

John 20:21, Luke 19:10, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

INTRO: David Brainerd, who was engaged to be married to the daughter of Jonathan Edwards & ended up on the mission field to the American Indians & died as a young man on that mission, once stated, **"AS LONG AS I SEE ANYTHING TO BE DONE FOR GOD, LIFE IS WORTH HAVING; BUT O HOW VAIN & UNWORTHY IT IS TO LIVE FOR ANY LOWER END!"** Nate Saint was the airplane pilot on that fateful trip in which Jim Elliot & his friends, including Nate were killed by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. He once was quoted as stating **In 1944 THE LORD CALLED ME FROM AVIATION TO HIMSELF, & NOW HE HAS SENT ME BACK TO AVIATION FOR HIMSELF.** In 1955, Nate (32 years of age), Ed McCully (not certain of age), Peter Fleming (27 years of age) & Jim Elliot (28 years of age) felt the call to evangelize the Huaorani ("people") of Ecuador. They were called the Aucas ("savages") by their neighbors. In late September 1955, they found a settlement just 15 minutes by flight from their home station. For 3 months, they dropped gifts to the Acuas as they had done to other tribes in order to develop a relationship with the tribes. They dropped an aluminum kettle, then a machete or two, then they used a loudspeaker to call out friendly messages to them in their language & soon the Aucas would respond with gifts of their own including a woven headband, carved wooden combs, two live parrots, cooked fish, parcels of peanuts, a piece of smoked monkey tail & they even cleared a space near the village to make the exchanges easier.

After three months of this, the missionaries decided it was time for ground contact & a fifth man joined them at this time, Roger Youderian from Montana. They located a beach that would serve as a landing strip about 4 miles from the village & decided on Tuesday January 3, 1956 to make physical contact.

On Tuesday they flew in & made camp, & then flew over the village to invite the Huaorani to visit them. The first visitors showed up on Friday, a man, a woman, & a teen-aged girl. They stayed for several hours in apparent friendliness, & then left abruptly. On Saturday, no one showed, & when the plane flew over the village, the Huaorani seemed frightened at first, but lost their fright when presents were dropped. On Sunday afternoon, 8 January 1956, at about 3pm, all five missionaries were speared to death at their camp. A search party the next day found no signs of a struggle, & the lookout who was to be stationed in a tree-house overlooking the camp at ground level had come down, so it appeared that the meeting had originally seemed friendly, & that the attack had been a surprise. Ed McCully's body was seen & identified, but was swept away by the river & not recovered. The other four, at the request of their wives, were buried at the site of the camp where they had died.

In less than three years after this tragedy, Rachel Saint (sister of Nate Saint) & Elisabeth Elliot (wife of Jim Elliot) had renewed contact with the Aucas & had established a permanent residence in a Huarani settlement, where they practiced basic medicine, learned the language & preached the gospel message – even to those men that had killed their loved ones just three years before. It is not always easy serving God but the love for lost souls drove these men, & later their relatives to continue to reach those that were in need of a Savior.

- A.** The missionary ministry of today is quite different from what it was many years ago – they may have made some improvements, but sometimes denominations have also handicapped those that are called to that ministry. Being a missionary is not an easy task, & though it may look glamorous from the outside, it is full of hard work & in some cases, the sacrifice of your life.
- a. It also appears that the thirst to see souls converted has waned in our modern society as the modern church has turned so much inward that we are more concerned about our own comfort & our own enjoyment than seeing others lives changed into servants of God.
 - b. C.T. Studd was a missionary of many years back & he once wrote, **"SOME WANT TO LIVE WITHIN THE SOUND OF CHURCH OR CHAPEL BELL; I WANT TO RUN A RESCUE SHOP WITHIN A YARD OF HELL."** We used to see souls dropping into hell & we were determined to do what we could to prevent such a situation, but now it seems we can sit idly by while people drop into hell & we sip our tea & read our newspapers & never talk to them about a means of escape from such an eternal destination.
 - c. The Christians in the early church (book of Acts) were led by the Spirit to the main task of bringing people to God through Christ & this consumed their spare times. I know we have to make a living, I know we need time to relax, I know we need time for our families, but how much of our time is dedicated to the service of God & would we really go out of our way to turn another away from hell's gates. Do we have the compassion that would drive us to reach over into the pit of hell & try to grab some that were falling in? Do we care if others perish or is our world consumed with just us & ours? We forget that we are a Christian today because someone cared, may be it is our time to care now.
 - d. The missionaries of old had an interesting take on missions.
 - i. David Livingstone – **"GOD HAD AN ONLY SON, & HE WAS A MISSIONARY & A PHYSICIAN."** When H. M. Stanley went to Africa in 1871 to find & report on David Livingstone, he spent several months in the missionary's company, carefully observing the man & his work. Livingstone never spoke to Stanley about spiritual matters, but Livingstone's loving & patient compassion for the African people was beyond Stanley's comprehension. He could not understand how the missionary could have such love for & patience with the backward, pagan people among whom he had so long ministered. Livingstone literally spent himself in untiring service for those whom he had no reason to love except for Christ's sake. Stanley wrote in his journal, **"WHEN I SAW THAT UNWEARIED PATIENCE, THAT UNFLAGGING ZEAL, & THOSE ENLIGHTENED SONS OF AFRICA, I BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT HIS SIDE, THOUGH HE NEVER SPOKE TO ME ONE WORD."** Livingston later wrote **"PEOPLE TALK OF THE SACRIFICE I HAVE MADE IN SPENDING SO MUCH OF MY**

LIFE IN AFRICA. CAN THAT BE CALLED A SACRIFICE WHICH IS SIMPLY PAYING BACK A SMALL PART OF THE GREAT DEBT OWING TO OUR GOD, WHICH WE CAN NEVER REPAY? IS THAT A SACRIFICE WHICH BRINGS ITS OWN BLESSED REWARD IN HEALTHFUL ACTIVITY, THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF DOING GOOD, PEACE OF MIND & A BRIGHT HOPE OF GLORIOUS DESTINY HEREAFTER? AWAY WITH THE WORD IN SUCH A VIEW & WITH SUCH A THOUGHT! IT IS EMPHATICALLY NO SACRIFICE. SAY RATHER IT IS A PRIVILEGE."

- ii. James Hudson Taylor – "I HAVE BUT ONE CANDLE OF LIFE TO BURN & WOULD RATHER BURN IT OUT WHERE PEOPLE ARE DYING IN DARKNESS THAN IN A LAND THAT IS FLOODED WITH LIGHT." He also said, "I LOOK UPON FOREIGN MISSIONARIES AS THE SCAFFOLDING AROUND A RISING BUILDING. THE SOONER IT CAN BE DISPENSED WITH, THE BETTER, OR RATHER, THE SOONER IT CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER PLACES, TO SERVE THE SAME TEMPORARY USE, THE BETTER."
- iii. Henry Martyn, "THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IS THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS, & THE NEARER WE GET TO HIM, THE MORE INTENSELY MISSIONARY WE MUST BECOME."
- iv. William Carey had to overcome great odds to obey the call of God. In *The Challenge of Life*, Oswald J. Smith noted that "EVEN THE DIRECTORS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY OPPOSED [CAREY'S] WORK. FOLLOWING IS THE IDIOTIC RESOLUTION THEY PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT: 'THE SENDING OUT OF MISSIONARIES INTO ONE EASTERN POSSESSION IS THE MADDEST, MOST EXTRAVAGANT, MOST COSTLY, MOST INDEFENSIBLE PROJECT WHICH HAS EVER BEEN SUGGESTED BY A MOONSTRUCK FANATIC.'" Smith added, "IN 1796, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND PASSED THE FOLLOWING INFAMOUS RESOLUTION: 'TO SPREAD THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOSPEL AMONGST BARBARIANS & HEATHENS SEEMS TO BE HIGHLY PREPOSTEROUS.' ONE SPEAKER IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SAID THAT HE WOULD RATHER SEE A BAND OF DEVILS LET LOOSE IN INDIA THAN A BAND OF MISSIONARIES. SUCH WAS THE OPPOSITION TO MISSIONS WHEN CAREY SET FORTH. AND YET, HE WAS ABLE TO WRITE, 'WHY IS MY SOUL DISQUIETED WITHIN ME? THINGS MAY TURN OUT BETTER THAN I EXPECT. EVERYTHING IS KNOWN TO GOD, AND GOD CARES.'" William Carey stood the test, & became the father of modern missions.
- v. Chet Bitterman, a Wycliffe bible translator in Bogota, Columbia, made this entry in his diary on September 13, 1978: "COSTA RICA, THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA IS GETTING WORSE. IF NICARAGUA FALLS, I GUESS THE REST OF CENTRAL AMERICAN WILL TOO. MAYBE THIS IS JUST SOME KIND OF SELF-INFLICTED MARTYR COMPLEX, BUT I FIND THIS RECURRING THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS GOD WILL CALL ME TO BE MARTYRED FOR HIM IN HIS SERVICE IN COLUMBIA. I AM WILLING." On January 19, 1981, 7 armed terrorists burst in the Wycliffe bible translators office Bogota, Columbia & took Chet captive for 7 weeks until they shot him in the head.

CONCLUSION: Certainly the world is in need of missionaries & I am in favor of doing what we can to go or to send others, but in the world in which we now live, the mission field is just as vital right where we are. Another missionary by the name of Elie Wiesel once wrote, "BUT WHERE WAS I TO START? THE WORLD IS SO VAST, I SHALL START WITH THE COUNTRY I KNOW BEST, MY OWN. BUT MY COUNTRY IS SO VERY LARGE. I HAD BETTER START WITH MY TOWN. BUT MY TOWN, TOO, IS LARGE. I HAD BEST START WITH MY STREET. NO: MY HOME. NO: MY FAMILY. NEVER MIND, I SHALL START WITH MYSELF." It all starts with us & our dedication to the Lord – it is not necessary to go half way around the world, in fact, if we cannot share the gospel at home, how do we expect to share it when we are in a hostile environment. Oswald Chambers wrote, "THE SPECIAL PERSON CALLED TO DO MISSIONARY WORK IS EVERY PERSON WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. THE CALL DOES NOT COME TO A CHOSEN FEW, IT IS TO EVERY ONE OF US." Let us not become so enamored with the stories of the achievements of missionaries half way around the world that we forget we have a mission field around us every day & in some case, in our own home! Will everyone listen? Will everyone accept the message? I believe I am safe in saying no, but at least we can present the message & who knows where that will eventually end. Just to know that you had a part in a salvation of a soul is an awesome event, even if it was just a small part – for there are no small parts, they are all necessary. We often talk about changing the world, if Christianity could be spread throughout our lands, even America, we would change the world. THE STORY IS TOLD OF A COLLEGE PROFESSOR WHO VISITED THE FIJI ISLANDS. BEING AGNOSTIC, HE CRITICALLY REMARKED TO AN ELDERLY CHIEF, "YOU'RE A GREAT LEADER, BUT IT'S A PITY YOU'VE BEEN TAKEN IN BY THOSE FOREIGN MISSIONARIES. THEY ONLY WANT TO GET RICH THROUGH YOU. NO ONE BELIEVES THE BIBLE ANYMORE. PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF THE THREADBARE STORY OF CHRIST DYING ON A CROSS FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND. THEY KNOW BETTER NOW. I'M SORRY YOU'VE BEEN SO FOOLISH AS TO ACCEPT THEIR STORY." THE OLD CHIEF'S EYES FLASHED AS HE ANSWERED, "SEE THAT GREAT ROCK OVER THERE? ON IT WE SMASHED THE HEADS OF OUR VICTIMS. NOTICE THE FURNACE NEXT TO IT? IN THAT OVEN WE FORMERLY ROASTED THE BODIES OF OUR ENEMIES. IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THOSE GOOD MISSIONARIES AND THE LOVE OF JESUS THAT CHANGED US FROM CANNIBALS INTO CHRISTIANS, YOU'D NEVER LEAVE THIS PLACE ALIVE! YOU'D BETTER THANK THE LORD FOR THE GOSPEL; OTHERWISE WE'D ALREADY BE FEASTING ON YOU. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE BIBLE, YOU'D NOW BE OUR SUPPER!"

People, we have the tools to change that portion of the world in which we associate. We may have family members, children, parents, brothers & sisters that are in need of salvation – why can't we start there? We may work with individuals that are in need of a Savior – when the door of opportunity presents itself to speak to them about Christ, do we or do we just let the door close? I have always thought if we have a desire to go around the world & preach the gospel, perhaps we had better start where we are. God has called every one of us, young or old, to be missionaries. Jesus Christ told His disciples, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." So did the disciples immediately leave Jerusalem & travel the world? No, we read they began right where they were & the church began to grow in Jerusalem & then they were able to spread to other areas to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember the words of Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world & preach the gospel to all creation." And in Acts 1:8, "...but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, & you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, & in all Judea & Samaria, & even to the remotest part of the earth." I would venture the question, have we started in Jerusalem? Have we started at home? We all have a mission field, sometimes we just ignore the obvious – start where you are – the world is waiting, the world is looking for missionaries, the world needs us. Don't look for that out-of-the-way place to spread the gospel, just look around you – even in your own home. Christians, let's wake up & let's share the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will listen & in every opportunity in which it is given us.