

# Aggressive Christianity

by A.B. Simpson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of aggressive Christianity, which is characterized by a deeper and larger faith, unselfish and aggressive work, and a spirit of love that reaches out to the world.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 10:15

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Aggressive Christianity"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the principles of 'Aggressive Christianity,' which is characterized by an absolute faith in a supernatural God and an intense spiritual earnestness. He argues that true faith leads to unselfish and aggressive work for God, urging believers to reach out to neglected fields and share the Gospel with those who have not heard it. Simpson highlights the importance of a deeper faith as the source of missionary work and the necessity of a spirit of love that compels Christians to care for the lost. He calls for a collective effort to evangelize the world, stressing that aggressive Christianity is essential for fulfilling the Great Commission and addressing the dire spiritual needs of humanity.

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## Transcript

Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 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 (II Cor. x. 15,16).

Were I asked to state the distinctive principles of the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, of which the Convention is a crystallized expression, there are two things that I would say: First, it stands for an absolute faith in supernatural things and a supernatural God. It represents a Christianity which is out-and-out for God, and it gathers to it those and only those who believe something, and believe it with all their heart and soul and strength. In a word, it represents intense spiritual earnestness.

And secondly, along with this as the outgo and overflow of this deeper life of faith and consecration, it represents intense aggressiveness in its work for God, an overflow and an outgo that is ever reaching on to the regions beyond and seeking to pass on to others the blessing we have ourselves received.

The Alliance movement therefore represents spiritual earnestness on the one hand and aggressive activity on the other. These are the two thoughts expressed in our text, somewhat obscurely, perhaps, at first sight, but plainly enough when we look more carefully at the structure and language of the passage.

The apostle first speaks of their faith and his own enlargement through fellowship with them, and then of the outcome of all this, leading him forward to new aggressive work in regions where others have never gone, and neglected fields which other have not reached. Let us glance briefly at these two distinctive features of Christian work, and, we trust we may say, without, egotism, of this work.

I. A deeper and a larger faith. "Having hope that when your faith is increased we shall be enlarged by you." The apostle was longing for a deeper and larger faith both on their part and his own. This must ever be the spring of earnest and aggressive work. We cannot give others more than we ourselves have received. The water can rise no higher than the spring. All missionary enterprise must have its source in a deeper spiritual life. Therefore, God has been deepening the life of His people during these waiting days. Therefore, God has been developing a more earnest consecration and a more intense devotedness to Christ in the hearts of His people during these years. It is this that stimulates your generous gifts and your noble sacrifices. It is because you believe in God and in His Word without reserve and have not been afraid to put all the weight of your need and your eternal future upon it and have found in it a satisfying joy; it is because of this that everything else is cheap in comparison and everything else has ceased to hurt. God has given us a Christ that is real, a Comforter that fills the heart, a love that lifts us above ourselves, "a joy that abounds even through deep poverty unto the riches of your liberality," a whole Gospel for the whole man, spirit, soul and body, and it is only the logical sequence that it should also be for the whole world.

II. The result of this is unselfish and aggressive work. No soul can receive this deep, divine and overflowing life and henceforth live unto himself. No church can be baptized into this supernatural life and this Christ spirit and ever again be selfish, contracted or earthbound. It makes the world our parish and irresistibly flows out like water to the deepest place of need.

This we trust, we may say without immodesty or extravagance at least, is the aim of the Alliance movement. The greatest blessing of our work next to the precious Gospel the Holy Spirit has revealed and the living Christ who is its centre and substance, is the privilege of giving it to the world. It has lifted our work to a higher plane than even the deepest spiritual teaching could ever have given it. It has given opportunity for the development of the highest qualities both of faith, love, sacrifice and service, and it is not too much to say that it has brought us far greater blessings than we have been able to confer upon others. Building far better than we knew God led us from the beginning to lay a foundation broad enough to reach the whole circumstance of the world in the scope of our purpose and our blessing. The missionary idea had given not only expansion but height and depth to the whole spirit of the movement. It is a law of the commercial world that the balance of trade must be maintained and that the exports and imports of a country must have a due proportion. If we did nothing but receive goods of other lands we would soon become a bankrupt people. It is the export of our produce and manufactures that brings to us the treasures of the world and enriches our merchants and our people. It is the same in the natural world. The body of water that only receives the inflow of its tributaries and has no outlet from which to discharge its overflow necessarily becomes a stagnant swamp or Dead Sea.

And so the life that terminates upon itself is an anomaly foreign to the very nature of things and contrary to the law of its own existence. The Christian that is bound by his own horizon, the church that lives simply for itself, is bound to die a spiritual death and sink into stagnancy and corruption. We never can thank God enough for giving us not only a whole Gospel to believe, but a whole world to give it to.

Let us look a little farther at this great ideal of aggressive Christianity and see how it is essential to the whole system of divine religion:

1. First it is the spirit of the Master. It brought Him to Bethlehem and Calvary, and it governed all his earthly ministry. How touching the picture of one of the first days in His earthly work! The previous Sabbath had been spent in the wonders of His grace and power, and when the next day dawned the multitudes thronged around Him, and Peter came eagerly saying, "All men seek for Thee." Peter was delighted with the success of his Master's ministry. He was proud to be around Him and know that He was the centre of every thought and heart. But he could not find his Lord at first, and when he did discover Him He was away in a place of retirement whither He had gone a great while before it was day to wait upon His Father in earnest prayer, and when he found Him the Master was not at all delighted or elated by the crowds, but turning His back upon His sudden popularity He set His face to new fields and answered, "I must go into the next towns that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee." Again and again with weary feet and unwearied love the blessed Master traveled over the nine hundred cities of Galilee until all its teeming millions had heard the Gospel from His lips.

How beautiful that little verse in the fourth chapter of John, "He must needs go through Samaria." It was not because the road to Galilee led through Samaria, but it was because a poor, weary soul was there at Jacob's Well, and all her countrymen in the city of Sychar, outcasts from "the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise," for whose souls there was no one else to care. How graphic the irony with which His very enemies described His love of souls when they cried in reproach "This man lieth in wait for sinners and eateth with them." And when He had traversed all His own land of Israel He reached beyond to Syrophenicia to the poor, sinful race of Jezebel, to the country of Peraea, and the very malefactor that hung beside Him in His dying agony. His love was always reaching out to regions beyond, and if the spirit of the Master is in us we shall be reaching too.

2. This was the spirit of the Great Commission. For when He went away He left His will in the form of His last commands. And what were these? They may be summed up in three special commissions. First, a commission to the nations as nations in the closing verses of the Gospel of Matthew: "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations." He sent them out as ambassadors from the King of kings to the kings of this world. He thus repudiated at once the idea of the Gospel being intended for any single nation or race. Certainly not the race of Israel, and just as certainly not the Anglo-Saxon race. The commission was world-wide, and it shall never be fulfilled until every race, tribe and tongue of the human family shall have received the Gospel in such form that its people can understand the message of salvation. It would not suffice if all the sinners in the United States were saved if there was yet a single tribe that had not heard of Christ--the commission would not be fulfilled. We cannot emphasize too much this national phase of the great commission, and until it is obeyed we do not see how we can consistently expect the Master's coming.

Next, there is the individual commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This sends us man by man to the individuals of the race, and bids us give every human being a chance for his life.

Then, finally, there is the last utterance of the commission in its most aggressive form given by the Lord from the slope of Olivet just before His ascension: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witness unto Me"--and now notice the expansive character of the command--"in Jerusalem--and in all Judea--and in Samaria--and unto the uttermost parts of the earth!" So

the ever-widening circle extends until it takes in the whole circumference of the world. Short of this, Christian enterprise dare not pause or it will miss the promise of the Holy Ghost and the approval of the Master.

3. This was the spirit of the early Church. They were slow to catch the Master's thought, but gradually they understood it and fulfilled it. And so it was not long until the Gospel had spread to Samaria, and then Philip was pressed out by the Holy Ghost to meet on yonder desert the heathen prince of darkest Africa and send him back to his own continent a pioneer of the glorious Gospel, and perhaps one of the founders of those mighty churches we afterward find in northern Africa. Then Peter is taken up on the housetop and prepared by a heavenly vision for the wider ministry that awaits him next day in the house of Cornelius the Roman centurion.

Next, the church at Antioch is formed with its larger brotherhood and its freer atmosphere of spiritual fellowship and world-wide evangelism. And then Saul is raised up and prepared for his peculiar ministry as the apostle of the Gentiles, and in due time sent forth on his world-wide evangel until he too is able to say, "So that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I striven to preach the Gospel not where Christ was named lest I should build on another man's foundation, but, as it is written, to whom He was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand." The one ambition of his life was to "preach the Gospel in the regions beyond."

And in the passage already quoted in the fifteenth chapter of Romans there is a fine sarcasm in one of his sentences where he tells them that much as he desired to visit them at Rome and enjoy their spiritual fellowship, yet he had not even thought of coming to them until he could say, "I have no more place in these parts." There was really nothing left to do among the heathen and so he was free to go to Rome, but even in going there it was but incidental to a more distant journey into Spain, and it was partly for the purpose of their helping him in this missionary journey. And so he says, "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you, whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you, for I trust to see you in my journey or to be brought on my way hitherward by you if first I be somewhat filled with your company."

4. This is the true spirit of Christian love. It is the native instinct of the heavenborn soul. The supreme law of the universe is love and the essence of love is to think of others and especially of the most needy and helpless ones. "There's another man," was the stammering cry of the shipwrecked sailor as they roused him into consciousness and bore him from the raft on which he was floating. His first thought was of the comrade that he had left dying behind him, and so while "there's another man" in any corner of this dark world who is sinking in the night under his awful load of guilt and with a desperate sense of helplessness, let no man dare to call himself the disciple of Jesus who does not care or presume to answer back to the challenge, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

5. Aggressive Christianity is the world's greatest need. Shall I try to make you understand the awful condition of the majority of our fellow beings in heathen lands? Can you take in the idea of a thousand millions without the Gospel? Suppose we were to bring them into this Tabernacle a thousand at a time, three times a day, every day in the week, and every week in the year, and thus have three thousand souls every day hear the story of salvation, how long do you suppose it would take the whole congregation of the Christless world to pass before us and have one sermon preached to them about the love of Jesus? It would take just one thousand years, and in the thousand years there would be thirty generations more just like them left to perish. How many of them have died since this Convention began? A population as vast

as Brooklyn, as Philadelphia--a million souls perished without Christ! How many of them will pass away before we meet again at Nyack a year from now? Let me give you the picture of graves. Let us bury them side by side all across the continent and allow one yard for each grave. The row of graves would reach from New York to San Francisco and back again twice over. And all of these have perished without Jesus! Oh, as they pass into His presence in their darkness and sorrow and learn for the first time that He died to save them, what must they think of us, and what must He think of us, if we never feel their need and never make a sacrifice to save them? We gave a hundred thousand soldiers to emancipate this little island of Cuba from oppression. If we should give a hundred thousand missionaries it would mean one missionary for every ten thousand of the human race, and with that army of workers the entire world could be evangelized in ten years.

What about the means that such a movement would require? It would take just fifty millions of dollars, one-quarter of the amount the United States spent in a single year on the Cuban war, and a mere trifle for the Christian world to give for the evangelization of the heathen.

We are told by intelligent authorities that the actual increase in wealth of the Christian people of the United States as represented by the amount that they add to their Savings Bank deposits is five hundred millions of dollars. Now they could give all this without lessening their wealth by merely contributing the annual surplus. But if they gave but a tenth of this it would be fifty millions of dollars annually from the United States alone, and it would be sufficient to support an army of one hundred thousand missionaries, or one to every ten thousand of the human race. When we look at such figures how can our hearts help being filled with deepest shame and wonder at the selfishness of Christians and the long-suffering of God!

Time will not permit me to tell you of the neglected fields of this lost world. I might speak of the three thousand languages and dialects of earth, of which more than two thousand still remain without a translation of the Scriptures or a Gospel messenger to tell them of Christ. I might speak of the interior provinces of China, with perhaps one missionary to half a million souls; of Mongolia and Tibet, which have just been touched with the first rays of light; of Turkestan and Anam without a single missionary; of the Philippine Islands just opening their gates to the Gospel; of hundreds of tribes in Central Africa that never heard of Jesus; of five million Indians in South America that are still in the night of paganism, and of many of the republics of South America that have but two or three lone messengers just beginning to cut their way through the dense darkness. But space and time forbid. God is calling, the Spirit is pointing, the Macedonian cry is pleading for the regions beyond. Oh, who will go, and who will help to send?

The Missionary Institute, for which today we are to contribute our loving gifts, is a training school for missionaries for the regions beyond. The men and women whom we train and send are themselves outside of the ordinary range of the Gospel ministry, and belong, in a sense, to a region beyond. Like the brave Rough Riders and Volunteers who helped to win the cause of Cuban freedom, they are the brave Volunteers and Irregulars in the army of Christ and of missions, and they go forth to regions where others have not ventured and fields where others have not scattered the precious seed. If there is a hard place, if there is a lonely spot, if there is a neglected soul, that is the place that is the work for which these brave hearts are first to volunteer. But what right have they to sacrifice and serve at such cost while we stand back in selfish indolence and apathy? No, let both ranks of the army of the Lord advance alike and keep step together, the workers at home and the workers abroad in the same glorious enterprise of sacrifice and service for a crucified Lord and a lost world.

In conclusion, the spirit of aggressiveness is the spirit of our age. The great message of God's providence to our people today is national expansion. The hand of God and the victories of our brave soldiers have spread our flag over new realms and new races. Let us not forget that these millions are not only our fellow citizens but our fellow sinners too. Shall we be true to the trust that God has so gloriously enlarged? Shall we give them merely the earthly symbol of freedom, or shall we give them the glorious liberty of the children of God and the Magna Charta of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

If the glory of Christ's cross has transfigured

you and me,

As he died to make them, holy, let us live and

make them free

While God is marching on.

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