

Aggression

by Catherine Booth

We are called to be aggressive in our Christian walk, to take the Gospel to every creature, and to adapt to the social and spiritual condition of those we seek to benefit.

Scripture: Matthew 5:13, Mark 16:15, Acts 26:16, 1 Corinthians 9:22, Jude 1:22

Topics: "Evangelism", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches on the determined aggression on the territory of Satan as commanded in Mark 16:15 and Acts 26:16-18, emphasizing the urgency to preach the Gospel to every creature and open their eyes to the truth. She highlights that this aggressive warfare will provoke opposition, as seen throughout history, and encourages believers to expect and prepare for persecution. Catherine stresses the importance of adaptation in spreading the Gospel, using various methods and agents to reach different people, and urges the Church to move out of traditional routines to engage and interest the masses in unconventional ways.

Transcript

MARK xvi. 15.--"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

ACTS xxvi. 16-18.--"Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness . . . unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in ME."

I WANT you to note that the great idea in both these texts is that of determined aggression on the territory of Satan. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." What a commission!! Who has ever yet grasped all that it implies? The vast obligations imposed on the people of God in this command have never yet been more than half realised. Go ye, not build temples or churches, and wait for them to come to you, but go ye, run after them, seek them out, and preach My Gospel to EVERY creature. Thrust yourselves and your message on the attention of men. The commission to Paul, and through him to us, embodies the same idea, "Unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes." They are indifferent, preoccupied, asleep in their sin and danger. I send thee as My herald to arouse them, shake them, open their eyes, make them think, and realise the verities of eternal things! We are to do this as God's ambassadors, whether men like it or not. We are not, to wait for convenient seasons, but in this most urgent business to be instant "out of season." We are not to shrink from pressing the truth on men's

attention for fear of giving offence. He who gave the commission has foreseen and provided for this result. "I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee" (verse 17).

II. Then it is implied in both these commissions that this aggression will provoke opposition. Of course it will. Who ever heard of aggression on the territory of an enemy without opposition, according to the power possessed by that enemy? Such a thing is impossible naturally, and even more so spiritually. "The whole world lieth in (the arms of) the wicked one." "The strong man armed keepeth his goods;" and if we, armed by a stronger than he, take them, we must expect opposition. Our Lord systematically taught His disciples to expect and prepare for persecution, He taught them, that their principles, motives, and objects, would be so incomprehensible to men of a worldly spirit, whether Pharisees or worldlings, that they would inevitably persecute and oppose them. Such we find was the case wherever the Gospel was introduced. Magistrates, rulers, and mobs, set themselves in array against both the preachers and their truths. I take it as one of the worst signs of the Christianity of this age, that it provokes so little opposition, for it is as true now as it ever was, that if we are not of the world, the world will hate us, and he that is born after the flesh will persecute him who is born after the Spirit.

III. I want you to note that the only law laid down in the New Testament for the prosecution of this aggressive warfare is the law of adaptation.

"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. ix. 22). "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" Jude, verses 22 and 23). The Gospel message is laid down with unerring accuracy, in unalterable terms. We are not at liberty to change even the order of it as given from the glorified lips of our risen Lord to Paul. "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." Here is the Divine order--1st, conviction; 2nd, repentance; 3rd, forgiveness; and woe be to the man who transposes this order. He makes as great a mistake as one would make in putting the key into the lock upside down. He who made man laid down this order, and it fits our mental and spiritual constitution. Let us take care to preserve it intact. Let us keep the message itself unadulterated and the order of it undisturbed; but in our modes of bringing it to bear on men, we are left free as the air and sunlight.

Adaptation, expediency, is our only law. I may convey it in any kind of language so that it carries the true meaning to the mind of the hearer--words are nothing, only as they convey ideas. I may send it through any kind of agent, from the acute and polished intellect of a profound theologian down to the new-born babe in Christ, scarcely able to read a letter in the Book. Any man, however common or unclean he may have been, if God hath cleansed him, may be used to open the eyes of his fellow-men, and turn them from darkness to light. Adaptation is the great, thing we ought to consider. If one method or agent fails, we should try another--God does so. How He tries by various methods and strokes of providence to bring men to Himself! In how many ways did He strive with you, my brother, my sister. He did not try one providence, one sermon, one consideration, one call, but oh, how many, with some of us, before our stubborn hearts yielded to His grace! And as He works, so He calls us to work with Him. In this sense, to become all things to all men, if by any means we may save some; of some making a difference, pulling them out of the fire. That is, adapt ourselves and our measures to the social and spiritual condition of those whom we seek to benefit. It is here I conceive, that our Churches have fallen into such grievous mistakes with reference to the propagation of the Gospel in our own times. We have stood to our stereotyped forms, refusing to come down from the routine of our forefathers, although this routine has

ceased to be attractive to the people, may, in many instances, the very thing that drives them away.

The most thoughtful writers on education tell us that the first essential in a teacher of youth is to be able to interest his pupils. True. This is equally true of the people--if you would benefit and bless them, you must interest them. You must clothe the truth in such garb, and convey it by such mediums, as will arouse their attention and interest their minds. In short, we must come down to them. Whatever has caused it, it is a fact, that the masses of the people have come to associate ideas of stiffness, formality, and uninteresting routine with our church and chapel worship, and if we are to be co-workers with God for them, we must move out of our jog-trot paces and become all things to them in order to win them. If they will not come inside our consecrated buildings, we must get at them in unconsecrated ones, or out under the canopy of heaven. And has not Jesus by His blood consecrated every spot of earth to soul-saving purposes? If they will not listen to our college-trained and polished divines, we must send them men of their own stamp, whose habits of thought and modes of expression are familiar and congenial to them, and who, washed and filled with the Holy Ghost, are as well adapted to preach to them, as were the fishermen of Galilee to the men of their generation.

Why did not our Lord fit and call the divines of His own times to go to the people? He certainly could have done so! Surely he must have had a sound and philosophical reason for choosing fishermen. He acted on the principle of adaptation. Instead of working a miracle to unteach and set loose the divines for this work, He acted on existing natural law, as He always did when there was no necessity to break it, and chose the best adapted instruments for His purpose; hence He chose men from amongst the people to be workers together with Himself, and sent them out into the bye-ways and hedges, the fields, the market-place, the sea-shore, and the hill-side; in short, He sent them wherever the people were to be got at. Oh! if the Church had steadily adhered to the tactics of our Lord, who can tell whether the kingdoms of this world would not long since have been subjected to His sway?

For our part, at any rate, we cannot hesitate for a moment as to the conduct demanded of us by the teachings of our Master, and of experience, as well as by the exigencies of a perishing world. We would a thousand times rather err in too readily utilising men and means that are manifestly suitable to the accomplishment of the great end in view, than in rejecting any man or any means as "common" or "improper" which may aid us in the gigantic labours which a dying world stands in such terrible need of.

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