

PASSION FOR SOULS

by Oswald J. Smith

Let us turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter nine, verses thirty-five to thirty-eight: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages..." Note, if you will, that He went about all the cities and villages. He did not settle down in any one community. Jesus never became a pastor. He was continually on the go. "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

"But when he saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion..." What about us? What happens when we see the multitudes? Are we, too, moved with compassion? "He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

"Then saith He unto His disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." This, then, is the problem. And the problem of His day is the problem of our day - a plenteous harvest, few labourers. More heathen babies are being born than ever before. Now for the solution to the problem: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

COULD I STAY IN CANADA?

Years ago, I went through the Bible to see if I could stay in Canada and still obey God. Would it be possible, I asked myself, for me to enjoy a comfortable pastorate; never cross the boundaries of my country and still carry out my Lord's commands? Would God be satisfied?

And as I studied the Bible, I found such expressions as these: "All nations, all the world, every creature, every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; the uttermost part of the earth." In other words, the Gospel, I discovered, was to be given to the entire world. Every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, must hear it.

When I saw that, this then was the question I asked: Do all nations live in Canada? If they do, and if there are no nations living beyond the boundaries of the Dominion, then I can stay in my own country, preach the Gospel here and never once cross the borders; but, if one nation lives beyond the boundaries of Canada, then I am in duty bound to leave my country, cross the boundaries and go to that nation. And if I cannot, then I must find substitutes and send them as my representatives. And if I do neither, I will be a missing Christian in the day of rewards.

"The field is the world." The United States of America is not the world. Great Britain is not the world. The field is the whole world. You never in your life heard of a farmer working in one little corner of his field. The farmer works the whole field. The United States is but one corner; Canada is but a little corner. The world, the whole world, must be evangelized. And since "the field is the world," we have no choice but to go to every part of it. The work is one, and it must be done, not corner by corner, but as a whole.

The tobacco firms have their agents in the most distant places. Millions of cigarettes are given away to create new appetites. Do you mean to say that the reason for it is because there is no

longer any demand at home? Of course not. The demand here - especially since women have stepped down from the high pedestal upon which they once stood and have taken to cigarette smoking - is greater than ever. Yet the tobacco firms are already sending their missionaries into foreign lands. They want new markets. They are wiser than we are, for that, after all, is God's plan, and we would do well to emulate them. It has never been God's will that we should remain at home until the work here is finished. He wants us to go to the entire world, to work the whole field simultaneously.

My friend, what about you? You know that the Gospel must be given to all nations, to all the world, to every kindred and tongue and people, to the uttermost part of the earth. What are you doing about it? What are you going to do? Either you must go yourself or else you must send someone in your place, and woe to you, if you do nothing. God's orders must be obeyed, His commands carried out, and there is no way to evade the issue.

THE BACK ROWS

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus Christ fed the five thousand? Do you recall how He had them sit down, row upon row, on the green grass? Then do you remember how He took the loaves and fishes and blessed them and then broke them and gave them to His disciples? And do you remember how the disciples started at one end of the front row and went right along that front row giving everyone a helping? Then do you recall how they turned right around and started back along that front row again, asking everyone to take a second helping? Do you remember?

No? A thousand times no! Had they done that, those in the back rows would have been rising up and protesting most vigorously. "Here," they would have been saying, "Come back here. Give us a helping. We have not had any yet. We are starving; it isn't right; it isn't fair. Why should those people in the front rows have a second helping before we have had a first?"

And they would have been right. We talk about the second blessing. They haven't had the first blessing yet. We talk about the second coming of Christ. They haven't heard about the first coming yet. It just isn't fair. "Why should anyone hear the Gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?" You know as well as I do, that not one individual in that entire company of five thousand men, besides women and children, got a second helping until everyone had a first helping.

I have never known a minister to have any trouble with the back rows. All his trouble comes from the front rows. Those in the front rows are over-fed, and they develop spiritual indigestion. They tell him how much to feed them; when to feed them; when to stop feeding them; how long to feed them; what kind of food to give them, etc. etc., and if he doesn't do it, they complain and find fault. If a minister had any sense, he would leave the front rows for a while and let them get hungry for once in their lives and go to the back rows, and then when he returned they would be ready to accept his ministry, and there would be no murmuring or complaining.

My friends, I have been with the back rows. I have seen the countless millions in those back rows famishing for the Bread of Life. Is it right? Should we be concentrating on the front rows? Ought we not rather to be training the front rows to share what they have with the back rows, and thus reach them with the Gospel, those for whom nothing has been prepared?

Do you know that the greatest thing a church can do for itself is to send its pastor to one of the foreign mission fields of earth? There is no vacation like it. He will come back a new man; for no one can see the need with his own eyes and ever be the same again. It will do something to him. He will have something to talk about. He will be worth infinitely more to the church than he ever was before. I suggest it because I know what it did for me, and I would recommend that churches everywhere realize its importance and do it. Let him see the back rows. Let him see them for himself. Let him see them waiting in darkness and midnight gloom for the Gospel.

DR. DUFF'S APPEAL

Dr. Alexander Duff, that great veteran missionary to India, returned to Scotland to die, and as he stood before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, he made his appeal, but there was no response. In the midst of his appeal he fainted and was carried off the platform. The doctor bent over him and examined his heart. Presently he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he cried. "Where am I?"

"Lie still," said the doctor. "Your heart is very weak."

"But," exclaimed the old warrior, "I must finish my appeal. Take me back. Take me back. I haven't finished my appeal yet."

"Lie still," said the doctor again, "You are too weak to go back."

But the aged missionary struggled to his feet, his determination overcoming his weakness; and with the doctor on one side and the moderator on the other side, the old white-haired warrior was led again to the platform, and as he mounted the pulpit steps, the entire Assembly rose to do him honor. Then he continued his appeal.

"When Queen Victoria calls for volunteers for India," he exclaimed, "hundreds of young men respond; but when King Jesus calls, no one goes." Then he paused. Again he spoke. "Is it true," he asked, "that Scotland has no more sons to give for India?" Again he paused. "Very well," he concluded, "if Scotland has no more young men to send to India, then, old and decrepit though I am, I will go back, and even though I cannot preach, I can lie down on the shores of the Ganges and die, in order to let the peoples of India know that there is at least one man in Scotland who cares enough for their souls to give his life for them."

In a moment young men, all over the assembly, sprang to their feet, crying out, "I'll go! I'll go! I'll go!" And after the famous missionary had passed on, many of those same young men found their way to India, there to invest their lives as missionaries, as a result of the appeal God had made through Dr. Duff.

My friend, will you go? Has God spoken to you? Have you heard His call? Will you not answer, "Lord, here am I, send me?" And if you cannot go, will you send a substitute? It is for you to decide.

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