

Thus does the patient work of the Church of Christ gain in time upon the most unpromising of the heathen and exhibit to the world the triumph of Christian missions.

MISSIONARY MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

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IN an attempt to set before others the various incentives and inducements to missionary zeal and effort, the difficulty encountered at the outset is that of selection. One sees so many reasons why every Christian should be personally and profoundly interested in spreading the Gospel that it is hard to decide where to begin. And yet there is one missionary motive, that of obedience, which should clearly stand at the head of the list. "Why should I," said a certain person, in answer to a strong appeal—"why should I, in this country of ours, be asked to send the Gospel out to India, or China, or Japan, when, in my opinion, the heathen has just as good a chance of salvation as many professing Christians, through the mercy and forbearance of God?" "Sir," was the answer, "that is not the question. It is not will the *heathen be saved* without the Gospel, but *shall you and I be saved* if we disobey and disregard a clear command of Jesus Christ?"

What is Christianity, after all, but the loyal confession with our lips, and the acknowledgment in our lives, that Jesus Christ is *Lord* to the glory of the Father? And what does that imply? Obedience, implicit obedience. And where in the Word of God can we find a clearer expression of His will than that often-quoted and disregarded command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?"

We sometimes hear this command quoted as if it stood alone, or almost alone. But is it the case? What did Jesus Christ say to His disciples on the Mount of Olives three days before His death on the cross? "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all nations, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." What did He say to them again on the memorable evening that followed His resurrection, when He stood before their wondering eyes in the upper room at Jerusalem? "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins *should be preached in his name among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem." But why do I need to quote these commands? As a speaker well said at the great missionary conference in London in 1888: "It is not necessary to quote missionary commands and missionary promises to prove that it is the

will of Christ that His Church should evangelize the world. The whole divine revelation, in its tendency, its purpose, and its spirit, converges to this: that the Church of Christ, elected, redeemed and endowed, enjoys all her rights, possesses all her privileges and holds all her endowments of grace for the evangelization of the world." "The missionary enterprise," said the speaker, "is not merely an aspect of Christianity—not merely a department of the Church's work; it is Christianity itself, and a Church that is non-missionary is essentially non-Christian. To put it in other and even plainer words, the spreading of the Gospel is the *business* for which the Church of Christ exists." "When," says a famous preacher, "a lighthouse-keeper, on a dark, stormy night, is told to go aloft and attend to his lantern, why does he receive that order? Because the ocean-burdened ship is coming upon the coast and needs the guidance of that light. But suppose him to reason thus: I have been told to take care of this light; I must see that no wind blows upon it; I must see that none of it is lost; I must hang it round with curtains and protect it from any mischance,—would that be caring for the light? Why, he might as well put it out. He is defeating the very purpose for which his lighthouse was set up. And so with the Christian Church. God has placed her in this dying world to lighten its darkness, to save its perishing, to guide its lost ones to light and immortality, and, failing so to do, she is false to her commission, false to her Head, false to the very purpose and reason for which she was brought into life."

So much for obedience; let us now consider another motive to missionary effort, that of *opportunity*. God hath set before us an open door, and hidden us to enter. What a pathetic message was that which came to one of our great English societies a few years ago: "Send us a missionary soon, for we are dying very fast." And this may be said of millions, for many millions are dying every year who have never heard of Christ! But others are dying also, and dying to the dirge of lost opportunity. We must work while it is day; we have little time to lose; every breath, every pulsation of the heart, brings us nearer to that night when no man can work. This surely calls us to earnestness and diligence in the great work of saving souls.

Oh, ye saints, arise! be earnest!
Up and work while still 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'erake you,
Strive for souls while yet ye may.

The trouble is that many Christians do not realize that they *have* such an opportunity, that they *have* a responsibility in this matter. If they could see the actual state of the case, if it were one of want and suffering right before their eyes, it would be different; but those far-