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INTERCESSORY FOREIGN MISSIONARIES

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS
FROM A MISSIONARY
TO EARNEST CHRISTIANS

STUDENT VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT
NEW YORK CITY

Intercessory Foreign Missionaries

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“Jehovah—wondered that there was no intercessor.”
Is. 59: 16.

The following is not a literary presentation of truth, but is designed to be a practical suggestion for work. This purpose has determined the form of presentation. It has grown out of the writer's experience in addressing churches, and the reception that has been accorded the truths here presented has revealed the need for their more general diffusion.

Christ did not command us to pray the Lord of the harvest that he send forth missionaries, but “laborers.” The difference is intentional, for there are others just as necessary as missionaries. (“Missionary” means “One sent,” and is the Latin form of the Greek “Apostle.”)

Those harvest hands who *directly* reach the souls of men and save them can be

divided generally into (1) Native Workers, upon whom in all countries the burden of evangelization rests; (2) Missionaries, who are no longer needed when the natives have learned all they can teach (some centuries ago they finished their work among the English); (3) Intercessors, who give their time and strength to the distinct work of definite intercessory prayer.

Of these three classes, if comparison is possible among things all of which are necessary, the Intercessor is most important because he is working at the very root and foundation of all harvest success and, in so far as man is responsible, his faithfulness determines the success of all others.

I. DEFINITION.

An intercessory Foreign Missionary is a "*laborer*" who cannot go in person to the foreign field, but who has set himself apart to pray for the definite details of the foreign missionary work. He alone is entitled to the name who enters upon an engagement to work for *definite* fields, an engagement as real as an appointment by a foreign mission board. His striking peculiarities are that he is working in the realm of "the heav-
enlies" instead of among visible men, and that there are no restrictions as to the

number who can be intercessors, to the place of their residences, or to the variety, sweep and completeness of the results accomplished.

II. NECESSITY FOR INTERCESSORY FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.

That mission field which has the largest number of missionaries (faithful intercessors) whose names are not in the published lists will always be the most successfully harvested. This is true

1. *Because of the nature of missionary activity.*

Eph. 6: 10-20 reveals the *facts* clearly, concisely and completely, showing that we are not primarily overcoming the prejudices and superstition of men, but “principalities — powers — world-rulers of this darkness — spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies,” which are various grades of rulers organized into invisible kingdoms of darkness. In Dan. 10 some of these principalities are mentioned by name: “Prince of Greece,” “Prince of Persia,” “Kings of Persia,” etc., while Christ calls the head of all these kingdoms the “Prince of the World.” Other forces are revealed in “the horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” and the “twelve legions of

angels'' mentioned by Jesus. Thus revelation shows missionary activity to be a spiritual WAR between the forces of Christ and those of Satan, not merely man trying to reform and civilize man. This war is waged for the possession of living men and through the medium of living men. Christ seeks men to be ''members of His body'' while Satan ''enters'' the hearts of men, so that each works out his purposes through the men who submit to him. It follows that men must go in person, as Jesus came to this world in person, to do the work made possible by prayer.

2. Because prayer based on God's word is the only weapon man can use to touch the invisible foe.

We can reach a Chinaman by speaking face to face with him, but we can strike the spiritual Prince of China only by way of the place ''above, where Christ is'' ever living to make intercession. An inspection of Eph. 6 shows that the end of putting on the armour of God is to *pray* for all the saints, but especially for Paul, who represents his missionary successors.

This armour is not for selfish protection, but to enable us to ''stand'' and—like Moses, Aaron and Hur—by supplication give victory to those fighting Amalek.

Jesus did not call upon the twelve legions of angels, but upon His disciples, and that they should watch with Him in prayer while He fought the invisible foe. In this He has shown the way for all who "fight the fight of faith." Even now it is by intercession that he continues the war.

3. *Because the missionary on the field cannot alone do His work.*

When the intercessors' hands fall Amalek prevails on the mission field to-day. The enemy is strong. Jesus refused to bow down to Satan, but the heathen bow and worship; therefore the blackness of darkness broods over those lands, a stifling, choking power of death. There a Christian is like a diver at the bottom of the sea.

In Christian countries prayer is continually offered for the pastor and for every detail of the work of the church; special meetings are held to pray for a revival. In open-air meetings, while one is speaking others are praying. Exactly in the same way one or two missionaries alone among thousands or millions need other persons to pray definitely while they work or speak. Only the need is more urgent, as the bottom of the sea is more dangerous than the air, just as there are more deaths "on the firing line" than in the quiet of the home.

The body of Christ does not consist of each one of us individually, but of all together, and if a missionary is left without sufficient aid in prayer, he suffers, limps, stumbles. Some have even fallen away. He may succeed in fighting his way to the very presence of God and receive blessings unspeakable, but *meanwhile the heathen perish* and God tells us that their blood is to be required at the hands of those who did not do their part. (Ezk. 33: 1-16.)

III. WHAT CAN BE DONE BY INTERCESSORY MISSIONARIES.

1. A host of intercessors can be speedily enlisted for this war.

2. Enough missionaries and money can be found to really accomplish our task.

3. *Suitable* men can be sent as missionaries, and the *unsuitable* can be prevented from making the mistake of going. Such mistakes have in the past cost many lives and thousands of dollars. They can be prevented by the Lord of the harvest only when He is asked to do so. Even Christ Himself prayed all night before He chose the first twelve missionaries. (It is a significant fact that there is no distinct command for *man* to send forth missionaries. That work was done by Christ Himself and

then by His Spirit when He chose Paul and Barnabas. When they tried to choose fellow-workers they quarreled over the choice. The command is to *pray*.)

4. Many urgent questions of general missionary policy can be solved only through much prayer.

5. Individual heathen can be prayed for by name and thus saved.

6. An adequate native ministry can be raised up and maintained.

7. Revivals can be brought about continually on the foreign fields.

8. Fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit can be given to over-burdened missionaries.

9. The health and strength of missionaries can be maintained under the severe strain of their physical and social surroundings.

10. Lonely missionaries—those without many friends—can be cheered and helped until their usefulness is multiplied many times.

Experience has repeatedly shown that the believing prayer of one humble intercessor at home can bring about a revival on the foreign field and save thousands. The experience of one missionary was that as far as man can see results he was able to do

more for the heathen toiling as an intercessor in America than while he was among the heathen *without intercessors pleading for him.*

IV. HOW TO DO THE WORK OF AN INTERCESSORY MISSIONARY.

1. Decide deliberately that *this* intercession is to be a regular binding duty.

2. Select fixed days, hours, times, and make them take precedence, as far as possible, of all other engagements.

3. Begin humbly, letting experience enlarge and guide.

4. Wait on the Lord of the harvest for directions as to what part of the field you belong.

5. Learn the names of all missionaries of all connections in your field and pray for them by name.

6. Do not pity the missionary or condole with him, give him your sympathetic *help*.

7. Write to the missionaries you are praying for, asking pointedly what their difficulties and needs are. Tell them you do *not* want something bright and newsy, but something dark and discouraging, and that when they are worn out you want them to drop you a postal telling you *that*, so you can pray them strong again.

8. Pray for every need or condition that you can learn about. This article is only suggestive.

9. Form the habit of letting God impress upon you the things for which to pray. He will do it.

10. Not many words are needed, but much time must be spent in "waiting" upon Him, the very silence calling for His will to be done. Silence enables one to draw very near to God. "We know not how to pray as we ought," and must *let* "the Spirit Himself make intercession."

11. Study and practice the art of praying until you are expert in it. The Bible furnishes its laws and examples, which can be worked out by patient practice only, just like any other art.

V. WARNINGS.

Some may be tempted to cherish a subtle, hidden feeling that by doing this work they are conferring a favor on some one by helping. Not at all; it is the other way; the unspeakable favor is granted you of sharing the burden of intercession daily carried by the risen man Christ Jesus in heaven.

A newly arrived missionary cannot vote for the first year, as so much has to be

learned before he can vote intelligently. In the same way, one beginning as an intercessory missionary needs to consider himself as a beginner with much to learn.

When details of mission work begin to come to your knowledge, be exceedingly careful how you judge, condemn or decide in matters that you have never met and that have puzzled the wisest men for many decades. No war is sweet or gentle but you are now fighting Satan enthroned among men, the most unscrupulous and horrible of enemies, worse than man can imagine. When matters utterly unexpected and discouraging arise, Satan will try to turn you away in disgust; therefore *remember* that the worse the troubles are the greater is the need for your prayers.

Many, many times you will be tempted to give it all up as useless, for every possible form of deception will be among his "wiles" to stop your intercession; if he can stop each one his victory is assured, and there are alarmingly few intercessors.

Be ready patiently to toil on without apparent results; time is required for them to show. Many a laborer has worked for years without seeing the results that overjoyed his successors. Cannot you do the same?

Woe be to any one who tries to become an intercessory missionary while the Lord is calling him to go in person. In Matt. 7: 23, Christ calls such “ye that work iniquity or lawlessness,” for although they have been eminently successful workers in the *church*, before men, what they did was not “the will” of God for them.

VI. SOME GENERAL TRUTHS.

1. Indirect Work. Every Christian should do some work as an intercessory missionary, but there are those at home whom the Lord calls to give their *daily toil* for the salvation of the nations. Many are needed who by teaching, writing and exhorting shall arouse Christians to a sense of their responsibility for the death of those who perish, not because they are sinners, but because the salvation prepared for them by Christ has never been offered to them by men. In the work here suggested, house-to-house visitation among church members has been proved most effective in arousing them to their privileges in the foreign fields. *A caution* is here needed, for such work is only indirect, and most jealous, prayerful care is needed to prevent it from displacing the direct work of intercession. Any work

that is *visible* so appeals to our pride that it is more attractive than is the lonely toil of intercession.

2. *Rejected.* It is generally considered that God has not called one to the foreign work because age, health, family relations, rejection by a mission board or other outward circumstances prevent him from going abroad. *Such circumstances have no bearing whatever on the question as to whether the Lord wants you to work directly for the salvation of the heathen.* God is waiting for you to take your place in the vital, difficult and blessed work of joining Christ in interceding before Him. It is not evidence of obedience quietly to drift along at ease, letting the far-away, unseen multitudes perish for the lack of your prayers. Some laborers *must not* go to the mission fields.

3. *Substitutes.* When a draft is made for war service only a limited number of men is called out, and a "substitute" has to be one of those not drafted in his own name. But in this spiritual war every citizen of heaven is drafted, and no substitutes are possible, because there are none left undrafted. Victory is impossible unless those at home meet and rout the invisible foe. It is unjust to send a man into the deadly blackness of heathenism without giving

your life in intercession for him while he gives his life for the heathen. We must “lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3: 16.)

4. *Candidates.* Beware of ever *urging* any one to go as a missionary. The Holy Spirit only can do that with safety. We should urge that one set his will “as flint” that he is going to “do the will of my father in heaven,” and that he then *pray*, “Lord, send forth laborers”; then if the Lord really wants him in foreign fields it is only a matter of time when it will be made so plain that there is no room for doubt.

5. *Rewards.* There is a peculiar supplementary reward given for all missionary work. It is an addition to the honors of faithful labor, and is determined not by what is done, but by what is “left.” For every comfort or friend that you leave in order to do this work you *will* receive one hundred fold (10,000 per cent.) of the comfort, rest and satisfaction that they could have afforded. This is indescribably true of both missionary and intercessor, and is the kind of “joy set before him” that enabled Jesus to “endure.” The missionary “leaves” by taking ship, the intercessor “leaves” by shutting the door of his closet. [When one contributes

money he does *not* "leave" it, but lays it up in heaven (Mt. 6: 20 and Lu. 18: 22), where it becomes the only treasure he can call his own.] Attendance on church meetings and conventions becomes a selfish indulgence of religious feelings when it leads to the neglect of the hard work God wants you to do. Men are dying in agony while you are enjoying a "beautiful" service and while God is calling you to forget your very existence in watching and praying with groanings that cannot be uttered.

"The unsearchable riches of Christ" are discovered by the missionary, whether he is among the heathen preaching it to them or in the home-land interceding for them. These things are not mere matters of intellectual theory, but they have been proven in experience, and should become your experience also, for they are a following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus.