

Lecture 28 – “The Last Command”: Missions in “the Great Century”

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28: 19, 20

Background Reading

Gonzalez, ch. 30

Prayer

From Betty Stam

“I give up all my own plans and purposes, all my own desires and hopes, and accept Thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to Thee to be thine forever. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, use me as Thou will, send me where Thou will, work out Thy whole will in my life at any cost. Now and forever. Amen.”

“The Last Command”: Missions in “the Great Century”

I. Catholic Missions

II. Early Protestant Efforts

A. Home missions

B. The Huguenot mission to Brazil

C. The Dutch Calvinists

1. “Church planting”

2. Missiological writings of Gisbertus Voetius

D. The English and New England Puritans

Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company pictured an Indian and the words, “Come over and help us”; Charter charged the company officials to win the natives to “the only true God and Savior of mankind.”

1. John Eliot (1604-90)

“Prayer and pains, through faith in Jesus Christ, will do anything.”

2. Thomas Mayhew (1620-57)

3. David Brainerd (1718-47)

Diary, Thursday, May 22, 1746: “If ever my soul presented itself to God for His service, without any reserve, it did so now. The language of my thoughts and disposition now was, *Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth, or earthly comfort; send me even to death itself; if it be but in Thy service and to promote the kingdom....*I found extraordinary freedom at this time in pouring out my soul to God for His cause, and especially that His kingdom might be extended among the Indians far remote; and I had strong hope that God would do it. I continued wrestling with God in prayer for my little flock here, and more especially for the Indians elsewhere, as well as for friends, till it was bedtime. *Oh, with what reluctance did I feel myself obliged to consume time in sleep! I longed to be as a flame of fire, continually glowing in the Divine service, and building up Christ’s kingdom, to my latest, my dying moment.*”

E. The Pietists and the Moravians

III. “The Great Century”

A. William Carey (1761-1834)

1. A vision
 - Baptist deacon to William Carey: “Sit down, young man. When it pleases the Lord to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine.”
 2. A book—*Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (1792)
 3. A sermon—“Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.” (1792)
 4. The Baptist Missionary Society (1792)
 5. “The Serampore Trio”—William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward (*“A Day in the Life of William Carey”)
- B. The London Missionary Society (1795)
1. Interdenominational (Congregational)
 2. David Livingstone (1813-73)
- C. Church Missionary Society (1799)
1. Anglican evangelicals
 2. Henry Martyn (1781-1812)
- D. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810)
1. American Congregational (and Presbyterian)
 2. The Haystack Prayer Meeting (1806)
 3. “The Brethren” and “The Society of Inquiry on Missions”
 4. Ordination of the first American Foreign Missionaries (1812)—Adoniram Judson, Luther Rice, Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, and Gordon Hall
 - a. Baptist Mission Board (1814)

Inscription on the tomb of Luther Rice, Pine Pleasant Baptist Church, South Carolina: “Elder Luther Rice...Perhaps no American has done more for the great missionary enterprise. It is thought the first American Foreign Mission on which he went to India, associated with Judson and others, originated with him. And if the Burmans have cause of gratitude toward Judson for a faithful version of God’s Word; so they will, thro generations to come ‘Arise up and call—Rice—blessed’: For it was his eloquent appeals for the Heathen, on his return to America which roused our Baptist churches to adopt the Burman mission, and sustain Judson in his arduous toils.”
- E. Church of Scotland Mission Board (1824) and Other Scottish Presbyterian Church Boards
1. The General Assembly debate of 1796—John Erskine: “Mr. Moderator, rax me that Bible!”
 2. Thomas Chalmers and the “St. Andrews Seven” (Alexander Duff [1806-78])
 3. Free Church of Scotland (1843)
 4. United Presbyterian Church (1847)—Mary Slessor (1848-1915)
 5. Reformed Presbyterian Church—John G. Patton
- F. Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church (Old School) (1837)
- Manual for missionaries of the Board of Foreign Missions, under “Leaving Home”: “One of the greatest trials to the foreign missionary is to part from parents and friends. All who have been called to take up this cross know its bitterness; and the Executive Committee have no wish to make it appear otherwise than it really is. But the cause of Christ requires self-denial, and the perishing heathen cannot be reached but at the expense of this sacrifice. On the one hand is the glory of God, and the good of men—on the other the parting from the most endeared relatives and friends. The Apostle speaks of rejoicing in tribulation; and this is often the case of the missionary and his friends, when called to part from each other. In this, as in every other part of his service, the Saviour is not a hard master, for his grace will enable the true Christian to part with those most dear to him, with a calm and heavenly frame of mind.”
- G. Southern Presbyterian Missions
1. John Leighton Wilson

2. William Henry Sheppard

3. Lucy Gant

H. The “faith” missions

1. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission (1865)—“The Cambridge Seven,” John and Betty Stam

2. Amy Carmichael and Donavur Fellowship

“Face it. Look and listen, alone with God. Then go, let go, help go. But never, never, never think that anything short of this is being ‘interested in missions.’”

3. Edith and Francis Schaeffer and L’Abri Fellowship

I. Decline in mission work

J. The Student Volunteer Movement (1886)—“The Evangelization of the World in This Generation”

K. Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church in America (1973)

IV. Results

A. Failures and disappointments

B. Demonstration of the love of Christ

“The much-maligned missionaries were in fact the finest people in the colony. Africans flourished and were well educated in their care. Zimbabwe owes its independence in part to the influence of Christian missions. One of the most saintly men in the colony was an Anglican missionary and poet, Arthur Shearley Cripps, who frequently went cold or hungry because he had given the coat off his back or his dinner to an African. Strangely enough, he was deeply respected by the whites” (Muriel Spark, *Curriculum Vitae: Autobiography*, 133).

B. Establishment of the worldwide church

1. Age number 3 (Christian Europe)

2. Age number 4 (global Christianity)

Prayer from Tiyo Soga

“God, Lord of truth, fulfill now your promise and let all nations of the world obtain salvation. Rule, Lord Jesus, rule, for peace comes only through you. Because of our confusion the country is being destroyed. Look in mercy on our land and forgive our sins. Amen.”

Questions from Class

What was John Layton William’s attitude toward slavery?

For Further Study

**A History of Christian Missions* (1964) by Stephen Neill

Standard one-volume history of missions.

**A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (1937-45) by Kenneth Scott Latourette

Seven-volume work by a Yale historian which redirected the study of church history.

**The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* by Andrew Walls

A collection of the writings of a Scottish missions professor (called by Mark Noll one of the most important books on church history of the 1990s).

A. Read the selection from David Brainerd’s *Journal*. After a short missionary career working among the Indians of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, David Brainerd (1718-47) died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine. One of the most famous of all missionary documents is Brainerd’s journal, edited and published by Jonathan Edwards. The impact of this little book was monumental during the nineteenth century (and its significance for missions continues to the present). William Carey, Henry Martyn, and a host of missionaries credited Brainerd with awakening or confirming their missionary call. On June 27, 1832, Robert Murray McCheyne wrote in his journal: “[Read] *Life of David Brainerd*. Most wonderful man! Tonight, more set upon missionary enterprise than ever.”

David Brainerd's most effective missionary work occurred during the year 1745 at Crossweeksung in New Jersey, when revival came to the small group of Indians to whom he had been preaching. The following excerpt from his journal reports some of the events of August of that year. Notice that Brainerd's ministry was mainly to the Indians, but also reached to white Christians and to "the white heathen." How would you characterize the spiritual movement among the Indians that Brainerd describes here?

B. Read some pages from William Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. William Carey's *Enquiry* (1792) argued calmly and convincingly that the New Testament command to "preach the gospel to every creature" was as binding upon the Christians of his day as it was upon the apostles. Carey presented scriptural arguments for missions, surveyed mission work which had been done by Catholics and Protestants, and answered the current and common objections to missions.

*What is Carey's main point in his introduction?

*What is the major argument against involvement in missions that Carey counters in section 1? How does he answer the claim that prophecy indicates that the time is not yet come that "the heathen should be converted"?

*The objections that faced Carey ("Sit down young man...") are seldom if ever heard today, but the Christian church is still not fully awake to the "Great Commission." Indeed it has become for many Christians "the great omission."

C. Read the selection from David Livingstone's journal. Here we see Livingstone's account of his meeting with Henry Stanley ("Dr. Livingstone, I presume"), his interest in nature, his piety and theological convictions, his troubles, and his fierce determination to carry on despite the cost. Livingstone saw his work of exploration as preparation for the "civilization" of Africa and, more importantly, its evangelization.

D. Make a practice of reading missionary biographies, such as *John G. Paton—Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography* by John G. Paton (Banner of Truth, 1965). Among the greatest missionary movements of the nineteenth century was the conversion of many of the people of the South Pacific islands of the New Hebrides. The first missionaries to Erromanga, John Williams and his young associate Harris, were clubbed to death within a few minutes after reaching land. John Geddie (of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia) settled in Aneiteum in 1848. A plaque on the wall of one of the churches on the island reads: "When he landed in 1848 there were no Christians here, and when he left in 1872 there were no heathens." John G. Paton worked on the islands of Tanna and Aniwa.

Paton describes the Tannese religion as he found it. Nineteenth-century missionaries often compared the religious practices of native peoples to Paul's description of paganism in Romans 1 and found remarkable parallels. They also pointed out, as Paton does here, that these same people worshiped someone or something. Paton built on the religious concepts of the Tannese and quite sensitively wove the Christian message into the "spiritual consciousness" of the people.

The Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* resulted in the translation of the Bible into native languages (the production of the Aneityumese version is described movingly by Paton). The great work of giving everyone the Bible in their native tongue continues through the work of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and others. In his "Closing Testimony," Paton thanks God for using him in missionary work and in his "Farewell to the Reader" reminds us that we will meet "in the presence and glory of the Redeemer."