

(Missionary Messages) 4. THE LOGIC OF MISSIONS

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Transcript

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:14-15). This chain of inexorable logic sums up the whole practical side of missions and brings home the guilt of the world's moral, spiritual and eternal ruin to the conscience of every man and woman who is not doing his best to send the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all mankind.

There is no sentiment about this. It is stern, inexorable logic, and it brings every one of us, by an irresistible argument, face-to-face with the responsibility of the world's ruin or redemption. It tells us that God has provided a remedy sufficient and completely fitted for all the wants of our fallen race. He has given us a salvation that is adequate, adapted and designed for all the world. He has put the simple conditions of it within the reach of every man who hears the Gospel and now, to use an expressive colloquial phrase, "it is up to you" and me whether men shall be lost or saved. Let us look at this magnificent argument.

It begins heart foremost as Paul always begins. It starts with a great burst of love for his lost brethren, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." This is the motive power of missionary work, a heart aflame with love for souls and longing and praying to lead men to Christ.

I. THE GOSPEL FOR THE WORLD

But mere sentiment cannot save a lost world. The tenderest love and most self-denying sacrifices cannot lift our lost humanity from the fearful effects of the fall. It needs a divine remedy, a gospel of super-human power as well as divine compassion.

The Apostle Paul had discovered such a gospel and had been commissioned to declare to men such a remedy, and this remedy and this gospel were so incomparably superior to all that the world had found that he was enthusiastic in his desire and ambition to pro-claim it to all men.

He had found a panacea for all human sin and sorrow and it was so good that he could not bear to have a single human being miss it. He expressed it by one great word which was a favorite of his and which we

find again in his epistle to the Romans. It is the word "righteousness." In a well-known passage in the epistle he had said, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is revealed." Here he expressed the same idea in the verse, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." That fine expression "righteousness" just means rightness, and the idea is that God has provided a plan for righting every wrong of humanity. It was said of the apostles, "these men that have turned the world upside down have come hither." There is a fine story told of an eccentric English evangelist who took that text for one of his open air sermons in a new place, and began by saying, "First, the world is wrong side up. Second, the world must be turned upside down. Third, we are the men to set it right." In its quaint phrase, this is really the purpose and effect of the Gospel. It is God's way of making things right.

Things are wrong between the world and God. They do not know Him. They do not love Him. They do not trust Him. They cannot stand before Him with acceptance. Their sins have separated them and the sense of sin is bearing them down to deeper sin and a dark eternal hell. But God has sent Jesus Christ to make this right. He has become a Man and so represents the fallen human family. As the great representative Man, He has taken upon Himself man's sins, man's obligations, man's wrongs against God. He has met the issue, He has paid the penalty, He has lived up to the requirements of God's most perfect law and has thus wrought out a righteousness that is perfect and sufficient to cover all the guilt of fallen man and forever to settle the salvation of every sinner who will accept this settlement. This is the Gospel of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is the only remedy for a guilty conscience and a sinful heart. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth and it was Paul's delight to sweep around the world and tell sinful men of the glorious righteousness of God.

But it is more than this. It is also God's provision for taking away the sin of the human heart and giving to weak, fallen man the power to be right toward God and toward all men. The worst thing in our fallen state is not our guilt and our liability to eternal punishment, but our helplessness to do right or even want to do right. Men tell us that the heathen will be saved if they will live up to the light they have. We do not stop to question this, for God will surely do right by every righteous man, but the difficulty is that the heathen cannot do right of themselves. We cannot do right. Human nature is helpless and the very essence of the Gospel is that it gives the power to choose and do the right. It takes away the love of sin, it makes us love the things that God loves and hate the things He hates. It has power to cleanse, purify and uplift human nature. It is a divine force placed within the human breast, causing us to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments to do them. This is the very thing we are called to give to a lost world, the righteousness of God. This is the glory of the Gospel, and with such a remedy for the dark stains of humanity, what a cruel crime it is to keep it back from our struggling and sinking fellow men.

II. ALL THIS COMES THROUGH CHRIST

It is not a character slowly built up. It is not mere merit painfully attained as the Buddhist tried to attain it, but it is a Person, a living, loving, real Man, Christ, our Brother, our Saviour, our living Head, who has wrought it all out for us and who waits to give it to us the moment we accept Him. It is not a struggle to be good in our own strength, but a simple act of confidence in a loving Redeemer who undertakes the whole task for us and makes us a free gift of righteousness the moment we accept Him.

Christ is the world's answer, the world's remedy, the world's hope, the world's Redeemer. The apostle's one business was to minister Christ to mankind, to tell them of Jesus and bring them into contact with Him who is the desire of the nations and the remedy for all man's wrongs.

All this is without the law and by the free grace of God. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." When we receive Him, we pass from under the condemnation, the claims, the terrors of the law. We do not have to obey a stern commandment as a condition of salvation, but we receive a righteousness, higher than man himself could ever have attained, without a single effort as the free gift of His grace. His merits become ours, and we stand before God in as good a place as if we had never sinned, in as good a place as if we had done everything that He has done and kept every commandment that He has kept. Not only so, we receive Him into our hearts as a living Presence, an efficient Power, a divine Enabling, and united to Him we can relive the life He lived and be even as He in this world.

Such a salvation, so complete, so sufficient, so far-reaching, so free, is enough to set on fire the hearts of angels and to make the men that have received it burn with desire to pass it on to all the race. What a pity that this lost world should be another hour without it.

Then this righteousness is accessible and available to all men. It is not far off, but near. It is not hung high in the heavens where men must painfully climb the heights of virtue and achievement before they can reach it, but it reaches down to the level of the most lost and helpless of men. Its terms are as simple as language can express or love can provide. It says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," and there is nothing so easy as to call, to utter a cry of need and know that instantly the love and grace of God will respond. It is not restricted to any class or race. "There is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." It is not for moral Jew or cultivated Greek or initiated philosopher, but it is for the common people, it is for the sinful people, it is for "whosoever will."

He uses a beautiful figure to express its accessibility. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above, or who shall descend into the deep that is to bring Christ up again from the dead, but the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we speak and if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

You do not need to slowly climb to some high experience to be able to know God and become righteous as all ancient philosophers taught. You do not need to go down to some depth of abasement to make yourself worthy of His mercy. All the efforts which heathenism inflicts upon its votaries as a meritorious cause of salvation are foolish and needless. Just where you are this moment, you can meet Him and sing,

"This uttermost salvation, It reaches me." Even amid all the wreck of humanity, there is still in every human heart some echo of the voice of God, some sense of need, some responsive touch that the Gospel awakens, meets and satisfies. There is a fine picture in the Book of Exodus of the nearness of God to sinful men. It comes at the close of the 20th chapter and immediately after the sublime and awful picture of Mt. Sinai and the terrors of the ancient law. Just at the foot of that fiery mount of judgment, God erected a little model picture of His grace which is full of the very spirit of the Gospel. It was an altar of earth representing the place where sinful men were to meet the God of this fiery law. Not on the fearful top of Sinai could they meet Him, for that only spoke of judgment, but this altar of earth represented the cross of Calvary and the plan of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. There they were to bring their bloody sacrifices and find atonement for the sin which that law so fearfully condemned. But the description of the altar is a very poem of grace.

First it is to be built of earth, not of stone. The commonest, cheapest material within the reach of everybody. Second, if it was to be built of stone it must not be of hewn stone, for God said, "If thou shalt put thy tool upon it, thou hast defiled it." No works of man must mingle with the free grace which insists upon saving us alone.

Again, there were to be no steps leading to it, for He says, "If thou go up thereon thou hast revealed thy nakedness." There is not even a single step needed to raise us to the level where God can meet the sinner, but He meets him on his own level and steps to the lowest place where guilty man lies helpless at the foot-stool of mercy. What a beautiful picture of that full and free salvation which God offers to the most unworthy of our race crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat. ... without money and without price."

There is another beautiful picture of the nearness of God's mercy and grace to helpless sinners in the 14th chapter of Leviticus. It is the picture of the poor leper outside the camp, excluded from the fellowship of his brethren by his uncleanness and leprosy. But in infinite tenderness and mercy, God is represented as going out to meet the sinner there; "the priest shall go to him without the camp." Just where he lies in his separation and misery, there God's mercy meets him and supplies all that is necessary for his return and his future way.

Perhaps there never has been a finer illustration of the far-reaching mercy and grace of God to sinful men than that given by a poor Chinaman when asked why he had given up Confucius and Buddha, his native gods, and had accepted Jesus Christ instead. "I was down in a deep pit," he said, "into which I had fallen in my folly and sin through heedlessness and drunkenness. I was sinking in the mire and vainly calling for aid. Suddenly a shadow fell across the mouth of the pit and I looked up, happy that a deliverer had come, and there was Confucius, the teacher of my fathers, with his venerable face and form, looking down and calling to me. I implored him to reach out his hand and help me, but he proceeded calmly to instruct me in the principles of right living, and told me that if I had only listened to his teaching I would not have been there. After fully impressing this upon me, he closed by saying that if I ever got out to be sure to mind his teachings in the future, and then with cold and heartless indifference, he passed on. It was vain for me to cry, 'Help me, help me now. Your good advice will be useful after I get out, but it is useless until some one delivers me from this pit of death,' for he was gone, and I felt that Confucius could not save me.

"Then I sank deeper in the mire and was about giving up all hope, when another shadow fell upon the opening, and I looked up and there stood Buddha, the religious leader of my people. With the frenzy of despair, I cried to him to save me. But Buddha folded his arms and looked serenely down upon me, and began also to preach a sermon to me. 'My son,' he said, 'be quiet, be patient, be still. Don't mind your troubles, ignore them; the secret of happiness is to die to self and surroundings, to retire to the inward calm and center of your heart; there you shall find Nirvana, eternal rest, and that is the end of all existence,' and so he was about to leave me, but I cried, 'Father, if you will only get me out of this pit, I can do all that you tell me, but how could you be quiet and satisfied sinking in this awful mire.' But he benignantly waved his hands and said, 'my son, be still, be still,' and passed on. And I felt that Buddha could not save me.

"Then indeed I was ready to sink in uttermost despair, and hardly cared to look up again, when a third shadow fell across my vision. At length I ventured to look up once more, hardly daring to hope for help, when I saw a man, like myself, with kind and tender countenance and the marks of tears and blood upon the brow that had been pierced with thorns, and with a voice that broke my heart he cried, 'My child, I

have come to save you. Will you let me?â€™ and I cried out in my despair, come, Lord, help me, I perish. In a moment He had leaped down into the pit and put His arms around me, and was lifting me up, and then He placed me on the brink, and taking from me my torn and spattered garments, He washed me and robed me in new raiment, and then He said, â€˜I have come to save you from your distress, and now if you will follow Me I will never leave you, I will be your Guide and Friend all the way, and will keep you from ever falling again,â€™ and He told me His name was Jesus. Need I say I fell at His feet and said, Lord, I will follow Thee.

"That," said the Chinaman, "is why I became a Christian."

Beloved, this same Jesus who has brought you and me out of a horrible pit and the miry clay and set our feet upon rock and established our goings, is longing to do the same for every lost and helpless child of our fallen race. Oh, how sad, how needless, how terrible that we should leave them to perish without ever knowing Him. How can we be so cruel to them and so heartless to Him. By the love that ransomed us, oh, let us go, like Him, "To seek and save that which was lost." Such is the glorious Gospel which God has provided for this lost world. Let us next look at

III. OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR GIVING THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD

There are three links in this chain of responsibility.

I. "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" That is the responsibility of every sinner. God calls upon every lost man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and call upon Him as Saviour and Lord, and if men refuse to do this, the responsibility for the loss of their souls is their own. They have had their chance and they have made their choice. God cannot save men without their believing in Him. In the very nature of things there must be confidence, there must be consent, there must be a response of the human will and the human heart to the call of God. Salvation is not a mechanical process, but a voluntary one, in which every human effort must cooperate with God. "He that believeth shall be saved, but He that believeth not shall be condemned. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God." Men deserve to be lost forever if they refuse to accept the Saviour that is offered to them. This is the one deciding question for every human being now. No man will perish eternally on account of his sins but only on account of his treatment of Jesus Christ. It is not the sin question but the Son question. Therefore, God wants the message of salvation offered to all mankind, then the responsibility offered to all mankind, then the responsibility rests with them. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."

2. The second link of responsibility. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" This is the next human agency. The agency of the messenger. And so God has ordained human agency in passing on the Gospel of mankind. He might have proclaimed it with trumpet voice, as He doubtless did when He went down into Hades and preached to the spirits in prison. He might have written it in flaring characters upon the sky. He might have sent a thousand angels to declare it among the nations. But He has chosen to give to us the privilege and honor of sharing this glorious work with Him.

"Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christâ€™s stead be ye reconciled to God."

Therefore, Christ's first word to His disciples is "go." The call of the heavenly voices is, "whom shall we send and who will go for us?" He is waiting for volunteers, and He will only send volunteers. It is the duty of every one to go who has not a good reason for staying at home. Have we heard this call? Have we weighed our responsibility? Have we waited for our marching orders, and are we where God wants us in this matter? Young men and women, fathers and mothers, students and earnest lives of every name who are standing at the crossroad of life, oh, listen today, while again He calls, "whom shall we send and who will go for us?" God grant that many may answer, even today: "Here am I, Lord, send me."

3. The last link brings the responsibility home to every one of us. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" This is something that we all can do. Certainly, it is God's business first to send a messenger, and the words apostle and missionary just mean sent ones. The twelve apostles were twelve missionaries, and every missionary should be sent of the Holy Ghost.

But it is our duty to send them too. Therefore, we read in that pattern chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 12, that before God began the great work of modern missions, He commanded the church at Antioch to separate its two best leaders and send them forth as foreign missionaries, and it is distinctly added, "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed unto Cyprus." Who is to do the sending? First, the Church, through her officers and missionary boards is called upon to send, and the missionary call should always have two sides, the volunteer's side, as he offers his services, and the Church's side, as she accepts him and stands with him in joint responsibility for his work and for his support.

But the parent can also send his child. What are you doing as parents? How are you shaping the future of your children? Are you saying, as one of our missionaries once reported an American Christian as saying to him, "Yes, we believe our children should go as missionaries when God calls them, but we do not agitate the question." Is that loyalty to God? Or are you going further? not holding them back as some have done, and like the eagle that stole the lamb of sacrifice from the altar, and found when she reached her nest that she had carried a coal from the fire along with the lamb, which in a moment burned up her nest and her young? Have you found, alas, that in robbing God of some precious life, you have wrecked that life and desolated your own home circle?

But, finally, we can all send as helpers and supporters of those who go. The question of money is today the deciding question in connection with any large advance movement in the missionary field. We can be missionaries at home just as truly as our brethren are missionaries on the field, and God will count our work a partnership with them and we shall share alike in the spoils and recompense when the great harvest home shall come.

Are we doing our part, and shall we do it again today to send the messengers, the missionaries who shall bring the missing link of the touch of a human hand, the sound of a human voice, the Word of God and the voice of love to wake up the faith of the world's lost children?

A gentleman called on a Christian businessman, and finding him intensely busy, asked how many hours he worked daily. "Oh," said the man, "twenty-four." "How is that possible?" asked his friend. "Why, you see it is this way," he replied, "when I was a young man, I gave my life to God for the foreign mission field, but soon after my father died and it became necessary for me to remain at home and carry on the business for the support of my mother and sister. But I have found another way of carrying out my missionary consecration. We have branches of our business in various parts of this country, and this suggested the idea of having a missionary department and branches in various parts of the world. Here, for example, is a

map of China, and at that little town in South China is one of our missionary branches. Out in India there is another, another in Africa, etc. So while I am working twelve hours here my representatives in the missionary branches are sleeping, and when I retire at night they begin work on the other side of the world, and so our business keeps open twenty-four hours in every day, and I find these missionary branches not only give a broader scope to our business but a delightful interest and the very best of all our returns come from them."

That is missionary consecration put in practice. That is the meaning of a missionary pledge. We do not give off-hand something on the impulse of the moment, and then forget it for twelve months, but we enter into a contract that runs over the entire year, and we go back to carry on our business and perform our daily tasks in partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ, and in gaining, saving and sacrificing the fruits of our toil for the spread of the Gospel and the building up of His glorious kingdom.

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