

"With the Cross of Jesus..."

The Nurses' School of the Presbyterian Medical Center in Chunju, Korea, had just opened in a beautiful new brick building when North Korean Communists invaded South Korea in 1950. When their forces occupied our city they set up police headquarters in this School. Masons constructing that building had set bricks forming a simple cross projecting slightly from the wall over the front entrance. Attempting to erase this symbol of the Christian faith, the Communists tried to chisel the cross away. But while they defaced the wall, actually the more they tried the more conspicuous became the "old rugged cross."

"In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

The World-Wide Witness of the Church is to the cross of Jesus Christ. "When Jesus said, "Go ye...and make disciples of all the nations" He offered the church no option; rather as Lord of the Church He issued an order.

"As long as that text rings out its trumpet-toned commission, any man who opposes missions is implicitly saying he knows more than Christ." (James Stewart).

The Church exists to witness. The witness is to Christ. Missions is the Church giving her world-wide witness to Christ.

The basic motive for missions is Christ. A prominent minister once asked me about a problem that seemed to vex him, "Why are missionaries as a group so conservative?" My reply was impromptu but I think it was correct, for I said, "Well, isn't it what makes him a missionary in the first place? His response to the call of Christ is primarily because he believes that all men are hopelessly lost in sin, that the Son of God died on a cross to save those sinners, and that it is our business to tell this news to the whole world. There you have the heart of the Gospel--call it conservatism if you like.

So the missionary is a 'conservative' from the start, or he wouldn't be a missionary. Those who sail for foreign lands with only lesser motives either do not remain in the service very long, or (as is often the case) have their convictions deepened as they come face to face with the raw sin of heathenism and see the utter hopelessness of mankind without Christ and the inadequacy of their 'native' religions." James Denney once heard a distinguished missionary say,

"Some people do not believe in missions. They have no right to believe in missions; they do not believe in Christ."

Missionary interest is spontaneous whenever there are burning hearts filled with a burning message for a burning world. You have to live in a pagan land to realize the abysmal darkness of sin and lack of fundamental morality in pagan societies and which we take for granted in America. Shortly before leaving Korea last summer I found a three or four week old baby abandoned by the road near my office--a symbol of pagan indifference to the value of human life. I have seen the demented--say a 20 year old girl--driven naked about the streets the butt of jeers and laughter and stones--evidence of heathen insensitivity to human need. I have heard the wailing by a fresh grave of those who know no hope, illustrative of the whole world of spiritual darkness engulfing uncounted millions who have never heard the words, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Education and Civilization without the Gospel only make matters worse. For instance Westernization of Korea is incredibly rapid. What Koreans learn from grade 2 American movies and literature, and from the example of many representatives of America living in Korea in recent years, is "education" and it is "civilization" but it has merely substituted one kind of paganism for another. The Gospel which will turn this world upside down is what the Apostles preached: "God is in Christ acting to save the world from sin; God can make all men new creatures in Christ Jesus; God is bringing all creation to its glorious climax with Christ comes again!"

This witness to the cross of Christ is world-wide--"to every nation"--and it is to individuals in every part of society. The true meaning of the word "ecumenical" is "world-wide" and not primarily the visible organic ~~of~~ unity of the church, as emphasized by the leaders of the current movement bearing this name. True ecumenism lies not in visible organization but in the fellowship in the Holy Spirit of those faithful to their witness to the cross of Christ.

The effect of the witness to the cross, is best seen in the lives of individuals in all walks of life. These in turn also become witnesses. Let me illustrate this truth in the lives of three Korean deacons, friends of mine. Books could be written about Korean deacons--how they witness to their neighbors, organize churches, build buildings, and keep their congregations alive. Since nearly any Korean Christian who is faithful and zealous gets to be a deacon, we deal with a lot of them.

Deacon Sim is very very poor so far as this world's goods are concerned. He lives a day's bus journey from Chunju, but that did not prevent his visiting me repeatedly until I travelled to his village where he was anxious to begin a church. I finally set out in my jeep, assuming that I would have to walk the last three miles from the nearest large town. But upon arrival Deacon Sim greeted me with the news that I could drive on to his village. How? Well, he and several friends had fixed up the old cart road, even installing a couple of bridges where streams could not be forded. We set out, inching our way between rice ^d _h paddies and jockeying our way around narrow bends in this "super-highway." The bridges were the usual type--two long poles from bank to bank with shorter poles cross-wise, gaps filled in with pine boughs and the whole covered with sand--total width exactly that of a jeep. As we crept across one such bridge my Korean Assistant was standing at the side of the jeep giving me directions how to cut my wheels; for it was now dark. The top layer of sand gave way under him and he fell sprawl-

ing backward into the clear cold water for an unscheduled bath. The whole village was out to welcome the first mission²⁷ and the first jeep in Mai-ye-li. On another visit, Deacon Sim, evidently suffering from some kind of arthritis, greeted me with his face and arms smeared with a locally prescribed remedy consisting of a mixture of ingredients in which raw egg predominated. Yet poor and ignorant as he is, by his faithfulness Deacon Sim has started a church which now has its own building and holds regular services. Deacon Sim carries the major responsibility--visiting, organizing, preaching, and witnessing personally.

Deacon Lee is another poor man who moved from North Korea where the Communists would not allow him freedom of worship. In response to his invitation I visited the little group worshipping in his humble home. Clearly Deacon Lee was using what talents he had to rebuild his fortunes. He was growing persimmons, walnuts, and chestnuts on every available piece of land. He kept chickens, pigs, honey bees, and silk worms. He cheerfully informed me that they had moved all the silk worms out of one room so I would have a place to spend the night. Rather than hire labor for all these enterprizes and to work his little farm, every member of the family worked with him. Since my first visit four or five years ago he has prospered in moderate fashion, and the whole village honors him for his diligence and frugality, which in turn testify to a vital Christian faith. The first time we worshipped there, about twenty of us met in an eight-foot square room. The ceiling was too low to stand, so I preached and held the first communion service in a kneeling position. Now, due to Deacon Lee's efforts a beautiful little church and manse stand on the hill behind his house. Last winter he was ordained as an elder, a position he fully deserves, and where I am sure he will continue to honor his Lord before the whole village.

Deacon Sin is a prosperous business man. Previously only a nominal

Christian, he became an active and earnest member of the church following his marriage to the daughter of a refugee elder from North Korea. They settled in a bustling mountain village, a natural crossroads and market center. He set up a sawmill operated by an ancient steam-engine which ran on charcoal-generated gas. During the post-war building boom his lumber business prospered, and Deacon Sin recognized God as the source of his success. His testimony was more by deeds than by word of mouth, for he is uneducated and poor at expressing himself. But with his lumber and the money he had made, he built a small church just outside the village. From the start it was a success and on each visit I held dozens of examinations and baptized many of the villagers. Deacon Sin was influential in winning his own brothers to Christ, as well as in his personal witness to many neighbors in the village. My last visit was this past spring when a revival was being held. The little church was packed and overflowing. Mr. Sin sat by the door, ushering in the late-comers in his humble way and making them feel at home. Some time ago, Deacon Sin bought from U.S. Army salvage an old generator. Reasoning that the same steam which sawed lumber in the daytime could generate electricity at night,, he organized a private company, strung wires to all the houses in the village (and, of course, to his church) and now this remote spot has electricity until bed-time every night. But more important than this physical light, is the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which his efforts have brought into the hitherto spiritually dark village of In-wul-li.

One other feature of missions--this witness to the cross of Jesus Christ--must not be overlooked. That is that God depends upon the human messenger, the man or woman who is willing to take up his cross and follow Jesus. Missions are predicated not only upon a message but upon those who are willing to carry that message at personal sacrifice. One might ask why it is necessary to send mission-

aries from America, when there are already fine Korean Christians who can and do witness to their own people. Why not send money, and radio stations, and movies, and Christian literature to help the Korean Christians without sending missionaries? These things are useful and needed, and yet they cannot take the place of the messenger. This story will illustrate this truth:

Some years ago a head-man in a distant village became my friend. Dignified, bearded, well-to-do and respected by the entire village, he often entertained me in his home. Although not a professing Christian, he came to the church services regularly. After I had made a number of visits, one of our lady missionaries, Miss Willie Bernice Greene, went to this place to hold Bible classes for a week. This old gentleman entertained her too--not in the best room as he had me, since she was only a woman, but in the little room in the back yard. Miss Greene and her assistants taught classes for the women and children in the morning, visiting in the afternoons in adjacent village homes, and held a meeting at night. Men were not invited or encouraged to attend, but this old gentleman was there every night. On the last night, as the service ended, he stood up and addressed the congregation as follows: "I have never been a Christian, but I have now decided to accept this Jesus as my Saviour. A few weeks ago I visited Chunju where these missionaries live. They have comfortable homes there, but I am sure they left far finer homes and manner of living in America because I have seen pictures and read about that country. If these people will come to our land, learn our difficult language, stay in our miserable homes, eat our food, endure the flies and mosquitoes and smells and noises--all for the purpose of telling us about the love of Jesus who means so much to them--then I want to be a Christian too."

I tell this story, not to pat missionaries on the back, but to show that our obligation under God is not merely to send abroad money, equipment,

technical experts, and social workers, but those who by their whole lives will indicate that they are sent out by God and His Church to witness to the cross of Christ, even though it demands sacrifice. The ordinary man in a distant land who sees the foreign missionary in his village cannot help but think, "If the Gospel is precious enough to someone half way around the world for him to come to my land to tell me about it, then surely I must hear and heed!" It is the combination of dedicated men and the message of the cross which God uses to win souls for His kingdom and establish the church on foreign soil.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16)

"Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of ~~Christ~~ our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14).

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24).

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before!"