

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSINTERCESSORY FOREIGN MIS-
SIONARIES.

By Alfred E. Street.

"Jehovah—wondered that there was no intercessor."—Is. 59, 16.

The following is not a literary presentation. It has grown out of the writer's experience in addressing churches, and the reception that has been accorded the truths here presented has revealed the need for their more general diffusion.

Christ did not command us to pray the Lord of the harvest that he send forth missionaries, but "laborers." The difference is intentional for there are others just as necessary as missionaries. ("Missionary" is the Latin form of the Greek "Apostle," meaning "One Sent.")

Those harvest hands who directed reach the souls of men and save them can be divided generally into (1) Native Workers, and in all countries the burden of evangelization rests upon them; (2) Missionaries, who are no longer needed when the natives have learned all they can teach (some centuries ago they finished their work among the English.) (3) Intercessors, who give their time and strength to the distinct work of definite intercessory prayer.

Of these three classes, if comparison is possible among things all of which are necessary, the Intercessor is most important because he is working at the very root and foundation of all harvest success, and, in so far as man is responsible, his faithfulness determines the success of all other.

Definition.

An Intercessory Foreign Missionary is a "laborer" who cannot go in person to the foreign field, but who has set himself apart to pray for the definite details of the foreign missionary work. He only is entitled to the name who enters upon an engagement to work for definite fields; an engagement as real as an appointment by a foreign mission board. His striking peculiarities are that he is working in the realm of "the heavenlies" instead of among visible men, and that there are no restrictions as to the number who can be intercessors, to the place of their residences, or to the variety, sweep and completeness of the results accomplished.

Necessity for Intercessors.

That mission field which has the largest number of missionaries (faithful workers), whose names are not in the published lists will always be the most successfully harvested. This is so.

(a) Because of the nature of missionary activity.

Eph. 6, 10-20 reveals the facts clearly, concisely and completely, showing that we are not primarily overcoming the prejudices and superstitions of men, but "principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness—spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" which are various grades of rulers organized into invisible kingdoms of darkness. In Dan. 10 some of these principalities are mentioned by name: "Prince of Greece," "Prince of Persia," "Kings of Persia," etc., while Christ calls the head of all these kingdoms the "Prince of the World." Other forces are revealed in "the horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" and the "twelve legions of angels" mentioned by Jesus. This revelation shows missionary activity to be a spiritual war between the forces of Christ and those of Satan, not man trying to reform and civilize man. This war is waged for the possession of living men and through the medium of living men. Christ seeks men to be "members of His body" while Satan "enters" the hearts of men so that each works out his purposes through the men

who submit to him. It follows that men must go in person, as Jesus came to the world in person, to do the work made possible by prayer.

(b) Because prayer based on God's word is the only weapon man can use to touch the invisible foe.

We can reach a Chinaman by speaking face to face with him, but we can strike the spiritual Prince only by way of the place "above where Christ is" ever living to make intercession. An inspection of Eph. 6 shows that the end of putting on the armor of God is to Pray for all the saints, but especially for Paul who represents his missionary successors. This armor is not for selfish protection but to enable us to "stand" and like Moses, Aaron and Hur, by supplication give victory to those fighting Amalek. Jesus did not call upon the twelve legions of angels but upon his disciples, and that they should watch with him in prayers while he fought the invisible foe, and in this has shown the way for all who "fight the fight of faith." Even now it is by intercession that he continues the war.

(c) Because the missionary on the field cannot alone do his work.

When the intercessors' hands fall Amalek prevails on the mission field to-day. The enemy is strong. Jesus refused to bow down to Satan, but the heathen bow and worship, therefore the blackness of darkness broods over those lands, a stifling, choking power of death. There, a Christian is like a diver at the bottom of the sea.

In Christian countries prayer is continually offered for the pastor and for every detail of the work of the church, special meetings are held to pray for a revival. In open-air meetings, while one is speaking, others are praying. Exactly in the same way one or two missionaries alone along thousands or millions need other persons to pray definitely while they work or sneak. Only the need is more urgent as the bottom of the sea is more dangerous than the air, just as there are more deaths "on the fringeline" than in the quiet of the home.

The body of Christ does not consist of each one of us individually, but of all together, and if a missionary is left without sufficient aid in prayer, he suffers, limps, stumbles. Some have even fallen away. He may succeed in fighting his way to the very presence of God and receive blessings unspeakable, but meanwhile the heathen periah and God tells us that their blood is to be required at the hands of those who did not do their part. (Ezek. 33, 1-6.)

What Can be Done by Intercessors

(a) A host of intercessors can be speedily enlisted for this war.

(b) Enough missionaries and money can be found really to accomplish our task.

(c) Suitable men can be sent as missionaries and the unsuitable can be prevented from making the mistake of going. Such mistakes have in the past cost many lives and thousands of dollars. They can be prevented by the Lord of the harvest only when he is asked to do so. Even Christ himself prayed all night before he chose the first twelve missionaries. (It is a significant fact that there is no distinct command for man to send forth missionaries. That work was done by Christ himself and then by his Spirit when he chose Paul and Barnabas. When they tried to choose fellow workers they quarrelled over the choice. The command is to pray.)

(d) Many urgent questions of general missionary policy can be solved only

through much prayer.

(e) Individual heathen can be prayed for by name and thus saved.

(f) A native ministry can be raised up and maintained.

(g) Revivals can continually spring up on the foreign field.

(h) Fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit can be given to over-burdened missionaries.

(i) The health and strength of missionaries can be maintained under the severe strain of their physical and social surroundings.

(k) Lonely missionaries, those without many friends, can be cheered and helped until their usefulness is many times multiplied.

Experience has repeatedly shown that the believing prayer of one humble intercessor at home can bring about a revival on the foreign field and save thousands. The experience of one missionary was that as far as man can see results he was able to do more for the heathen tiling as an intercessor in America than while he was among the heathen without intercessors pleading for him.

How to do the Work of an Intercessor.

(a) Decide deliberately that this intercession is to be a regular binding duty.

(b) Select fixed days, hours, times and make them take precedence, as far as possible of all other engagements.

(c) Begin humbly letting experience enlarge and guide.

(d) Wait on the Lord of the harvest for directions as to what part of the field you are to belong to.

(e) Learn the names of all missionaries of all connections in your field and pray for them by name.

(f) Do not pity the missionary or console with him, but give him your sympathetic help.

(g) Write to the missionaries you are praying for, asking pointedly what their difficulties and needs are. Tell them you do not want something bright and new, but something dark and discouraging, and that when they are worn out you want them to drop you a postal telling you that, so that you can pray them strong again.

(h) Pray for every need or condition that you can learn about. This article is only suggestive.

(j) Form the habit of letting God impress upon you the things to pray for. He will do it.

(k) Not many words are needed, but much time must be spent in "waiting" upon Him, the very silence calling for His will to be done. Silence enables one to draw very near to God. "We know not how to pray as we ought" and we must let "the Spirit himself make intercession."

(l) Study and practice the art of praying until you are an expert in it. The Bible furnishes its laws and examples which can be worked out by patient practice only, just like any other art.

Warnings.

Some may be tempted to cherish a subtle, hidden feeling that by doing this work they are conferring a favor on some one by helping. Not at all. It is the other way; the unspeakable favor is granted you of sharing the burden of intercession daily carried by the risen man Christ Jesus in heaven.

A newly arrived missionary cannot vote for the first year, as so much has to be learned before he can do so intelligently. In the same way, one beginning as an intercessory missionary needs to consider