with the millions in the field to which we go; we shall know by the number who accept His offer and enter the fold.

No, the central idea of any great movement must have certain characteristics if it is to be influential and widely accepted.

It must be clear, definite and specific, so that the most ordinary minds can grasp it. Surely, nothing can be clearer or more definite than this.

It must be Scriptural, so that there can be no doubt of its source.

Surely this needs no further confirmation than the single passage which we have quoted, and such as the following, in which God's plan of evangelization is so explicitly laid down:

"God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; That the residue of men might seek after the Lord and all the gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." [Acts 15:14-17]

The idea must be novel enough to awaken attention, and surely there is nothing more novel than this conception of missionary work. It is fitted to revolutionize all our ideas of foreign evangelization.

And last, the idea, to have the utmost power, must be stirring, inspiring, and fitted to awaken enthusiasm. What can be more sublime than this conception of missionary work? What can be more stimulating than to be the heralds of His advent, and the plenipotentiaries of His kingdom, carrying the last manifesto of the coming King to all the provinces of this revolted empire? What can be more majestic than the thought that we have it in our power to hasten the close of this tragedy of sin and sorrow, the consummation of this dispensation and the advent of an era of peace and glory, perhaps even in our own lifetime? What crusade can compare with the sublimity of this grand enterprise, to win for the King of Kings the crown of all the world, and lay it at His blessed feet, and then share with Him, as David's faithful followers, the Kingdom which He will bring?

If we heartily embrace and loyally follow out this great idea, it will lead to very practical results. It will separate us from a great many things. We will not be able to compromise with doubtful things, or propagate ideas which are out of harmony with this, or directly opposed to it.

There are such ideas abroad, even in Christian work and teaching. There are excellent Christian people who believe and teach that this is not a missionary age; but that after our Lord's return, a great missionary movement is to be carried on by another people, and under entirely different circumstances. There are conservative methods of missionary work which, while they accomplish much good, are not in keeping with this great conception; and while we rejoice in all the good they do, we cannot do our best work on

divided lines. There are millions of Christians who are spending most of their strength on charitable, educational, and religious movements which assume that the world is to last for centuries, and that the best we can do is to try to reform, convert, and elevate the race, by the present agencies. We shall be utterly discouraged, if we work on these lines; but if we understand the Master's plan, and work intelligently with Him, and with each other, this movement will gather a momentum which will be as widespread and as irresistible as the glorious truth which lies back of it, and will hasten His glorious coming; and then He Himself will end the sin and sorrow with which we are now struggling so ineffectually.

II. We can propagate the missionary idea.

Living truths are living forces. A divine thought is divine dynamite, and wherever it goes it must produce results. It will produce the best results when carried along upon systematic lines. Let us, therefore, spread these glorious thoughts; let us systematically work them out among our friends; let us circulate the truth; let us talk it into people; let us spread it abroad by tracts, leaflets, and missionary literature; let us provide ourselves with cards presenting these principles, and put them in every hand, and keep them in the minds of people until they are saturated with the truth, Let us organize more thoroughly the forces that are already accumulated. There are thousands of people all over the country who thoroughly believe in these great truths, but they are scattered. Get them together and organize them for work. Get your friends together and hold prayer meetings; pray for missions and missionaries, and, better still, give for the support of some dear worker in this direction. Let us muster living hearts around this great central truth, and this crusade will spread until its means are measured by millions; its missionaries numbered by many thousands; and its glorious results will be the evangelization of all nations, and the speedy coming of our blessed Lord.

III. We can labor, sacrifice, and give to sustain others who are called to go.

It is just as much missionary work for you to toil in the laundry, the kitchen, the shop, the factory, the office, or on the farm, to support a living voice in China, India, or Africa, as it would be for you to go. Some of you are better farmers than missionaries; some of you can make money at home more quickly than you could learn the Marathi language abroad; some of you are strong in your own profession or line, but would be baffled with the perplexities and difficulties of the heathen field, and God wants you here.

There are others who are particularly fitted for the missionary field; they have the faculty of acquiring foreign languages; they have a tact for dealing with people; they have the vigorous health, and the confidence in God for their body, which will carry them safely through the perils of pestilence and climate, and they have the peculiar unction which will help them in the winning of souls. You can send them abroad, to represent you, and they will be your other self, your partner in this business, and you will have an equal share in their work, and when the end comes, and the recompenses are awarded, you will share with them the glorious results of their life of labor and sacrifice.

Is not this inspiring to the humble toiler? Does it not give a beauty and sublimity to your ordinary employments which takes you out of the commonplace, and lifts you to the heights of heroism?

I have told you of the lepers who are often found without feet or hands. They tell us of one who had no hands, who used to carry about his neighbor, who had no feet; and the two went into partnership, and were able to cultivate their two farms by mutual help. The one who had no hands carried his neighbor who had no feet, and sitting on his shoulders he scattered the seed, and both together shared the harvest as they had shared the toil.

Who will volunteer to give the Lord a pair of feet, or a pair of hands? God is calling for volunteers in the home guard; He is calling for men and women who will support missionaries abroad. We have been looking for churches or societies to do this; but the time has come when God wants to assign this work to individuals. He has given us 200 men and women in the Alliance work who are standing as supporters for substitutes abroad; but what are 200? It would be just as easy for 200,000 Christians in America to do this, if their hearts were only stirred, and kindled, and baptized with this great thought. Who will volunteer?

I am sure some of you are needed at home, although you are willing to go, and God counts your willingness as if you went. We have already said that David was willing to build a temple, but God gave the work to Solomon, and David furnished the means. In a single day we read that David contributed -- how much do you suppose it was? -- \$8,000,000? No, it was \$80,000,000, and his nobles followed it with a munificent offering of \$120,000,000 more. This was in the days that we call semi-barbarous, and in a little nation with one-eighth of the population of the United States, and in a time when money was worth much more than it is today.

Oh, how our paltry gifts pale before it, and how God must feel ashamed of our boasting! We wonder as much when men give a million dollars for missionary work as we do when God heals some poor sufferer who has trusted Him. Our sacrifice is about as much as our faith. The day will come when people will give hundreds of millions. God is putting money into the hands of the Jews, and we will be put aside because we have been unfaithful to our trust. If we would do anything truly noble for this work, we must hurry up.

But God is not going to get much of this money from the rich. He loves sacrifice, and He has chosen the poor to be His most precious stewards. Oh! how often their deep poverty abounds unto the riches of their liberality. God doubly blesses the gift that costs something. When a noble woman was asked how she could afford to give so much, she answered, "I cannot afford to give it; I sacrifice it."

The support of our missionary work during the past year has been full of sacrifices. This very week, the splendid sum of \$300 has just been contributed by a laundress in this church to support a missionary. Many of the missionary gifts of last year came from struggling men and women who had to go out and pick berries and sell them to earn their missionary offerings, or sacrifice part of their lunch every day, and live on simpler fare, that they might give the savings to spread the gospel. One has sold his horses and carriage, and given the proceeds to missionaries; another has given up part of her luxurious rugs, and some of the needless decorations of her handsome parlors, that it might be turned into immortal souls. Another remained away from the first week of this Convention, that he might give what it would have cost, to the work of missions, and he has come this second week, to take part in the same unselfish work. God can show us a hundred ways where we can change our earthly investments and "lay up in store for the time to come, that we may grasp the prize of eternal life." [I Timothy 6:19]

The best of it is, these are all investments, and God is going to put it out at interest, and give us back a hundredfold. The other day, Mr. Cameron told us that a bank cashier said that a hundredfold would be 10,000 per cent.

Beloved, where is your life invested? Where are you putting your money, your toil, your strength, your hope, your interest?

God has a perfect system of bookkeeping, and when the hour of recompense arrives, everything will be apportioned, and one will be called from Africa, and another from Kansas, and the two will stand together amid the dusky souls that form their crown of rejoicing, and God will place a crown on both their heads,

and say, "As ye did it unto these my brethren, ye did it unto me;" [Matthew 25:40] and share and share alike; "he that sowed and he that reaped shall rejoice together." [John 4:36]

IV. Some of you can give your time to this work.

There is great need of strong executive business men in the departments of this work at home. God wants many such men, and we often find it hard to secure their services. They have plenty of time for the bank and the Board of Trade, and many of them have secured a competence and are independent; but it is difficult to get strong business men to give even half their time to a thorough oversight of the Lord's business, and to advertise and advocate it as they would some great financial scheme to write it up, to present it to thoughtful minds with all the force of their logic and tact, and put their whole heart in it as they would in some great worldly schemes, banking enterprises and commercial corporations that are the wonder of the age.

May God speak to some of you, beloved, and call you to "stand by the stuff," to be the head of the commissariat department, to give your time to the keeping of God's ledgers, to the packing of goods, to the purchasing of supplies, and the advocating of this great crusade among your fellows, until it shall become the enthusiasm of your life and the mightiest movement of the century.

V. You can encourage the workers abroad, by correspondence.

You can write letters to the missionaries; you can send them leaflets, Christmas cards, anniversary remembrances and words of cheer, from time to time. The lone heart will often bless you for even the cup of cold water that comes to them on their lonely way.

Oh, you little know the density of the darkness, the long pull of the years of isolation, and the apparent failure of fruition that sometimes gives them such pain, and the privation which is the keenest of all. Nor can you know the darkness of the loss of these hallowed scenes of blessing which are so refreshing to you, and whose inspiration they never directly enjoy.

We shall be glad to assign a missionary to even the humblest contributor, and consider him or her your especial trust for communication and prayer.

VI. You can especially pray for the missionaries abroad.

They have gone down, like the diver for pearls, into the deep, dark waters of the ocean of sin; but we must sustain their vital breath by prayer, as the diver is sustained through the tubes that bring fresh air to him from the faithful hands that move the tubes on the deck. If for a moment they cease to move the pumps, he will perish. How do we know but some of these faithful workers have perished because of our neglect? How do we know but some precious lives might have been spared to work on earth, if we had not ceased to remember them?

Often while I was abroad, I felt the breath of prayer at home, and often I had an instinctive sense of your meetings, and that your warm breath of affection was impelled and transmitted to me. Oh, by brethren, let us transfer it to our dear workers in those lonely fields. You cannot understand what their life is in those dark lands. It is depressing to the lone heart; it is exhausting to every spiritual energy. They must have some living ceaseless intercession.

Prayer is the highest of all spiritual forces. It will send the workers to the field; for the Master Himself has said, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into the harvest." [Matthew 9:38] It is the only agency that will bring us the right workers. And prayer will bring the souls upon the field and open the hearts of men to the gospel.

While I was in India, I saw a beautiful girl, the wife of a native preacher. A sweeter face I have never seen, and a more useful life cannot be found among the native workers in India.

Back of her life was a story so beautiful that I looked upon her with great interest.

Many years ago,, there was in India a class of native girls so utterly wayward and wicked, and so steeped in heathenism, that their teacher, one of our own missionaries -- at last lost almost all heart, and felt that there was no impression made, and that her work was useless. She prayed over it, and wrote to a friend in America, and he prayed as he had never prayed before. The good man went into his closet one Saturday night, after his day's work was over, and prayed for two hours, and then he only stopped because he had received an assurance that his petition was answered. On Sunday morning, this lady met her class as usual, but to her astonishment the whole spirit was changed. They were quiet, earnest, and obedient, and at the close they came to her, asked forgiveness, and promised to become Christians; and they did become such, and are living useful lives. This dear woman of whom I have spoken was one of them, the wife of a native preacher and an honored worker for Christ.

We must not miss the precision and vivid reality of this divine touch. By a familiar physical law, Saturday evening in Ohio was Sunday morning in India, and the very time when that good man was praying in America, was the hour when the class was meeting in India. Had you been able to look on this scene from heaven, you would have beheld a little stream of prayer ascending from that little village in Ohio. Steadily it is ascending to heaven, like an electric current. It passes through the hands of Jesus, to the Father, and then, receives an added flame, the very breath of the Holy Ghost. Lo! the circuit is completed, and the flash falls upon the little class in central India, and five young girls have started forth on careers of usefulness, whose issues eternity alone can tell -- all through one hour of prayer.

Oh, beloved! Pray for these lone workers, and look, while you pray, for the mighty answer.

Prayer will provide money for the work. If you will honestly pray, you will soon find yourself giving, and even sacrificing, to answer your own prayers.

Prayer will bring the money of others. A lady told me that a few years ago, a little prayer meeting was held in a New England city, and three women asked the Lord that He would lead some one to give liberally for missions. It happened that the wealthiest man in the city made his will that very week, and in that will, to the surprise of his friends, left a very large legacy to missions. And, some years later, when he passed away, a sum of more than a million dollars passed into the missionary funds. Then the people remembered how he had changed, from being rather a skeptic on the subject of foreign missions, and had left this immense legacy for missionary work. But they did not know the secret of that legacy. It was that little prayer meeting.

Another electric spark had started from earth to heaven, and describing a perfect circle around the throne, had come back to the point from which it started, and opened "the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places" [Isaiah 45:3] for the Master's work.

Prayer will also open closed doors in the field. Our brother, Peter Scott, has told us how often it has stopped the daggers of the murderous Africans when they were trying to stab him to the heart; and Dr. Paton, of New Hebrides, has told us how the breath of prayer paralyzed the arms of the South Sea Islanders, and rendered them powerless to hurl the stone or to pull the trigger they were aiming at his heart.

Our missionaries in China tell us that, when there was a long drought, the natives would become restless. The astrologers would tell them that their gods were angry at the missionaries, and there was a ferment brewing; and that if the drought continued very long, there would be a riot and perhaps a massacre. Often, at that time in answer to their prayers, God had sent the rain, and aroused the wonder of the natives at the power of the missionaries' God.

Prayer will open the gates of Tibet and Anam, and neutralize the climate of Africa. Prayer will open the hard hearts of the idolatrous nations, and prayer will bring the little flock for whom Jesus is coming soon.

Yes, and prayer will bring Jesus Himself, in a little while, to gather in His waiting ones, and bring His Kingdom in.

Let each of us give ourselves to this ministry of prayer as we never have before.

Let us be definite and special; let us have our hour of missionary prayer, and let nothing interrupt it.

Let us have special ones for whom we pray, and yet not forget to pray for all.

Let us pray, believing that we receive the things we ask for, and we shall then see the salvation of our God covering the earth and bending the heavens to meet the earth in the blessed coming of our Lord.

Down amid the depths of heathen darkness,

There are heroes true and brave,

Shrinking not from death, or toil, or danger.

They have gone to help and save.

But we hear them crying, "Do not leave us,

'Mid these dreadful depths to drown,

Let us feel your arms of prayer around us,

Hold the ropes as we go down!"

So beneath the dark and mighty ocean

Divers plunge for treasures rare

, But thro' hands that hold the ropes above them,

Still they breathe the upper air.

Seeking precious pearls of richer value,

Braver hearts have dared to go,
But our faithful hands must every moment
Hold the ropes that reach below.
Who can understand the dreadful darkness
Of these realms of sin and death?
E'en the very air is scorched and tainted,
With the Dragon's putrid breath.
But across the widest, wildest billows
Love can reach to distant lands;
And beneath the deepest, darkest surges,
Prayer can hold a brother's hands.
Think you was it only for your brother,
Jesus spake His last commands?
Is there naught for you to do or suffer,
For these lost and Christless lands?
If you cannot go yourself to save them,
There are those that you can send,
And with loving hearts stretched out to help them,
Hold the ropes while they descend.
Let us hold the ropes, with hands more loyal;
Let us pray, with faith more strong;
Let the love that never fails, uphold them,
Through their night so dark, so long.
Let us lay our treasures on the altar,
Let us give our children too;
There's a part for each, in this great conflict,
And the Lord hath need of you.

Hold the ropes, -- 'tis a brother crying, --

He has plunged beneath the wave;

He has gone, 'mid the lost and dying,

He has gone, to help and save.

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