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“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work,” John 9:4.

World-Wide Missions Urgent

Lesson Aim: To study Article 16 of our Doctrinal Statement.

L320. Date: November 1969. **Text:** Matthew 24:4-14; I Corinthians 15:1,4.
Topic: Doctrine: Studies In; Missions.

INTRODUCTION—“Missions is our mission!” We believe it is the duty of each Christian believer to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ. Even those who have no sense of a “call” to missions are obligated to be missionaries.

Each believer lives under the instruction of the Lord Jesus: “. . . **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,**” Mark 16:15. This command is obeyed when a parent speaks to his child about Jesus; when a teacher speaks to her Sunday school class; when the Pastor preaches in the church; when a team goes from the church in visitation; when a missionary goes across the city or the state to start a new congregation; when a family goes across the ocean to another country. Each believer lives under this divine imperative.

“Into all the world”—what a challenge! **“To every creature”**—what a congregation! **“Preach”**—what a ministry! **“The gospel”**—what a message!

A grievous mistake has been made in departmentizing missions into strict divisions of local, state, national and foreign. These divisions are made only for the sake of convenience in organizing the witnessing force. The work is the same on any mission field: lead men to Christ, baptize them, train them to lead others to Christ and obey His doctrines.

All churches should be “missionary” churches. This does not mean that they should have the title in their respective names. It means they should have the work upon their hearts and that their utmost efforts should be to

win men to Jesus. Churches that are evangelistic at home will be missionary abroad. For winning men to Jesus on the home field is exactly the same work as is done on foreign fields. In each case the Christian witness speaks to people about him the testimony concerning the Lord Jesus who is the Savior of all who believe.

EXPOSITION

I. WORLD NEED

The world has always needed the gospel. People are no different today than they have been in generations past. They are still depraved sinners, doomed to hell apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, the Bible seems to say that toward the end of this dispensation there would arise conditions which give special challenge to Christian missions.

1. False religions—Matthew 24:4-5, 11. There has been, and will continue to be, a rejection of the Bible as the authoritative standard of faith and practice. Many pastors of large churches and professors in theological schools are openly saying now that the Bible is not reliable. Each man is free, therefore, to decide for himself what is right and wrong, what he should believe and how he should behave.

Naturally, this gives rise to many different cults and sects. Not only is Christendom divided into many different denominations, but scores of heretical groups hang on like leeches to the faith once delivered to the saints. Jesus said it would be so. No one should be surprised to see it happening today.

This is a missionary challenge to the Lord's churches. The successes of the "off brand" cults indicate that many people have seeking hearts. They are trying to find peace and satisfaction. The cults and sects can never provide it for them. Jesus can. Therefore, we must be heralds of God to an age floundering in anxiety and lost in direction. Today holds a great missionary challenge.

2. International turmoil—Matthew 24:68. Man has developed in scientific areas beyond his moral power to control what he knows. The result is that there is great distress among nations with most international leaders at a loss as to what to do.

Look at what just one term in office as President of our United States does to the health and appearance of a man. The pressures are too great for any man to bear. No decision seems to be the right decision. Our enemies

are fierce, persistent, and facing the same anxieties which we face.

Such international crisis will close mission doors in many areas to the traditional method of mission work. In many countries today the full-time religious worker is not welcome. But the need in these countries is as great as ever. What can we do? We can magnify missions through radio, printed materials, and television. We must send missionaries who are medical doctors, technicians, teachers, farmers, scientists, etc. Many countries will permit these people to enter. Working in another profession the Christian can be a witness to Jesus. This was the way Paul used his tent-making profession during his missionary tours.

3. Religious persecution—Matthew 24:9. Hatred, opposition, imprisonment, and even martyrdom are still common today. It has been estimated by some who keep contact with such information that more people have died for the witness of Christ in the twentieth century than in any equal number of years since the days of Jesus upon earth.

But persecution has never stamped out Christian truth. It hinders freedom in witnessing, closes doors of nations against missionaries, prohibits freedom of assembly, stops religious presses from publishing materials, and sometimes even takes the life of a witness. But the Word of God is not bound.

Times of persecution have always been the times of greatest religious outreach. Opposition is common against the Gospel. This is no time to lessen our witness. Keep on reaching out!

4. Great apostasy—Matthew 24:10, 12. “The “love of many will wax cold.” This is a tragic truth which is already evident today. But while the love of many will wax cold, the love of many more will grow warmer and warmer. Today, in spite of apostasy and heresy, there is more money being spent on Christian missions than in any other time in history.

Seeing some fall by the way, those who truly love Jesus are resolved to get the gospel out while there is time. God has given us this day to witness. Even if some do fall away, the rest of us can continue our witness. God has given us this day to witness. We have no promise of tomorrows. If a businessman needs a certain article which is available today and may not be tomorrow, he buys it today even if he must borrow money to do it. God has given us this day to witness. We have no promise of another. Let us be missionary today!

5. Loyal remnant—Matthew 24:13-14. There will always be a faithful remnant. These are those who “endure unto the end” because they are truly saved.

While there are false religions on the rise, international turmoil between

nations, religious persecution against some, great apostasy of many, the faithful remnant will keep on bearing witness for Christ!

Some day “this gospel of the kingdom” will have been preached “in all the world as a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come.” We are ready!

World need is no excuse for us to neglect Christian missions. On the contrary, it is the very motivation we need to get the gospel into the hearing of each person in our generation. What a challenge it gives. If believers, who are aware of what is happening are distressed, what about unbelievers who have no hope in Jesus Christ? There is no day like today to win men to Jesus. Be a missionary!

II. DIVINE PROVISION

1. A gospel—I Corinthians 1:1-2. The message of redemption in Jesus Christ is “gospel”—good news! The term “gospel” was first used to refer to the reward a ruler would give a man who brought good news to him. Gradually its usage changed until it came to mean the message of good news which the messenger brought.

And the Christian has a gospel to share! To the deceived and deluded he declares a true religion. To men and nations in turmoil he tells of the peace which Jesus gives. To those under religious persecution he tells of One who feels the pains we bear because He suffered in all points like as we. To the loyal remnant he speaks of the Lord who will make them overcome. To the guilty and defiled he preaches the message of cleansing and new life in Christ.

This is gospel! It is good news to a sin cursed world. This is the missionary message. Share it!

2. A prophecy—I Corinthians 1:3-4. What happened to Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry was no accident or tragedy. It all happened “according to the scriptures.” It was foretold long before it came to pass. This indicates that the offering of God's only Son was no last resort with Him but was His plan from the beginning.

It all happened as God planned. It all came to pass because of His love and mercy. It is eternally effectual to one who repents of sin and trusts Jesus as his own Savior. This is what makes the gospel to be good news.

The world needs a message like this. Do you know someone who waits for you to share the good news with him?

3. An atonement—I Corinthians 15:3-4. “Christ died for OUR sins.”
“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,” Isaiah 53:5. “. . . **he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,”** Isaiah 53:12. **“And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our’s only but also for the sins of the whole world,”** I John 2:2.

This is our greatest missionary challenge. Jesus loves all men. He died for all men. He desires not the death of any but that all should come to repentance, II Peter 3:9. We must not neglect even one for whom Jesus died. His atonement was for “the whole world.” Our missionary obligation must be to “all the world” and the gospel must be preached “to every creature,” Mark 16:15.

What are you doing to fulfill the world missions ministry entrusted to us?

III. CHRISTIAN OBLIGATION

1. Authority or obligation? The Great Commission, as recorded by Matthew reads, **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen,”** Matthew 28:19-20.

The common interpretation is that this gives the church “authority” to baptize and teach. Yes, but there is another side. It puts the church under obligation to make disciples!

Which do you stress, authority or obligation in the Great Commission? Authority tends to pride in which we judge others who have not authority. Obligation tends to humility as we realize we are but under orders. Authority tends to satisfaction with things as they are. Obligation gives motivation to perform our duty. Authority centers interest in the man who is authorized. Obligation centers interest in the God who gave the commission.

The Great Commission which Jesus gave stresses obligation. The only authority involved there is that authority needed to obey His divine imperative to duty.

2. At home or abroad? The world mission ministry which rests upon the Lord's churches is universal in scope. There is no hemisphere, continent, nation, state, municipality nor individual which is not included. Each person in the whole world is to hear the message of Jesus. The half-dressed savage in the jungle and the well-dressed businessman in your community are included. You are responsible. Jesus has commissioned us to take the gospel

to both.

Acts 1:8 sets out the system for world missions. It suggests beginning in your hometown, covering your state, extending the witness to neighboring states, and continuing throughout the whole world. These are not different kinds of mission work. They are but different phases of the same work—getting the gospel message into the hearing of each human being alive today.

Second Corinthians 5:18-20 teaches, that each Christian bears a personal responsibility in world missions. This responsibility can be discharged only by faithful witnessing. We can speak to people we meet about the Lord Jesus and so fulfill the commission in our home communities. We can give through the denominational agencies to support missionaries at home and abroad and so fulfill the world-wide aspect of the commission. But fulfill it we must!

CONCLUSION—Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved! But to call on Him men must believe on Him. To believe on Him men must first hear of Him. To hear of Him messengers must be sent. For messengers to be sent someone must bear the cost. (See Paul's statement of this in Romans 10:13-15.)

The responsibility for world missions comes back upon the local congregation and each member thereof. (1) Study your church budget. What percent of the offerings are actually used to spread the gospel? (2) Study your teaching program. How much instruction is given the people on the “how” and “why” of world missions? (3) Study the communications media. How much do the people know about the work presently being done by our churches around the world?

Then one other heart-searching question remains. “Am I really doing my best to help my congregation to feel the urgency of world missions and am I willing to be used of God to encourage its support by precept and example?”