

“Except They Be Sent”

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*13 Lessons on
Means and Ways of
World Evangelism*

By

J.C. Choate

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INTRODUCTION

Like the book, "How Shall They Hear?", this material was also written and printed in India during 1968, 69. While the first volume emphasized the need for workers to go, this one shows the role congregations are to play in sending and supporting those who will go. The text for this study is found in Romans 10:13-17.

"Except They Be Sent" has been out of print for several years, but I am happy now to be reprinting it. Please help us to educate the church concerning these matters. Encourage your friends to read this book. Ask your home congregation to use it in a classroom situation. Share it with elders and anyone who is serving the Lord in a leadership capacity. At the same time, I hope to use it as a correspondence course.

There is no telling how many would be willing to go if the church would only sponsor them. We as a brotherhood, however, have been very cruel to those who would volunteer for foreign service. We have either flatly denied them of our backing, or else we give so little that they must spend a lot of time in going from one congregation to another to find support. This has caused many to turn sour on mission work, both those interested in going and potential supporters.

Brethren use every excuse in the book for not doing the very thing that Jesus said they should do. Again, how do we expect to please the Lord when we fail to carry out his wishes? And how can the gospel be taken to the world, when we fail to send and support those who are willing to go?

My brethren, we should not sit and wait for someone to come to ask for our help. We should be out looking for good men to send.

There are worlds of opportunities to spread the gospel of Christ. Let's get excited about it and get involved with it. Many are willing to go. Are you willing to send? If you are interested in sponsorship or helping to support the Lord's work in a foreign field, please contact me about it.

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Winona, MS
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LESSON ONE

WORK OF THE CHURCH

**Revelation 3:1-6; I Corinthians 12:6; Ephesians 2:10;
Acts 2:42; James 1:27; I Thessalonians 5:11**

INTRODUCTION

Christ built the church (Matthew 16:18) and is the Saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, one must be in the church to be saved (Acts 2:47). If this be true then it means that those who are outside of it are lost. The conclusion is that we who are in the church must work hard to bring all others into the Lord's fold that they too may be saved. This just happens to be the mission of the church, the work of the church, and the reason for its existence.

DISCUSSION

I. THE RESPECTABILITY OF WORK.

Some people are afraid of work. Others are ashamed of it. They look down on it, and those who would engage in it. Still others will work only if it is up to their standard. I have seen men in Pakistan turn down jobs, although they needed work badly, because it was "too low for them." Certain types of work in India are reserved for the

“untouchables” or those of the lowest caste. In much of Asia it is thought that if a man has a college education then it is below his dignity to engage in any manual labor. Work as such is shunned and looked down on by thousands of people of all walks of life all over the world.

We need to realize that it is not a shame to do any type of work provided it is good and right within itself. Neither should we feel that we are too good to engage in certain types of work. If we need work, and we are offered a job, and that is all that is available, then we should gladly accept it. While we might choose a different type of work, should we have the opportunity to do so, we can always take what is available for the present and hope to find a job later that will be more in keeping with our wishes, our training, etc.

Those people who get ahead in this world are the ones who have worked for it. Many of them started out with hardly anything, but have ended up with much wealth. Some of them started out with very meager jobs but worked their way up to better and higher paying positions. Those in the undeveloped countries of the world have often asked how it was that the developed countries have been so successful. It is hard for them to appreciate the fact that it is all due to the hard work that so many have engaged in to bring it about.

The Bible has so much to say on this subject. It teaches the importance of it in life, shows its place in one's salvation, and suggests the consequences for one who will not work. Paul exhorted his brethren, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (II Thessalonians 3:10).

While honest labor and toil is praised and honored,

laziness and slothfulness is ridiculed and condemned. We read, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Proverbs 18:9). Again we read, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

The only way we can be saved is through obedience, and this means work. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8, 9). "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Although the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace, that grace or salvation may be received only through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9), and it is through faith that we are led to obey and to do the works of God.

II. THE WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN.

It is not enough just to become a Christian. This is just the beginning. To be saved and to go to heaven then one must remain a Christian. He must grow and develop and become strong. He must study and learn and work. The apostle Peter writes, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, given diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:5-11).

The New Testament gives the Christian many exhortations to obey, to work, and to serve. James says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Paul writes, "Therefore, my beloved brethren be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). Christ himself warns, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

What is the work of the individual Christian? His job is to abstain from evil and to cleave to that which is good. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good (Romans 12:9). "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22). Paul says again, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed

by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2). In other words, God wants all of an individual – his soul, his body, his life. Then he wants that which belongs to him to be pure, to be submissive to his will, and to be industrious in his cause.

The Christian life is a life of worship, a life of love, a life of teaching others (Acts 2:42; John 14:15; Acts 8:4). He is to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16), a source of help in time of need (Ephesians 4:28), a doer of good works (II Thessalonians 2:17).

In all of the duties and responsibilities of the Christian, all of the toil, work, and labor, all of the giving, sharing, and sacrificing, and all other things that may be wrapped up in the Christian life itself, it is designed to save the individual, to bring others to the truth, to glorify God, and to bring one to the place where he may receive the crown of righteousness (James 1:12). There can be no better way to live and one can receive no greater reward than this.

III. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.

While the individual Christian may have duties and responsibilities to the Lord, being a member of the church, he must realize that the church itself has a work to do. There may be certain things that he can do as a Christian that the church cannot do, but the church, being composed of all true Christians, has a work to do that is on and beyond what an individual member can do.

A. What it does not include.

The religious world has expanded itself where it works in many areas in addition to what the Bible teaches. For example, it has turned Christianity into big business. It operates secular schools, hospitals, agricultural projects, hotels, book stores, etc. It deals with real estate and dabbles in many other types of business for profit. Because of this practice, and the tendency to become like those that are around us, we need to be very careful lest we do likewise.

We must understand what the work of the church is and restrict ourselves to that and that alone if we are going to please the Lord and accomplish his purposes. Paul says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). He goes on to say, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

B. What it does include.

As we study God's word we will find that the work of the church is limited to three areas:

1. *Preaching the gospel.*

The church has the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel to a lost and dying world. Christ commanded the apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19,

20). This commission was given to the apostles in anticipation of the fact that they would become the first members of the church, or they would be set into the church, and thus as the church would have the responsibility of taking the gospel to others. This is what happened (Acts 2; II Corinthians 12:28), and as we read through the book of Acts we can see the results. After the church was established on the day of Pentecost, the gospel was preached through Judea, then taken to Samaria, and finally to all the world (Acts 1:8; Acts 2; Acts 8:1-25; Colossians 1:23).

Paul himself made three missionary journeys, preaching through Asia and in Europe, being sent out by the church at Antioch (Acts 13). This was in keeping with what Paul wrote the church in Rome. "For there is no difference between the Jews and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:12-15).

What did they preach? They preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). They preached the commands of the gospel: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16). They preached the rewards of the gospel (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:3). The result was that souls were saved, added to the church, and the gospel was spread to others (Acts 2:47;

Acts 8:4). The church has the same responsibility today.

2. *Helping the poor.*

The duty of the church is not only to care for man's spiritual needs, but to help him physically as well. To discover the duty of the church today, then let us briefly consider what it did in the days of the apostles.

After the church was established one of the first things that we read about is how the members began to "sell their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45). Why did they do this? Because they were concerned about each other and wanted to help one another to the extent that they were able.

A little later we read of a problem within the church that had arisen due to the fact that some of the widows of the church had been neglected in the daily ministrations. To solve this the apostles asked that seven godly men be selected from among them so that they might be appointed to see after this work (Acts 6).

On one occasion Paul went to Jerusalem to help the poor saints there. He wrote, "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Romans 12:25, 26). Then Paul ordered the churches in Galatia and Corinth to give on the first day of the week to help with this work (I Corinthians 16:1, 2).

While it is natural that the members of the church should be the first ones to receive help (Galatians 6:10), all are to be helped according to the need and the ability to help (I Timothy 5; James 1, 2).

The purpose of helping people in need is twofold: to

help them physically so that this might lead to the opportunity to help them spiritually.

3. *Edifying the church.*

The members of the church need to be strengthened, encouraged, and inspired to be faithful to the Lord and to do his work. This may be accomplished through worship, fellowship, preaching of God's word, helping one another, engaging in good works, having love for one another, and so on. Among the many other verses that could be given, Paul says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

The whole work or the mission of the church is designed to save souls. In other words, the church is to see to it that the gospel is preached, that man may be saved, then that he be helped and edified physically and spiritually, that he may be encouraged to be faithful to the Lord, that

he may be saved eternally. All of its means and efforts that are scripturally within this framework are to be used to this end. When the church does not have this as its goal, and thus fails to discharge its responsibility to this extent, it is not doing its work and therefore is forfeiting its right to even exist.

IV. WHY MORE IS NOT BEING DONE.

Although the church has its orders, and has within its power the ability to carry them out, yet the job is not being done as a whole. But why? Since the church is made up of many congregations, then it must be that some of them are doing their work and some are not, but all of them could do more. I think we could point to several reasons as to why we are not doing more.

- A. **We have not really come to realize what the work of the church includes.**
We have limited ourselves, our work, and our effectiveness as a result.
The world is a big place and we are afraid of big things.

- B. **We have been too selfish to share with the others around the world.**
What is ours is ours. We want to keep it for ourselves and use it on ourselves.

- C. **We have been lazy because of the work involved.**
We have been sleeping on the job, satisfied with ourselves, and indifferent about the needs of

others. It means nothing to us if millions of souls are lost.

D. We have not recognized the great responsibility that is ours.

We have not yet come to realize that we as individuals, as congregations, as the church, must take the gospel to the whole world. We have not come to see the consequences if we do not.

E. We have not been converted ourselves to the Lord.

We are not interested in others because we are not interested in ourselves.

We are not going to try to help others to be saved if we are not serious about saving our own souls.

These are but a few of the reasons why we are not doing more to evangelize the world, but they are not the only reasons by any means.

V. WHY WE MUST DO MORE.

The very fact that the world is not evangelized today indicates within itself that the church must do more. Souls are at stake, even our very own. The world itself is at stake. We must see this and determine now that we will do more. We need to be more conscious of the world, its needs, and what we can do. We need to pray more, give more, and do more. More of us need to be going. More congregations need to be sending.

VI. A WORKING CHURCH.

My brethren, the Lord wants us to be a working church. We must work or die. Look around you and see what is happening. Why is it that some congregations are growing and some are not? It is because some of them are working and some are drifting. Furthermore, a congregation may have all kinds of projects and programs to attract people, but this does not necessarily mean that it is growing and doing all it can to spread the gospel and to do good. For a congregation to really be accomplishing the Lord's purposes then the emphasis must be on evangelizing at home and abroad. This is what really attracts people, converts them, and keeps them faithful to the Lord. People won otherwise will not last.

CONCLUSION

Would the congregation where you worship be considered a working congregation? If not, why not? What is wrong? What can be done to change that? Could you say that the congregations around you are working congregations? Would you say the church as a whole, as you know it, is really doing all it can to spread the gospel and to do good?

Surely we can see that there is room for improvement and this lesson and the lessons to follow are being sent forth with the prayer that the church will awaken to its responsibilities to the world and will begin to discharge them.

QUESTIONS

1. Give some facts about the church.
2. Must one be a member to be saved?
3. Can one be saved outside the church?
4. What is the mission of the church?
5. How do a lot of people feel about work?
6. Is it a shame to work?
7. Who are the successful people of this world?
8. What does the Bible teach about work?
9. How can we be saved?
10. What does it mean to be a Christian?
11. List some things that the Christian must do.
12. Give the Christian's reward.
13. What are some of the things that the religious world becomes involved in?
14. What is the work of the Lord's church?
15. Give the three areas that it is limited to.
16. State the great commission as given by Christ.
17. How did the early church deal with it?
18. How many missionary journeys did Paul make?
19. What did the first century Christians preach?
20. What must be preached today?
21. In what ways are people to be helped physically?
22. How did the early church express its interest in the welfare of the members?
23. Who is to be helped?
24. What is the purpose of it?
25. Define, "edification."
26. Name some of the things that the church can do to edify itself.
27. Read: Ephesians 4:11-16.

28. Why is the church not doing more?
29. Why must more be done?
30. What kind of church does the Lord want us to be?
Why?

PROJECTS

1. Discuss the subject of "A Working Church" as it relates to the local congregation.
2. Make a study of the local church to see how many of its members are working.
3. Have someone to give a report on the work the church is doing to reach beyond its own community.
4. Let someone make a study of the history of the local church and give a report on it and its accomplishments through the years.
5. Discuss the three areas of which the church is to carry out its work and consider other steps that can be taken to enable it to do more.

LESSON TWO

PREPARING TO SEND

Acts 13

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the church is to preach the gospel to the whole world. For this to be done in our day then it means that every congregation is going to have to do its part and every member is going to have to give and work to support it. But even before this is done, there will have to be some preparation made (I Corinthians 14:8). This is the whole problem today. There not only has not been sufficient preparation made, but not enough is being made now. We cannot hope to do the job that we have to do if we just drift along and do things only in spurts and as someone is able to talk us into doing something. Rather, we must take concrete steps to get ready for the greatest work in all the world, and once we are ready we will not only be in position to do a good job, but we will proceed with courage and determination.

In this lesson we are going to see how it may be possible to prepare and lay an adequate foundation to get involved in sending the gospel.

DISCUSSION

- I. WHY SHOULD WE SEND THE GOSPEL TO OTHERS?

A. We have the responsibility to send.

We have been saved to save others. We have received so we must send. We have been blessed so we must give. Paul said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14, 15). The Lord said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

B. We have a message to deliver.

We have the greatest story ever known to tell. We have the good news to take to a lost and dying world. That is the good news that Christ died on the cross for the sins of man (Romans 5:8). What a joy to be able to take it and what a blessing it can be to those who will receive it.

Jesus himself has asked that we deliver this message: "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).

C. We have a work to do around the world.

The Lord's work is international, it is universal, it is worldwide. The gospel is to be preached in every nation, the church established, and good works done among men. In the long ago Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth

him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35).

II. WHO CAN SEND?

It is not the duty of the government to send workers of the Lord into the field. Neither is it the Lord’s will that we should look to a missionary board to send and support workers. Rather, it is the duty of the church to do so.

The Lord has taught that the laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). That means that if the church sends workers then they should be supported. For this reason Paul asked, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Romans 10:15). It means then that the church has the obligation to send workers, and to care for their needs while they are engaged in this work.

Therefore any congregation that is able to send and able to support one or more individuals or families may send and is expected to send. Those who are unable to assume this responsibility should cooperate with others to send.

III. WHO SHOULD WE SEND?

At the present the church is in the habit of sending just about any and everyone that announces his intentions of going. Regardless of an individual’s background, his qualifications, or capabilities, if he decides to go and has enough initiative to get out and find support, then he is bound to go. In this case the preacher finds the congregation to send him instead of the congregation finding the man to send. The man going is the one who decides the field, the length

of stay, and most of the particulars, instead of the congregation. This is true simply because the church has been so lax for so long about world evangelism that various preachers, teachers, and other members have felt the need to take the lead in carrying out the great commission. The result has been that the church has never been able to catch up with their zeal and has therefore been forced to drag along at the tail end.

While the present system may be a means of itself of weeding out many of the would-be missionaries, still it has many drawbacks. The ideal thing, and the thing the Lord would have us to do, is to take the lead in choosing workers. What we need to see today in the church is for congregations all over the country out looking to find workers to take the gospel into different parts of the world. It was the church at Antioch that chose and sent out Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel (Acts 13:1-3).

A congregation should find a good Christian family that is spiritual, qualified, known for their good works, and after making adequate preparation, they should be sent.

IV. WHERE SHOULD WE SEND THEM?

The gospel is for the whole world. It would therefore appear that any congregation aware of this would be interested in sending their worker to a part of the world where the gospel has not been preached. Of course there are other possibilities too. There is always a need for someone to be sent to replace those in fields where the gospel has already been preached, provided there is still the need for workers in that area, and in many cases there are. For example, Paul said on one occasion, "I have planted, Apollos watered;

but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:6-9).

If a congregation will but decide to send a worker then it won't have any problem as to where to send him.

V. WHEN SHOULD WE SEND HIM?

If we have prepared ourselves adequately to send, then we should locate workers to go, and send them NOW. While it is certainly wise to prepare, it shouldn't take forever to do this. We don't have a minute to waste. Right now is the time to act. Tomorrow may be too late. Paul wrote his Corinthian brethren: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure

in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:1-7).

VI. HOW CAN WE PREPARE TO SEND?

Preparation in anything is always wise. This is just as true in the Lord's work. For a congregation to even begin to prepare to send means that they have already become involved to that extent, and will become even more involved the further they move along in making their preparation. It may take a little time, but in the end it will save time. It will also pay off in interest, in supporting it, in the amount done, in the kind of results that is gotten, etc.

First of all, someone in the congregation, whether it be the elders, the preacher, or some of the members, must have the initial interest in world evangelism that would cause an effort to be put forth to arouse the rest of the congregation and to get something going. Naturally, you would think that the elders, preacher, etc., would be aware of the work of the church and the needs of the world enough to push this. But sometimes this is not the case. Evidently this is not true with one congregation, but many, considering the fact that very few have taken the lead in this type of work. The interest may come in time from just a general study of the Bible, through the local work, and the gradual upsurge in the congregation to do more. Or the interest may be aroused as a result of what the other congregations are doing, or from preachers coming by to ask for help.

But regardless of how the interest comes, it needs to be stimulated and encouraged to grow until it is finally culminated in someone being sent. It certainly is not enough

just to realize that someone needs to be sent. Some steps need to be taken that will lead to this. So we want to think now of what we can do to prepare or get ready to send.

A. The elders or leaders of the congregation should take the lead in preparing the congregation mentally and spiritually to send the gospel.

What a shame it is in many congregations where the members want to send the gospel to others but the leaders refuse to take the lead or to give any encouragement to it. Actually, the leaders of the church today will have to take much of the responsibility of the church having done no more than it has to evangelize the world. The leaders have not been leading, at least leading in the right direction. Rather, the members are far ahead of them in their love for the Lord and in their desire to carry out his will.

If the elders of the church want to have the love and respect of the members then they need to take the lead. The qualifications that Paul lays down in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 indicate that the men who are able to meet them are those who have real teaching and leadership abilities. Furthermore, they would indicate that those chosen to be elders would be men who are spiritual and who have a desire to see the Lord's kingdom grow and spread.

There are many things that the elders can do to prepare the church to do its work. Even if the members are not aware of its responsibilities, or may not be interested in discharging them, there are steps that can be taken to remedy this situation with the proper guidance (I Peter 5:3).

B. The proper teaching needs to be done.

The elders are to see to it that the flock is properly fed. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter said, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; nor for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:1-3).

It is therefore the duty of the elders to see to it that the local congregation receives the proper teaching concerning all matters that pertain to their salvation, their growth, and welfare. It means too that they must be given the necessary teaching concerning the duty of the congregation to send the gospel to other parts of the world.

To see that the job is done the elders may work through the preacher, the Bible teachers, and may also take the opportunity to speak to the members themselves concerning these matters. They may not only put emphasis on mission work in their regular Bible classes, but provide special Bible courses that deal specifically with these responsibilities. While they will not want to go to an extreme to put too much emphasis on taking the gospel to others, they should not go to the extreme in the other direction and not put enough. However, most congregations do not study the subject enough.

Also the elders can see to it that other steps are taken to inform the congregation of their need of world

evangelism and the responsibility they have to do what they can. A congregation that is ignorant of the Bible, its responsibilities of sharing the gospel with others, and of the needs that exist in the world, will certainly not be taking the lead to evangelize the world. On the other hand, a well informed congregation, a wide awake congregation, a growing congregation, will be doing what it can to carry out the great commission.

C. We can pray for wisdom and guidance and that the Lord will help us to do his will.

Through our study of the Bible and various courses on mission work, then a real desire should be planted in our hearts to want to do what we can to send the gospel to others. Now through prayer we can help this feeling to grow and become stronger.

If we'll only pray, and pray regularly, and pray sincerely, and often, for the Lord's church to spread, then we'll want to do our share. If we'll become concerned about the work that is being done in the rest of the world and if we will begin to pray for workers to be sent to those areas where the church does not now exist, then what is going to be the result? You know as well as I do, it will result in sending someone. That is why the Lord said, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

The whole church should pray about these matters in the public assemblies and each member should be encouraged to pray about it during the week. But how many congregations do this? How many members are concerned

enough to remember this great work in their personal prayers? Not enough, I am afraid. But if we are going to get serious about sending someone then we are going to have to pray about it, and do a lot of praying about it.

Pray for the leadership of the church. Pray for the members. Pray that more will be given to enable more to be done. Pray that the elders will decide to sponsor a family. Pray that the right family will be found to go. Pray that they may be sent and may do a great work. Prayer can make the difference. Try it and see yourself.

D. Have a missionary to come to tell you about his work.

If you really begin to build interest in the church then invite a former missionary to come and tell you about the work that he did and the needs that exist. There is nothing like getting information from a first-hand source to build interest and enthusiasm. When Paul went back to Antioch, to Jerusalem, etc., he gave a report on his work (Acts 14: 26-28; 15).

E. Have a missionary workshop.

If you really want to get the church stirred up and full of zeal to do more for the Lord, then have a missionary workshop where missionaries from different parts of the world are called in for a week to give their reports and lessons that will exhort the members and the congregation to do more for the Lord. To be able to associate with people of this nature, and to hear their first-hand experiences, the work they are doing, the needs that exist, etc.,

will certainly make a big difference (Acts 15:3). If it does not move the members to want to do something then there is something wrong somewhere.

F. Have an active program of work at home.

The elders need to see to it that the local church has a full program of work. It should be designed to keep every member busy and to challenge one and all to greater service. Until the church is working at home it is useless to try to get it interested in working in another part of the world.

G. Study the needs of the world.

If you are going to send a worker out then you are going to have to decide where to send him. Where will he be most needed? What area are you most interested in? Will you send him to begin a new work or to take someone's place or to work with others? You should give serious thoughts to these questions so you can know what to do and then do it without wasting time in doing so.

H. Study what sponsorship involves.

If you are going to send a family, then you need to know something about what it involves, the needs, the responsibilities, the work you'll have to do, your financial commitment, the kind of decisions that will have to be made, what you hope to accomplish, and so on.

I. Sell every member on it.

You don't want to divide the church over a work of this nature and you won't if the proper teaching is done and the necessary steps have been taken to prepare the way for it. But put the matter before the church, encourage the members to get behind it, keep them informed as to what is happening, share with them the progress that is being made. The other should be no problem.

J. Finally, find a good family and make the final preparations to send them.

It would be ideal to choose a family the church knows and feels close to. It might be that a family in the congregation would be prepared to go. What about your preacher and his family? Why not send them? If you are unable to find a family to go that you know, then try to find some good family that wants to go, who has a good background, who is qualified, is highly recommended, and someone you feel that you could work with. Get to know them and give them an opportunity to get to know you. Have a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of each to the other. Only after both are fully prepared and ready to proceed, should the family be sent. Then the work that follows will be easier and more successful in most cases.

CONCLUSION

Are you a sponsoring congregation? If you are, then that is wonderful. If you aren't, then why aren't you? When are you going to begin? Have you begun yet to make any preparation? If not, then let me personally encourage you to begin to work on this right now. You are already

late and you have no time to lose. But go ahead and get to work on it and you'll soon be ready, I am sure. You'll be the loser if you don't.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the mission of the church?
2. Why is it important to prepare?
3. Give some reasons for sending the gospel to others.
4. Why are we saved?
5. Discuss Romans 1:14, 15 and Luke 17:10.
6. What message are we to take to the world?
7. Where is the Lord's work to be done?
8. Quote Acts 10:34, 35.
9. Who has the responsibility of sending the gospel to others?
10. Explain, "The labourer is worthy of his hire."
11. What did Paul mean when he said, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"
12. Who should the church send to preach the gospel?
13. What is the present system of sending?
14. Where should the church send them?
15. Read: I Corinthians 3:6-9.
16. How can we prepare to send a missionary?
17. Who should take the lead in this in the local congregation?
18. Who is to feed the flock?
19. How can prayer be beneficial?
20. How can a missionary help by coming to tell of his work?
21. Define missionary workshop and the part it can play.

22. What kind of program should the home congregation have?
23. Why study the needs of the world?
24. How may brethren learn what sponsorship involves?
25. Explain how every member of the church can be sold on it.
26. What kind of family should be chosen to be sent?

PROJECTS

1. Make a study of what the local congregation would have to do to be able to send a family to a foreign mission field.
2. Appoint someone to make a study of the local congregations to find out who is sending, the preparation necessary, and what must be done for others to send.
3. Compare the present day method of sending in comparison to the method that should be used.
4. Read Acts 13 and study the preparation that the church at Antioch made before sending workers out.
5. Write some missionary and get his suggestions on this matter.

LESSON THREE

EXCUSES FOR NOT SENDING

Luke 14:18; Romans 1:20

INTRODUCTION

So many good congregations are certainly able to send workers into the field. In many instances they are able to send them with full support. But they do not. They could, but they don't. They think they can't. But they are fooling no one.

In this lesson we are going to examine some of the excuses that are commonly made by brethren to show you what they sound like and how flimsy they are. Maybe you have been making excuses. If so, let this be a means of showing you the position you have taken, and we pray that it may help to awaken you and encourage you to correct the matter and begin to do what you should have been doing all along.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS AN EXCUSE?

Someone has said that to offer an excuse is just a polite way of saying no. It is an attempt to shift responsibility or to cover up. It is to offer an apology for not doing something. It is an attempt to cover up one's fault or to justify it. However, an excuse is not a reason. A reason is based on a just cause for some action. It is not a means of just

getting by or covering up. So there is quite a difference between the two.

The Lord will not accept an excuse. To show this, all we need to do is to read the parable that the Lord gave on the great supper. "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:16-24).

Remember this, an excuse, or even a number of them, will not take the place of obedience. Excuses are no substitute for obedience. When the Lord commands a thing to be done then it can be done, and it must be done, or else those who failed to obey it will have to suffer the consequences.

The work of the church is to take the gospel or to send workers into all parts of the world to preach the gospel.

Now what is the Lord going to say when we sit back and offer excuse after excuse for not doing that? You can imagine without my having to say it.

II. WHY BRETHERN MAKE EXCUSES.

Brethren are good at making excuses. Especially is this true when it comes to mission work. I know because I have personally heard many of them myself. But why do they offer excuses? That is very evident.

A. **Because they are more interested in the work at home.**

Brethren won't always come right out and say that they are more interested in the work at home, but the excuses offered for not engaging in foreign work clearly point this out. In other words, they are more interested in self, keeping their money at home, etc.

B. **They are not giving as they should.**

Many of the excuses offered are an attempt to cover up the fact that they are not giving as they should and are not going to do much about it to change the picture.

C. **It is an attempt to cover up guilt.**

They want to feel that they are right but deep down in their hearts they know that they are wrong. It is an attempt to justify self. They just can't offer enough excuses, because the more they are able to offer the more they feel

that they have cleared themselves of the responsibilities that were theirs. But not so.

Regardless of the excuses offered, and the motive for offering them, this does not remove the responsibilities that we have for preaching the gospel. When are we going to learn this? Actually, we are not helping matters at all and we are not truthful with ourselves and with others and with God. How much better it would be to face up to our responsibilities and do as the Lord has said. Only then can we be right.

III. EXCUSES FOR NOT SENDING.

Let us now notice some of the excuses that are offered for not sending the gospel to others.

A. "There is work to be done here."

It is true that there is work to be done here and this will always be the case. But this should not hinder us from sending the gospel to others. It should make it possible for us to do more of the other.

We are not advocating that we do all that we do here or that we do all we do there, but we are saying that we should do some of both. One will make possible the other. When we have the right attitude toward mission work, then it can be a means of boosting the home work.

We must realize that we are not competing with one another. We are not saying either that one is better than the other or that one is more important than the other. We are simply trying to emphasize the fact that there is room for both.

B. "America has not heard the gospel."

If there is any country in the world today that has heard the gospel then it would be our own country. Think of all the radio and television programs that are constantly being directed to the people all over the nation. Think of all of the gospel papers, tracts, advertising, etc., that is going out to thousands and even millions of people. Then think of all the gospel preachers to be found everywhere throughout the land. If the gospel hasn't been preached to all of our people, then how long is it going to take? How long will we continue to use that as an excuse for not doing more? We have not only preached the gospel to our people as a whole, but we have just about worn many of them out with the gospel. Think of the thousands and perhaps millions of people who have heard the gospel not a hundred times but thousands of times. We need to read through Matthew 10 and Luke 10 and see the instructions that Christ gave to the twelve and to the seventy concerning the preaching done under the limited commission. They were exhorted to tarry where their message was received, but where it was not, that they were to go outside the city and shake the dust off of their feet and go to those who would receive their preaching. Christ put it like this: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6).

My brethren, we need to realize that there are more than a hundred and forty nations in the world today, yet our country is just one nation. In spite of that, most of the congregations are here. Most of the members are here. Almost all of the preachers are here. Almost all of the work

is being done here. But what about all of the other nations of the world? Most of them are doing well if they have one or two gospel preachers in them. Believe it or not, but there are still several countries where there are no gospel preachers. Most of the world is simply being neglected, and our face saving excuse is that our country still needs the gospel. Well, bless your heart, our country needs the gospel all right and I know a lot of brethren who need to be converted to Christ.

Listen, I have seen the time when I was the only gospel preacher working in a country of more than one hundred million people. Now I want you to know that I felt pretty little. So I sent word back to my good brethren at home that I needed help. How much did I get? Not a soul offered to come. And yet, I kept reading in our papers that there was a preacher shortage back home and a lot of people were concerned about it. Well, I thought we had a preacher shortage of our own, but no one got very excited about it. Let me suggest that you go to another part of the world to preach the gospel and you'll begin to write back home for help too. If all of us could just spend a little time on the other side of the world then we might feel a little different about those who came and ask for some help.

If the only excuse that we can come up with is that America has not heard the gospel then I don't think I would even offer an excuse.

C. "They wouldn't believe it."

Why did the Lord ask the apostles to go teach all nations? He not only asked them to go but anticipated a

response because he asked them to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and to teach them to observe all things that he had taught them (Matthew 28: 19, 20).

Why did Paul make three missionary journeys? Why did the church at Antioch send him and others out to preach the gospel? They must have had some hopes of getting a good response. And they did. As a result of their labors the church was established in key cities in Asia and in parts of Europe, and then from these areas the gospel was preached to all in those areas. For instance, while Paul was in Ephesus, the record says, "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all that which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8-10).

In modern times we have had workers to go to different parts of the world. Why? To preach the gospel of Christ. What have been the results? Thousands and thousands of people have heard the truth and many of them have been converted to the Lord and the church now exists in the majority of the countries all over the world. What if these men and women had not gone? Then the church would hardly exist outside of our own country.

I personally believe the day is near at hand that we will have many more members outside the United States than we have inside. As a matter of fact, all that is keeping us

from converting millions of people to Christ and even converting practically whole nations is the lack of workers through which to do it. Even now we are already seeing a greater response to the gospel in other lands than we are having at home.

But last of all, we should remember that whether people will believe the gospel or not, we still have a duty to take it to them. Our first duty is to teach them, then it becomes their responsibility to deal with it. Even if they do not obey, we have done our part. If they do obey, both of us have done our part.

Remember that the apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). He just meant by this that he had not been sent to baptize only or just to go around baptizing people. Baptism is a result of proper teaching. Therefore he had been sent to preach the gospel or to do the necessary teaching that would result in baptism. Naturally if there were those who wanted to be baptized, then Paul was ready to baptize them (I Corinthians 1:14-16). I have often said, as Paul said, in going into different Asian countries, that Christ had not sent me to baptize but to preach the gospel. I went in to sow the seed of the gospel and I knew the harvest would come later, and it did.

The Lord has not left it up to us to decide whether a people will respond favorably or not and to act accordingly. Therefore, it is a flimsy excuse to pre-judge and say that the people would not believe it even if it was taken to them. This is just not true.

D. "They wouldn't be faithful."

Here again, this is pre-judging and without any basis at all. In the first place, we cannot expect more of them than we expect of our own brethren at home. In the second place, we must realize that they have not had the background that we have had. I mean by that, that they have not had Bible teaching for years and years and have not had the influence of Christianity as we have known it. In spite of this, I have found my foreign brethren to be very fine and where they have the teaching, the encouragement, and the opportunities to serve the Lord, are just as faithful as brethren here at home, if not more so.

But regardless of what we might say, we are going to have to take the gospel to these people to give them an opportunity to obey, to be faithful. They can't very well be faithful otherwise.

E. "It costs too much to do foreign mission work."

Have you ever counted up what it is costing to carry on the Lord's work at home? Do so sometime and it will be an eye-opener. For instance, consider the cost of the work of the Lord in your community. Consider the cost of just one congregation. How long has it been there? What is the size now? How many are converted each year? Then how many buildings have been constructed? How many preachers have worked with it? What about the expense of meetings, radio programs, advertising, teaching materials, and all of the other expenses involved? Then if you are in a city of a few thousand people, what about the other congregations that may be in that city and all of their expenses? If you should figure it up, compare it to the expense of sending a family to another part of the world, and what it

takes to keep up the family, the work, and so on, and then consider the results, I am sure that you would find that foreign mission work is not so expensive after all. As a matter of fact, our most expensive work is done here at home. Now are we going to quit at home because it costs too much? Of course not. But the reason we don't think about the expense of one and emphasize the expense of the other is because one is at home and the other is for the other fellow.

F. "We don't have the money."

I have heard this excuse many times. As a matter of fact, I have often wondered where all the money goes that the various congregations are bound to have. But they always have money for new buildings, for any amount of local work, and for anything else they want to do at home. Brethren will even borrow large sums of money for the work at home, but never seem to feel that a work that is away from home is important enough to borrow money for. A few have done this, but a very few.

Money is like time. We have the time to do what we want to do. We also have the money to do what we want to do. When we are sold on world evangelism as we should be then we will be able to get the money for it.

G. "We are in a building program."

It seems that almost every congregation has been in a building program and is still trying to pay it off, is presently in a building program which takes their money, or is about to enter a building program which will take their money

for years to come. Many congregations of a few years ago built a new meeting house, but they built only for then and not the future, and so before long they found their building inadequate. What was necessary under the circumstances? That they build again and brethren are still building and what the end of it will be I don't know. It reminds me of the story of the rich man: "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21). A lot of my brethren need to read again the story of the rich man of Luke 16:19-31. He wasn't interested in the souls of others until he went to hell. Are we going to have to go to hell before we become concerned about the lost of the world? It would appear that this may be the case.

It is fine to have a building for the church to meet in. But when we put so much of our money into a material building, with all of its luxuries, to have to point to with pride, and then to use that as an excuse for not being able to send the gospel to others, then there is something wrong. If we must have a building let's have it but let's not allow that to keep us from doing our duty otherwise. It should enable us to do more, not less.

I have heard some brethren reason that in spite of their building program that they were not going to allow that to keep them from going ahead with their mission work. This is commendable; however, many times this may not amount to very much since their giving to begin with is so small.

H. “We are just a young congregation.”

That is even better. If a congregation can get started in this work while it is still young then there is greater hope of it doing more as time passes. What ever you do, don't drift along to become like some of the older congregations, and that is, never to do anything to evangelize the world.

I. “We are going to help a little.”

I have found that most congregations are helping a little. This looks good on the surface, but when you get right down to it, it doesn't amount to much. As a matter of fact, most brethren give just enough to say they are giving. Then it soothes their consciences on the basis that they are giving, and then when someone comes by then they can always say, “Well, we are already giving.” My brethren, we may be giving, but we need to be giving much more and we must do so if we are going to evangelize the world.

J. “There is not enough interest here.”

Some brethren will come right out and tell you that the church there isn't interested. In this case, it sounds to me like they need to be converted. Can you picture a congregation of the Lord's people who are not interested in doing

what Jesus commanded them to do? How can these brethren even justify their existence? They are dead.

K. "Our budget is full."

Some congregations when challenged to take the gospel to others will offer this as their excuse. It may be true that their budget is full, but if they are not doing any mission work then it needs to be re-worked. You can be sure their budget includes the things they need and want to do for self. This is the problem.

L. "We plan to begin later."

Some congregations are always going to begin later. They have been offering this excuse for years and they are still not doing anything. But all we have is now, and this is the time to begin.

M. "We don't know enough about sponsorship."

Then it is time to begin to find out. One of the best ways is to actually become the sponsor of some good family. If you will, then you'll learn in a hurry.

Well, we could go on and on with other excuses like, "We are interested in some other projects now," "It is so far away," "We can't," etc., but they all amount to the same: failure to do the Lord's will, inactivity, selfishness, self-deceit, and so on.

IV. WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR EXCUSES?

The remedy is conversion, a love for the Lord and the souls of men, work and more work, facing up to our responsibilities at home and abroad, the desire to serve our fellowman, and putting the emphasis on things that count.

CONCLUSION

If we'll be honest with ourselves, with one another, and with God, then we won't find ourselves in embarrassing situations. We'll simply do what we can and that will be it without the necessity of apologizing or excusing ourselves for not doing more. Rather, when we put forth a real effort to do what we can then we'll find ourselves doing much more than we ever dreamed that we could. There is no substitution for truth and effort.

QUESTIONS

1. Are many congregations able to send workers into the field?
2. Could they send the workers with support?
3. Why don't they?
4. Define, "Excuse."
5. Will the Lord accept excuses?
6. Read Luke 14:16-24.
7. Why do brethren make excuses?
8. List some of the excuses that brethren often use for not sending the gospel to others.
9. Has America been evangelized?
10. Explain Matthew 7:6.
11. Where is the real preacher shortage to be found?
12. How long will it take to have more members of the

- church outside the United States than inside?
13. Will foreigners accept the gospel?
 14. Discuss I Corinthians 1:17.
 15. Will foreign members be faithful to the Lord?
 16. How much does it cost to do foreign mission work?
 17. Does the church have money to evangelize the world?
 18. Should a building program come before preaching the gospel? Why?
 19. How much do most congregations help?
 20. When should a congregation begin to send?
 21. How may one learn about sponsorship?
 22. What is the remedy for excuses?

PROJECTS

1. Make a list of excuses that the members of the class have heard.
2. Have someone to give a talk on Luke 14:16-24.
3. Discuss whether or not America has been evangelized.
4. Compare what the local congregation is spending on itself in comparison to what it is doing to help others.
5. Discuss what the church there could do in comparison to what it is doing.

LESSON FOUR

WHAT YOU LOSE WHEN YOU FAIL TO SEND Luke 9:25; Matthew 10:39; II John 8

INTRODUCTION

So many congregations have profited so much as a result of their decision to send someone to the mission field. Perhaps they didn't think they could do it to begin with, but once they became involved, it became very evident that they had been mistaken. Perhaps they didn't think they could afford it, but now see that it pays. Regardless of what may have been the thing that was holding them back, once they overcame that and launched into the work itself, then they found it to be very rewarding indeed.

On the other hand, there are still hundreds of congregations all over the country that could certainly send a family out to preach the gospel if they could be convinced that they are capable of doing it. Many of them, though, are afraid of the unknown, don't want the responsibility and continue to try to convince themselves that they are doing all they can. These brethren don't realize what they are missing. They are like children who don't see any need of taking their medicine. They don't realize that they are only hurting themselves. They don't know what they are losing.

In this lesson we want to show what the church loses when it fails to send the gospel.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT THE CONGREGATION LOSES.

A. It loses the opportunity to give.

Sometimes congregations don't send because they think they can't afford it, but they are not helping the matter by not sending. You don't encourage brethren to give by just drifting along keeping house for the Lord. Rather, if you want the members to give then you have to have a program that will challenge them to give. They want to see a reason for giving. They want to see a need to meet. They want to see something being accomplished.

For instance, when Paul was going over Asia and Europe preaching the gospel he mentions more than once the help that he had received from his brethren. He says that they were not able to give, but that they had done so nevertheless. Listen to him: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering of the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in

your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also” (II Corinthians 8:1-7). Now why did they give? Because they first gave themselves to the Lord. That is the key. When brethren first give themselves to the Lord then they will give.

To hear most congregations talk, then you would think they are very poor but look at their building, look at all the money they spend, etc., and you are made to wonder wherein their poverty lies. If they are poor it is certainly not in material things.

My brethren, when we turn down the opportunity to send the gospel to others then we are not saving but we are losing. We are not only losing at home, but we are losing the opportunity to save souls away from home. We are in position to give Christ to others, to give the gospel, but we are not taking advantage of it. Have we not read the words of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive?” (Acts 20:35). “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Regardless of what congregation it may be, I believe that if that congregation really wants to send workers into the field, that if those brethren will really pray about it, and will give all they can to it, and will seek to find ways to enable them to send, that the Lord will bless them with the opportunity. It depends on the congregation as to how much they will do.

B. It loses the opportunity to send.

What a privilege and honor to be able to send the gospel to others. We become the bearers of good news. We are

able to make it possible for them to have the truth. We become responsible for their salvation and the hope that is theirs. We have made it possible for the work of the Lord to be planted in another part of the world. But see the other side, if you would. When a congregation fails to send, then all of this is lost. Just think of what we lose.

Of all the people that are in the world without the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the few that are willing to go, it seems such a shame that any congregation would turn down the opportunity to send a family to the mission field. Perhaps it has not dawned on the brethren yet the blessing of sending, of the joy there is in sharing the gospel with others, of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.

I would like for you to see this work as an opportunity instead of a great responsibility. It is a responsibility, but it is also an opportunity to be able to show your interest in others, to share with others, to express your faith and love in taking the gospel to others.

How many congregations are able to send themselves and what do they do? They turn the responsibility over to someone else. They pass the buck. They say, "Here, you do it." I have seen large congregations sending money to smaller congregations, when if anything, it should be the very opposite. Evidently some congregations have no pride at all. They are the ones who lose.

When a large congregation decides that it will not send workers but it will help another congregation to send one, then it is making it possible for that congregation to receive all the credit for the good that is accomplished. All they do is to help supply the money while other brethren receive credit for sending the workers. There is nothing wrong with

this, provided that is the best that a congregation can do, but so often this is not the case. This is where the shame lies.

C. It loses the opportunity to work.

A congregation that decides to send workers to another part of the world will work harder. It will do more at home. Being interested in souls away from home, then it will be interested in reaching souls at home. There will be more interest manifested, more enthusiasm shown, and more will become involved. More members will be needed to help in various capacities to see that the mission work is carried on properly.

Now when a congregation fails to send, it loses much of that. There is less work and less good is done. Oftentimes congregations like this are just marking time. They have no real aim or goals to work toward. All they are doing is trying to keep themselves alive in the community where they are and this becomes more difficult year after year. They may try to compensate by diverting the members' attention to a new building, to this project, or to that project. But what is going to happen when the day comes that they don't need a new building and they have nothing else to work for?

No telling how many souls have already been lost at home and elsewhere because we didn't send the gospel as the Lord commanded. Our loss has already been great. How much more will we have to lose before we awaken to what is happening?

D. It loses the opportunity to grow.

Any congregation that will get concerned about world evangelism and will begin to do something about it will be blessed in growth. It will grow spiritually. It will grow in membership. It will grow financially. It will grow in its ability to do.

A congregation that will send workers to the field will naturally grow spiritually. Realizing its responsibility to send and to do then it takes upon itself the responsibility to become involved in the work. Once this is done it is made to realize the blessings that are connected with it. It begins to feel strength. With more faith, love, and zeal, now it attempts to do more and does. A number of congregations are sending more than one family out.

Its membership begins to grow. That is, as the church becomes involved more and more in the work of the Lord then it begins to grow at home as well. People become interested in a working, growing congregation. They want to be a part of it themselves. It will not hurt the local work to be interested in taking the gospel to the other people of the world. If the congregation is interested in world evangelism then it is interested in home evangelism. If it isn't interested in taking the gospel to others then it will not be interested in preaching the gospel at home.

Its financial ability grows. How many a time have I heard brethren say that since they started a mission program their contributions have grown to the point where they are not only doing the mission work that they had in mind, but they have more money left than they started off with before the mission program was begun. So they have learned that it doesn't cost to do mission work but that it pays.

As a congregation does more to spread the gospel it will

find that its ability to do such will grow. More members will be put to work. More zeal will be created. More will want to teach. More will want to grow. More will be active, etc. This will enable it to do far more than it did before.

Now when the church does not send then it loses all of this.

E. It loses the opportunity to set a good example.

There are congregations today that are setting wonderful examples when it comes to sending the gospel to other parts of the world. They show what can be done when brethren want to do. In spite of their own needs, problems, etc., they find opportunity to send.

Every congregation could be setting this kind of example. But all don't. We have to point to some and say, "There is a congregation that will not do what it can do." Do you want that to be said about you? Whether you do or not, it is being said if you are not doing what you can.

F. It loses the opportunity to be a leader.

There are congregations over the brotherhood that are considered as leaders. They don't wait on others, but charge ahead to show the way. They want to be leaders and are. Many congregations are content to follow, if they follow at all.

You could be a leader in your community and in your area if you would be. Why is it though that so many congregations have no initiative, no leadership ability, and have no desire to develop any? How much is lost?

Congregations who fail to send are certainly not

patterning their actions after the congregations in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Berea, and so on.

G. It loses the confidence of the brethren.

There are some congregations that I wouldn't go to for anything. Why? Because I have lost confidence in them. They have already proven to me and to others that they aren't going to send anyone anywhere. In other words, as far as they are concerned the world can die and go to hell. Of course it is possible that they might repent some day, and I pray that they will, but until they do I have no confidence in them.

There are many congregations today that have allowed their brethren to lose confidence in them. This is very bad.

H. They have lost their self-respect.

Did you know that there are congregations that will not keep their word? They will promise that they will help financially and then not do it. Many congregations have promised to give monthly support to some preacher only to forget their promise. I heard about a congregation that promised to send a preacher to a foreign field and then decided not to. But they didn't have enough respect for themselves or for the preacher to even notify him of this. Later, another preacher happened to be visiting with that congregation, found it out, and then took it upon himself to break the news to this preacher. He was heartbroken. How can brethren be so cruel? Sometimes it is hard for me to see any Christianity in us. It is sad that many have lost their self-respect.

I. It loses the opportunity to spread the gospel.

What greater work could be done than that of spreading the gospel throughout the world? There is the opportunity to share Christ with others, to take the good news to the lost, to try to make the world a better place in which to live. When congregations fail to send them they lose their opportunity.

J. It loses the opportunity to save precious souls.

The soul is the most valuable possession in all the world. There are millions and millions of them. Most of them are lost. They need us because we have the gospel and they need the gospel. Think of the good that is done if just a few of them are saved. But if we can be responsible in saving a few souls, then think of what they may be able to accomplish. But think of the consequences if we fail to save any. If we fail to send the gospel to others, then how can they be saved? (Romans 1:16, 17; 10:17).

K. It loses the opportunity to plant the church in another part of the world.

I would think that one of the great joys of a congregation would be to know that because of its sending forth a family to another part of the world the church has been planted in some country where it would not have been established otherwise. It is winning souls to Christ. There is no way to describe the joy and the satisfaction that comes from it. Then I know what a personal thrill it was to me to be able to plant the church in great cities like

Karachi, Pakistan, Colombo, Sri Lanka, and New Delhi, India. But congregations that do not send miss all of that joy and satisfaction. Actually, they don't realize what they are missing. I feel sorry for these brethren, but it is difficult to get the point across until they actually experience it for themselves.

L. The church is weakened.

No telling what the church could be doing if it just would. As we look at the church we are seeing the church as it is in spite of the little it is doing. It is very weak in number, in spirituality, in comparison to what it could be. It could be the largest religious organization in the world if it really wanted to be. The church can do what it wants to do. It can be strong, but it can be weak too. It can be large, but also small. It can do much, or it can sit. It could be a blessing to the world, but when it fails to do its duty then it leaves people lost and condemned to hell.

We have such a great opportunity to grow and to be a blessing to all of mankind. We have such a great responsibility to carry the gospel to all of mankind. When we fail then the church is left to drift along in a weakened state. This ought not to be so.

These are some of the ways that the church loses when it fails to do its duty. No doubt there are many other losses, but our goal should be to reverse this situation so we can talk about the many ways the church grows and prospers as a result of sending the truth to others.

As long as we are lax we lose and other lose also.

II. OTHERS LOSE TOO.

A. God loses.

1. *Limiting God.*

A lot of people never stop to realize that God has chosen to work through the church to reach the world with the truth. He can therefore accomplish his will only as the Lord's people are willing to submit their will to his. He can do much or nothing depending on what we decide to do. It means that God's work is limited when the church fails to take the gospel to others. The Psalmist David said of the people of his day, "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41).

2. *Disobedient children.*

The Lord has commanded us to take the gospel into all the world. It is the same message that has been proclaimed from the beginning (I John 1:5; 3:11). It is the faith that is spoken of in Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

This being so, what happens when we fail to do this? It means that we have disobeyed the Lord. Such people are described by Paul, when he says, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

3. *Wise servants.*

The Lord wants all of us. He is a very jealous Lord. He wants us to serve him and carry out his will. When we fail to do so then he is displeased. Christ has taught, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:42-51).

B. The missionary loses.

The church of the Lord is to spread the gospel of Christ. It does this through its preachers and teachers and members. Paul exhorted Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). Again he said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2). Then he

said to Titus, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

But if the church fails to send the very ones that it looks to to spread the gospel then what can they do? It means that they have no sponsor, no support, no encouragement, and therefore cannot go in most instances.

I have often thought that if the church would only fulfill its responsibility in being willing to send workers, that there would be many more brethren who would be willing to go. This would automatically follow since it would not only challenge brethren to go but would mean that they would have the necessary support and backing to go. But when so many congregations refuse to send, and even become critical of those who do want to go, then this is a great source of discouragement to them. Sometimes I am amazed that there is anyone who wants to go since those who do want to go are treated as they are.

C. The world loses.

Yes, even the world loses as a whole in that it loses the gospel, Christianity, and all the good works that go along with it, and its general influence for good, to the extent the church fails to send.

CONCLUSION

As far as I know, the only ones who gain when the church fails to send the gospel is the devil and his workers. But they are the only ones. All others lose. Which side are you on? You know it is possible to be with the devil

sometimes when you think you are with the Lord. I would suggest that you check your position again to see where you are and while you are at it make a careful check.

What we want to do is to try to reverse the present trend. It can be done. It must be done.

QUESTIONS

1. How many congregations are sending the gospel to others in comparison to the ones who are not?
2. Why aren't more sending? Could they if they wanted to?
3. What does a congregation lose when it fails to send?
4. Explain Acts 20:35.
5. What do a lot of congregations do even though they are able to send?
6. Is a congregation encouraged to do more work when it fails to send the gospel to others?
7. Will a congregation lose numerically and financially by sending workers to the field?
8. Why will it grow by engaging in such a work?
9. Why does it not grow when it does not do this type of work?
10. What kind of example is set when a congregation fails to send workers?
11. Are most congregations leaders or followers? What should they be?
12. When the church fails to send, how do the members react?
13. Are all congregations honest in dealing with those who are desirous of going into the mission field?

14. Can people be saved if we fail to send the gospel to them?
15. How can a congregation know the joy of planting the church in another part of the world?
16. How can the church of the Lord be strong?
17. What does God lose?
18. How can we limit God?
19. When are we disobedient children?
20. Who is a wise servant?
21. What does the missionary lose when the church fails to send?
22. What does the world lose?

PROJECTS

1. Find out how much the local congregation is putting into the mission program.
2. If the church is not sending then discuss what it is losing.
3. If the church is sending then discuss what it is receiving from it.
4. Make a list of the congregations in the area that would be considered leaders and then list those that would be thought of as followers. Why would you so class them?
5. How do the local members feel about the program of the local church?

LESSON FIVE

SEEKING THE RIGHT ANSWER

Psalm 86:7; Matthew 7:7, 8

INTRODUCTION

There are many problems in the world. But all of them are not in the world itself. Some are to be found in the church. They need to be solved. There are questions that need to be answered. There are answers for them if we will but seek them. There are not just answers but correct answers. These are the ones that we should be most interested in at this time.

DISCUSSION

I. LOOKING TO GOD.

So many of our problems are brought about as a result of trying to direct our own steps. However, man is not big enough, strong enough, and wise enough to be his own guide. The prophet recognized this when he said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). We would be much better off to admit that we are human beings and submit ourselves to the Lord who knows our needs and how to guide us. Christ said, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

Another great mistake we make is that of looking to

man for advice and guidance in religious matters. Think of the millions of people who are lost simply because they are following the teachings of men (Romans 16:17, 18; Matthew 15:9). Not only so, but many of us in the church go to the elders, preachers, and to one another to get the advice we want to hear. We take the writings of men and allow them to be our guide.

The thinking of certain schools often influence us and lead us to take positions. The same is true with papers and magazines among us.

What are we doing in all of this? We are allowing man to influence and guide us. We are putting our confidence and faith and hope in what human beings say. It may be true or it may not be true. But regardless, we are still in error in that we allow man to become our saviour. This is true in regard to first principles of the gospel, the church, the Christian life, our work, etc. This ought not to be.

Rather, we should look to God to solve our problems. The Psalmist said, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me" (Psalm 86:7). Why should we depend on ourselves or upon any man, when we have God to look to? He knows us. He knows our needs. Therefore, he can help us when no one can. In the final analysis, he is the only one who can help us.

How much better off we would be if we would go to him for help and guidance. He wants to help us, and will if we'll but look to him.

II. CHRIST HAS PROMISED TO BE WITH US.

The Bible tells us that we are in Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27) and that Christ is in us (Colossians 3:11). He has

therefore promised to be with us. He said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

The Lord has promised that he will be with us and help us to overcome every temptation. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

Christ said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7: 7, 8).

In other words, the Lord will be with us, bless us, guide us, and give us those things that we need if we will but be faithful to him and look to him for help.

III. THE BIBLE WILL GUIDE US.

We are blessed to have a book that contains the truth and nothing but the truth. It is the word of God, being inspired of him. It is therefore powerful and will guide us from this world to the world to come. It tells us what to do and not to do. It will bless us if we heed it but condemn us if we do not. It reveals God, his will, his church, how to be saved, how to live, and his promises. We are not to add to it or to subtract from it, or to change it in the least.

Let us now notice a few statements from the Bible: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John

17:17). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

IV. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS.

There are many problem connected with mission work. But what shall we do with them? Some simply shun them or ignore them. Others just don't get involved. But the thing we need to do is to try to find the correct answers and proceed with the work the Lord wants us to do.

We have God, Christ, and the Word to look to for the solutions to our problems. They are ready to help us if we will only look to them. This is a blessing within itself. We may also profit from former experiences, by seeing what will work and what will not work. Surely there is no point in everyone having to make the same mistakes year after year.

Let us now consider some of the problems that we are currently faced within the realm of world evangelism.

A. What is the mission of the church?

The mission of the church is more than just putting up a meeting house and meeting in it two or three times a week to worship. I know that many congregations are content to just keep house for the Lord. If they do more than

meet each week, and perhaps conduct a gospel meeting once a year, I don't know what it is. It never seems to dawn on them that there is more to do. This may be important, but this is not all.

Other congregations seem to feel that the reason for their existence is just to build a meeting house, or to carry on a little program in the local community that will help to care for the social needs of the members.

When we turn to the Bible we find that the church was evangelistic. It was outgoing. It had a teaching program. The members got involved. They put the Lord first in their lives. When persecution came, the record says, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

The mission of the church is to preach the gospel to a lost and dying world. Each congregation is to do what it can to take the gospel to others or to send it to those near and far. Each member of the church is to be active in this great work (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 13).

If the church is not taking the gospel to others, then it is not doing its duty. If it is not reaching beyond its own area then it is not doing what the Lord asked that it do.

B. How can the church be educated on the importance of sending the gospel to others?

Education is the key word here. If the church ever evangelizes the world then it will be only after it has been educated to the need of it. This is the problem right now — the church has not been made aware of its responsibilities, its duties, and the needs. It has not been challenged. When it learns more then it will do more. So our great task is to

see to it that the church is properly informed on these matters. Now the question is: Where shall we begin?

There are perhaps a number of ways of doing this, but in my estimation the most effective way would be to take the problem to the classroom. If the church is to be educated on mission work then it needs to be done right and that is from the ground up. I am not talking about having mission classes for the adults only but to start out with the children. If they can be taught and trained from the beginning as to what mission work is, the part they can and must have in it, then in the years to come, it will make a big difference in our mission program. The ideal thing would be for the whole church, including all congregations, and all classes of each congregation, to occasionally have a series of lessons on mission work. Even when the classes do not engage specifically in such materials, the program can be kept alive from classroom to classroom with some emphasis being put on mission fields and workers around the world, correspondence with missionaries, prayers for them, articles and reports being read on what is being done, etc.

There are some problems though in getting such a program underway:

1. The elders may not see the need to do it.
2. The teachers may not be sold on it.
3. Materials may be difficult to find for the various age groups involved.

In spite of these problems, there is one thing certain: this matter is going to have to be taken to the classroom if we ever put the proper emphasis on mission work that needs

to be put on it, and if we ever have the missionaries that we need, then we are going to have to start off with the children, and stay with them until they are old enough to go, and then send them.

It may be difficult to change the thinking of the older members, but if we begin teaching and training the children from their first class up, then they can be prepared to go.

Our mistake in the past has been that we allow our children to grow up without being made aware of the work of the church outside of their own community. Then some of them go off to a Christian college where they begin to hear various missionaries speak and gradually they become aware of the rest of the world and of the need of taking the gospel to it. On this basis some decide to become missionaries but the majority are not so influenced, and it is because they have not had the sufficient teaching from their youth up to encourage them to do so. But what about all of those other Christians that grow up who never make it to a Christian college or who never come in contact with any teaching and influence to share the gospel with the rest of the world? Naturally, they remain at home.

As the church becomes more aware of its mission then little by little congregations are beginning to take this matter to the classroom, but the program needs to be speeded up. Actually, it should begin in the home. What is wrong in encouraging our children to be missionaries? Not a thing in this world. Even if they do not grow up to be preachers and preacher's wives, they can be encouraged from youth up to be missionaries. We are living in a time when so many young people leave home and go hundreds of miles, or even thousands of miles, to find work. If parents then can only instill in them the desire to share the

the gospel with others, wherever they go they will be Christians and work for the Lord. Just think of what this could mean in years to come.

I am hoping and praying that in future years we are going to be doing more to teach and train our children at home and in the church to carry the gospel to others. If enough of us will do it, then we can raise up a generation of people that will surely evangelize the world. What greater goal could we have?

C. What can we do to encourage our preachers to take the gospel to the world?

One of our biggest problems today in world evangelism is that of getting our preachers to go. You would think of all people who would want to go, it would be our preachers. But this is not so. They are known for their many excuses and for their frankness in simply admitting that they do not have enough faith, that the wife is not willing to go, etc. They are preaching the gospel themselves, and in order to preach it fully, they must preach the importance of taking the gospel to all the world, and yet they are not willing to practice what they preach. An elder of the church told me one time that there were many preachers in his area that should be going but that it would be impossible to run them off. He was simply saying that they were happy where they were and had no intention of leaving. I have attended mission workshops where the people were given an opportunity to express their desire to go. Those volunteering to go were not the preachers but the various members of different congregations who were at that time holding different secular jobs. It made me feel that there was

something wrong somewhere. While it was wonderful that numerous ones wanted to help spread the gospel, the shocking thing was that the preachers sat there without making any commitment. But why?

To me one of the saddest things in the church today is to see the many preachers who have latched on to pulpits across the country and refuse to give them up. Many of them think that they are indispensable. Because of their education, their age, their years of work, their popularity, or something, they think that they are exempted from mission work. They will perhaps preach that others should go, but then refuse to go themselves. They quote considerably from the apostle Paul but fail to note what Paul did — he took the lead in spreading the gospel on two continents in spite of the fact that he was well-known, highly educated, etc. What is going to happen when these preachers die? Will the church fall apart and cease to exist? Certainly not. Neither would it fold up if they chose to take the gospel to some other part of the world. Further, it would be one of the finest things that they could do.

But these are the kind of men that feed off the church, and refuse to leave their own country, unless they have the opportunity to go to another part of the world with all expenses paid, to be the star attraction of a meeting or lecture program, and then be back home within two or three weeks of their departure. They don't want to do the work that made all of this possible but are ready to partake of the fruit of the labors of others. This is to their shame. If such brethren cannot get out and help to extend the borders of the Lord's kingdom, then they shouldn't be so little as to try to exalt themselves by making such trips.

Although we may have such a problem with our

preachers, the question is, who is responsible? It is their fault naturally, but it is not altogether their fault. It is the fault of the church too. Actually, the church should not tolerate this sort of thing. I mean, the various congregations should be so aware of the need of sending the gospel to the world that it would be encouraging its preachers to go. Will preachers go themselves when the various congregations give them every encouragement to stay at home? Certainly not. So if we are to have more workers going then we are going to have to have more congregations encouraging them to go. To solve one problem is to solve the other.

D. What can we do to prepare the average member of the church to work for the Lord?

I have personally seen various members of the church end up in another part of the world with some type of secular work, and in most cases they ended up in these categories:

1. Some were entirely unfaithful.
2. Others were very faithful, and found ways of being useful.
3. Many were faithful, but were simply helpless.

Now I think we should be especially concerned here at home about trying to prepare the members of the church to be able to carry on should they find themselves away from their home congregation. This is especially true in our time since members of the church may be sent eventually to most any part of the world in connection with a

construction job, government work, business, the armed services, etc. Now then each congregation should have a program of work that would involve every member and then there should be classes taught from time to time that would prepare the members to go into other parts of the States, and even into foreign countries, and there to know how to preach and teach the Lord's will and to establish the church. Right now there are members of the church all over the world, but what are many of them doing? Nothing. They are just sitting. They are like fish out of water. They don't know what to do. They don't know how to reach people, how to teach them, and how to start the church. This is very sad. On the other hand, if they had been given the proper training, then on going to a part of the world where the church does not exist it would only give them an opportunity to get something going for the Lord and they would not end up leaving the church behind.

I pray that more congregations will initiate a program to train its members to be able to carry on regardless of where they may find themselves anywhere in the world. This could be a real step forward in laying the foundation to evangelize every nation under heaven.

E. How can we be assured that the gospel will be preached in the countries around the world in the years to come?

As of now, we are sending missionaries into the various countries around the world, and we are gradually building up a foreign aid program of our own. I mean by that, that in some of these countries, especially in the undeveloped ones where the economy is so much lower than our own,

some preachers are putting everyone on the payroll that they come across who wants to preach. Some of them are also lining up American congregations so that they can send salaries directly to these preachers. I believe that this is a great mistake.

In the first place, it has never really been proven that the church can be established in such countries by using such a method. In the next place, the wrong people are usually attracted – hirelings and those who are out to take the church for all they can get out of it. Then in most cases, the salaries are much more than they should be, based on the local economy. Especially is this true where American congregations are dealing directly with these men. They do not know the true situation as it is and often times are encouraged to give much more than they should, although they may feel that the amount they are giving is relatively small in comparison to what they might give an American preacher. But the end result is that much damage is done.

When this kind of program is begun it is very difficult to break away from it. And my brethren, you will see in the end that it does not, and will not, work if you are not already convinced of it.

Now what is the solution? Simply that the gospel be preached in these countries, and that good hearts be found and converted to the Lord and encouraged to share the gospel with their own people. They should be encouraged to go ahead with their secular work but as they have the opportunity during their off hours, weekends, and holidays to preach and teach the gospel to others. Such an approach may not be as spectacular and may not get as much visible results, but in the end it will produce more good fruit than

the other method. Watch it and see for yourself.

Paul did not go over the country putting everyone on the payroll to preach the gospel, and I don't believe the Lord would have us to do that. It is not wrong for a preacher to receive pay for his work, but this should be left to the local congregations of each country. Certainly, American brethren cannot support every preacher of every country of all the world, and yet this would be the result if it was left to some brethren. Surely the better way would be the one already suggested.

V. FURTHER SUGGESTIONS OF SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS.

- A. Keep an open mind.
- B. Have a desire to know the truth.
- C. Be willing to accept the truth and obey it.
- D. Be prayerful about the matter.
- E. Be humble.
- F. Put forth an effort to work with others.
- G. Have a love for the Lord and the souls of men.
- H. Try to find the best methods that get the desired results.

CONCLUSION

These problems, or other problems, can be easily solved if we are really anxious to find a solution. The question now is: What are we going to do when we find the solution that we are looking for? God will bless us when we really want to do the right thing and put forth the effort to do the same.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the problems found in the church today?
2. Are there answers for them?
3. Can man direct his own steps?
4. Discuss Matthew 23:12.
5. What happens when we follow men?
6. Who should we look to?
7. Where are we if we are Christians?
8. List some verses that teach that Christ will be with us.
9. What is the basis for truth?
10. Quote John 17:17.
11. How much of the scripture is inspired of God?
12. What must we continue in?
13. Who can we turn to to solve our problems?
14. What is the mission of the church?
15. Can the church be doing its duty if it is not taking the gospel to others?
16. How can the church be educated on its responsibilities?
17. List some problems that must be dealt with in trying to get such a program underway.
18. Why is the classroom such a wonderful place to begin teaching the mission of the church?
19. What can be done to encourage our preachers to take the gospel to the world?
20. What is one of our biggest problems today in world evangelism?
21. Why is it that many preachers simply refuse to go?
22. What have many of these preachers done?

23. Who should insist that they move out into new fields?
24. What can we do to prepare the average member of the church to do the work of the Lord?
25. What happens to a lot of members when they find themselves in a foreign country?
26. How can we correct this situation?
27. How can we be assured that the gospel will be preached in the countries around the world in the years to come?
28. Should we put a lot of our foreign brethren on salary?
29. Does this approach lead to self-supporting congregations?
30. What are some of the problems involved in this?
31. Does the difference in economies have anything to do with this?
32. What is the solution?
33. Give some suggestions when it comes to solving problems.

PROJECTS

1. Discuss in the class some of the more important problems that have to do with world evangelism.
2. Have someone to find out how many mission classes are being conducted in the local congregation. How often?
3. Find out if any other kind of teaching is done within the church to encourage world evangelism.

How often?

4. Have someone to investigate the other congregations in the area to find out how much teaching is being done on world evangelism.
5. Find out if the local congregation is supporting directly a foreign national.
6. Discuss what you would do to further the Lord's cause should you be sent to a foreign country on your job.

LESSON SIX

DEALING WITH VISITING PREACHERS

Acts 15:36; Jeremiah 5:9; Psalm 106:4; III John 9, 10

INTRODUCTION

The Lord has given the church the responsibility of taking the gospel to every creature under heaven. That means in order for the church to do this then it must find and send those who are willing to go to different parts of the world to plant the cause of Christ. This sounds relatively easy and would be if the church would but do this. But instead of the church being out looking for workers to send, gospel preachers are busy visiting one congregation after another seeking someone to sponsor and support them in a foreign work. From this comes a number of problems and we are going to consider some of these things at this time and see if some suggestions might be made that would help to better the present day situation.

DISCUSSION

I. PLACING THE BLAME WHERE IT BELONGS.

I have often felt sorry for the elders of the many congregations over the country because they get so many appeals for help by mail. I think though that most of them have decided the best way to solve that problem is just to dump all of the requests into the wastepaper basket as they come in. Usually the elders are not bothered with such

since the preacher takes care of that little chore for them. I have heard of a congregation or two that decided to answer every request for money by sending a check for \$5.00. Well, I doubt if this is a wise solution either, for there might be some cases where those involved were not deserving of even that much.

I have also had a great deal of feeling for congregations who are besieged by different ones from over the country asking for appointments to come to speak and to take a contribution. Yet, the church has no one to blame for this sort of thing but itself. Had it been doing its duty all along then there would never have been a necessity for this. I am sure that every preacher of the church deplores the fact that he must get out and travel all over the country, and ask congregation after congregation for help, in order to find someone to sponsor him and to get enough funds in order that he might proceed with his plans to take the gospel to another part of the world. As a matter of fact, it is this very thing that keeps many from even having a desire to take the gospel to others because they don't want to put themselves in the position of becoming a beggar in order to go.

The sad part about all of this, most congregations blame the preachers for this when really they are the ones to blame. It is true that some of them have a very fine program of work, but most of them do not. Therefore we must work on those congregations that are not doing their part as we must try to move those preachers who are not willing to go.

II. THE RESPONSE OF CONGREGATIONS TO VISITING PREACHERS.

Now bear in mind that we are dealing with a situation where the church as a whole has not done its job in sending forth workers, and therefore forces those preachers and individuals who want to go to turn to the congregations over the country to ask for help. This is usually done by the preacher contacting one or more congregations about the possibility of coming by for a visit to speak to the elders or to speak to the congregation as a whole in an attempt to explain his plans, his needs, and to ask for help. If he calls, he may be told that he will have to contact someone else or that the matter will have to be considered at some future business meeting. If he writes, his letter may not be answered until weeks later. If he goes by, and requests the opportunity to speak, he may not be permitted to do so. But here are some of the kinds of replies that brethren are giving today:

- A. **You can't come.** There are some congregations that have a policy that they simply will not allow anyone to come. These are the ones that are guarding the member's pocketbooks and do not care to be reminded again of their responsibility.

- B. **You can come but you can't take a contribution.** Don't the elders of these congregations know that if the members want to give then they are going to give? For some reason, there are those who will not allow a public collection but will allow the members to give personally as they like. I heard of one congregation where they refused to allow the preacher to take a collection but the members personally gave him several thousand

dollars. Many times such policies backfire and the church ends up in giving more than they would if they were encouraged to go ahead and give.

- C. **You can come but we can give you only ten minutes after the sermon.** Sometimes the elders suggest that the preacher use the Bible class time, or any time, except the time that is reserved for the local preacher. For some reason they think that since he is supported by the local congregation that he must get in his full time. Don't they realize that the missionary might have some things to say to the church that might do more for the members than a half dozen sermons by the local man? And that is not to take anything away from the local man either and the sermons that he might preach. But there is a time and a place for everything.
- D. **You can come but only on Wednesday night.** But why not on Sunday morning or on Sunday evening? Of course Wednesday night is fine too, but it is the idea that the elders evidently are kind of sticking the missionary's visit off to the side. Again, sometimes this backfires on such churches.
- E. **You can come but we can't help you any.** Sometimes congregations suggest that the missionary not even come because they don't want to waste his time. But to invite him on this basis is not much better, but at least he has the opportunity of trying to change their minds and to challenge them to do more, and sometimes he is able to do just that.

But no trip is ever wasted if all concerned have the right attitude.

- F. **You are welcome.** These are the congregations preachers enjoy visiting with. They are the ones that will not only allow visitors, but will allow him to take a contribution, try to help in other ways possible, and in general act Christian about the whole thing. We need more congregations like this.

Why is it that some congregations feel that it is a great burden to have preachers to visit with them, and even feel that it hurts their work, while others feel that they are helped, benefited, and made to prosper because of such visits? I believe it has to do with the teaching that congregation has had. It has to do with the kind of leadership they have, the mission they feel, and what they want to accomplish. This makes the difference. Now which one do you think the Lord would be most pleased with?

III. WHY CONGREGATIONS DO NOT WELCOME VISITING PREACHERS.

Not all congregations today will allow a preacher to come by and speak. There seems to be more and more taking this position year after year. But why? There must be a reason for it.

- A. **Because there are so many requests that some congregations decide not to allow any to come by to speak.** While it might be going to the extreme to

let everyone come by to speak, I would think that to allow no one to speak would be going to the other extreme.

- B. **We already have a full load of mission work.** This may be true, but by having others to come by might give new initiative to the congregation and challenge the members to do even more. If the congregation just can't do any more, then the preacher will understand.
- C. **Some congregations simply don't want to be asked for help.** Since they don't want to be asked for help then the best way to solve that problem is by simply refusing to allow the missionaries to come to ask for help. But it is a sad day for the church when it gets in this shape. Probably such churches have money for all kinds of luxuries, but don't want to be asked for help that might mean the saving of souls in some other part of the world. The church many times is so selfish thinking only of itself. No doubt many congregations are paying a janitor more each month than they are putting on mission work.
- D. **Some congregations are trying to guard the member's pocketbooks.** They may even have an agreement with the members that they will not allow anyone to come by to ask them for help provided they will help with a local building program or some other local need.

- E. They don't want to be blasted.** It may be that a few preachers will blast a local congregation for not doing more, but most preachers will try to teach and encourage, rather than just condemn. Most of them will try to challenge and show the blessings of help rather than just to blast away for the sake of blasting someone. Just because a few are ugly doesn't mean that all are.
- F. Others just aren't interested.** To be indifferent about the command of the Lord means that such a congregation is in serious trouble. If there is no interest then that is all the more reason why missionaries should be allowed to come by to speak so that interest may be created.
- G. Finally, there are congregations that can't help and so they just don't want anyone to come.** But this is a mistake. I have seen numerous congregations that thought they couldn't help but ended up in helping.

Now these are some of the reasons why some congregations aren't interested in having various preachers to come by to talk to them about mission work. However, I think that some of this goes back to the damage that is done by the way some congregations treat some preachers and vice-versa.

IV. THE WAY SOME PREACHERS TREAT CONGREGATIONS.

We don't want to be unfair, but rather we want to set the true picture before you. Whereas most preachers are just as nice as they can be to the congregations with whom they deal, it is fair to say that there are a few who abuse and take advantage of these congregations.

There are some preachers who go around taking up money to go to some place and they end up in not going. I know of one preacher who took one congregation for several hundred dollars and he did not go and he did not return the money even though he was encouraged to do so.

Some preachers have become bitter and they take it out on the congregations that they visit. They say many unkind things. They condemn for the sake of condemning. This is bad, and I think that most would say so.

I am sure that most congregations could recall some preacher who was unkind in some way or who took advantage of them or who disappointed them. All of this is bad and causes many to have to suffer for what a few did.

V. THE WAY SOME CONGREGATIONS TREAT PREACHERS.

There are many fine and wonderful congregations in the brotherhood and I wouldn't want you to think otherwise. But just like there are some preachers who take advantage of some congregations, there are some congregations who mistreat preachers. To tell you the truth, some of them are not very Christian, and they can get pretty ugly. I have seen some ugly letters written that you would never think that could have ever come from brethren. Some are not very honest — promising certain things only to end up in failing to keep their promises.

I am ashamed to have to say it, but some brethren will treat you like dirt. They are not interested in you or what you are trying to do. They had just as soon to see you fail as succeed.

Again, some brethren are pretty cold-hearted. That is to say, they are hard-hearted, dealing with you more like you are their enemy than you are their brother in Christ. They feel no love and show no love in their actions.

Now after preachers have had a few rounds of brethren like this, then they get a pretty bad impression of the church sometimes. Of course what they must realize, and what all of us must realize, is that such brethren are in the minority. Most brethren are good and wonderful.

VI. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THIS SITUATION.

I certainly wouldn't go so far as to say that a congregation should permit every preacher that comes by to speak and ask for a contribution. However, I would make a number of suggestions on this:

- A. **Prayerfully consider each request.** You wouldn't want to purposely turn away someone who might do you a lot of good and who in turn you might have the opportunity to help and encourage. Remember, he doesn't like this arrangement any more than you do but has been forced to turn to his brethren to ask for help.

- B. **Don't turn a man away merely on the basis that he will ask for help.** Some brethren are afraid that if

the members give their money to the visiting missionary it will hurt their local contribution. I think this is being over-protective. Actually, the money that the members give to the missionary, in most cases, would never find its way to the collection plate on Sunday morning. It means that the missionary was able to challenge the members to give up and go beyond what they usually give. In other cases, it may be that the members readily give to the visiting preacher to show their favor of this type of work when the local church is failing to have part in it. Remember though that the missionary is not anxious to hurt the local contribution and work in order to help the work he has in mind. Rather, he would like to see both helped and benefited by his visit.

- C. **If at all possible, try to let the man come, and try to help him.** This could be a very rewarding experience both for you and for the preacher. It could be a means of encouraging and helping each other to do more.

- D. **Try to hear a variety of preachers placing emphasis on different parts of the world.** To just hear one or two, then you are not able to get an overall picture and therefore your vision will be very limited.

- E. **Don't just hear a lot of preachers, give each one a little, and never get involved beyond that.** While it is wonderful to hear various ones, and to help them

as you can, still you need to begin to sponsor one or more of them, and to support them to the extent that you are able.

- F. Even though you are already a sponsoring congregation, and may be helping all you think you can, do not allow this to lead you to turn away all other preachers. They may be able to say things and touch certain hearts that others were unable to.**

- G. Whatever you do, show love, concern, and be Christian in dealing with these brethren. Regardless of whether you have them or not, you don't have to be crude, ugly, unkind, and un-Christian about it. Rather, try to show interest, a desire to help and to encourage, and to make helpful suggestions. It is just as easy to be nice and it will accomplish so much more good.**

- H. Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you. Put yourself in the other fellow's place. How would you feel if you were treated that way? What if your son was out trying to find support? Would you want him to be treated the way you treat those visiting you?**

Now you wouldn't think that things like this would have to be discussed, but they do. You can't imagine the way some congregations treat some preachers. I know a little about some of these things because I have been down that road myself.

VII. SOME OF THE RESULTS THAT FOLLOW WHEN PREACHERS HAVE TO SEEK THEIR SUPPORT.

There are many good and wonderful congregations that go out of their way to be understanding and sympathetic toward those who may come by for a visit. These are the brethren who give again and again and do all they can to encourage and help these preachers to reach their goals. However, there are some of the other kind too, and this is what makes it rough. Because of these, a lot of my preaching brethren would prefer to remain at home rather than to have to go to them and ask for help to take the gospel into other parts of the world. Such congregations are so ugly, so cruel, and so un-Christian that they actually end up in causing good brethren to be turned against mission work in general. This means fewer workers to go with less being done and accomplished.

Other preachers don't go because they don't want to take all of the time necessary to get out and go from one congregation to another asking for help, when they know that many of the congregations could send them if they would do so. Their attitude is that, "If they don't want to send me then I just won't go."

Many of these brethren simply don't want to lower themselves to the point of becoming beggars. And brethren that is what it amounts to — a man has to get out and beg and plead with congregations all over the country to give him enough support so he can go. Then instead of being appreciated, he is often resented. If he is given some help then it is as though he is personally being done a great big favor. Isn't this a shame?

Because of pride, a lot of our brethren will simply not stoop to this sort of thing and therefore they simply remain at home. If a congregation approaches them, then it is different. I know of a well known preacher passing word on to another preacher that if he came across a congregation interested in sponsoring and supporting a man in the mission field, then he would be interested in going. Such a congregation was found and this preacher was contacted and he was sent. Many other preachers are never contacted.

This system of sending is not conducive to mission work. We are very blessed to have as many in the field as we do. We need to try to find the solution to the problem and put it to work.

VIII. THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE.

The solution and the ideal thing is for the church to begin to do its work and thus seek out those individuals who will go to the mission field and then send them. Again, if brethren are unhappy with the present arrangement of having to deal with visiting preachers, then they can bring an end to this sort of thing if they will only turn it around and approach the preacher before the preacher has time to approach them.

This would not make any preachers mad. Some congregations may get tired of so many preachers contacting them about support, but those preachers get awfully tired of having to contact them about the possibility of getting some help. Actually, the preachers are taking the lead with the church following behind. The problem can be solved when the church begins to take the lead.

I think all of us who are desirous of doing mission work

are hoping and praying for the day when the church will be writing us, phoning us, sending members to talk to us about the possibility of being sent out to preach the gospel. How wonderful it would be to have brethren to say, "If you'll go then we'll sponsor you and give you the necessary support." What a great improvement this will be over the present day. For this day we are praying, and it will be that day that the church really becomes of age in this the twentieth century and begins to do the work that the Lord intended for it to do.

CONCLUSION

What we need today in the church is for one and all to begin to work together to reach a lost and dying world with the gospel. One shouldn't be leading the other, but we should be pulling together, marching forth side by side as the Lord's people accomplishing the task that is before us.

There should never be any resentment on the part of any member that someone wants to take the gospel to others. Furthermore, when we grow weary and tired of hearing men and women say that they want to take the gospel to others then there is something wrong with us. Instead of resenting them, we should thank God for them and have a desire to help them and to encourage them. Not only so, but when we have time for everything in the world, and money for everything in the world, but not for the lost, then that means that we are lost too. May God help us to awaken to our responsibilities and the wonderful opportunities that we have to share the gospel with the rest of the people of the world.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it necessary for preachers to have to visit with congregations to talk to them about doing mission work?
2. Who should be taking the lead – the preacher or the congregation?
3. What kind of appeals are sent to congregations all over the country?
4. How do they deal with many of them?
5. If the church was doing its duty, would congregations be plagued with preachers calling on them for help?
6. Do preachers want it to be this way?
7. Why do so many preachers choose not to go to the mission field?
8. Who is blamed for all of this?
9. What must the average preacher do if he wants to go to the mission field?
10. What are some of the responses he gets from those congregations he contacts about paying them a visit?
11. Why would any congregation refuse to allow a preacher to visit with them?
12. Why would any congregation refuse to allow a preacher to take a contribution?
13. Why would any congregation stoop so low as to limit the time the preacher can speak?
14. Describe the kind of congregation that preachers like to visit with?
15. Why is it that some can be so ugly and others can be so nice?

16. Give some reasons why a congregation might not welcome a visiting preacher.
17. Can a congregation gain anything from refusing to allow such a preacher to visit?
18. Is it possible for the preacher to take advantage of the congregation?
19. Does one bad congregation mean that all are bad?
20. Does one bad preacher mean that all are bad?
21. How do some preachers treat the church?
22. Describe how some congregations treat some preachers.
23. Give some suggestions that might improve the situation.
24. List some of the results of preachers seeking support.
25. What is the solution?
26. What is needed in the church today?

PROJECTS

1. Find out how many preachers visited the congregation during the past year, the purpose of the visit, and the results.
2. How does the congregation feel about having visiting preachers?
3. How does the class feel toward having preachers to visit?
4. Discuss some ways and means that this situation may be improved.
5. Appoint someone to give a talk on the subject, "Why the church should take the lead in sending the gospel to others."

LESSON SEVEN

BECOME A SPONSORING CHURCH

Acts 13

INTRODUCTION

In my estimation, one of the greatest needs in the church today is for more congregations to become sponsors of those who are willing to go. If we are going to evangelize the world then there are just going to have to be more who will volunteer to do this.

In this particular lesson we want to make a detailed study of sponsorship, see why more are not taking the lead in it, consider what is involved, think of some of the problems that accompany it, and see if we can encourage more congregations to accept their responsibility for it.

As we go along in this study, keep in mind that most any congregation that really wants to, and will, can be a sponsor.

DISCUSSION

I. WHY MORE CONGREGATIONS ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT SPONSORSHIP.

Most congregations refuse to accept the responsibility of sponsoring a family in a foreign land. You would think that they would be anxious to take advantage of such an opportunity, but not so. Why?

- A. Most congregations are ignorant of what sponsorship involves.** That means that they are afraid to accept the responsibility. They are afraid that it will be too big for them to handle. And it is especially frightening to them if it has anything to do with a foreign country. However, it would be so easy for these brethren to find out what sponsorship is all about if they really want to know. I think some brethren want to remain ignorant so they can continue to use it as an excuse.
- B. They feel that they are not financially able to accept such a responsibility.** These congregations need to realize that they can sponsor a family in spite of the fact that they cannot fully support them. The remainder of their support can be raised from congregations who refuse to serve as sponsors. But congregations who do not want the financial responsibility should consider their own local program and the financial obligations that go with it. Surely if they can handle the kind of building debts that they do, then they can stand behind a family who wants to go to preach the gospel. If they can financially back a local man or two, then they can do the same for a family who wants to work in another part of the world.
- C. They feel that they do not have qualified men in the congregation who can do the necessary work to carry on such a program.** Surely in the average congregation that is made up of people who are

able to carry on their own personal business and to participate in the various professions of the community, you would find enough qualified men who would be able to do whatever is necessary to see that such a work is carried on. Surely if the congregation has elders or men in the congregation who are able to see about the local needs, there are those who can handle the necessary work that would be involved in sponsorship.

D. They reason that they already have a full load of work. These are the congregations that usually can be counted on to serve as sponsors. Those who are doing nothing seldom want to begin to do something. But just because the congregation is loaded, that doesn't mean that it can't do more. Perhaps if it would re-examine some of its activities then it would find that some of them could be dropped in order to make it possible for this work to be done. There are some things more important than others even in the Lord's work.

E. Then there are congregations that just aren't interested. In other words, they don't believe in it in the sense that they feel that whatever they do should be done at home so they can keep their eye on their money and what is being accomplished. According to this reasoning, if all congregations followed in their footsteps, then nothing would ever be done to spread the gospel beyond the shores of our own country. This would be disastrous. These congregations must be taught their

responsibility so they will become interested. Surely when they know of the needs, and the role they can play, then they will have a change of heart.

- F. **Still other congregations are just plain selfish.** They are able to help, have the ability to sponsor, but are thinking only of themselves. These are the congregations that need to be converted to Christ.

- G. **Finally, there are congregations who feel that they should concentrate all of their mission work in the United States.** It is wonderful that brethren will be interested in their own country, but I don't think one is showing any disloyalty to want to see the gospel taken to other parts of the world. What did Jesus say? (Mark 16:15, 16). Actually, I think that any congregation would be wise to sponsor a man in a mission field in the States and then at the same time to sponsor one in a foreign mission field. By so doing then their efforts are balanced and no one can say that more emphasis is being placed on the one than the other. I believe also that this arrangement will encourage the local members to give more and to do more.

No doubt there are any number of other reasons as to why congregations do not become sponsors, but these are a few of them. You can see that they amount to little more than excuses since even these congregations could serve as sponsors if they really wanted to.

II. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SPONSORING CONGREGATION.

We have been talking about why congregations are not willing to become sponsors, but now we want to see what it means to be a sponsoring congregation. We want to see if it is too hard and difficult for a congregation to handle.

To tell you the truth, sponsorship is very simple. It is not difficult at all to those who want to do it. Neither is it difficult to find out what it involves. All a congregation needs to do is to call in some missionary to find out what it is all about or it can turn to sister congregations that are already serving as sponsors and ask them. Letters can be sent to various individuals and congregations to gather information on the subject. No, it is not necessary for anyone to remain ignorant on this subject if they are really interested in learning.

Those congregations that do become involved will tell you that there is nothing to it in comparison to what they had thought beforehand. I remember talking to my sponsoring congregation about this very matter. At the time they were wondering if they could do it, but once they were convinced they could, then everything was all right, and everything has been all right ever since.

But let's see what is involved.

- A. **Sponsorship of a family simply means that you have accepted the financial responsibility of that family and the work that they are going to be engaged in.** It is very similar to that of hiring a local man and giving him a salary and supervising his work. In other words, you satisfy the demands

of a foreign government in that you promise to sponsor or support financially this family while they are in this particular country. The term sponsorship may sound big, technical, and difficult, but it is none of that.

- B. The sponsoring congregation may give all of the financial support, work fund, etc., or it may have it understood that only so much support will be given and the rest will have to be raised from other congregations who may want to have fellowship in this work. Of course the ideal situation is for the sponsoring congregation to give all of the support but this is not always possible. But regardless of the financial arrangement, the sponsoring congregation is obligated to stand behind the missionary family all the way through.**

- C. The sponsoring congregation should carefully choose an individual or family that they want to send and the field that they want to send him to. So many times the preacher seeks a congregation to send him to a place that he has chosen. This might not be so bad if it were not for the fact that it is the church that is to take the lead. More will be said about this in another lesson.**

- D. The sponsoring congregation will have the responsibility of directing the family in their new work, in making the major decisions pertaining to work, etc.**

- E. Other responsibilities will have to be handled by**

the sponsoring congregation.

1. *The elders will need to appoint some individual or couple to serve as treasurer of the fund.* That is, they will be given the authority of seeing after the money (checks, etc.) as it comes in and putting it in the bank. They will handle the books on it, see to it that the missionary is paid each month, that his checks are cleared, and that a monthly statement is made of the fund. This will involve a considerable amount of work, but no doubt some good couple will volunteer to see about it.
 2. *Someone will have to be appointed to see that a monthly newsletter is received, prepared, and sent out to all of those who are helping financially and to all of those who may have a special interest in it.* This will also involve a great deal of work, but once more there will probably be someone within the congregation to volunteer for the job.
 3. *Try to get all of the members of the congregation involved.* They can write letters, send books, help with the mailing of the newsletter, etc.
- F. The sponsoring congregation should have frequent public prayer for the family and keep the members informed on what is taking place.**

- G. The elders should stay in close contact with the missionary family and show some interest, offering advice, and all of the encouragement possible.**

Now basically this is what sponsorship is and what it involves. There is nothing hard or difficult about it. It is simply another opportunity to help further the Lord's cause and why anyone would want to shun it is beyond me.

It is only right that if a family is willing to go to another part of the world to preach the gospel that the church stand behind them and give them the necessary encouragement and help needed to do a good work. They will have enough problems without having to worry constantly about where their next meal is coming from or how they are going to be able to afford to have some tracts printed, etc. Then sponsorship is necessary because some countries in particular require a family to have such an arrangement before they enter their borders. They are simply trying to protect themselves and the family from embarrassment at some later date.

To tell you the truth I know of no congregation personally that ever had any real problem or difficulty in serving as a sponsor. Now I have heard of a few congregations that for one reason or another either cut their missionary off of their support and left him stranded in a distant land or called their missionary home. But serving as a sponsor is somewhat like borrowing money to put up a new meeting house. I have never heard of a congregation that was unable to pay its debt and therefore lost its building, and neither have I ever heard of a sponsoring congregation that got into such a financial bind that it simply was unable to continue.

Finally, sponsorship is altogether scriptural. Paul wrote, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:15). What does that mean? It simply means that the church should send preachers forth to proclaim the gospel. When this is done then the gospel is preached. When it is not done then the gospel is not preached. It is just that simple. So the gospel is being preached around the world today to the extent that the church is sending preachers out. Much more could be done if the church would send more. The world could be evangelized if the church would but accept the challenge. Again, we have an example of the church in Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas out to preach. What were they doing? Simply serving as their sponsoring congregation. Actually, when a congregation offers to support a local preacher and his family then they have said in so many words, "We are becoming your sponsoring congregation in this work." Now when we get it down to this level, then sponsorship isn't difficult to understand at all, is it? It is simply a modern day term that is used to suggest that a congregation is financially supporting a family in the work he is being sent to do.

III. THE BLESSINGS OF SPONSORSHIP.

I can't begin to tell you all of the blessings that may come to a congregation that decides that they will accept the sponsorship of one or more in a foreign field. Besides the congregation growing in faith, love, zeal, etc., they also grow in other ways provided they really are involved in it as they ought to be.

A. **The attendance grows.** Now that the church is

doing more to reach a lost and dying world then it affects the local work in that the members show more interest, do more, teach more, invite more, and so the attendance grows and the church grows. I have heard many congregations say that as a result of their mission work they had grown considerably at home.

- B. The members give more.** Some brethren reason that they just can't afford to get involved in mission work. Really, they can't afford not to. Some of the leaders are still not aware of the fact that the members are just not going to give as much as they could when there is no real program of evangelism being carried on by the church. I remember talking to a preacher of a congregation that told me that the elders just knew that they could not do any mission work, but after the members stayed after them for so long, they finally agreed to it, and then their contributions tripled automatically. Now isn't that a fine commentary on the elders of that church? But that illustrates again what happens when the members are given the opportunity to send the gospel to others. This story could be repeated hundreds of times. It is so sad that the leaders of many of the congregations are holding the church back instead of leading it and challenging it to do more and allowing the church to do more.
- C. It will put the church to work as never before.** It will create new jobs for more members to work.

This will create more interest and more work, etc. There is no end as to what can be done when the leaders of the church accept the kind of responsibilities that will give the members an opportunity to use their time, efforts, and resources to further the Lord's cause.

- D. It will simply change the whole congregation.** It will revive it, give it new life, new spirit. The elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and all of the members will sense the change that has taken place. It will get up and go to work and accomplish more than ever before.
- E. It will begin to more nearly do what the Lord wanted it to do.** He wanted the church to take the gospel to others.
- F. It will be sending another family forth to preach the gospel.** What greater thing in all the world can it do than this?
- G. It is making it possible for people in another part of the world to hear the truth of God and for the church to be established there.** If this wouldn't cause excitement in a congregation then I don't know what would. Just think about that for a minute. Ponder the significance of it. I know it is difficult for us to grasp the meaning of this because we have already had the truth, but we must realize that millions have not been as blessed. So we are in position to help change this. It might be little

but not near as little as doing nothing.

- H. **God will bless us and help us.** Besides all of the blessings mentioned, as we do God's will then he will bless us in many ways.

So many of our brethren have never really known the real joys of Christianity because they have never gotten involved in it enough to know what it is all about and to the point of allowing the Lord to bless them as he would like to. But these are some of the blessings that come from sponsoring a family as they go to proclaim the will of God. There are no doubt many other blessings that accompany the ones that have already been mentioned.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT SPONSORING.

If there are blessings for sponsoring then there would automatically be consequences for not sponsoring. While one reaps the blessings of sponsorship, then one would reap the reverse for not doing so. But perhaps there are some other things that should be considered too.

- A. **God is not obeyed.** How do we think for a minute that we can please God when we fail to obey him? He wants us to take the gospel into all the world. Now what is he going to do with us when we refuse to do so? That is rebellion.
- B. **The church does not accomplish its mission.** The mission of the church is to preach the gospel to every creature, but what is its purpose of existence

when it fails to do that?

- C. **The church is hurt at home.** The members resent its leaders for not leading. They want to do more than just keep house for the Lord, build big meeting houses, and sit in luxury. When the church does not move, then they refuse to support it with their money and lose interest.
- D. **Missionaries are discouraged and many refuse to even put forth an effort to go.** They reason that if the church isn't interested enough to send them then why should they wear themselves out trying to get someone to send them.
- E. **Souls will be lost.** Just think about it. Simply because the church fails to do its duty, then instead of souls being saved, souls will be lost. The missionary does not go, the gospel is not preached, the church is not established in other parts of the world, and souls are left in a lost condition. How sad.
- F. **The church does not want to be reminded of its responsibility.** Therefore more and more congregations refuse to allow anyone to come to talk to them about mission work. The guilty do not like to be reminded of their guilt.

To me one of the most heartbreaking things today is to think of what needs to be done, what could be done, and then to see what is being done. Oh, it is all so pitiful. How

the church needs to be awakened to its duties, responsibilities and opportunities. How long will it be before it will rise up and do what the Lord wants it to do? Let us pray.

V. THE CHURCH MUST TAKE THE LEAD.

What we need to see today in the church is for congregations to come alive and go to work for the Lord. We need to see these congregations rising up to take the lead on all fronts of the Lord's work. Wouldn't this be wonderful? If the church would but do its job, then there would be many changes for the better.

CONCLUSION

I am hoping and praying, and so are hundreds and thousands of members of the church, that more and more congregations will accept the responsibility of becoming sponsoring congregations. If it was all that hard, difficult, or impossible, then it might be different. But it is altogether possible for most any congregation that really wants to accept this work. I would say that any congregation that can afford a full-time preacher could also become a sponsoring congregation if it will. I would further say that quite a number of congregations that are not even supporting a full-time man could serve as a sponsoring congregation. In other words, it is within the reach of just about every congregation. How wonderful it will be when the church accepts this work as its own.

QUESTIONS

1. What is one of the greatest needs in the church today?
2. List some reasons why some congregations are not willing to become sponsors.
3. Is it necessary today for a congregation to be ignorant of what sponsorship involves?
4. Must a congregation have a great deal of money to send a family to another part of the world? Why?
5. What are the qualifications for becoming a sponsor?
6. Will sponsorship require work? How much?
7. Should the mission program of the church be confined to the United States?
8. Define, "Sponsorship."
9. List some of the responsibilities of sponsorship.
10. Who would handle the funds?
11. What would be the significance of a newsletter?
12. To what extent should the elders stay in contact with the missionary?
13. Do congregations usually have any trouble in serving as a sponsor?
14. Is the idea of sponsorship scriptural?
15. Who sent Paul and Barnabas out to preach?
16. Give some of the blessings of sponsorship.
17. What happens in the local congregations?
18. What does sponsorship make possible?
19. State some of the consequences when the church fails to sponsor.
20. Is God pleased?
21. Can the church fail to sponsor and still do its duty?

22. What happens to the missionaries when the church fails to sponsor?
23. Does the church like to be reminded of its duty to the world?
24. Who must take the lead?

PROJECTS

1. Have a missionary, if possible, to come to explain sponsorship and its responsibilities.
2. Discuss Acts 13 and Antioch as being a sponsoring congregation.
3. If the congregation there is sponsoring a family, then try to determine what it is doing and the blessings that it is reaping from it.
4. How do the local members feel about sponsorship? What about the elders, preacher, etc.?
5. If the congregation is not sponsoring anyone, then discuss what can be done to encourage it to begin to do so.

LESSON EIGHT

CHOOSE A FIELD

Acts 16:9

INTRODUCTION

When a congregation makes up its mind that it is going to become a sponsoring church then it must choose a field. Where will it send a family? Where is the gospel most needed? Should the work be confined to the States or should a family be sent to a foreign field? These are some of the questions that the sponsoring church will now be faced with.

In this lesson we will be considering the importance of the field and the various questions that arise when a congregation begins to consider the area to concentrate its work on.

DISCUSSION

Different congregations have different ideas about mission work. Some feel they should work at home and others feel that they should send the gospel to a foreign field. Still others want to have a part in both. Let us notice the pros and cons of these.

I. HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

A. Home Missions.

There are several reasons why a large number of congregations are interested in doing their mission work at home.

1. *A lot of brethren are still convinced that much of America is still a mission field.* It is true that there are still many cities where the church does not exist, but this does not necessarily mean that the people there have not yet heard the gospel of Christ. With all of the radio and television preaching, not to mention literature and other teaching methods, surely all of the people of our country have heard the gospel by now. But why does not the church already exist in every community throughout the whole country? We have done enough preaching and work, that if it had been properly spread out, then this would have already been accomplished. I am afraid that much of our work is but an excuse not to go beyond our own community.
2. *Brethren like to do their mission work near enough to home where they can keep an eye on it.* I have heard elders talk about how nice it was to be able to visit the preacher they were supporting and to see the work he was doing and then to have some of the members there to come and visit them from time to time. Brethren like that, and it is wonderful. However, all work that needs to be done cannot be kept within driving distance.

3. *A lot of brethren are still selfish and want to do what they do at home.* They feel as if it is the only place in the world where they can legitimately spend the Lord's money. They feel that it is the only place that will produce the fruit that will be lasting. Of course these brethren have a lot to learn. They need to be informed about the needs in the rest of the world and the kind of results that are already being gotten from the work that is being done.
4. *We still have brethren that have never been converted to doing foreign mission work.* That being the case, if they do any mission work at all, then it must be done at home.
5. *The needs at home are more personal, more real, and more touching, whereas, the rest of the world is so far away and so unreal.* This makes a big difference to some.

B. Foreign Missions.

1. *With the second world war a lot of brethren saw parts of the world and began to see the need of going beyond our own country with the gospel.* As a result, many of the service men prepared themselves and encouraged congregations over the country to send them. This has resulted in the church being established in many different nations around the earth.

2. *A lot of brethren have become convinced that after these many years of preaching the gospel at home it is time to share the gospel with the rest of the world. But just because one may be interested in sharing the gospel with the various nations of the world, does not mean that he is no longer interested in his own country.*
3. *More and more brethren have come to believe that in order to obey the Lord they are going to have to do what he has said and that means taking the gospel to every nation under heaven. We have made a beginning but we have a long way to go.*
4. *The church is being awakened by the missionaries and various ones in the church who have become conscious of the rest of the world and the many opportunities that exist to spread the gospel. We are praying for the day when all of the members of all the church will be sold on world evangelism.*
5. *Members of the church are now beginning to see the wisdom of foreign mission work and to agree that it is paying off. Wherever you go now, you can find the church. This means so much. If you don't believe it, then make a trip around the world and stop by to visit the different congregations in the various countries and see if you feel that it is worthwhile.*

6. *Those in the church who are aware of the needs of the world know that the hope of the world is the gospel. It can change the world for better. It can save it spiritually and physically.*

C. Engaging in Both.

1. *Some brethren believe that it is wise to engage in mission work both at home and abroad. By so doing everyone is made happy.*
2. *There should not be any competition between the two. Actually, they go hand in hand and complement one another. If one is interested in souls at home then he will be interested in saving souls in the rest of the world. If one is interested in saving souls in India, or in any other foreign country, then he will be interested in saving souls at home. God loved the world. That means that he loved souls. We should have the same love and the same concern for souls. If so, it really won't matter where they are. We'll just do what we can to reach them with the gospel.*

II. THE FIELD IS THE WORLD.

Jesus taught, "The field is the world" (Matthew 13:38). Again he said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are already white unto the harvest" (John 4:35). And still again he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach

the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

While the world is the field, and the gospel is to be taken into all the world, one congregation can do just so much. That means then that it must decide where in the world it will put forth its effort. Even if it is going to work in the States, it still must think about the location, the type of people, etc. Let us consider some possibilities:

- A. What country will you work in?
- B. Will you plant the church in the city or in the village?
- C. Will you work among the educated or the poor people?
- D. What kind of religious people will you choose to work among?
- E. Are you going to work in Asian type countries or those of the European type?
- F. Will you work in war-torn countries or concentrate on those that have less violence?

Even as you think about these different areas or fields, there are some other questions that may help you to more intelligently choose a field.

- A. What are your goals? Are they to get immediate results or do you have a long-range program in mind?
- B. Are you interested in working in those areas where the people are more receptive to the gospel or do you plan to pioneer and try to open some harder fields?

- C. Do you plan to work with the English language or have your workers to learn the local language?
- D. Will you be sending your workers to work with others in a group effort or will they be working alone?
- E. Are you planning to open up a new country with the gospel or will you be sending them to a new city or area?
- F. Will this family be sent to replace another family or will they be going as additional workers?
- G. How much can you put into this field?
- H. How long will you be able to stay with it?

Perhaps by thinking about these questions and trying to give them intelligent answers will help you to come to a decision as to the field that you will choose for your work.

III. HELP IN CHOOSING A FIELD.

You may find it difficult to decide on the field that you would like to send your family to. In this case, perhaps there are sources that you can turn to for help.

- A. The family that you choose may have a field in mind that they would personally like to go to and you may find this to be a wise choice.

- B. It may be that you will be sold on a particular field after hearing a missionary from there come by to speak and to acquaint you with it and all of the needs and opportunities.**
- C. Or you may want to turn to some of the schools that are emphasizing mission work for some advice on a field to send workers to.**
- D. You may know of some field that is white unto harvest that are in desperate need of workers.**
- E. And finally, you may have a desire to send a family into a country where the church has not yet been established.**

All of these fields of course will be fine, and the main thing is to do what you can to help spread the gospel.

IV. KNOW YOUR FIELD.

After you have studied the situation well enough so you can decide on the field that you are going to send workers to, then begin to gather information about it. Learn all you can about it. Not only do you, as elders, want to know about it, but you should want the missionary family to know as much about it as possible and also the members of the congregation should be acquainted with it.

The more you know about it, then the more interest you will have in it and the more you will be able to do to help it. Naturally, you should know some of these facts about it:

- A. Where it is located.
- B. What the size of it is.
- C. What the population of the country is.
- D. What the religious situation is.
- E. The kind of people who live there, along with their culture.
- F. The kind of language, or languages, they speak.
- G. The kind of government it has and whether stable or not.
- H. What the economy of the country is.
- I. Whether or not there are other workers there.
- J. What the possibilities are to establish the church.
- K. The cost of living, the availability of various necessities, etc.
- L. The kind of climate they have.
- M. The type of schools, hospitals, etc., that are there.
- N. The capital of the country and other populated centers.
- O. Whether the people are friendly toward Americans or not.
- P. If other Americans may be found there.

By knowing these things, and something of its history, geography, etc., one will come to know the country well and will appreciate it that much more and will be prone to want to do more to help it. As far as your missionary family is concerned, it is imperative that they know all of these things about the country they are being sent to. Whatever you do, don't send them ignorant of the place where they are going.

Information concerning this country or area can be obtained from many sources. It may be obtained from

missionaries coming out of that general area, from encyclopedias and other reference works and books that may have been written about the country, by writing to the American Embassy of that country for information, etc. All of these sources should be utilized to the fullest.

V. BE HAPPY WITH YOUR FIELD.

It is up to you as a congregation to choose the field that you are going to work in, or to accept the one that the missionary has in mind, and in either case you will want to accept the one that you will be happy with. Not only must you be happy but your missionary family must be happy with the decision. It would simply be disastrous if one of you, and especially both of you, ended up being unhappy with the field that you have chosen. Your task will be great enough without feeling that you have chosen a field where you cannot enjoy working.

VI. THE FIELD YOU HAVE CHOSEN CAN MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE.

If you have chosen a good field, and both you and your family are happy with it, then you are bound to have a good work. Of course the gospel is needed everywhere around the world, but because of some special interest in one given area, or because of the special need, then you may be more interested in this particular area and it can result in more being done and in more being accomplished in the end, and this is the thing that you are working for.

I know of some congregations that feel that they are trapped with certain fields and they are miserable. In such

cases they are unable to do an adequate job and they are being unfair to themselves and to the work. When they are unable to put their whole hearts into it then they should find some other congregation that might be interested in taking over the work.

VII. GOALS TO WORK TOWARD.

Now that you have a field, and a family to send to it, what are your goals? This is very important too, for if you are going to accomplish much then you need to have goals to work toward. Consider the needs carefully and plan accordingly.

- A. Plan to stay long enough to do the job.**
- B. Put enough into the work to get the desired results.**
- C. Set a number to be converted per month.**
- D. Have some definite goals for the congregation, or congregations, established.**
- E. Decide something on hiring preachers, building meeting houses, etc.**

Of course most of these things will have to be finally decided by the missionary himself based on his findings.

CONCLUSION

In closing I would make one suggestion. If you have not already chosen a field to send a family to, then why not choose a country where the Lord's church does not exist and send a family there. We want to see the gospel being

preached in every country under heaven. There are still a number left where we have no gospel preacher. We keep saying that we are going to evangelize the world, but the question is, "When are we going to do it?" So if you would begin by trying to open up a new country, and if others would do likewise, then it wouldn't be long until we could truly say that we now have workers in every country of the world. If we'll really work at it and do what we can then the Lord will bless our efforts and make this possible.

QUESTIONS

1. Why choose a field?
2. What two great fields do most brethren think of when they think of mission work?
3. Why do a lot of brethren prefer to do their mission work at home?
4. Is America still a mission field? Why?
5. Can all of the work that needs to be done be kept within driving distance?
6. Is it possible for some brethren to still be opposed to foreign evangelism?
7. Why do some congregations prefer foreign mission work?
8. What happened during the second world war?
9. Why is it time to share the gospel with the rest of the world?
10. How is the church being awakened to its responsibilities to spread the gospel?
11. Give the reasons for engaging in both home and foreign missions.
12. If one is interested in preaching the gospel in a

- foreign land, will he have the same interest in preaching it at home?
13. What is the field?
 14. List the questions that must be considered when thinking of foreign evangelism.
 15. List some other questions that may help the church to choose its field.
 16. What are some other things that the congregation can do to help decide on a field?
 17. What should you know about the field you choose?
 18. Why will a knowledge of the field be helpful?
 19. Where can such information be obtained?
 20. Why is it necessary to be happy with your field?
 21. Give some goals that you should work toward.
 22. Why should you send a family where the church does not exist?

PROJECTS

1. Discuss the different fields of the world.
2. Make a list of all of the countries where the gospel has not gone.
3. Make a list of all of the countries where the gospel has gone.
4. Find out what the class can do to try to get the gospel to one of the countries where the gospel has not gone.
5. Write some missionary about the possibility of helping him and his work in some way.
6. Make a map of the world, listing the various countries, and keep it checked as to where the missionaries are, etc.

LESSON NINE

CHOOSE A FAMILY Acts 13

INTRODUCTION

So many congregations find themselves being challenged to become sponsors that one by one they do. Even in these cases, a family is chosen but in a somewhat awkward way. Again, may it be stated that the ideal way of doing it is for the church to get out and find a family who will go.

In this lesson we are going to see what the Bible says on this subject and think in terms of the kind of family that should be chosen.

DISCUSSION

I. A BIBLE EXAMPLE OF HOW WORKERS WERE CHOSEN.

The apostle Paul is a great example of what it means to be a missionary. He made journeys through Asia and Europe preaching the gospel and establishing congregations. But how was he chosen for this great task and who sent him? The scriptures tell us: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called

them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:1-4). Now let us notice what happened:

- A. Paul and others were in the church at Antioch.
- B. There they ministered unto the Lord and fasted.
- C. The Holy Ghost worked through the church and asked that Paul and Barnabas be separated for a special work.
- D. Then the brethren fasted and prayed and laid their hands upon them and then sent them out.
- E. Their missionary work follows.

In this particular case these men were chosen from among the members of the local congregation. They were godly, dedicated men. The church had a work to do and therefore chose, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the best they had to send. The preparation for their departure was done in all seriousness and humility with fasting and praying and the laying on of hands. This meant then that the church loved them, had confidence in them, and was sending them forth with their blessings.

Should it be any different today?

II. HOW IT IS IN OUR TIME.

Often times the church is going along thinking of everything in the world but doing mission work. Then somehow, somehow, along comes a man and he manages to get a speaking appointment. The congregation doesn't know

anything about him, but all of a sudden he is speaking. He asks the congregation to sponsor him and to support him in a work that he proposes. It takes the brethren by surprise, but if they have a little money on hand, and he is able to convince them that they can do it, then they agree to it. He travels around some more, pays a few visits, and off he goes to a foreign field for three or four years. The congregation still knows little about this man and his family. Very little planning has been done. Hardly any prayers are said. Then over the next three or four years there is hardly any contact between the two. It is a cold business deal and that is all. Whereas, the preacher and his family may be able to do a good work, the sponsoring congregation reaps very little from it. Sometimes a situation like this does work out all right, as poorly organized and planned as it may be, but other times it does not turn out so well.

The sad thing about this is that it is happening all the time and there doesn't seem to be any let up on it. I don't think anyone likes it but nothing much is being done about it. It would just take too much effort to do it any other way as far as a lot of brethren are concerned. Well, as we go along in this study we want to keep in mind the way it was done in the days of the early church and then we want to consider a number of things that might help to improve the present day situation.

III. CHOOSE A FAMILY.

The things we want to drive home again and again in this study is that the church should choose a family. However, this will not be possible unless the congregation

prepares itself so that this will be possible.

- A. The congregation needs to make up its mind that it is going to sponsor one or more families in mission work.**
- B. Then it needs to prepare the congregation to assume such a responsibility.** This means that the church will have to be prepared mentally, spiritually, and financially.
- C. Then the church will want to choose a field where a family may be sent.** If nothing is definite in mind, and after giving some thought to this, still nothing is forthcoming, then the church might want to discuss this with the family they choose.
- D. Finally, choose a family to go, and after adequate preparation and planning, then send them.**

Now this is the kind of approach you are going to have to make or else you'll end up doing like all the rest and that is taking the first one that comes along that challenges you, or even if it is the second, third, or fourth, it will amount to the same – you will be following and not leading.

We just must change the situation in the church today when it comes to mission work. Not that a few congregations should change, but that the whole church should change its ways. That is, we want to see the church taking the lead in world evangelism. We believe that this is the way the Lord planned it and the way he wants it.

IV. FINDING A FAMILY.

Suppose a congregation is ready now to sponsor a family in foreign mission work. Where will it find a family to send? This should not be difficult at all.

- A. **Since there are so many brethren who are interested in going, then it may be that the congregation will want to contact one of them, or even several of them. Then after meeting with them, perhaps one of them may be found to be the very family that you are looking for.**
- B. **The colleges and preacher's schools may be able to recommend some good families to you for consideration. No doubt they would be coming well prepared to do a good work.**
- C. **You could always put a statement in the papers asking for those interested to contact you. The only problem with this is the fact that you will probably be covered up with letters inquiring about it. Then many of them might be so far away, and unknown to you, that you wouldn't be interested in them.**
- D. **Other congregations might be able to recommend some good families to you for this work.**
- E. **Another approach is to pick a good family that you would like to send and go and talk to them about the matter and try to persuade them to go.**

- F. It might be that you would want to send some former missionary.** There are cases of where some brethren go to a foreign field, then return to work for awhile in the States, and then they are ready to return to their former mission work or to go for a new field.
- G. Some of the former missionaries or present missionaries may know of some good family that they could recommend to you.**
- H. Then perhaps better than all, why not approach your own local preacher about going?** You know him, he knows you, and you have worked together for some time. It seems that this would be an ideal arrangement. I know of several missionaries who formerly preached for their sponsoring congregations.
- I. Or maybe there is some good family in the congregation who might be the ones to send.** Perhaps they have proven themselves to be fine Christians, hard workers, soul winners, and maybe the head of the family has had a good bit of preaching experience. I know of families like this who have been sent and they have done excellent jobs. Sometimes they do even a better job than the one who has known nothing but preaching.

So there shouldn't be any real problem in finding a family to go. Rather, your big problem will be to decide which family you will send.

V. THE KIND OF FAMILY YOU WILL WANT TO CHOOSE.

Now we want to take it a step further and talk about the kind of family that you will want to find to send to the mission field.

But before we get into that then let me urge you not just to pick up anyone to send. You don't have to because there are too many who want to go, and the more congregations that will decide to send them the more brethren there will be who will decide to go. So be selective. Furthermore, don't get into too big a hurry to choose someone. It is urgent that we get on with the job, but first of all look carefully for the right family, pray much about it, and only after you are sure you have the right one then go ahead. Then you want to consider age, health, size of family, etc. All of this can make a big difference.

Now let us continue with the kind of family that you'll want.

- A. **You'll want a family that really wants to go.** The whole family needs to be sold on it, not just the preacher. Unless all are enthusiastic about going, then it can end in disaster.
- B. **You'll want a faithful Christian family to work with.** They should be sound in the faith. The mission field is no place for weak and shallow Christians.
- C. **You'll want workers who have the ability to do the job they are being sent to do.** They should know

the Bible and how to teach it.

- D. **You'll want members who have a sufficient amount of secular education to have the respect of those they are going to be working with.** Especially is this true of the missionary. I would suggest also that it would be better to select a man who already has his M. A. lest he go to the field and pine away the whole time he is there longing for the day he can get back to get it. That doesn't mean, however, that a man necessarily has to have it to be a good missionary.
- E. **You'll want to send those who will have the ability to win souls and to establish the church.** It would be such a tragedy to send people to do this work and then they were unable to do it. Also, you'll want to send people who can do a stable work and not just baptize people in order to send back glowing reports.
- F. **You'll want to send those who will have a love for those with whom they will be working.** There can be no color bar or distinctions made because of color of skin. They must simply love souls and prove it by their teaching and in their daily life.
- G. **You'll want to send a family who is willing to work.** They'll have to be people who will be able to discipline themselves, push themselves in the work, and do the many jobs they will be called on to do. The mission field is certainly no place for

lazy people.

- H. **You'll want to send honest people and those whom you can trust.** They'll need to be the kind that you can trust with money, and that you can depend on to tell you what is happening, etc.
- I. **You'll want to send those who do not have a lot of personal problems.** For example, if they are bad about paying debts at home, if the family members cannot get along with one another, or if strain and worry causes mental distress, then you had better think twice before you send them.
- J. **You'll want to send people who are able to work with others, especially if they are going to be working with other missionaries.** You'll also need to have some understanding with them about this; otherwise, in trying to work with others, along with all of the pressures upon one another, some definite problems can come about. Even the most qualified people will be duly tried in such a situation.
- K. **You'll want to send those who will have the ability to stick it out and see the job through.** Certainly you'll not want to go to all of the trouble of sending a family over and then for them to get homesick or for them to blow-up during some trying times and come home. So choose a family that means business and that can be counted on to do a job and to do it well.

What must be realized is this: mission work is not kid stuff from the standpoint of the one sending them or from the standpoint of the one going. Rather, it is business, serious business, all the way. Therefore, you'll want to send the very best family you can find. They will be dealing with souls, representing you, and you'll want the job done right. Otherwise, it is a waste of time, money, and will mean the loss of precious souls.

VI. OTHER ARRANGEMENTS TO BE MADE.

In choosing a family to work with you'll have to discuss some other things and have an understanding about several things. Unless you do, this can cause serious problems at some later date. It will be far better to take care of that right now.

- A. **How long will you plan to work together?** Will you be sending this family for two years, three years, four years or more? What will happen after this period of time is up? Will you continue to work with this family? Even if you don't choose to do so will you plan to continue with the work that has been begun?

- B. **What will the salary be?** Will you pay him what he has previously been making, or will it be more or will it be less? I personally think that several things should be taken into consideration. Where will he be working? But regardless of where he will be working, if it is outside the United States, in all probability it will cost him more to live than

in the United States. A lot of brethren are not aware of the fact that even in the poorer countries, living costs are more there than even at home because so many things have to be imported and that runs the price up. Although some things may be cheaper, other things will be much higher. Then he'll have to send his children to schools that charge tuition. Not only so, but there will be many other expenses here and there that he has never had at home. All of this must be taken into consideration. And finally, I have never been able to understand how brethren can ask a family to make all the sacrifices that are necessary to go, and then end up paying him less than what he might get if he were working with some congregation in the States. In this case it seems that brethren just can't ask the missionary to sacrifice enough, but rather those who stay at home are the ones who are awarded with the high salaries. I think we have got the whole thing turned around. In government work, those who go to foreign fields are usually sent with double or even tripled salaries in comparison to what they might get at home. I realize that we are not going for the money, but neither should brethren be encouraged to stay at home for money. Therefore, the whole matter should be carefully reviewed and both the sponsoring congregation and the missionary family should come to a definite understanding on this and therefore should be happy with it according to the needs involved.

- C. **Where will the work be done?** Much will depend on where the work will take place because of schooling, health problems, language barriers, etc., that may be involved. Of course the missionary family will have to take all of these things into consideration.
- D. **Who will furnish the work fund?** Will the sponsoring congregation do that or will the missionary be expected to find other congregations that will be willing to help on this?
- E. **Who will provide the travel fund?** Again, will the sponsoring congregation do this or will the missionary have to get out and raise this for himself?
- F. **What will be expected of the missionary family before their departure?** Will they be left to continue with their present work, and then to close it out, or will the sponsoring congregation expect them to come and spend some time with them?
- G. **When will the family be expected to leave for their destination?** How much time will they have with relatives and friends? How much help will they be given in their final preparation or will they be expected to do all of these things themselves?
- H. **Will they be allowed to visit some on the way over?** I would like to encourage any sponsoring congregation to practically insist that their missionary family visit a few countries enroute to their

destination. Getting to see brethren in different lands, seeing the people and living conditions of those countries, seeing the church at work in these places, will prepare the family for their new home and their new work. Of course it could be over done, but to go straight from home to one's destination will bring about too great a shock.

- I. **Will the missionary family be given some time off occasionally to travel to workshops, conduct meetings, etc.?** I would hope that every sponsoring congregation would permit their missionary family to do so. Sure, it would cost a little more but it would pay off. To expect a family to stay tied to one spot for three or four years is asking too much. They'll get into such a rut and will become so tired and worn out that they will not accomplish near as much as those who are allowed to get away from time to time. Have mercy on them.
- J. **What will you expect of this family while they are away?** Don't be too demanding but try to work with the family in such a way as to build a relationship that will get the best out of both of you.
- K. **What will be your goals?** You'll certainly want to have some goals to work toward, but these can be set as you go along.
- L. **Will you want to support local preachers, build a meeting house, etc.?** These are some of the questions that may be coming up sooner than you

think. So you need to be giving some thought to them and try to come to some conclusion as to the course you will take.

- M. What should they do in case of emergencies? Have an understanding with them about what to do in case of a death in the family, sickness, etc.**

If you can just have a good understanding with the family that you are going to send, and if they can understand you and what you expect of them, then it will be so much better than just to jump into something and for neither one never to quite understand each other or be able to work together. This is the Lord's work and it needs to be done right.

There are no doubt many other things that could be discussed, but these are a few of the things that you'll definitely want to take into consideration in choosing a family to send out to preach the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUSION

If you can choose a good family, and have a good relationship with that family, for three or four years or more, then you'll look back and see how important it was that you took all of these things into consideration. Unless you do, then you may definitely look back one day and think how much wiser it would have been had you taken a little more time, and chosen the right family, and had the proper understanding before you got involved. There is no better way than doing a thing the right way from the very beginning.

As we study along these lines our entire thought is centered on the idea of preparing to do mission work and then doing it – both adequately.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Paul as a missionary.
2. How was Paul chosen?
3. Who chose him?
4. What kind of preparation was made before he was sent?
5. How do most congregations do it today?
6. Is much planning done?
7. How can the congregation prepare to send a family?
8. Where can a family be found to be sent?
9. What kind of family will the congregation want to send?
10. List their physical characteristics.
11. Discuss the spiritual qualities they should have.
12. How long will they want to work together?
13. Discuss the importance of the salary.
14. Where should the work fund come from?
15. What is a work fund?
16. What will be expected of the family before their departure?
17. Should the family be expected to go directly to their field of work?
18. How close should the family remain to their work on the field?
19. List some of the goals that might be set.
20. What about supporting local preachers, building

- meeting houses, etc.?
21. How should emergencies be dealt with?
 22. What kind of relationship should be maintained between the congregation and the missionary family?

PROJECTS

1. Discuss the ideal missionary family, listing his qualifications, etc.
2. Have someone to give a talk on, "Paul, as a missionary."
3. Talk about the advantages of sending a single person.
4. Talk about the advantages of sending a family.
5. If the local congregation is sponsoring a man then find out how it came about. How was the family chosen?

LESSON TEN

WORKING WITH THE MISSIONARY BEFORE SENDING

Acts 13

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have chosen a field, and a missionary to send, the next thing to do is to make the final preparation to send him. The time you spend to do this may prove to be the most crucial time for both of you. If you can lay a good foundation to work on, then you are going to be a long way ahead when he is actually sent. If you fail to do this, then it may prove to be disastrous for the whole program.

In this lesson we want to think about some things that can be done that will set the stage for a wonderful work.

DISCUSSION

I. DIFFERENT VIEWS ON WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE MISSIONARY.

Different brethren have different ideas on what should be done with regard to the missionary once he has been chosen to be sent. Here we will present these different views for your consideration. We will make suggestions on them as we go along.

A. It is thought by some that once a man and his

family have been chosen then they should be sent. These brethren feel that there are several reasons for doing this:

1. *Time will be saved.* Already time has been wasted in getting around finally to choosing a man to send. Why squander more time when the missionary is so urgently needed?
 2. *Money will be saved.* To have this family travel all over the country, and then spend several months with the sponsoring congregation, this will add up to a lot of money being spent uselessly. Why not send the family on and let them begin their work? By so doing, the money that would have been spent otherwise, can be put to valuable use in the field itself.
 3. *All will be saved a lot of inconvenience.* Should this family be kept around several months, then not only will a lot of time be consumed, a great deal of money be squandered, but also the family, the congregation, and perhaps numerous others, will be put to a lot of unnecessary inconvenience. So why not cut all of this to a minimum and send them on? Besides, their hearts will not be in the work at home, but in their proposed work before them.
- B. Other brethren are prone to believe that the missionary family should spend some time with their sponsoring congregation before they are sent.**

They likewise offer a number of reasons for this:

1. This will give the sponsoring congregation some time to get acquainted with the family they have chosen to send, and vice versa. Where they are new to one another, this kind of arrangement is felt to be especially desirous.
 2. This period of time may also be used for the congregation and the missionary to make adequate preparation and plans for the work that lies ahead.
 3. During this time the missionary may complete his fund raising and also close out his personal affairs in preparation to go.
 4. This will also give the missionary time to gather the various things he will need to box and ship for his future work.
 5. Extra time may be needed for visas and other things that will have to be done before their departure.
 6. While all of these things are going on, the missionary family can be visiting and working with their sponsoring congregation, and in the end time and money will be saved.
- C. It is reasoned by others that if the congregation would send their own local preacher or some other

good family from among its own membership, then it would be able to save time and money, inasmuch as they would be able to proceed with their plans since they would already know one another and it would not demand any necessary moving about.

- D. Still other brethren reason that another solution would be for the congregation to invite a family to come to work with them for awhile with the thought in mind of sending them at a later date to the mission field.**
- E. Another solution is that a family should be sent to a mission field in the States for a few years with the thought of later sending them to a foreign country. In this particular case, it is felt that in working together in the States both will be better prepared to work together in a foreign effort.**

II. EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE.

When we turn through the pages of the Bible we find that as the Lord worked with various ones, he always chose those best qualified and best suited for the job, and then worked with them, trying them, testing them, and preparing them before they were actually sent to do the job itself.

Let us notice some of them.

- A. There was Noah. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair;**

and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with men, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch" (Genesis 6:1-14). After giving

him the remainder of the instructions, we read, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Genesis 6:22). Peter says, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (II Peter 2:5). Again he says, "Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water" (I Peter 3:20). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Now what do we have:

1. The world was very wicked.
2. But God saw that Noah was righteous.
3. Because of this God chose him to build an ark.
4. God gave him instruction as to what to do and worked with him for many years.
5. Noah obeyed God and he and his house were saved.
6. The wicked were destroyed.

B. God called Abraham. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and

make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (Genesis 12:1-5). "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10). Think about these facts:

1. God called Abraham out of his own country.
2. Abraham went out by faith to a land that the Lord would show him.
3. God worked with him through the years, trying him and testing him, and thus preparing him to accomplish his purposes.

C. **The Mission of Moses.** "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents,

because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Hebrews 11:23-29).

In the foregoing we have the gist of the life of Moses. Someone has said that God prepared Moses for eighty years before sending him to accomplish the mission of leading the children of Israel out of the land of bondage. It was during this time that God humbled him, spoke to him, worked with him, and through him. Therefore he was successful.

- D. The sending forth of Jonah.** "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa;

and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:1-3).

As the story continues, there was a great wind that came against that boat, and the mariners were afraid and reasoned that there was someone aboard that shouldn't be there. They cast lots and they fell on Jonah and he was thrown overboard. “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17). After Jonah had prayed to the Lord and had changed his mind about things, the record says, “And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land” (Jonah 2:10).

Again, “And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his

nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sack-cloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3).

In this story we have several things happening:

1. The commission was given to Jonah to go and preach to Nineveh.
2. Jonah tried to escape his responsibility and set out to go to another place.
3. God had to teach Jonah a lesson and prepare him for the task that he was to do.
4. Jonah changed his mind and went and preached to the people of Nineveh.
5. The city repented and God spared them.

E. The preaching of John the Baptist. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John has his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and

wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:1-6). "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (John 1: 6, 7). Also, continue to read in John 1.

It had been prophesied that John would do this work. He miraculously entered the world (Luke 1). Then the Lord prepared him and used him to prepare the way for Christ. He did the job he was sent to do.

- F. **The work of Christ.** Christ was with God in the beginning (John 1:1, 2). He then was born of the virgin Mary to begin his mission on earth (Matthew 1). Nothing much is said about him for the first several years of his life. The record does say, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). So the first thirty years of his life were spent in preparing for his work. The last three years were spent in performing miracles, teaching, and finally dying on the cross for the sins of the world (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 2:9).
- G. **Preparing the Apostles.** Christ called the apostles one by one and only after working with them, teaching them, and equipping them for their task, did he send them forth on the limited commission (Matthew 10). Only after further teaching and

guidance, and his death, burial, and resurrection, did he give them the great commission (Matthew 28:19, 20). Even then he promised to send the Comforter upon them who would guide them into all truth (John 16).

- H. Paul's preparation.** Even before his conversion, Paul was well educated and was a very religious man, even persecuting the church (Acts 8; 9; 26: 9; 22:3). Of course the Lord then appeared to him, and after his conversion he began to preach Christ (Acts 9). After preaching for some time, do we find him in the church at Antioch (Acts 13). And only after he had ministered for some period there, was he chosen, along with Barnabas, to be sent out. This was the beginning of the three missionary journeys that were to follow.

Now all of these accomplished so much for the Lord. Why? Because they were the right men for the right job. Not only so, but the Lord worked with them for the period that was necessary to give them the time needed to adequately prepare for the task that they were going to be sent forth to do. Because of this training, guidance, and preparation, then they were successful.

III. SOME SUGGESTIONS ON WORKING TOGETHER.

Based on what the Bible teaches, and knowing the general practice among brethren, I think I would make these suggestions:

- A. Choose the right man or family for the right job.**
- B. Be sure that they are ready to go and that they are qualified to go.**
- C. Try to know them as well as possible before you send them to the field. They also need to know you as well as possible before they leave you.**
- D. If the situation is such that you haven't been well acquainted with them in the past then some arrangement may be worked out so you can have an opportunity to be together for awhile.**
 - 1. Use this time though to the fullest degree.**
 - 2. If he is free from raising additional funds, etc., then let him preach some for you.**
 - 3. Give him the opportunity to fully acquaint the congregation with his proposed work.**
 - 4. This will give him an opportunity to teach some special classes on mission work.**
 - 5. He may also have the opportunity to get to know those in particular that are going to serve as treasurer of the funds and the one who will be handling the monthly newsletter.**
 - 6. He'll have time to help the congregation to build interest in mission work.**
- E. During this time you may want him to speak to neighboring congregations about the work to acquaint them with the program that you are beginning.**

- F. It might also be advantageous for him to begin to look around for others who could come now or later to help or to eventually come as a replacement.
- G. It may be that you will want to send him to one of the summer mission schools conducted by Harding College and Abilene Christian College.
- H. Only after you have learned to work together at home, are you ready to send this family to their final destination.
 - 1. You should love and respect each other.
 - 2. You should be happy with each other.
 - 3. You should trust each other.
 - 4. You should have the same goals.
 - 5. You should be in full agreement.
 - 6. You should be praying for each other.
 - 7. You should try to help each other in every way possible.
 - 8. You should know what to expect of each other.

If this kind of relationship can be created and maintained, then a wonderful work is surely bound to be the result. At least this should be your goal and you should do all within your power to live up to your part of it.

CONCLUSION

I have met several families who were so unhappy with

their sponsoring congregations. They felt no closeness. They never did hear from the elders. In general, they felt forgotten. And they may have been. But now is this the way it ought to be? Do you want your missionary family to come to feel this way about you? Surely not. Then work on this before their departure and then see to it that you have a wonderful relationship while they are away. If you will, then you will be happy and they will be happy too.

QUESTIONS

1. Give some of the different views of what should be done before sending the missionary.
2. What are the arguments given to suggest that the missionary be sent on immediately?
3. List the reasons given for having the missionary to spend some time with the sponsoring congregation before being sent.
4. What are some of the things that the missionary could do during this period of time?
5. Give some Bible examples of various ones that the Lord worked with in order to qualify them for the work they were going to be sent to do.
6. How long did Noah preach to the people of his day before the flood was actually sent?
7. How did God test Abraham for the work he wanted him to do?
8. What was the mission of Moses?
9. Why was it eighty years before God ever sent him?
10. Tell the story of Jonah.
11. What would have happened had Jonah not gone?
12. Why was John the Baptist sent before Christ?

13. What was done to prepare the Lord for his work?
14. About how many years did he spend in his public ministry?
15. How did Christ prepare the apostles for their task of world evangelism?
16. Tell the story of Paul.
17. Give some suggestions on working together.
18. How well should the congregation know the family they are sending?
19. List some things that can be done to make it possible for the congregation and the family to get to know one another better.
20. What can be done during the time?
21. How should the congregation feel about the family that they are sending?
22. What will happen if there is no real feeling of closeness between them?

PROJECTS

1. Make a survey of nearby congregations and see what kind of procedure they used before sending a missionary.
2. Discuss in the class the advantages and disadvantages of having a family to work for awhile with the congregation.
3. Give different class members a Bible character to report on in relationship to the preparation they had for their work.

4. How do you feel the congregation feels toward its missionary (provided it has one)? Take a poll among the members to find out how well they know him, if they correspond with him, if they know what he is doing, and if they are praying regularly for him and his work.

5. Talk about improvements that might be made.

LESSON ELEVEN

WORKING WITH THE MISSIONARY AFTER SENDING Philippians 4:14-20

INTRODUCTION

If sufficient preparation has been made prior to the departure of the missionary family, then this should lead to a pleasant relationship with them while they are away. This should be your goal and you should do all within your power to maintain such a relationship. By so doing, much more good will be accomplished.

In this particular lesson we are going to consider some different congregations and missionaries and the various relationships they may have with each other and what can be done to have a more profitable work.

DISCUSSION

- I. SOME THINGS THAT THE CONGREGATION CAN DO TO ASSURE A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MISSIONARY.
 - A. The church can send the family with sufficient personal support. I have known of cases where the missionary was poorly supported and then sometimes the preacher might go for several months without receiving a dime from the sponsor. To me this is deplorable. If you are going to support a

man then support him. Give him enough to live on and see to it that it is sent on time. Remember he must live even if he is on the other side of the world.

- B. Give him enough funds to do a good work while he is there.** Why send him to another part of the world if all he is going to do is just sit there? Tracts will need to be printed, Bible courses put out, a meeting place for the church, etc.
- C. Stay in contact with him.** Let him know that you haven't forgotten him but that you are with him. The elders should write him, and the members should write him. This shouldn't be over done, but there should be some letters, and it should be consistent. The missionary needs to know that you are there and that you will answer his letters. There are congregations who never write their missionary. They show no interest in him whatsoever. You can imagine how he must feel in such a case.
- D. Let him know that you are praying for him and his work.** You should pray for him and you should do this regularly. He should be remembered in the various meetings and then the members should be encouraged to privately pray for him. He'll have many trials and problems and it will mean so much just to know that his brethren are praying for him.
- E. Be sure to keep him posted on any decisions that**

you may make concerning the work. Don't leave him in the dark on anything. Remember, you are on one side of the world and he is on the other side.

- F. Try to answer any requests that he may have if it is at all possible.** He will probably not be asking for something that is unreasonable but will be thinking of the welfare of the work.
 - G. Help him solve his problems and make important decisions.** Do not put everything on his shoulders and then blame him if everything doesn't go just right.
 - H. Work with him.** Try to work with him and direct the work as far as you are able to do so.
 - I. Show love.** Have love for the missionary and the people that he is working with.
 - J. Send things as needed.** You may be able to gather Christian books, clothes, etc., to send to help with the work.
 - K. Be Christian.** Don't be ugly and unreasonable, but be Christian in your dealings with this family. This will mean so much to all concerned.
- II. THINGS THAT YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT OF YOUR MISSIONARY.**

- A. You can expect him to go to do the job you sent him to do.** You have not sent him on a trip or on a vacation. You have not sent him to be lazy. Rather, you want him to work and get on with the job of preaching the gospel, converting souls, establishing the church, and strengthening it.
- B. You can expect him to cooperate with you.** You are not sending someone to be rebellious, to be cranky, and to ignore your wishes, but rather to hear you, to work with you, etc.
- C. You can expect him to be wise in the way he uses his time and money.** It is possible for one to squander all of his time and to waste the money that he is given by improperly using it. Rather, you want him to be the kind that will wisely use these so that more good might be accomplished.
- D. You can expect him to build on another man's work, if he's gone to replace someone.** There are preachers who feel that they must tear down the other man's work in order that they might build their own work. This is a sign of envy and jealousy on the part of the missionary and ought not so to be. Rather, much more will be accomplished if the missionary will try to take advantage of the past missionary's work. Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, and God giveth the increase." This is the spirit.
- E. You can expect the missionary family to be able**

to work with others. So often preachers are the poorest people to get along with each other. Because of pressures to produce, being thrown together so much so far from home, etc., then they fuss and fight among themselves like cats and dogs. This is horrible and ought not to be. It is possible for them to work together if they'll try. You should insist that the family you send should do this. Of course, in all fairness to the man you send, you should realize that it is not just up to him, but the other fellow must put forth an effort too. Sometimes a missionary runs into another missionary who is just impossible to work with. In this case you should allow your missionary to move out to another area.

- F. You can expect your missionary to stay in contact with you.** I know some preachers who are just not very good at communicating with others. This is especially bad for a missionary since so many write him and each one expects an answer. But you should not only require him to send in a monthly report but he should be asked to write you every week or so. Unless he does this, and gives you an idea of what is going on, then you'll never know.
- G. You can expect him to contact you concerning his more difficult problems and the decisions that he will be called on to make.** You'll want to know about these things, especially as they relate to the church and its work.

III. SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID WHILE HE IS AWAY.

- A. **Don't start off with a lot of interest in them and finally lose all of it.** With some congregations, as far as their missionary is concerned, "Out of sight then out of mind." You don't want to allow this to happen. Rather keep a keen interest in the work all the way through and try to show it as much as is possible.

- B. **If you change preachers, don't allow the new preacher to come in and kill the interest you had in your mission program.** This often happens. The new preacher counts this as someone else's program, and he must have his own to show what he can do, so he encourages his brethren to begin to think on other things that can be done. I have heard of congregations likewise that talked about their missionary so much that it caused jealousy on the part of the local preacher and therefore turned him against the program and then he finally turned the congregation against their missionary. These are cruel things that must be avoided.

- C. **Whatever you do, don't expect too much of him.** So many preachers go with the feeling of pressure to produce. Because of this they are anxious to baptize some people as soon as possible and to report as many baptisms as possible each month. However, the emphasis is upon the wrong thing here. Jesus has said that the gospel must be

preached, then the results will follow. It is therefore our duty to see that the gospel is preached and it is the duty of those who hear it to obey it. Even if they do not obey it, we have still done our duty. The missionary can easily say, "For Christ sent me not to baptize but preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). His first duty is to preach the gospel. The seed must be sown properly if a harvest is to be forthcoming. But to act in haste will accomplish nothing and will only result in a lot of problems. For instance, in most foreign countries one can usually find a certain type of people who will immediately produce themselves and will submit to baptism upon request. But these are the people who are usually insincere in their actions and most likely have ulterior motives. They want to make a good impression in an attempt to get some help, to obtain a job, etc. So I would suggest that you encourage your man to mind his step and be sure to do a proper job in teaching rather than to have him rush in and try to baptize a lot of people. Even then he will be confronted with a number of problems.

- D. Don't hold the lines too tight.** Realize that you are on one side of the world and your missionary may be on the other. That means that you have sent a responsible man to do a responsible job. He'll therefore have to make many of the decisions that are made. It must be left to his better judgment as to what to do in many of these things, based on the local situation. So you must give him

the leeway or else you'll have him so tied up that he will not be able to move without word from you. That will mean also that the work will be completely killed. I say this on the basis that many decisions will have to be made on the spot at the time and he will not be able to wait from ten days to two weeks to get your reply on it. Even if he contacted you about them, in many instances you wouldn't be able to give an intelligent answer because it may be something you haven't been confronted with before and it involves things that are entirely different to what you have been accustomed to. Then how can you make a decision on where this family should live in the city, or whether a sign should be erected at a certain place or not, etc.? The only way you could make an intelligent decision would be for you to be there, to know the needs, and so on. So you'll have to leave this, and many other things, to your missionary. Of course on some of the more important decisions, and especially if it involves the future of the work, your financial commitment to it, etc., then you will want to have some say-so on them.

IV. SOME PROBLEMS THAT YOU MAY BE FACED WITH DURING THIS PERIOD OF WORK.

- A. Whether you will become involved in helping one or more of the members of the church of that country to come to the States to attend a Christian College. That is a real problem that you will no**

doubt have to face sooner or later. Of course with some brethren it is no problem at all – they simply feel that such people should be given an opportunity to come and they are therefore encouraged and helped to come. But is this the wise thing to do? Based on the experience that I have had, and the experience that others have had, and based on the results of this kind of thing, then I would personally strongly advise you not to become involved. Especially is this true if it involves Asia or any of the poor underdeveloped countries. But let us see how all of this comes about:

1. A missionary goes into some part of the world to begin his work.
2. He may convert a few and some of them may be young men.
3. The missionary may see in them some potential and, since he knows what a Christian education can mean, then he may have a great desire to see one or more go to the States to have their education.
4. Or one or more of these young men may approach the missionary about going to the States to continue their education. There are worlds of young people who are looking for any and every way to go to a foreign country for schooling. It may be that their motive in becoming members of the church was precisely

this.

5. So the missionary writes to one or more of the Christian colleges about getting a scholarship for them. Since some of the colleges evidently count some foreign students being on the campus as a must for their prestige then they will offer some scholarships. They seemingly never learn the lesson that in so doing they destroy their worth to the church, or at best, set the thing up so that these men must be returned to their own countries as paid missionaries with American congregations having to foot the bill. A book could be written on the problems and bad experiences that have come out of such adventures but we don't seem to profit from lessons of the past.
6. Now the next step is for the missionary to write you or some of his friends about making some funds available to send these students to the States. Please note, in most cases even their whole trip is paid for by others, meaning members of the church from America. Now this wouldn't be so bad if any thing good came out of it, but this is the whole point. In most every case without exception to date it has been a complete failure.
7. Once these students arrive in America and get settled down in one of the Christian colleges, they are not only in position to learn the Bible,

but to learn many other things as well. For instance, they learn a different way of life. They learn to eat a different kind of food. They learn to wear a different type of dress. They become accustomed to more money (there are always a lot of brethren who are more than willing to help them and to give anything they can to these poor foreign students who have never had the opportunities to enjoy the American way of life). Now look at them a year or two later. What do you see? Foreigners who have been Americanized. After they have completed a two or four-year course, they have different ideas about returning to their country. Why not remain in America? Besides what is there to return to? We picture them returning as great leaders of the church and accomplishing much for the Lord, but of course we have a different background and we are the ones who have all of these goals. The foreigners are still new in Christ, and have been dazed with all that they have seen and been given. They see nothing good about going back home. They see only a hard way of life, with only the bare necessities of life, with no real future for themselves or their families. So they usually end up staying in America. If they do decide to return they go well financed. I know of cases of where such brethren have returned and they are now living as kings simply because while they were in the States they made valuable contacts and they have been able to keep

those contacts since returning.

8. Now if these students do not return, then the missionary and all brethren concerned are greatly discouraged and all of the time, money, and even the man himself has been lost. You would think this would be enough, but some even try it again and again but still with no better success.
9. Should he return, with a ticket that has been given to him, he returns as a big man. He returns with American support. He returns with pride and prestige. He may not even want to work and cooperate with the local man. Actually, he now feels better and more important than the missionary. He has already forgotten who made all of this possible. Then many of the local people will resent him. He is no longer one of them. Or they may work through him to try to get something for themselves. Now to some this may seem exaggerated, and it would not be true of everyone, but it is true of most. If you don't believe it then go on and learn your own little lesson for yourself and then you will know.

Now it is not that we don't want to see foreigners educated. If it worked, we would like to see everyone of them go to a Christian college in America. But the point is, it just doesn't work. The problem is the difference in economics. Brethren, we must realize that we cannot send

students from these low-economy countries to a high-economy country like America and expect any tangible results from it. What is the solution? If it is possible at all to give them a Christian education, then do so in their own area, and better still in their own country. If there is no Christian school in operation then they'll just have to study privately with the missionary, study personally by reading and studying the Bible and other Christian literature. Then as the work grows and develops and a better arrangement can be made, that is fine. Otherwise, it must be limited to what can be done on a local basis. This will be better in the long run for them and all who are concerned.

- B. Whether you will become involved in supporting foreign preachers directly out of the funds you have available.** From all that I have seen and heard, I wouldn't say that it would never be wise to support a foreigner, but even then it would depend on the part of the world he is in, his background, and a number of other things. But for example, when it comes to Asia and much of the world, in my estimation it is far from ideal for a congregation to put a foreigner on direct financial support. In the first place, it is usually too much. In the next place, there is no way for the congregation to keep up with what he is doing. And finally, this creates many problems locally. With a people who's background and thinking are so different to that of our own, then you can't imagine the problems that can come about as a result of putting an Asian, for example, on a salary directly from an American church. What is the

solution? If he is to be put on salary at all, then let the missionary choose the man, set his salary according to the local economy, see to it that he receives his monthly support, and that he does the work that needs to be done. Even then you will have some problems, but not near the problems you would have otherwise. But not just that, you should be thinking in terms of what is best for the work. If you are thinking about that then you'll be more careful in the action you take. Then finally, a solution that would be even better than that would be to instill within the minds and lives of the foreign members of the church their responsibility to preach and teach the gospel to their own people, and thus to encourage them to go on with their regular jobs, etc., but with a love for the Lord, the truth, and souls, to teach the gospel as they have opportunity. Actually, it is going to have to come to this if we ever accomplish very much in these countries because we cannot support financially everyone we convert or even everyone who wants to work full-time for the Lord.

- C. **Whether you will allow the missionary to put anyone on salary.** The missionary will need help. Therefore, if he converts a good man and he can be given some teaching and training, and might be of use, then there is a temptation to put him on salary. Certainly there will be many things he can do since he will be a local man. He may be needed for translation, for follow-up work, to deal with Bible correspondence work, to put out tracts, to

preach, and to do a thousand other things. But my advice would be that if one is to be given a salary, then the missionary shouldn't rush into it. Rather, he should take his time and try to choose the right man (if there is more than one to choose from), then to approach him about the work, explain the work to him and what will be expected of him and what his salary will be. But there should be a clear understanding. I have found that everything goes fine until you bring money into the picture and that is when your problems begin. So watch out. But I would at the same time advise that the missionary not get involved by putting a number on the payroll. It will certainly be tempting because you feel you could do so much more, establish congregations in other areas, etc. But even if this was to be done, how could you possibly do it, until the church has been built up so there are enough men who are qualified to be taught and trained to do this type of work. To convert a man out of denominationalism and then to send him out is unwise, because he cannot preach the truth if he does not know the truth. Rather he will teach what he has always taught — his denominational error. Therefore in the end you will have only been responsible in spreading denominationalism. Not only so but when preachers are hired on a wholesale basis you end up in attracting only the hirelings of the area. Be careful, and again I say, be careful. If you don't, you'll wish you had.

D. Whether you'll put up a meeting house in connection with the work you are sponsoring. Again, this will be the tempting thing to do. But you should want to know several things before you move. Where will it be built? When will it be built? How much will it cost? Will there be any responsible members there who can take care of it? Or will it end up falling into the wrong hands and either being used by some denomination or personally used and sold by some member of the church who has been allowed to scheme and gain control of it? Will the meeting house really benefit the work and help it to grow? Will it only end up in making the people more dependent on the foreigner? Will they be able to keep it up? Can they build their own meeting house? Could they do without one? Of course these questions and many others will need to be carefully weighed and considered. Naturally most Americans, having always been accustomed to meeting houses, therefore think the thing to do is to rush in and build a meeting house. They may have nothing else, but if they have a meeting house then they think they have been successful. My advice would be to weigh the matter carefully and only after you definitely see that a meeting house would be in the best interest of the work, then build one. Otherwise, don't. If you are not careful though, you'll get involved in a building and then you'll be forced to keep a missionary there for years to come, if for no other reason, to police the building that you constructed. **WHY?** To protect your investment,

financially.

V. CONCERNING THE WISDOM OF BRINGING A MISSIONARY HOME.

If there is any way possible to allow a man to stay on the job and complete his work, then do that. However, there may be some cases where it would be absolutely necessary to recall a man.

- A. **If a man, or some of the members of his family are sick, then it may be in the best interest of his health and the work to have him come home. This would be rare, but it could happen.**
- B. **If a family is having difficulty in adjusting, working with others, etc., then it would be necessary to either have them move to another place or to call them home. In either case, this would be bad, but if the family is jeopardizing the work then something will have to be done.**
- C. **If the missionary is unwise in his use of money and refuses to abide by the decision of the elders then he may have to be brought home. I have known of cases like this and I am sure that it was for the best in the long run.**
- D. **If the missionary is definitely teaching error, causing division, and so on, then he should be returned home immediately.**

In any one of these cases, or in any other that might come up, the congregation should be very careful not to jump to conclusions, act upon hearsays, and the words of some disgruntled person or persons. However, after investigation if it is found that it would be wise to bring the family home, then and only then should the congregation act. But the congregation should not notify the family in the field that they are being dropped and that from that day forward that no additional support will be given to them and that no travel fund will be provided for their return home. This would be very un-Christian. Even if the congregation is bringing them home, they should continue the family's support until they have at least returned, and the travel fund should be made available for their return. This would be the only right thing to do in this case. I have known of cases where congregations were very un-Christian in dealing with their missionaries and this only hurt them and made the missionaries bitter toward them. Not only so, but what family in the future would want to work with a congregation that would treat its missionaries as they had treated theirs.

CONCLUSION

Your work and relationship with your missionary in a foreign field should be pleasant, inspiring, profitable, and productive. Both the congregation and the missionary should find it a rewarding experience. It should promote and lead to greater things for all involved.

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of relationship should exist between the congregation and missionary after he has been sent?
2. List some things that the congregation can do to assure a good working relationship with the missionary.
3. What kind of support should he have?
4. What will he need a work fund for?
5. Should the congregation ever write him? How often? What for?
6. How should the congregation feel toward its missionary?
7. Make a list of some things that the congregation has a right to expect of its missionary.
8. Should the missionary stay in contact with his sponsor? To what extent?
9. How should the missionary deal with those with whom he is working?
10. Mention some things that should be avoided while he is away.
11. Is it possible to expect too much of your missionary?
12. Why has he been sent?
13. What are some of the problems that may have to be dealt with?
14. Should foreign students be brought to the States to attend a Christian college?
15. What is the result of this kind of procedure?
16. What happens when the student returns home (if he returns)?

17. Is it ideal for a congregation to put a foreigner on direct support?
18. Mention some of the problems that come about when such support is given.
19. What is the solution to this problem?
20. Should the congregation allow the missionary to put foreigners on salary? Under what circumstances?
21. Should you get involved in building a meeting house in a foreign country?
22. What happens when you do?
23. Is this in the best interest of the work?
24. Is there ever a time when a missionary should be brought home?
25. How should this be handled?

PROJECTS

1. What kind of relationship does the local congregation have with its missionary in the field?
2. What can the class do to encourage one or more missionaries?
3. Have any of the members of the class ever been associated with any foreign students? Let them tell their impressions.
4. Check with one of the Christian colleges and find out how many of their foreign students have returned to their homeland to preach the gospel.

5. Have someone to write two or three foreign missionaries about the wisdom of supporting foreign preachers with American money.
6. Also have someone to write two or three foreign missionaries about the way they solve the problem of a place to meet for worship.

LESSON TWELVE

HAVING THE MISSIONARY TO REPORT

Acts 14:26-28

INTRODUCTION

After the missionary and his family have spent two to four years or more in the field, then it is time for him to return home. Then what? For one thing, you'll want him to report to the church on his work, and likewise to all of the other congregations that may have had a part in the work.

There is quite a lot to be said about the missionary's return, his report, the attitude of the church toward all of this, etc. Come along as we give some thought to these matters.

DISCUSSION

I. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL.

As we begin our study we should keep in mind that the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas out to preach the gospel (Acts 13:1-3). However, they were sent only after they had spent some time with the church and adequate preparation had been made. Prior to Paul's second journey, the record says, "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every

city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (Acts 15:35-41). Finally, after staying some time with the church at Antioch, for the third time he went forth on another missionary journey (Acts 18, 22, 23).

There are many wonderful lessons that we could learn concerning mission work if we would but study his missionary journeys, but just here we want to note that after his first two journeys in particular the record clearly shows that Paul returned to his sponsoring church to report on the work that had been done. Please note what took place after the first journey: "And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples" (Acts 14:26-28). After the second missionary journey, we read: "And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there he departed, and went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:22, 23). After Paul's third journey he went

up to Jerusalem to fulfill a vow (Acts 21). Along the way, and in Jerusalem itself, he met with the church to tell them all of the wonderful things that were happening.

Could you picture Paul being sent out by the church at Antioch and then before his return for him to be sent word that it would not be necessary for him to come to give a report? Could you picture Paul visiting with any other congregations in the whole area and not being called on to speak, but rather for the local preacher to be asked to go ahead with his regular sermon? Could you picture Paul visiting one of these congregations and being told that he could have ten minutes to speak? But if Paul were living today, this would be the kind of experiences that he would have. Then if he visited one of our Christian college lectureship programs, he would be given eight minutes to tell what he had been doing and of the needs that existed. You can see surely that things have changed somewhat since Paul's day. You can see that the emphasis is no longer on the spreading of the gospel, but on what is going on at home. My brethren these things ought not so to be.

II. WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE THE MISSIONARY AND HIS FAMILY TO RETURN FROM TIME TO TIME?

Paul went out to preach the gospel and to establish the church in the major centers of Asia and Europe, but he returned quite frequently. There was a great deal of traveling involved but we read of no criticism of this. But there must have been some reason why he returned, and there was.

Likewise, there are several reasons why a missionary of our day may return home occasionally.

- A. He may need to return home to give a special report to the elders concerning some problem or the needs of the work. This would naturally be at the request of the sponsoring church.**

- B. He might be given permission to return home to raise money for a building or to find additional workers. Again, this would be with the approval of the sponsoring congregation.**

- C. At the close of his period of work he will naturally return home for awhile. Even if he is going to continue with the work it is still necessary for him to return.**
 - 1. If he stays away too long his brethren will forget him and his work.
 - 2. He needs to return to get some much needed rest.
 - 3. He needs to return to report to the sponsoring church concerning his work.
 - 4. He needs to return for the sake of the relatives and friends.
 - 5. He needs to return for the sake of the children.
 - 6. He needs to return in order to make new plans for the work.

III. HOW SOME BRETHERN REACT TO THE MISSIONARY'S RETURN.

Believe it or not, some sponsoring congregations would be just as happy if the missionary family just stayed away

from them. Especially is this true of a number of those who may have given some monthly support. I have personally had congregations write me not to come. Can you believe that any group of brethren would treat a missionary like this, especially one that they have been helping to support? Why is this?

- A. They usually explain that they have inaugurated a new program of work.**
- B. They may explain that they will not be having any other financial ties with the work.**
- C. But the fact probably is that they fear that they will be asked for additional financial assistance.**
- D. It also indicates that they are not interested and just don't want to be bothered.**

But regardless of the explanation offered, can you imagine a congregation of the Lord's church not wanting to have a personal report from the man that they have been helping to support? That would be equal to the United States sending a man to a foreign country to serve as Ambassador for four years and then not even have him to come in to give his report upon his return to the States. It would also be equal to a firm sending a man to another part of the world to assess the business opportunities and then sending him word upon his return home that he should not bother to come by to give his report. It would also be comparable of a man having a doctor to go by to see a sick relative and having him to run several tests and then not

to be interested in the results of those tests. In other words, you just can't picture a congregation, any congregation, feeling that way. When this is the case then there is something badly wrong. Any way you look at it, it is bad.

Other congregations will allow the missionary to come to give his report but they do so out of a sense of duty only. They actually have no interest in the work, but because they had put a little into it, then they tolerate the report on the work.

Can you imagine how this would make the missionary feel? Here he has spent several years of his life in a foreign field. He has worked hard and sacrificed a lot in comparison to his brethren at home. He now returns home anxious to tell his brethren all the wonderful things that have happened. And what is the response he gets? When he writes for an appointment, he is either told not to come or else if he is allowed to come he is treated more as an intruder than a bearer of good news.

But thank God, there is the other type of congregation also. There are still a lot of good and wonderful congregations. They have sponsored and supported a missionary in the field and they are vitally concerned about him and the work he has been doing. They welcome him home. They are anxious to have his report. They make him feel wanted. They show their appreciation in various ways. They feel that they just can't do enough to show their appreciation. Now this is the kind of congregation that missionaries love to come home to. This makes them thankful that they went and it makes them want to continue.

IV. THE REPORT ITSELF.

Letters, newsletters, etc., are good, but nothing can take the place of a firsthand report. This is the whole idea then. You'll want to hear the story from the missionary himself. There will be many things that you will want to know about.

- A. You'll want to hear about the people he has been working among. You'll want to know everything possible about them.**
- B. You'll want to hear about the first conversions, the establishment of the church, and its growth.**
- C. You'll want to hear about some of the major problems, of the needs, and of prospects for the future.**
- D. You'll want to hear about as many personal experiences as possible to make the whole thing come to life and be real to you.**
- E. You'll probably want to see the slides that are available.**

Not only will you want to have this report, but you may want him to speak on other occasions as well. The elders will want to have some private meetings with the missionary, and even more so, if the relationship is to be continued for another term of work. And finally, the elders will naturally want the missionary to visit all of the supporting congregations to give them a special report on the work.

While the missionary is with the sponsoring congregation, and visiting with supporting congregations, the

brethren should try to take full advantage of his presence, and the fact that he has been working in a foreign land, by introducing him to the local radio and television stations and to the local newspapers. If you'll do this then they will probably want to interview him and write up a special report on him and his work. It is a wonderful opportunity to get a lot of good advertising free of charge for the church.

Also, while the missionary is home, apart from visiting his sponsoring congregation, and his supporting congregations, and trying to spend some time with his folks, there may also be opportunity to appear on missionary workshops in the area and speak on other occasions that may help to acquaint more brethren with the work and to encourage more to help. As with the work in the field, the time at home will also be a trying period of time with work and more work to be done. To tell you the truth, unless one loves to indulge in work then he had better not become a missionary. Whoever came up with the idea that all missionary work is just a lot of travel and having a good time either was ignorant or else told a lie.

V. UNDERSTANDING THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE REPORT.

A lot of brethren do not understand the purpose of the report. They think that it is only for the purpose of asking for money. Of course they think the missionary is trying to get their money and they don't want to give it, so the best thing to do is to keep him away from them. But they have missed the entire point. The genuine missionary is anxious to visit those congregations that have helped him

whether he is given any financial support or not. He is not a hireling. Rather, he desires to fulfill his obligation to those congregations that have been contributing to the work by giving them a report on what has been accomplished. Of course he wants to thank them for helping to make this possible. He would naturally like them to continue their support, but if they are not interested then he is certainly not going to try to force them to continue. Rather, he will thank them and go on his way.

If brethren could only realize the good that it will do them, then surely they would feel differently about having the missionary to come. If they have any interest in seeing the Lord's church expand, in souls being saved, and in what has been done with the money that they have spent on the work, then surely they are going to want to hear about it.

CONCLUSION

With the report made, it should mean that a work has been begun and completed, the goals set have been reached, and now it is time to begin all over. Most congregations and missionaries do not stop with their initial experience, but go on to try it again. This speaks well for the work itself and the congregations and missionaries should be commended for their love for the Lord and their desire to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to others.

QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 14:26-28.
2. What did Paul do on his return from his missionary journeys?

3. How was he received?
4. Why is it necessary for the missionary family to return occasionally?
5. How is the missionary received on his return?
6. What are some of the excuses offered for not having the missionary to come by for a visit?
7. Why would any congregation not want such a man to come by to give his report?
8. How does this make the missionary feel?
9. Do all congregations respond negatively?
10. How do these congregations react to the missionary's visit?
11. What kind of report will you want to hear?
12. Will you just want to hear the pretty side?
13. What else will the elders want the missionary to do?
14. Explain the real purpose of the report.
15. Is it given solely in hopes of getting more support?
16. Will it hurt the congregation?
17. What will it do for the congregation?
18. Do most congregations and missionaries quit at this point?
19. What does this indicate?
20. What is wrong with a congregation when it resents a missionary's visit?

PROJECTS

1. How many of the class have ever heard a missionary give a report on his work? Discuss them.
2. Have someone to give a report on Paul's reports.

3. As the class engages in some type of work, have one to give a report on it.
4. Should a member of the class engage in a campaign, help in some special way with the Lord's work at home, or away from home, invite him to give a report on it.
5. Has the local congregation had an opportunity to welcome its missionary, or another missionary, to give a report? How did the congregation react to it?
6. Try to encourage a missionary to come to give a special report to the class.

LESSON THIRTEEN

GOING ON TO GREATER THINGS

Matthew 23:11; Philippians 2:12-16

I Corinthians 15:58

INTRODUCTION

Paul's first missionary journey did not bring his work to a close for the Lord. Neither did the church at Antioch consider its task completed just because they had sent Paul and Barnabas out. Rather, both went on to accomplish more and more for the Lord.

Neither should a missionary and his sponsoring congregation today think of their job having been completed just because they have already spent a few years in mission work. Although they may have done more than others, that does not mean they have a right now to sit down with a clear conscience and feel that they no longer have any responsibility to God or their fellow men. Instead, with the experience already gained, it should put them in position to move on to greater things for the Lord.

DISCUSSION

- I. SOME THINGS TO BE ON THE GUARD AGAINST.
 - A. **Don't allow yourself to become bitter because of past experiences.** Even though you have had some bad experiences, don't allow that to turn you

against mission work. Next time may be better. Just because a farmer fails one year with his crops, doesn't mean that he will fail the next year provided he will try. All of us have our ups and downs. All of us have our successes and failures. We cannot give up though. Neither can we become hardened and bitterly oppose something because of a few bad experiences. To the contrary, we must just work hard and be determined next time to succeed.

- B. **Don't be a quitter.** Whatever you do, don't quit. Since you already have experience, and you are in position to do more than ever before, this is all the more reason why you can't quit. Instead of quitting you should want to try to do more.
- C. **Don't wait too long.** You don't want to go too long without getting back into the work. It would be even better if you had a situation where you, as a congregation, could get right back into the work almost immediately.
- D. **Don't allow some other program of work to take your interest.** Sometimes brethren will get involved in a building program, or any number of local projects, and then they will begin to reason that because of these they will not be able to continue with their sponsorship. But try never to let this happen. All of the Lord's work is important, but sometimes it is a matter of choice, then we would have to say that some of the work is more

essential or more necessary than other things.

II. GOOD REASONS FOR CONTINUING WITH YOUR SPONSORSHIP.

- A. **You now have the kind of experience you need to do a great job.** It is like in most everything else, the more experience you have then the better prepared you are to do a good job.
- B. **You have the ability to do this work.** You have already demonstrated this by the fact that you have already been engaged in this type of work. Not only so, but the next time will be even easier.
- C. **Your help is still greatly needed.** To cease to sponsor would only mean that there is one less congregation to do the job that needs to be done. On the other hand, to continue with your sponsorship means that there will be at least one more congregation that is doing its duty.
- D. **It is your duty to the Lord and to your fellow man.** “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).
- E. **If at all possible, you should continue with the work already begun.** To start a work is commendable, but what is accomplished if it is allowed to die? It would be so much better if you would try

to continue with the work you have already begun. You are familiar with the missionary who did the work. You know a great deal about what has been accomplished, the needs, etc. No doubt more can be done this time.

- F. To encourage others.** What are brethren going to think if you quit now? What a bad example it would set. You must continue to show what it means to stick with something and see it through. It will be encouraging to many others.

- G. The Lord commanded you to.** The gospel is to be taken into all the world (Mark 16:15). "How shall they go except they be sent?" (Romans 10:15). That means that the Lord is looking to the church to carry forth the gospel. If the church fails then who can the Lord look to?

III. WHY YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO EVEN MORE.

The Lord not only wants you to continue to do what you are doing, but to do even more. Surely with all of the experience that you have gained, all the growth that has taken place spiritually and numerically, then you should be in position to do much more than you have done in the past. There are several reasons for this:

- A. You should have more faith by now.** Surely your faith has grown considerably after seeing that it was possible after all for you to sponsor a family in

a foreign field. If your faith has grown then it is time to take on more work, not less.

- B. Your vision should be raised higher.** You have firsthand experience. You are more acquainted now with this type of work. You know more of the need in the area you have been working, and around the world. This should lead you to have a vision of a greater work.
- C. Your very involvement should pave the way for an expansion of your work.** Because of this it will now be easier to take on more work than it was even to accept such a responsibility in the beginning.
- D. Your leadership should be stronger now and should encourage taking on more responsibility.**
- E. The members should be mentally and spiritually prepared now to do more.** This is not new to them any longer. They know what it is all about. They have been through this before and know that they can do even more.
- F. The financial strength of the congregation should be stronger than ever.** With growth in membership, in faith, and vision, there should have also been a growth in contributions, enabling the church therefore to be in position to do much more. This means then that it would be possible to take on more work. If this does not follow, then the

church will eventually lose what it has gained, and therefore lose its opportunity to do more.

If you haven't grown and developed over the past few years, and if you are not in position to do more now, then there is something wrong somewhere. In such a case you need to find where the fault is and correct it. But in all probability you are altogether able to do more. It is just a matter of seeing the need, being challenged, and preparing a program that would lead to an expansion of your work load.

IV. SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO ADD TO YOUR WORK.

A congregation cannot stand still. It cannot remain indifferent about its work. It will either go backward or forward. It will either go down or up. For this reason it is expedient that you begin to think in terms of what you can do to add to your work and then get busy and do it.

Now some congregations will add to their work, but all of it will be on a local level. They will add another preacher, build some more on to their building, or construct a new building altogether, begin some television work, and a lot of other things. But is this the way to grow?

What a lot of brethren can't seem to understand is this: it doesn't hurt the local work to engage in foreign evangelism. Rather, if the church has the right spirit and the desire to do the Lord's will then it will help it to grow and develop. Of course, if you have already served as a sponsor then you should know that by now.

Here are some suggestions on how you might add to

your program of work:

- A. **Why not add another missionary to your present program?** In other words, instead of sponsoring one, sponsor two. It would not take all that much extra. If you could give all of the financial backing, then so much the better. If not, then the missionaries could raise the remainder of their support from sister congregations.
- B. **Why not add three or four more missionaries to your program?** Stories are told about various denominational groups that are sponsoring dozens and dozens of men in foreign evangelism. If they can do this, in spite of the fact that they are in error, surely you can send out three or four missionaries. It might be that you could send even more than that, and how wonderful that would be. There are some congregations that are doing this. There just needs to be more. A good question for study might be: How is it that some can send several and others cannot? Also, how is it that some congregations can at least send one family whereas many others seem to think that they can't send the first one? Yet, if you looked at a lot of these congregations you would find little difference in those sending and those not sending. That is, there would be little difference when it comes to membership, financial ability, etc. So the difference must lie in dedication, vision, faith, love, and zeal for the Lord.

- C. Why not send another missionary to some mission point in the States?** We are not really advocating that the only place in the world to do mission work is outside the United States. We are encouraging more foreign mission work in an attempt to get the gospel spread around the world and to see the church planted in every nation of the world, but we realize at the same time there is still much to be done in the States. We must remain strong at home if we are to evangelize the world.
- D. Why not do more in your own city and community?** There is still much to be done at home. Every member of the church needs to be put to work. Every person in the whole area needs to be reached for Christ. If you'll work hard, and use the right approach, many of these people can be won to Christ. As you strive to expand your work away from home, also expand it at home. One should encourage the other. They should go along hand in hand.
- E. Why not add to your teaching program?** At the very base of all of this, and perhaps to pave the way for the other, there needs to be a lot of good sound teaching done. The members need to be well grounded in the Bible and trained to teach it to others. World evangelism classes need to be taught from the youngest class to the oldest class, from the smallest to the largest, in order to educate, inspire, and to prompt the church to do more toward reaching the world for Christ. If you'll

work on your teaching program and put the emphasis where it belongs then the congregation will move out and leave others behind.

These, and many other things, can be done to help the church to do more. The church just must do more if we are going to do the job the Lord wants done. We are able to do it if we will but use our talents and our opportunities to do so.

V. FURTHER SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY HELP US.

- A. Let's not be content with doing what we are doing but let's have a strong desire to do more.**
- B. Let's not soothe our conscience on the basis that we are doing something, but our conscience should bother us unless we are doing all that is within our power.**
- C. Let's be looking for means and ways that we may launch out to do more.**
- D. Let's raise our vision, put our faith in God, and believe that we can do all things through Him.**
- E. Let's sincerely pray about this and pray that the Lord will help us to do more.**
- F. Let's get behind the elders of the congregation and assure them that we are desirous of doing more.**

- G. Let's be giving more, realizing that the church can do only as the church has to do with.
- H. Let's be doing all we can to win souls to the Lord and to interest the brethren in accomplishing more for the Lord Jesus.

VI. WE SHOULD HAVE A GOAL.

The mission of the church is to carry the gospel to a lost and dying world. With vision, plans, goals, faith, courage, giving, and work, the Lord will see to it that we reach our goal. That goal should be to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven in our own immediate generation. Each congregation should send one or more men according to its ability, and every member of the church should become a missionary for the Lord. If we'll be earnest about this, with all faith and determination, we'll be able to turn the world upside down for the Lord, and nothing will be able to stop us from reaching our goal. If we fail then we will have no one to blame but the Lord.

VII. THE LORD WILL SURELY BLESS OUR EFFORTS.

Christ has said that if we would seek, we would find, that if we would ask, it would be given that if we would knock, it would be opened to us (Matthew 7:7, 8). Do you believe that? I do.

The Lord has said that if we would seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness then all of the other things would be added to us (Matthew 6:33). Do you

believe this? I do.

The Lord has said that all things will work together for our good if we love him (Romans 8:28). Do you believe this? I do.

He has said that if we sow much that we shall reap much and that whatsoever we soweth that shall we also reap (II Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 6:7, 8). Do you believe this? I do.

The Lord has made so many wonderful promises to us as his people. He has assured us that he would be with us. He has said that he would hear us and answer our prayers. He has said that he would be with us and help us. How comforting it is to know that when we strive to do his will he is going to help us succeed.

Yes, the Lord will bless our efforts. With this assurance, how can we lose? How can we fail? He will surely give us the victory. Faith is the victory.

CONCLUSION

In every walk of life we prepare ourselves to enable us to do more and to go on to higher positions and thus to accomplish more. The Christian begins as a babe in Christ, but as he feeds on the milk of the word then he grows and develops and becomes stronger. Soon he is able to take of the meat of the word, enabling him to understand the will of the Lord more fully and to do more work and to serve him more effectively.

This is true with this congregation, any congregation, every congregation, and even the whole church. The Lord expects it to grow and develop and to do. As it does then it is able to do more. Then there is more growth, making

it possible to accomplish more for the Lord. There is no end to it. Neither is there any turning back. There is only one direction to go and that is forward – ever going on to greater things for the Lord.

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:10-12).

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).

QUESTIONS

1. Did Paul's first missionary journey bring his work to a close?
2. Did this end the job that the church at Antioch was doing?
3. Should a missionary and his sponsor feel that the job is done just because they have completed two or three years of work?
4. What should they be in position to do now?
5. List some things they should be on guard against.
6. Is it possible for a congregation to become bitter because of past experiences?
7. Should they allow this to prevent them from being a future sponsor?
8. Why do some congregations quit?
9. Give some reasons for continuing with your sponsorship.

10. What can experience mean to your future work?
11. Has the job been completed yet? How much more is left to be done?
12. How can you be an example to other congregations?
13. What has the Lord said about it?
14. Why should you be able to do even more?
15. In what ways has the congregation grown?
16. What are some things you can do to add to your work?
17. Why should you add another missionary to your present program?
18. What can be done in the States?
19. What can be done at home?
20. To what extent are world evangelism classes needed?
21. List some further suggestions that may help the work.
22. What goal should we have?
23. Will the Lord bless these efforts? How?

PROJECTS

1. Think of ways the class can do more at home and abroad to spread the gospel and to do good.
2. Consider ways the class can encourage the congregation to do more for the Lord.
3. How many members of the class have decided to take the gospel to others?
4. Discuss the mission program of the church and means and ways of adding to it.
5. Have visiting class members to give reports on their home congregations and what they are doing.