

The Missionary Problem Is A Personal Problem

by Andrew Murray

Every believer a soul winner. Many will agree that every believer is called upon to live and work for others, but still look upon this as only a secondary thing, additional and subordinate to the primary interest of working out his own salvation.

Every believer a soul-winner - that does not mean, among other things, but first of all, as the chief reason of his existence. We all agree in saying that the one and supreme end of the Church is to bring the world to Christ. We know that God gave Him the Church as His body. The one purpose was that it should be to its Head what every body is on earth - the living organ or instrument through which the purposes and the work of the head can be carried out. What is true of the Head is true of the Body; what is true of the Body is true of each individual member - even the very weakest. As in the Head, Christ Jesus, as in the Body, the Church, so in every believer, the supreme, the sole end of our being is the saving of souls. It is in this, above everything, that God is glorified. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and should bring forth fruit."

Many may be brought to agree with this truth and yet have to confess that they do not feel its full force. Many a minister may feel how little he is able to preach it, compared with the full conviction with which he preaches grace for salvation. It is well that we should give such confessions careful consideration. Where does the difficulty come in? This union with the Lord Jesus, to participate in His saving work to such an extent that without us He cannot do it, that through us He will and can accomplish it in Divine power, is a deep spiritual mystery. It is an honor altogether too great for us to understand. It is a fellowship and union and partnership so intimate and Divine that the Holy Spirit alone must reveal it to us.

To simple, childlike souls the reality of it comes without their knowing how. Some [people] have lived long in the Christian life and lost the first love, and to them, everything has to come by the slow way of the understanding. Such people need humility to give up preconceived opinions, and the confidence of being able to grasp spiritual truths. They also need patient waiting for the Spirit to work such truth in their inmost parts. Above all, we need to turn away from the world, with its spirit and wisdom, and return to closer fellowship with Jesus Christ, from whom alone come light and love.

Every believer ordained to be first and foremost a soul-winner. Simple though it sounds, it will cost much to many before it has mastered them.

We are often at a loss to understand the need of much continued communion with God. And yet it is the same as with the things of earth. Take the gold put into the furnace. Exposed to insufficient heat, it gets heated but not melted. Exposed to an intense heat for only a short time, and then taken out again, it is not melted. It needs an intense and continuous heat, before the precious but hard metal is prepared for the goldsmith's work. So it is with the fire of God's love. They who would know it in its power, and in power to proclaim and convey it to others, must keep in contact with the love of Christ. They must know it in its intensity, and know what it is to continue in it till their whole being realized that love can reach all, and melt all. It can make even the coldest and weakest child of God a lover and seeker of souls. In that intense and continuous fire a pastor, a leader, can learn to witness in power to the truth - every believer a soul-winner.

What has this to do with our missionary discussion? We seek to make it the keynote of this book - The missionary problem is a personal one. If the Church is really to take up its work, it is not enough that we speak of the obligation resting upon the present generation to make Christ known to everyone. True education must always deal with the individual mind. To the general command must always be added the personal one. Nelson's signal, "England expects every man to do his duty," was a personal appeal addressed to every seaman, not just his fleet. As we seek to find out why, with such millions of Christians, the real army of God that is fighting the hosts of darkness is so small, the only answer is-lack of heart. The enthusiasm of the kingdom is missing. And that is because there is so little enthusiasm for the King. Though much may be done by careful organization and strict discipline and good generalship to make the best of the few troops we have, there is nothing that can so restore confidence and courage as the actual presence of a beloved King, to whom every heart beats warm in loyalty and devotion.

The missionary appeal must go deeper and seek to deal with the very root of the evil. If there is no desire for soul-winning at home, how can the interest in the distant unevangelized be truly deep or spiritual? There may be many motives to which we appeal effectively in asking for supplies of men and money-the compassion of a common humanity, the alleviation of the evils of pagan people, the elevation of fellow-human beings in the scale of human life, the claims of our church or society. But the true and highest motive is the only one that will really call forth the spiritual power of the Church, for the work to be done.

If the missionary appeal to this generation to bring the gospel to every person is to be successful, the Church will have to gird itself for the work in a very different way from what it has been doing. The most serious question the Church has to face just now-in fact, the only real difficulty of the missionary problem is how she is to be awakened as a whole to the greatness and glory of the task entrusted to her and led to engage in it with all her heart and strength. The only answer to that question-the key to the whole situation appears to be the simple truth: The missionary problem is a personal one. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Author and Leader of Mission. Whoever stands right with Him, and abides in Him, will be ready to know and do His will. It is simply a matter of being near enough to Him to hear His voice and so devoted to Him and His love as to be ready to do all His will. Christ's whole relation to each of us is an intensely personal one. He loved me and gave Himself for me. My relation to Him is an entirely personal one. He gave Himself a ransom for me, and I am His, to live for Him and His glory. He has breathed His love into my heart, and I love Him. He tells me that, as a member of His Body, He needs me for His service, and in love I gladly yield myself to Him. He wants nothing more than that I should tell this to others, prove to them how He loves, how He enables us to love, and how blessed is a life in His love.

The personal element of the missionary problem must be put in the foreground. Every missionary sermon or meeting must give the love of Christ the first place. If Christians are in a low, cold, worldly state, the first object must be to wait on God in prayer and faith for His Holy Spirit to lead them to a true devotion to Jesus Christ. Will that be an apparent loss of time in not beginning at once with the ordinary missionary information and pleas? Ah, no-it will soon be made up. Weak believers who are glad to hear and give, must be lifted to the consciousness of the wonderful spiritual privilege of offering themselves to Christ to live for His kingdom. They must be encouraged to believe that the Lord who loves them, greatly prizes their love, and will enable them to bring it to Him. They must learn that Christ's love asks for whole-hearted devotion, and that the more they sacrifice, the more will that love possess them. As definitely as we labor to secure the interest and the gifts of each individual, even more so must we labor to bring each one into contact with Christ Himself.

At first it may appear as if we are aiming too high. In many congregations the response may be very weak. Let the pastor give himself to study the missionary problem in this light. Let him put it to his people, clearly and perseveringly: You have been redeemed to be the witnesses and messengers of Christ's love. To fit you for it, His love has been given you, and shed abroad in your heart. As He loves you, He loves the whole world. He wants those who know it to tell those who don't know it. His love to you and to them, your love to Him and to them call you to do it. It is your highest privilege, it will be your highest happiness and perfection. As Christ gave Himself, give yourself wholly to this work of love.

Discussion Questions:

1. Murray mentions that Jesus "without us cannot do it", that is, cannot complete the missionary work, and that this "is a deep spiritual mystery." What do you find mysterious about this? Why do you think God honors us with this "fellowship and union and partnership so intimate and Divine"?
2. The argument seems to center on one reason for there being millions of Christians and yet so few that engage others with the Gospel - lack of heart for the King. How would you rate your heart for the King, both in feeling and in action?
3. How would you summarize Murray's solution? What would be fitting steps of response for you?
4. Murray closes essentially with a principle that what God does in us He also wants to do through us (His love in us; His love through us). What has God done in you that He could do through you?
5. It's often said that God is not looking for perfect people to answer His call, but willing people? How willing are you to reach other students?

Points of Prayer:

1. Confess your nearness to the world. Lay whatever entangles or holds you back at His feet. Draw near to Him in gratitude and worship.
2. Choose 3 people you know and begin praying for them to know Christ, and for God to give you opportunities to share with them.
3. Ask someone to help you discover an unreached people group (a group of people someplace in the world with no Christians, no church and no missionary) or least reached people group (so few Christians and churches as to make any impact) and begin praying daily for the next 30 days for that people group.