

Success Abroad— Failure At Home

By
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TO OUR LORD

FOREIGN MISSION BOARD

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THE outstanding failure in connection with our foreign mission work is not on the foreign fields, but here in the homeland. The little that Southern Baptists are putting into foreign missions is bearing a hundredfold increase abroad. No investment of a corresponding amount of money ever yielded to Southern Baptists such large returns as that invested by them in foreign missions. The amazing thing about it is that when the cause abroad is prospering so marvelously, Southern Baptists are withholding their investment from it. Many things oppose foreign mission work abroad, but no obstacle abroad can resist it or seriously retard it. What compels it to halt is the failure of our people at home to supply it with proper equipment and re-enforcements.

We are building a denomination abroad that is already so well established in many lands that if we were to withdraw, the Cause would not die. It would be crippled to be sure, but not killed. The development is in the normal Baptist way. First the pioneer period in which the missionary patiently sows the seed; then the development of the churches, schools, associations, conventions, publishing plants, hospitals, orphanages, ministerial relief boards, home mission boards, foreign mission boards, church building associations, etc.

There are associations and boards in almost every one of our fields. These associations function just as they do here in the homeland. There are five boards in our South China Mission, for instance. The Secretary of the General Board in that field is a layman. The only condition im-

posed by him upon those who called him to the secretaryship was, that he should be permitted to pay his own salary. Every one of these five boards is doing a very vigorous work.

The Mexican Baptist Convention has founded an orphanage, and is conducting active mission operations amongst the Indians of South Mexico.

The Argentine Board conducts a good foreign mission work in Paraguay.

Brazil has as a foreign mission field the Republic of Portugal. In Brazil there are also the Home Mission Board, Sunday School and Bible Board, Educational Board, etc. A new Hospital Board in Nietheroy, Brazil, has been appointed and developed by the Brazilian Baptists. Last July they dedicated the first Baptist Hospital in South America. The Brazilian Baptists have spent about \$25,000 on this hospital, and will raise much more in order to complete and equip the plant. This is one of the many evidences of the development of self-support.

Self-support grows apace in all of our fields. To illustrate, there are seventy-three churches in the Campos Field in South Brazil, and sixty-three of them are self-supporting. One-third of all the churches we have now in the world, are self-supporting. Two-thirds of them own their houses of worship. The Building and Loan Boards in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and China, which have received some funds from the Foreign Mission Board have raised large sums from the native constituency and have done a great deal towards the development of this church building enterprise.

The per capita gifts of our members abroad last year amounted to \$3.32. Southern Baptists gave for all purposes \$10.51. Some of our mission fields

abroad gave more per capita than Southern Baptists but the average amounted to \$3.32. If Southern Baptists should give to the Foreign Mission Board \$3.32 per capita per year they would raise an amount almost equal to Twelve Million Dollars for foreign mission work. Southern Baptists are amply able to do this, and would do so if they really could see the vision.

The growth of our work in Africa is an illustration of how foreign mission work pays, and how aggressive the native churches are. In the Ibadan District there are about twenty churches with two thousand members, who have not yet seen the face of a missionary. These churches were built up by native evangelists who were sent out by the churches at Lagos. In the Ekiti District, a little further interior, the same number of churches with the same number of members have been founded by one of the churches in Lagos. Years ago a slave boy went interior on an evangelistic tour. When the boy came to a certain town the sights began to be familiar to him and he soon realized that he was in his home village. He did not know the whereabouts of his mother. He returned to Lagos with his master; was afterwards freed, converted and was sent back into the interior to preach the Gospel. He sat in the market-place of his native village inquiring about his mother, and finally she was found. She identified him by marks she had made upon him at his birth. This slave boy developed a church which now numbers 700 members. The work has grown so rapidly that the church at Lagos, which has been heretofore supporting it, is calling earnestly for assistance from our foreign missionaries. There are other districts in which the same situation obtains. So rapid has been this development that a great mass movement is on towards Christianity. Even now

there are more Baptists enrolled in the territory of our African Mission than in any other one of our fields. God is going ahead of us. The Spirit of God runs before and beckons us on. The facts cited here are but fleeting glimpses of that vast, surging movement that is being felt in foreign lands. This is our day of opportunity. We are succeeding marvelously abroad in spite of the halting support which our churches here in the homeland are giving.

Seventy-five years ago T. J. Bowen entered Nigeria with a view to opening work in the great Sudan region. The Sudan region of central Africa is the largest unoccupied mission field in the world. But up until the present we have not even reached the Sudan. We have been laboring amongst the virile Yorubas, and a great work has been developed amongst them, but still central Africa waits for Southern Baptists who are so slow of foot. Not only is this true of central Africa, but beyond the borders of every one of our mission fields are vast untouched reaches that call to us with piteous voices of needs that will not be met unless Southern Baptists meet them. These needs are calling. The rapid growth of our work abroad demonstrates that the favor of our God is upon it. Shall Southern Baptists not only fail to provide money enough to take care of actual running expenses of this growing work, but also allow to rise higher and higher the walls of a hindering debt which is shutting us out of scores and scores of inviting fields?

One of the main reasons why the Foreign Mission Board has upon it now such a great burden of debt is, that it has accumulated the debt in order to keep from injuring the growing work abroad until Southern Baptists could be aroused to see that the

throbbing vigor of their foreign mission work demands of them far larger offerings. This policy cannot be pursued indefinitely. We cannot go on piling up this debt on the Foreign Mission Board. The time has come when Southern Baptists must build higher and higher their gifts of gratitude and thanksgiving to their Lord who is leading them out into such glorious successes in the far fields.

Let us think of this debt from another point of view. It has been so well presented by one of our recently returned missionaries that we quote a portion of what she says: "I want to give you another angle on that debt. Did you ever think what it represents? It is not just a sum of money that we owe the banks. That debt represents missionaries in China, Africa and South America. It represents teachers for little children in other lands. It represents preachers who have told and are telling the good news of salvation. It represents thousands of souls who have been led into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. 'Other men have labored and ye have entered into their labors.' Other men labored to accomplish these results, the results that are represented in the debt and in the payment of that debt. You are entering into their labors. The debt is a door of opportunity to enter into their labors. Here is our opportunity to be real missionaries."

Let us be real missionaries and pay this debt joyfully because of the successes it represents abroad and provide abundantly for the work that is yet to be done, and thus set free the missionaries on the field and release these who are held at home. In so doing we shall be able to rejoice because of successes not only in foreign lands but also here in the homeland.