

## MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

– ACTS 13:1-12 – MAY 2. –

**Golden Text:** – "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." – Mark 16:15,16. – (Omitted in the old Mss.)

THIS verse and all this chapter from verse nine to the close is acknowledged by all scholars to be an interpolation – an addition to the Scriptures – not written by Mark, but added centuries later. The words are not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts. We would better use the well-authenticated words of Matt. 28:19, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit."

The spirit of Christianity is an aggressive one. The Gospel sets before the true believer an object, a motive, which inspires to an enthusiasm of the highest degree. The message becomes a burning one which must flame forth as a true light to enlighten others. Otherwise it would become extinct, smothered. "Quench not the holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed," may surely be applied to a proper missionary spirit, as well as in other ways.

Missionary endeavor in foreign lands certainly has been in harmony with the Divine intimation, that a knowledge of the grace of God might be scattered abroad so as to select God's "elect" from every quarter. We are not by these words endorsing everything connected with the methods or the message which have been sent forth in the name of the Gospel. We do believe, however, that a blessing has resulted even through the use of wrong methods and impure teachings. Those who have given money to the cause have surely received a blessing, compensating every endeavor to serve

the Lord. The sacrifice of earthly means has brought its blessing and compensation in fervency of spirit. We are not certain to what extent the heathen have been benefited by the lessons civilization has brought them; some, more; some, less. Only the Lord will know how to determine the actual results and to apportion the rewards for services in his cause.

It is our thought that while there is so much to be done at home in civilized lands, those who have their hands full do well to content themselves therewith, leaving it for the Lord to open up the way later, according to his wisdom and grace, for the heathen to hear the message. Our readers will remember that in the Lord's providence it seemed wise that Brother Booth and wife should go to Africa as representatives of the Truth. This seemed to be no hindrance to the work in civilized lands, and the evidences were that the Lord had some ripened grains of wheat in far-off Africa. Word from Brother Booth and others of Cape Town and vicinity assure us that the proclamation of the good tidings of great joy is making fairly good headway in that region. Three white brethren there are now preaching to mixed audiences continually. Some half dozen little congregations are rejoicing in a growing knowledge of the Divine Plan of the Ages. Further, three black brethren have espoused the cause **[R4360 : page 93]** and zealously begun its proclamation. One is laboring near Cape Town. One has already journeyed nearly two thousand miles and is exerting a considerable influence amongst his people near Lake Nyasa. Another has just started for the same vicinity on foot, a journey of about a month. With him go six or eight other young black Christians who thus journey, that they may have the benefit of his indoctrination on the way and be the better prepared to tell the tidings of great joy when they reach their fellow-countrymen. Our missionary efforts, however, both at home and abroad, are of a different character and different inspiration than other missionary efforts. Ours is not a proclamation of a fierce God and a great place called hell or Purgatory into which all their forefathers have

gone and into which they must go unless they receive our message. Ours is the missionary message of St. Paul and Barnabas – an announcement that the God of love has provided a Redeemer; that in due time the Redeemer will establish his Kingdom and through it bless all the families of the earth with a knowledge of his grace, and grant assistance back into harmony with God and thereby an opportunity for eternal life.

Ours is a message of special favor now being given out to any who have the "ear to hear" and the heart to appreciate and accept it. Ours is the missionary hunt for the Lord's jewels, for his "Royal Priesthood," his "little flock," his "elect" – that these may be enlightened and assisted to a clearer knowledge of the Truth, that they may make their calling and election sure to joint-heirship with their Redeemer in his coming Kingdom. Our chief work is at home or in places where the Gospel has already been proclaimed, because we understand the Scriptures to teach that we are in the Harvest time of this Gospel Age, just as the work of the Lord and his Apostles was in the Harvest time of the Jewish Age. To his disciples Jesus said, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor." Other men labored and ye are entered into [the fruit of] their labor – harvesting the ripened grain. It will not surprise us to learn in due time that as many as two hundred new believers in Africa celebrated the Memorial Supper this year in excess of the number that partook of it last year. Of course, two hundred are not many, nor can we hope that they will all be ripened grains of wheat. However, we consider this a very favorable opening, considering the length of its establishment.

### **THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT IN ANTIOCH**

Our lesson tells us that there were three public speakers at Antioch, besides Paul and Barnabas, and that as they **[R4360 : page 94]** served and practised self-denial, the holy Spirit indicated that Barnabas and Paul should have a special work to do in

carrying the message of God's grace to others. And in this way we have a suggestion in respect to the proper course to be pursued amongst the Lord's people generally, wherever it is found, that the number of public speakers and teachers, Berean Lesson leaders, etc., is greater than is really needed. Instead of wasting valuable time and energy all should recognize the facts of the case, and square them to the instructions of this lesson, and separate some to special missionary effort. A failure to notice the breadths of the Lord's work and the privileges of service has proven a temptation to some, and led to fault-finding and bickering, heart-burnings and discouragements, instead of mutual encouragements, sympathetic aids, and increase in the joy of the Lord and spread of the Truth. Each member of Christ, and especially each one of teaching ability, should seek to take the broadest possible view of the Lord's work and the most loving and appreciative view of every fellow-servant's endeavors. This course leads to mutual upbuilding, while the other course tends toward coldness and leanness, if not to back-biting and devouring one another.

### **LAI D THEIR HANDS ON THEM**

The Church ordained the Apostles for this missionary service. The laying on of hands did not signify the impartation to them of any spiritual or occult powers. It did not mean the giving to them of *authority* to preach. It did mean that the congregation of the Lord at Antioch recognized these two men as God's servants and authorized them to go forth as *their* representatives, and impliedly at their charges, to carry the message of good tidings to others. As the priests laid their hands upon the animals which were to represent them in sacrifice, so the Church laid their hands upon those who were to represent them in the service of the Truth.

Similarly today we are following what we believe to be the direction of the holy Spirit in sending forth the Pilgrims to proclaim the good tidings. They go forth, as the apostles expressed

the matter, not authorized to preach by man or men or human systems, but by him who said, "Go ye, disciple all nations" – people of all nationalities, and not merely the Jews, as at first. Nevertheless the Church in general lays its hands upon these Pilgrims in the sense of saying, "You go with our approval, as our representatives, and all of your expenses will be met out of our donations to the Tract Fund. Serve the Lord faithfully and make reports to us through the Society's channels.

### **LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN CONFLICT**

They decided to go first to the Island of Cyprus, probably because Barnabas was a native of that Island and because it would be their proper route in going into Asia Minor. Apparently nothing of special moment occurred until they had gone almost the length of the island, where they came in conflict with a Jew, a sorcerer, known as Elymas or magician. Much of the trickery of that time and today is aided and abetted by the fallen angels or demons. Elymas perceived that the reasoning of the Apostle was having its effect upon the governmental deputy or pro-consul and sought to gainsay the Truth, recognizing that the success of the Apostles meant the loss of prestige to his own presentations of falsehood. St. Paul, imbued with a special power of the holy Spirit, fastened his gaze upon Elymas and said, "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."

It was not Paul's power, nor Paul's judgment, but the Lord's, and Paul was merely his mouthpiece. Nor does the Lord always thus punish his opponents now, but rather this was an exceptional occurrence, intended to assist in the establishment of the religion of Christ as well as to encourage the apostles in their further ministries. It is not for us to seek to emulate St. Paul's course in

this matter. He was an Apostle, specially empowered and specially used in a sense that we are not. It is ours to preach the Word and to leave the results to the Lord. However, the day is not far distant when, under the power of the Kingdom, those who resist the Truth will be dealt with vigorously and feel the heavy hand of Divine judgment on them. We are glad, however, that there will be a recovery from those judgments, even as there was in the case of Elymas; even as his blindness was only for a season. Of that future Age it is written, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad (everywhere) in the land, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." No doubt Elymas learned something by his experiences, and the narrative indicated that the matter was of great assistance to the pro-consul. But his belief was aside from the miracle. As we read, "The deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the *teaching of the Lord.*" We remark here that this is the proper influence which we should seek to leave in every heart; not astonishment at our ability or oratory or other powers, but astonishment at the teaching of the Lord's Word. Indeed, there is no doubt that this is the secret of the progress of the Harvest message today. People are astonished at the *doctrine*. Our Pilgrim speakers are not beyond the average. Many would say, perhaps, not up to the average of denominational ministers, but they have *the* teaching. They have the Divine Plan of the Ages – and this it is which impresses and astonishes those who hear.

