



A Light To The Gentiles

Acts 13:44-49 KJV And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. [45] But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. [46] Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. [47] For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. [48] And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. [49] And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

I. INTRODUCTION—MISSIONS

-I am going to do something a little different with this sermon. The first Sunday of every month for as long as this church has been established has been determined as Missions Sunday. I believe it is important for every family in this church to have at least one missionary that they support both prayerfully and financially as God has blessed them. I also believe it is important for us to take on additional families under our Partners In Missions program.

-I would also encourage you to walk by the pictures in the hallway of our missionaries and take their names and pray diligently for them. They are under spiritual attack and the godly efforts of your praying can do great things for them.

· Pray for doors to be opened to them:

Colossians 4:2-3 KJV Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; [3] Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

· Pray that God would give them courage to speak:

Ephesians 6:19-20 KJV And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, [20] For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

· Pray that the Word of God would be spread without obstacles:

2 Thessalonians 3:1 KJV Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:

· Pray that they would have protection:

2 Thessalonians 3:2-3 KJV And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith. [3] But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil.

They need for us to do this in their behalf.

A. Some Stats on the State of Missions

-Mark Noll noted the following things about missions at large in a book he wrote in 2009 entitled, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith*:

- This past Sunday. . . more Christians believers attended church in China than in all of so-called ‘Christian Europe.’
- The number of practicing Christians in China may be approaching the number in the United States.

· More Christian workers in Brazil are active in cross-cultural ministry outside their homelands than from Britain and Canada.

-What could happen to us as a church. . . as a people who are called by His name. . . as men and women who truly want to make a difference if we could say we have “enough!”?

· What if we were willing to live within our means so that we could support missions?

· What if a \$35,000 income or \$40,000 income could say, I will live in a lesser state so I can give?

· What if a week that had 168 hours in it were not stuffed so full of the American Dream that we had time to pray for missions and reach out and witness to those who need to hear?

B. General Quotes on Missions

William Booth—Founder of the Salvation Army—“Not called!” did you say? “Not heard the call,” I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear Him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell, and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father's house and bid their brothers and sisters, and servants and masters not to come there. . . . And then look Christ in the face, whose mercy you have professed to obey, and tell Him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish His mercy to the world.

Robert Savage—The command has been to "go," but we have stayed—in body, gifts, prayer and influence. He has asked us to be witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. . . But 99% of Christians have kept puttering around in the homeland.

Nate Saint—And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives...and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted.

K. P. Yohannon—A tiny group of believers who have the gospel keep mumbling it over and over to themselves. Meanwhile, millions who have never heard it once fall into the flames of eternal hell without ever hearing the salvation story.

T. J. Bach—Two distinguishing marks of the early church were: Poverty and Power.

John Piper—Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty and beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to declare His glory among the nations (Ps. 96:3).

C. Biblical Quotes on Missions

Isaiah 34:1 KJV Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

Matthew 6:9-10 KJV After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

Matthew 10:18-20 KJV And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.[19] But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.[20] For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Mark 16:15 KJV And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Luke 10:2-3 KJV Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. [3] Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

2 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. [17] But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

II. ACTS 13—A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

-I am going to violate some of the laws of homiletics and hermeneutics with this sermon in that I shall not deal greatly with the text except to use it as a leaping off point concerning missions.

-Over the last several months, I have spent much time reading through the book of Acts and meditating on the activities of these men who God used in the foundation of His church. They were dedicated men, called men, separated men, and sent men.

-Their great desire, once the persecution begins to drive them, was to publish the message of Jesus Christ throughout the world. This is what is taking place in this chapter. The Gentiles and even some of the Jews are hearing what Paul is preaching and they want to hear more.

-Early in Acts 13, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark have a confrontation with Elymas, a sorcerer, who is smitten with blindness because of his opposition to their preaching. We have to remember what Ananias was told by the Lord in Acts 9 when he was about to go and bring Paul his instructions. . . . Tell him that there will be a lot of suffering with his mission.

-Don't forget that point! We will have opposition and suffering as we advance the Gospel. The "Americanization" of the Gospel has caused us to think that all will be well when we serve the Lord. However, you will discover that when you read the Bible that these men suffered immensely with the advancing of the Gospel. Our reward comes after this life. . .

-At some point, John Mark gets discouraged and throws in the towel (Acts 13:13) and Paul and Barnabas have to go on alone. They reach Antioch and this is the setting of the passage we read initially.

-The whole city shows up to see and hear what is going on (13:44) but all are not happy about it (13:45) and they are filled with envy and the Jews begin to speak against them. This opposition just filled Paul and Barnabas with great boldness. . . You have to admire the way the KJV notes it. . . *then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold*. . . There are times you will have the same experience! Witness on and do the will of God!

-But then when the Gentiles begin to turn toward the message, it was then that Paul clearly stated that God had ordained them to be a light to the Gentiles.

-This is what takes place when missionaries begin to heed the call and do the will of God.

-One such missionary among us, I would like to introduce you to. . .

III. LEWIS MORLEY—UPCI MISSIONARY TO VENEZUELA, COLUMBIA AND ECUADOR

-Lewis Morley was born in England in 1915 and was converted when he was 18 years old. He immigrated to Canada in 1948 where he was baptized in the name of Jesus and was ordained to the ministry.

-In 1956 he arrived in Venezuela and established a church. It was a fortuitous event because a missionary named Sallie Lemons was working in nearby Columbia and he married her. They moved to Columbia in 1957 and labored there for 20 years before having to return home because of health issues.

-Brother Morley wrote a book about his experiences and I am going to take some of those stories out of that book and hope to inspire you concerning your involvement with Foreign Missions.

A. Great Sacrifice

-Missionaries have to live under some of the most challenging of circumstances of all people. Not only do they have to forego many of the American amenities that we have, they are on the very front-line of spiritual attack in the places they are trying to establish churches and make converts.

-Brother Morley related that there were terrible times of loneliness and discouragement that he and his wife would have to endure as they literally fought with the demonic powers that opposed their work in Venezuela, Columbia, and other areas of South and Central America.

-Missionaries must have:

- Great Faith.
- Large amounts of determination.
- A stock of dedication.
- The ability to pray and press through opposition.
- The ability to endure physical, emotional, and spiritual persecution.

-Brother Morley said that during the time of satanic attack it is easy to get discouraged and let down the bars so that he can come in like a flood. The only way to overcome that is to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

-He learned how to give himself to concerted prayer. It was prayer that came in such a way that he literally felt like he was grabbing the horns of the altar and would not let go until God had answered with great power against the opposition.

-When the breakthrough would come during those prayer meetings, he said that they would feel incredible amounts of joy because of the presence of the Lord. He felt the assurance of victory through those prayer meetings and would feel the authority the Lord would give him over the devil.

B. Arrival to Columbia

-When he first got to Columbia he was appalled at the conditions that he found there. Kidnappings and horrendous crimes were committed by roving bands of killers who would demand food and money from those they attacked.

-Jagged glass was on top of the walls that surrounded the homes and huge bars covered the windows in an effort to keep these miserable criminals from stealing their possessions. The power lines were bare and exposed and periodically children would accidentally be electrocuted because of the exposure.

-Huge piles of garbage would cover the streets and made it a ready haven for the infestation of rats. There wasn't a health department to put ratings on the food supply and more often than not they would have to endure terrible bouts of sickness because of the unsanitary condition of the food.

C. A Bus Ride

-He told about a time when he was on a bus riding to one of the outlying cities. Prior to everyone getting on, a street vendor was selling some greasy sausage that everyone seemed to be enjoying. When they got on the hot bus, many of the people got sick as they were riding through the twisting mountain roads.

-There was a man and his small daughter sitting next to Brother Morley on the bus when suddenly she began to cry that she was sick. The father fought furiously with the window but could not get it to open. The poor little girl was getting worse until finally the father pulled off his hat and the little girl used that for an emesis basin. Brother Morley said that they were going through twisting and turning mountain roads where on one side of the bus the drop-off was thousands of feet and to the other side was the sheer rock wall of the mountain just inches away from the bus.

-Finally the father managed to get the window down and he emptied his hat out the window. To Brother Morley's great surprise, the father just put his hat back on and did not think anything of it. Brother Morley said that by the time they got to their destination all of the sick, heaving, barfing folks around him had almost wilted him down too! Can you begin to imagine what the sights and sounds were on that hot school bus during that day?

-If you are going to endure hardship as a good soldier, a missionary has to know that they are called of God! He said he realized very quickly that Satan was alive and well and fought furiously against him and Sister Morley in their efforts.

D. Persecution

-One time he was visiting two persecuted congregations in an effort to encourage them. Both of these congregations had experienced some of their members being butchered with machetes and martyred. The opposition had forced the authorities to put some of them in jail and their tracts had been taken away from them.

-After he had preached that night, the members of the church told him that it would be better if he would stay and not drive back during the night. Night travelers were often robbed, beaten, kidnapped and even shot to death. But Brother

Morley wanted to make it back to his home and so he left in his twenty-year old Jeep.

-He had not been gone too far down the road before a group of bandits dressed in army gear stopped him and forced him out of the Jeep. He said that when he was confronted by these men that he literally could hear the voice of the devil speaking to him. "Ha, ha. You have been caught in a trap at last. See if your God can deliver you now."

-He said that he slid out of the Jeep and uttered a desperate prayer, "Lord, help me!" He managed to take his Bible out and was holding it out in front of him when one of the bad men asked him what it was. Brother Morley pulled his Bible out of the case and opened up the Word. When he did, the man's attitude suddenly changed to one of fear and he began to apologize to Brother Morley. He told Brother Morley, "It is a mistake, you must leave now."

-Brother Morley said he didn't need any prodding at all. He quickly got back in his Jeep and took off for home. It was at that point that he realized that there were indeed angels of the Lord that were encamped round about him.

-One of the brothers in the church had a group of these men come to his home late one night. When they got near to his home they noticed a group of uniformed soldiers with weapons in their hands surrounding the place. Unable to complete their foul deed, they confronted him the next day in the town and accused him of telling the governor who had sent the soldiers to protect him. The man denied this and told them that the Lord had sent some angels to protect him.

E. Poisoned

-One time Brother Morley went to Armenia, which is a prosperous city between two of the mountain ranges of the Andes Mountains. Known for its famous mountain grown coffee, it serves as a commercial center and literally bustles 24 hours a day.

-They went in with tracts and invitations to hold services and soon a small work was established and it began to grow. With its growth came some opposition. The Morley's managed to buy a small house and they knocked the walls out of it so it would hold 50-60 people. This is where they established the church in Armenia.

-One time Brother Morley went to Armenia to look for a lot to build a larger church. He had spent the whole day looking but had found nothing. Because he was tired and not particularly alert, he stopped in a small café for a cup of coffee. The enemies of the cross recognized him and when the coffee was prepared, it was poisoned.

-Brother Morley drank it and it was not long before the poison began to work and he became seriously ill. He had made arrangements to travel across one of the mountain ranges to a place called Ibague to preach there and encourage the church. He was able to make it there but his strength was quickly leaving.

-Also on this particular trip, the church in Neiva was having some great difficulties and problems and he was going to do his best to work those out. So with some assistance he pushed on. However when he got there, he was so sick because of the poison, he could not continue on. Instead he went home as fast as his transportation could take him.

-When he arrived, he immediately went to bed and his situation looked very grim. The other missionaries all gathered around praying for him but he only continued to get worse. When he was flat on his back, he wrote that Satan showed up to accuse, torment, and mock him. "So, you think you are better than Brother Jose?" This was a pastor who had been poisoned and died just a few months earlier. "Now let's see if you can trust God to get you out of this one. Since you have preached that God could heal, why don't He heal you? Don't you feel the poison taking control? It won't be too long before they are carrying you out too because the Lord cannot save you now!"

-Brother Morley said that his head whirled, his vision was affected but in all of this something happened to him. He began to get very angry at Satan and a great determination settled into his spirit to overcome his workings.

-With his voice filled with urgency, he said that he cried out, "Lord, do something! Either take me home or heal me, but do something right now, please Lord!" The words of Isaiah 65:24 came to pass: *Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.* Instantly, God healed him and every pain and sign of the poison disappeared.

-Today there stands three churches and the mother congregation has approximately 300.

IV. CONCLUSION—WE HAVE TO DO OUR PART!

-There are missionaries sitting on these pews right now, it is just a matter of you giving in and trusting the Lord to open

the doors and provide the means. You will have our support!

-There are others who are sitting here and God has chosen you to work in this church so that you can help to prepare them by teaching them and being a godly example to them.

-All of us can financially and prayerfully support our missionaries. I long for the day that we will be able as a church to support every single one of our UPCI missionaries with our finances and with our prayers.

-Don't forget our missionaries and our responsibility to missions.