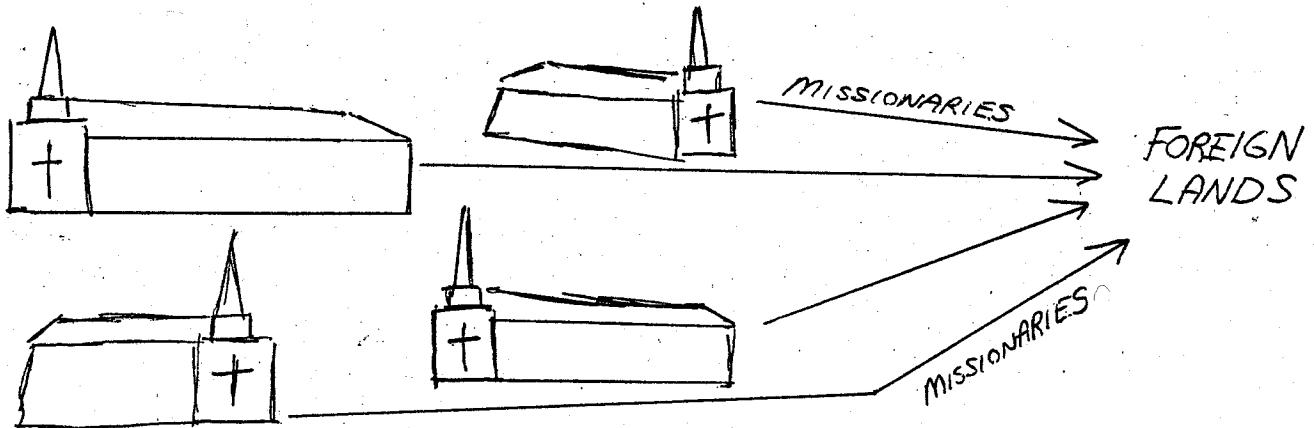


CHAPTER 11

THE MODERN PRACTICE OF MISSIONS AND ITS PROBLEMS

In our last chapter we took a look at CHURCHIANITY. We learned how the devil has corrupted and complicated and confused and cluttered and created a MESS. Many of the churches of today have moved away from the SIMPLICITY that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3) and have become CORRUPTED with all kinds of TANGLES.

Missionaries are generally sent forth from churches. The barrooms of the land do not send forth missionaries. The great universities of the land do not usually send forth missionaries. The government may send forth ambassadors and "special envoys" to foreign lands, but does the government send forth missionaries? _____ Missionaries usually come out of churches and are sent from churches:



Churches Reproduce After Their Kind

Tangles in the churches at home will produce tangles on the foreign fields. When Baptist and Congregational and Catholic and Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries go forth, what kind of churches do you think they will reproduce on the mission field? If the churches have different ideas about water baptism, do you think the missionaries that come from these churches will have different ideas about water baptism? _____ If there is confusion at home, there will also be confusion on the mission field.

Every missionary carries with him certain ideas and practices and ways of doing things. The missionary's job is to preach the gospel and to plant churches in areas where there are no churches.

If you plant a tomato seed, what do you think will grow up? _____

If you plant an apple seed, what do you think will grow up? _____

If you plant a sunflower seed, what will grow up? _____

If you plant a Methodist seed, what will grow up? _____

If you plant a Catholic seed, what will grow up? _____

CHURCHIANITY produces more CHURCHIANITY. The tangle seems to get worse and worse.

The churches that are planted on the field will usually not be very much better than the churches at home. If your fishing line is all tangled up at the boat, is it still going to be tangled up if you cast it far away from the boat? _____ In many ways this is a picture of modern missions. Many tangled lines have been cast out into the world and the problems of CHURCHIANITY have been reproduced on the mission field.

We should remember that when Paul was sent out on his first missionary journey, he was sent forth from a very strong church (Acts 13:1-3). The church at Antioch was a praying church (Acts 13:2-3). It was a Bible teaching church (Acts 11:26; 13:1). It was an evangelistic church where the gospel went forth and people were being saved (Acts 11:24). It was a church that was known for its CHRISTIANITY (Acts 11:26) not for its **confusing CHURCHIANITY**. It was a church which had an UNTANGLED FISHING LINE. When this line was cast forth it remained untangled.

Different Concepts and Ideas

A true missionary must have a correct concept of the PROVISION OF GOD and the NEED OF MAN:

1) **THE NEED OF MAN:**

Man is needy. He needs salvation.

Man is lost (Romans 3:10-23).

Man is perishing in sin (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Man cannot save himself (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2) **THE PROVISION OF GOD:**

God can meet the need of man (Hebrews 7:25).

Only God can meet the need of man (Acts 4:12).

There is no other Saviour apart from God (Isaiah 45:21-22).

Apart from God's grace, man is doomed (2 Timothy 1:9).

These are the simple facts that every missionary should know backwards and forwards. These simple facts are like the "A,B,C's" of missions. If a student does not understand the simple "A,B,C's", then it

is certain that he will not do very well in reading and writing. If a person does not understand that $1 + 1 = 2$, then he will certainly have trouble with more difficult math problems.

What about you? Do you understand that you are needy, lost, perishing and cannot save yourself? Do you understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who can solve your problem and save your soul, and that apart from Him there is no hope? If you understand these things, then how have you responded? What have you done? Have you come to the Saviour? Have you believed on Him? Have you called upon the name of the Lord and asked Him to save your soul (Romans 10:13)?

It is a sad thing that many people (including missionaries) do not understand these simple truths. They are confused when it comes to the "A,B,C's"! They do not see man's need and they do not understand God's provision.

Some are confused so they ask the question, "Can people be saved without hearing the gospel? Can a person be saved if he has never heard about Jesus?" They wonder about the poor native who lives deep in some jungle. If no missionaries ever reach him, is there still a way for him to be saved? Then as they get more confused they might say, "It is nice to go to the heathen with the gospel but it is **not essential**. They can be saved without a preacher. If they have never heard about Jesus then God will not judge them too severely." Is this really true? Is a PREACHER essential or not essential (see Romans 10:13-14)? _____ Can a person be saved apart from the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12)? _____

Some are confused so they ask the question, "Will God give people a second chance after death?" If this were really true then missionaries would not be so essential because people would always have a second chance. According to the Bible, does God really give people a "second chance" (see Hebrews 9:27)? _____

Some are confused so they ask the question, "Will all people eventually be saved some day?" If this were true, would it be necessary to send out missionaries preaching salvation? _____ Are *all people* walking down the road that leads to salvation (Matthew 7:13-14)? _____

Some are confused so they ask the question, "Is there really a hell? Is there really such a thing as eternal punishment? Would a loving God really condemn people who reject His Son? Would God really condemn people who have never heard about His Son?" Does the Bible teach that there is a real hell (Mark 9:43-48)? _____ Does the Bible teach that there will be such a thing as eternal punishment

(Matthew 25:41,46)? _____ ETERNAL JUDGMENT is one of the “first principles” or one of the “A,B,C’s” that every believer should know and not be confused about (see Hebrews 5:11,12; 6:1-2).

Confused About What Our Mission Really Is

Why do missionaries go into the world? What is their real mission? What are they supposed to be doing? It would be foolish to send a soldier out into the middle of the battlefield if he does not know what he is supposed to be doing and if he does not even know who he is supposed to shoot at! Sad to say, there are many missionaries that are on the Lord’s battlefield and they do not understand why they are there or what they should be doing. Here are some of the ideas that people have:

“I’m going into all the world to make the world a better place to live.”

“I’m going into all the world to improve society.”

“I’m going into all the world to clean-up society.”

“I’m going into all the world to change the world.”

“I’m going into all the world to educate people so that they can live better lives.”

“I’m going into all the world to provide food for the poor and medicine for the sick and clothes for the naked.”

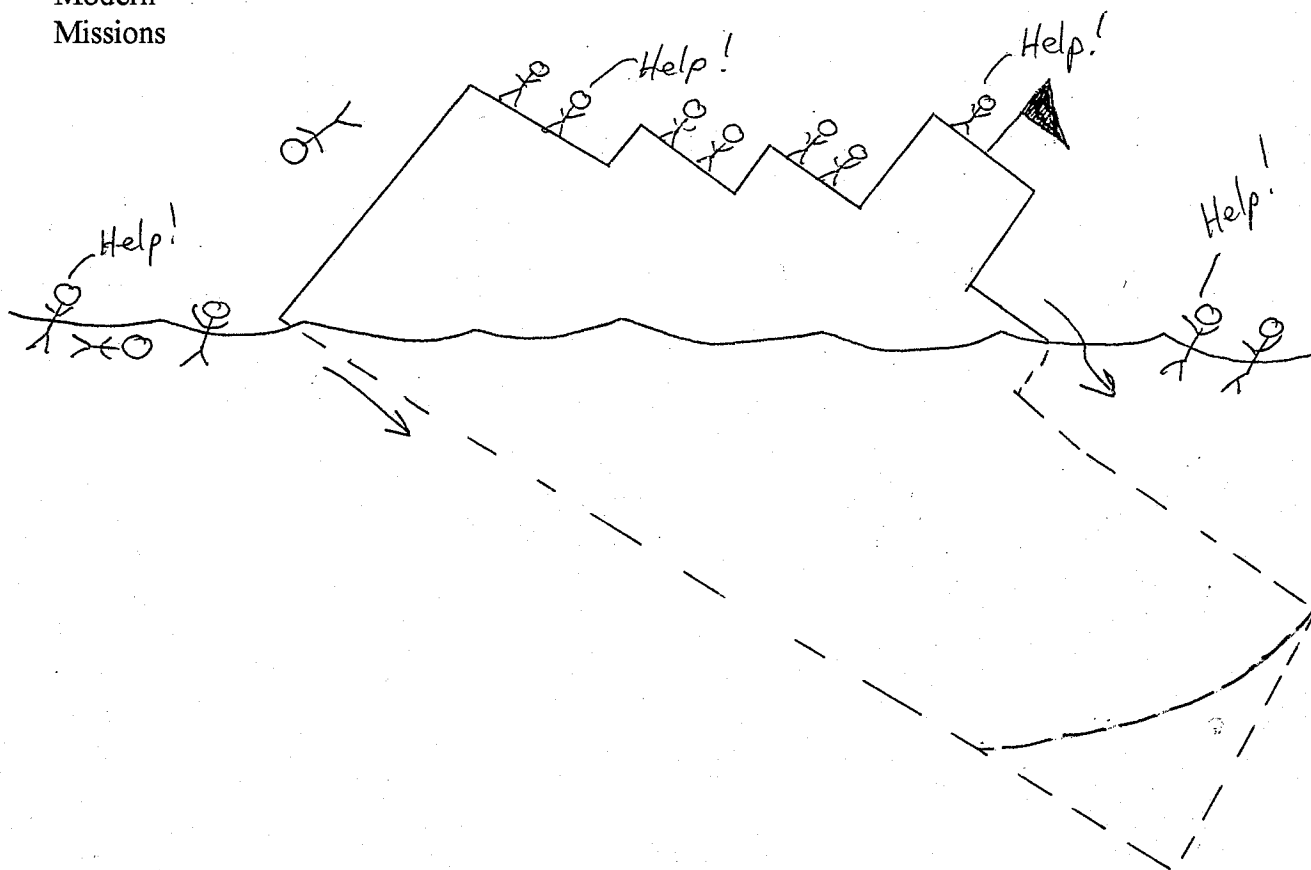
“I’m going into all the world to help people to love their neighbors and to do good unto all men.”

All of these things sound very nice and good, but we must not forget why the Lord Jesus Christ has sent us into the world. He has told us to go into all the world and what are we to do (Mark 16:15)?

The Lord has never told us to go and SAVE THE WORLD or CHANGE THE WORLD. God’s plan is not to save this world. Instead God’s plan is to reach down and save INDIVIDUALS out of this evil world (Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:13; John 15:19; John 17:14). Think of a large ocean liner that is sinking (like the great ship TITANIC):

(SEE DIAGRAM ON THE NEXT PAGE)

Modern Missions



Does the New Testament Pattern Really Work?

God's program of missions is spelled out very carefully and very simply on the pages of the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts and in the letters of Paul. God has given to us all the information that we need to have in order to carry out His Great Commission.

The problem we face today is this: There are many people who do not believe that the New Testament pattern would really work today. They might say something like this: *It worked well back then in the days of Paul but it would never work today.* They somehow feel that New Testament methods and practices have become out-dated and that more "modern" methods are needed for today. As a result much of the New Testament is ignored and God's perfect blueprint for missions is not followed. They somehow feel that man's tangled up ways are much better than God's untangled and simple ways!

God's Simple Program of Missions

God's program for missions can be described by 8 simple words:

1) **PRAYER**--the early church was a praying church and prayer is the very heart-beat of missions (compare Matthew 9:36-38). The first missionary journey was bathed in prayer (Acts 13:2-3).

2) **POWER**--The power of the Holy Spirit is the dynamite of missions (Acts 1:8; 4:33; 6:8; 10:38). Man's programs and methods are never a substitute for the power of God.

3) **PREACHING**--preaching the Word of God was the very backbone of missions (Acts 4:2; 8:5; 8:25; 8:35; 13:5; 14:7; etc.).

4) **PRACTICE**--The early Christians not only preached the Word but they practiced it. They were **DOERS OF THE WORD** (James 1:22). They not only preached the gospel, they lived the gospel.

5) **PLANTING**--The early missionaries, such as Paul, spent their time and energy in planting local churches. Paul did this in Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica and in many other cities. The local church is at the very center of God's program for missions.

6) **PERFECTING**--The believers in local churches must be perfected (equipped) so that they might be able to minister and serve the Lord (Ephesians 4:12). The local churches must be Bible teaching centers so that believers might be strong in the Word of God (Acts 20:27,28,32). Instead of the pastor or missionary doing all the work there is a whole trained army of believers who are spiritually healthy and equipped and able to serve the Lord.

7) **PERSECUTION**--God's true missionaries have never been popular with the world. In 1 John 3:13 we read, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the _____ you." We find God's missionaries facing persecution in almost every chapter of the book of Acts.

8) **PROCLAMATION**--Persecution did not stop the message from going forth and being proclaimed. Instead, "they that were scattered abroad (by persecution) went _____ preaching the _____" (Acts 8:4).

In 1 Thessalonians chapters 1-2 Paul gives us a glimpse into his missionary work in the city of Thessalonica. As you look through these two brief chapters, can you find any of our 8 words exemplified and illustrated in the ministry of the Apostle Paul?

God's Work and Man's Work

There has always seemed to be confusion concerning **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY** (what God chooses to do) and **MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY** (what man is responsible to do). The Bible clearly teaches that God is sovereign and that man is responsible, but down through the centuries people have taken these two ideas and have really gotten them tangled up:

1. SOME EMPHASIZE SOVEREIGNTY AND FORGET RESPONSIBILITY.

Many have fallen into this error. In Chapter 8 this was illustrated by Dr. Ryland's speech to William Carey: *Young men, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen He will do it without your aid or mine!* This man wrongly thought that God must do it all and man must do nothing. It is true

that God is the One that must save and God is the only One who can save. But God will only save those who _____ (1 Corinthians 1:21). People cannot believe unless they hear the gospel message, and therefore God saves those who believe by “the foolishness of _____” (1 Cor. 1:21). Thus we see the responsibility of believing men (which is what Dr. Ryland failed to see). Those who are unsaved are responsible to BELIEVE and those that are saved are responsible to PREACH. God’s responsibility is to SAVE! Man must do the believing; God must do the saving.

2. SOME EMPHASIZE RESPONSIBILITY AND FORGET SOVEREIGNTY.

This is another great error men fall into. The first error was to say that God will do it without man’s help. This second error is to say that **man will do it without God’s help**. Thus we have men running around with all kinds of gimmicks and programs trying to get men saved, instead of seeking to do it in God’s way and in God’s time using God’s methods and with God’s help. If God does not do it, all of our labor is in VAIN (see Psalm 127:1).

A Right Concept of the Bible

A missionary must have a right concept and understanding of God’s Word, the Bible. The Bible is the missionary’s most important tool and this tool must be used properly.

Albert Schweitzer was a man who lived from 1875 to 1965. He was a brilliant man who lived a very useful life of service to his fellow men. He was a religious scholar, a gifted musician (organist) and a skilled physician. He was also a philanthropist (a lover of men, a lover of mankind, and thus one who performs acts of goodness towards his fellow men). He spent years of his life in tropical Africa doing all that he could for the welfare of the natives who loved him. With his own hands he built a mission hospital and served for years as a missionary doctor, skillfully battling the tropical diseases which were so destructive to human life. Much more could be said about this man. His life was full of good deeds towards others in need.

We must, however, tell you something else about this man. This is the sad part of the story. Albert Schweitzer wrote a religious book entitled, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. This book makes it very clear that this man did not really believe the Bible and did not really believe that Jesus was the Son of God. He believed that there were many things in the gospels that were not really true. Here was a man who did much good in the world, but he was also a man who did not believe the Word of God. We can be sure that Albert Schweitzer never preached the true gospel to the African natives, and because of this he cannot be considered a true missionary of God. Because he failed to tell them the true Bible message of salvation, we must say that **this man helped the Africans FOR A MOMENT but he hurt them FOR ETERNITY.**

The same is true with poor and needy people anywhere. We can feed their stomachs and provide medical care for their bodies. We can put them in better homes and clothe them with better clothes. However, if we never give them the message of the Bible, then what have we really done for them? Someday they will die and enter into eternity WITHOUT CHRIST. Have we *really* helped them? Have we taken care of their *greatest need*?

Living By Faith

The life of a missionary and the life of every believer is to be a life of faith. This means we are simply to depend on the Lord and look to Him alone to supply all of our needs (Philippians 4:19).

The great pioneer missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, established what was called THE CHINA INLAND MISSIONS. This mission believed that missionaries were to operate by faith. In order to maintain this faith principle they followed certain rules. For example, they were never to ask for funds. They believed God would supply their needs in response to believing prayer. Also the missionaries were never to have a “fixed income,” because God was the One who supplied, and whether little would come in or whether much would come in, God would take care of His servants!

In order to live and be content, what two things do people need (see 1 Timothy 6:8)? _____ Does God promise to supply His children with these two things (Matthew 6:25-34)? _____ Those who faithfully do God’s Work (“seek first the kingdom of God”--Matthew 6:33) will never lack God’s supply (“all these things shall be added unto you”--Matthew 6:33)!

Old time missionaries used to get on the boat and sail to the foreign field often with very little funds. They looked to God to meet their needs and they found that God was faithful. Today some missionaries believe that they need thousands and thousands of dollars before they will even consider going to the mission field. MONEY and FINANCES have become quite a problem. More and more people are looking to MEN to meet their needs and less and less are looking to God. How does God’s Word say that we should live and walk (2 Corinthians 5:7)?

In this chapter we have seen just a few examples of how people have “tangled up” the simple truths of missions. May God help us to go back to the Bible and back to the simplicity that is found in Christ. God is looking for those who have “untangled lines” who will go fishing for Him (compare Matthew 4:19). When the Lord cries out, “WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?” may we give the answer that Isaiah once gave:

“Here am _____; send _____” (Isaiah 6:8)