

# MISSIONARIES: THEIR LIVES AND THEIR MESSAGE

## A Real Burden For Lost Men

If "God so loved the \_\_\_\_\_" (John 3:16), should not believers share a love and concern for the world? The great missionaries of the past have been those men and women who have shared God's heart of concern for lost men. As examples of this, let us consider William Carey and Mary Slessor.

### 1) William Carey

In our last chapter we talked about William Carey, the great missionary to India who is remembered as the father of the modern missionary movement.

When Carey lived in England he was a shoemaker. Carey was very interested in the journeys of the famous English navigator and explorer, Captain James Cook. Carey wanted to learn all that he could about the world and the needy people who lived in the world. On the walls of his humble shoemaker's shop he hung hand-drawn maps of the world on which he had noted the population, climate, vegetation, animals and religions of the different countries. Out of pieces of leather, he had constructed a globe, and as he turned it in his hand, he prayed in turn for the people of Africa, India and China as well as the islands who had never heard the gospel.

William Carey had a burden in his heart for lost men. He was concerned for them. He prayed for them. Finally God made it possible for him to go to India where he could reach lost men for the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God give us HIS concern for lost men and women and children wherever they might be found, whether near or far.

### 2) Mary Slessor (1848-1915)

This woman was born in Scotland. Her mother was a devout Christian but her father was a drunkard. It was in her teen years that Mary became a Christian. Later she was greatly moved by the death of an older brother who had always hoped to be a missionary. She volunteered to be a missionary in his place.

On one day Mary heard a missionary tell about Calabar which was located in Nigeria, West Africa. He said something like this: *"Calabar is the worst spot on earth! A mysterious, awful land ruled by witchcraft and secret cannibal societies. Human sacrifices, spells, poisons. And the awful custom of murdering twin babies which are considered bad luck. A land of fever, skin diseases, malaria."* If you had been listening to this missionary, would you have wanted to go to such a land? This would be the last place in the world that most people would want to go! As Mary heard these words her heart reached out to these needy people. She wanted to help them! At the age of 28 she went to Calabar. As she boarded the ship she saw the cargo being loaded. The cargo included barrels and barrels of whiskey. *"How sad,"* Mary thought, *"Scotland is sending hundreds of barrels of whiskey to Africa, but only one missionary!"*

Mary Slessor spent 40 years in Calabar, mostly in pioneering efforts. She became known as THE WHITE QUEEN OF CALABAR. She personally raised many of the sets of twins that would have been killed had she not stepped in and taken these babies unto herself. Most of all Mary preached by her life. One of her Nigerian friends said, *"Ma Slessor didn't stand up on a mountain top and preach to us. She came right down and lived among us, ate our food, slept in our huts, showed us what was right and wrong by her example."* This was a dedicated woman who had a real burden for reaching people for Christ.

### **Willingness to Face Dangers**

Missionaries must have a burden, but they also must be brave! The life of a missionary is not an easy life. Often there are great dangers that must be faced.

John Paton was a man who was willing to face danger. John was a missionary to the New Hebrides islands, and these islands were inhabited by savage cannibals. In fact, the first two missionaries that set foot on one of these islands were clubbed to death and eaten!

Before John left for these islands, an old man tried to hinder him and stop him from going. This old man said this: *"The cannibals! YOU WILL BE EATEN BY CANNIBALS!"* This was the argument that he kept using. Finally one day John Paton answered him, *"Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your body will soon be laid in the grave, to be eaten by worms. If I can live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms."* John Paton was not afraid to face dangers!

There were many people in John Paton's day who were not willing to leave the security of their own country to serve the Lord in a dangerous land. Although he was serving the Lord in Scotland and conducting successful Bible classes, he knew there would be many others that would be willing to take over his work there. But sadly he knew that there would be few who would go to the islands to preach to the heathen. John said this, *"Happy in my work as I felt, and successful by the blessing of God, yet I continually heard the wail of the perishing HEATHEN in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Calton."*

John left Scotland and went to preach to the people that he was so burdened for. Later he himself said that he knew of 50 times when his life was in imminent danger and he knew that always his escape was due solely to the grace of God. We will learn about one of these "escapes" shortly!

### **God Protects His Missionaries**

Although the dangers on the mission field are great, God's protection is even greater. Let us consider three examples of how God wonderfully (and even miraculously) protected His missionaries:

#### **1) Hudson Taylor**

Hudson Taylor was a great missionary to China. On his first trip to China the ship approached New Guinea and was just 30 miles off land. The Captain was troubled because a strong current

was carrying the ship rapidly towards sunken reefs. As they drifted nearer to shore they could see the natives rushing about the sands and lighting fires every here and there. They were cannibals. Hudson tells what happened, *"After standing together on the deck for some time in silence, the captain said to me, 'Well, we have done everything that can be done; we can only await the (tragic) result.' A thought occurred to me, and I replied, 'No, there is one thing we have not done yet.' 'What is it?' he asked. 'Four of us on board are Christians,' I answered, 'let us each return to his own cabin, and in agreed prayer ask the Lord to give us immediately a breeze.'"*

Hudson Taylor continues: *"This they did. I had a good but very brief season in prayer and then felt so satisfied that our request was granted that I could not continue asking, and very soon went up again on deck."* Hudson then asked the officer who was standing there to let down the sail. *"What would be the good of that?" he replied.* In just a few minutes the breeze had indeed come and the multitude of naked savages whom we had seen on the beach had no wreckage that night.

## 2) **David Brainerd.**

We were introduced to David Brainerd in our last lesson. Once David heard of a very savage tribe living in the New Jersey forests. He made up his mind that he would take the light of salvation to these Indians. When he got there, he was very much surprised to be welcomed by his redmen hosts. He had expected that arrows would be shot at him and that he might even be skinned alive, but instead the Indians seemed glad to see him. In a little while he learned why. When the Indians had learned that a white man was coming to see them, the warriors sent out as usual to kill him. They reached his tent at night and went in planning to put a dagger or an arrow through him. What do you think they saw when they got inside his tent? They saw that the Paleface was in prayer. They also saw that while he was praying a large rattlesnake lifted its head and was ready to strike him. Its long tongue licked back and forth and then without any reason, the snake slipped away into the bushes!

The Indians said, *"The Great Spirit is with the paleface,"* so they let him live and visit them.

## 3) **John Paton**

God's protection was often seen in the life of John Paton. Here is but one example: On one occasion the savages surrounded the mission house and set fire to the church and also set fire to the fence which connected the church to the mission house. Mr. Paton ran out and tore up the burning fence, while savages raised their clubs and shouted, *"Kill him!"* At this moment occurred an incident which John later traced directly to the interposition of God. A rushing and roaring sound came from the south, like the noise of a mighty engine or of muttering thunder. Every head was instinctively turned in that direction, and they knew from previous hard experience that it was one of their awful tornadoes. The wind carried the flames away from the house. Had the wind come in the opposite direction no power on earth could have saved them all from being consumed. It also brought with it a cloud which poured out a perfect torrent of tropical rain. The flames of the burning church were cut off from doing further damage. A panic seized the savages and throwing down their torches they fled. Was this a mere accident or a mere coincidence or was this the hand of God protecting His believers? John Paton knew the answer to this question! [See the great **protection Psalm**, Psalm 121].

## **Missionary Martyrs**

God has not always delivered His missionaries. There have been times when God has not shielded his missionaries from danger. There have been times when God has allowed the heathen to put His believers to death. Even in this God had a great purpose, as we shall see from the following two examples:

### **1) John Williams**

The first Christian missionary to the New Hebrides Islands (the Islands where John Paton labored) was John Williams. As soon as he arrived on the Cannibal Island he was clubbed to death and then devoured at a cannibal feast.

His labor was not in vain. God had a purpose in allowing this. The news of this tragedy filled the London Missionary Society, which had sent him, with sorrow but also with a strong determination not to be defeated by this event. Immediately 25 new workers volunteered to take the place of Williams. Fifty years after Williams was murdered, the son of his murderer was laying the corner-stone of the martyr's memorial, while another son was preaching the gospel for which that martyr died!

### **2) Five Modern Missionary Martyrs**

On January 8, 1956 five young missionaries landed on a small beach on the Curaray River in the jungles of Ecuador. Their names were Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Jim Elliot and Roger Youderian. This was to be their second contact with the warlike Auca Indians. The first had been made two days earlier, and the Aucas had been cautious but friendly.

This time, however, the savage Aucas attacked the Missionaries without warning. All five were killed, and their plane destroyed. News of the slayings shocked the world, but caused Christians to earnestly pray for this needy tribe and for the other missionaries who now took up the task of reaching them.

Other missionaries, including the widows of some of the five men who died, did reach the Aucas. Gradually, they realized that the white men had come to help them, and began to listen to the gospel (good news) of God's love.

Since then the majority of this Auca tribe has turned to Christ, including five of the men who killed the missionaries. Two of these former killers now minister the gospel to their tribe. On one day they baptized two of Nate Saint's children in the Curaray River—at the very place where they had slain the missionaries 10 years earlier!

God has a purpose in all that He allows! "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

## The Results of Missionary Work

### 1) Adoniram Judson

This great missionary is known as the Father of American Missions. He was sent from America and arrived in Burma in 1813. Judson labored hard and faithfully but he did not see many results. Five long years passed before Judson was able to baptize his first convert. As he himself said, Winning a convert in those regions was *"like drawing the eye-tooth of a live tiger."* Ten years he labored hard before he was able to gather one little flock of 18 converts into a church. In many ways those 10 years seemed fruitless. However, what may seem very fruitless to man may be very fruitful to God.

Before Judson died there were 7,000 Christians living in Burma with 63 churches and 163 missionaries, native pastors and helpers to watch over the churches. God had given the INCREASE (see 1 Corinthians 3:7) in His time and in His way!

### 2) Robert Morrison (1782-1834)

This man was the first missionary to China. Seven years passed before Morrison baptized his first convert and the total number of converts as a result of his work remained small. God is concerned about how faithful the missionary is, even in the things that are least (even in the little things, see Luke 16:10). The number of converts is not really the missionary's business. Whose business is it (see Acts 2:47 and Matthew 16:18) \_\_\_\_\_

### 3) John Paton

Sometimes God blesses the work of missionaries in amazing ways and gives results that are almost unbelievable. John Paton worked with the savages on the island of Aniwa. At first the work was slow and difficult, but as he labored faithfully through the years he had the joy of seeing practically every inhabitant of Aniwa make a profession of faith in Christ. The cannibals, for the most part, had become Christians. John Paton could not praise himself. He could only praise His God who had given the increase and who had transformed the lives of these people who were once savages.

## The Importance of Faith

A missionary must be a person of faith! Hudson Taylor was a great missionary to China. He also founded the China Inland Mission. This mission was established on the principle of faith. No direct solicitation for funds was ever to be made. This means that the missionaries were to look to God and not to men for their financial support. They were to depend not on men, but on God alone to meet every need (see Philippians 4:19). Also none of the workers was guaranteed any fixed salary. The missionary was to trust God whether the funds came in or whether funds did not come in.

The early missionaries learned that *"those who trust God WHOLLY find Him WHOLLY true!"* He never disappoints those who put their trust in Him!

## **The Importance of Prayer**

Prayer is a vital part of missions. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us the importance of prayer. See Matthew 9:36-38. We must do the P \_\_\_\_\_ING and God must do the S \_\_\_\_\_ING (see Matthew 9:38).

Samuel J. Mills and four other college students once met together at Williams College (here in New England). They held a prayer meeting under a haystack where they went for shelter during a storm. This has been since called the famous HAYSTACK PRAYER MEETING. These men were concerned about lost souls. These men prayed to the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth workers.

Out of this simple prayer meeting God did a wonderful work! This was the beginning of what came to be *The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Adoniram Judson and other great missionaries were sent forth from this Board. All of this took place because 5 young men had a burden on their hearts and banded together in prayer.

## **The Importance of the Bible**

Wherever missionaries have gone the Bible has gone! The work of Bible Translation has always been one of the great labors of missionaries. The people must have the Bible and they must have the Bible in their own language.

Think of how difficult it would be for us if we did not have a Bible in the English language. William Carey, the father of modern missions, translated the Bible (in whole or in part) into at least 26 Indian languages. It is hard to see how one man could have done all this work. Adoniram Judson translated the whole Bible into the Burmese language so that those people could have the precious Word of God in their own language.

Years ago the Middletown Bible Church helped missionary Bob Hawkins to publish the books of Matthew and 1 Corinthians in the Wai Wai language for the Wai Wai Indians of Brazil. [Your Sunday School teacher can show you one of these books so that you can see what the Wai Wai language looks like.] The work of Bible translation continues to this very day.