

EXTRAORDINARILY MISSION MINDED

“United in fighting for the faith that the Good News brings.” PHILIPPIANS 1:27 (NOG)

ACTS 16:9-14 (MSG)

“That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” The dream gave Paul his map.

We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans.

[We travelled] to Philippi, the main city in that part of Macedonia and, even more importantly, a Roman colony. We lingered there several days.

On the Sabbath, we left the city and went down along the river where we had heard there was to be a prayer meeting. We took our place with the women who had gathered there and talked with them. One woman, Lydia, was from Thyatira and a dealer in expensive textiles, known to be a God-fearing woman. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart—and she believed!”

PHILIPPIANS 1:27 (NOG)

“Live as citizens who reflect the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come to see you or whether I stay away, I’ll hear all about you. I’ll hear that you are firmly united in spirit, united in fighting for the faith that the Good News brings.”

INTRODUCTION

Today, we have presented our World Services gifts. Thank you for every effort you have made to help us reach out to people all around the world. I hope you have experienced joy like that expressed in the video we watched, which showed Salvation Army ministry and joy all around the world!

In bringing our gifts, we have signaled we are, “united in fighting for the faith that the Good News brings,” just as Paul instructed us to do in Philippians 1:27. Isn’t it wonderful to be moving forward on the right path?

After all, this is part of our Salvation Army DNA. We have learned to fight for the faith.

*“We’re in God’s Army and we fight
Wherever wrong is found;
A lowly cot or stately home
May be our battle ground.
We own no man as enemy,*

*Sin is our challenged foe;
We follow Jesus, Son of God,
As to the war we go.” (SASB 991)*

My prayer is that you will be extraordinarily mission minded. That you will discover, since we have a life changing message, that it is vital for every Christian to be on the same team, working together, fighting together, all for the same goal.

Today, I am looking for mission–minded people.

It is time to be both compassionate and clear in our message. It’s time to be visible in every neighborhood, every city, and every country. It’s time to proclaim that being born again and forgiven is truly transformational and worthy of our best efforts. It’s time to move forward under the direction of God.

This goes beyond joining together in our World Services celebration, as important as that is. Let our celebration be a start. This is about being mission–minded every day. It is a spiritual matter first, then a giving matter. It is a clear call to mission.

Now, let’s see how this call influences each of us.

I. A CALL TO MISSION: MY RESPONSIBILITY

This call to mission must become personal to you. We are told to be “united in fighting for the faith.” So, while we work together as Citizens of the Kingdom, we each have to take responsibility for spreading the Good News. It is a spiritual matter for each of us.

You know, something like that happened when our Salvation Army World Services began. This program had had at its root the idea of self denial. In fact, “Self Denial” was the name we used for the fund–raising effort.

Major John Carleton was present at a meeting led by General William Booth. The General asked the congregation, many of whom were well–to–do people from the middle and upper classes, to write on pieces of paper an amount they were willing to give to support the Army’s missionary work. Major Carleton did not have much money, but he was stirred by the challenge and took it personally. On one of the pieces of paper, he wrote a promise to abstain from dessert pudding for a whole year, and by doing so, save 50 shillings, which he would give to the Army’s work.

William Booth received Carleton’s written promise. The Founder was deeply moved and inspired to put a challenge before all Salvationists. His call to mission came in the form of a request that everyone consider making a personal sacrifice, and deny themselves of something, not for a year but simply for a week. Participants were to set aside the money saved for the mission. In doing this, he knew that everyone could make a contribution and they would benefit personally from the self–discipline this would require. The name given to this challenge became the International Self–Denial Fund.

Major Carleton was challenged in his spirit and responded so that the word of God could advance.

Having heard that story, I have a question for you. Are you willing to commit to the mission of spreading the Good News and making disciples? Has your spirit been challenged? Can we depend on you?

You see, we are not just talking about you giving money, which is so important at World Services time. We are talking about your desire to make a commitment to God to support His mission.

To give commitment priority, you must have embraced the message of salvation. You must have your own personal experience with Jesus. How else could you really share the Good News? You must understand that salvation is not about your good intentions, as described in the words of this song:

*“Jesus, save me through and through,
Save me from self-mending;
Self-salvation will not do,
Pass me through the cleansing.”* (SASB 714)

It is not about sincerity and good intentions. It is not a self-help issue. It is about your transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit and faith that there is a redemptive power for other people too. Will you be a participant in sharing the Good News and not just a spectator?

Whether it be something you feel compelled to do to help us financially, like the pudding sacrifice that Major Carleton was willing to make or responding to God’s call and serving in another country or working behind the scenes at a corps or giving your testimony in public—it all means you will accept responsibility and get involved. The motivation is a spiritual matter that comes first and then we take on our responsibilities and go to work.

You see, God helps us fulfill important responsibilities when we engage our faith. An example is what General Cox said when addressing a desperate famine situation in Africa. He said that Salvationists and friends need to respond “through our actions, not just through our words.” He also said, “We might feel a sense of powerlessness by a pending disaster of this magnitude and yet our faith in God should drive us to more than thoughts of compassion.”

“We’re in God’s Army and we fight!” is what the song says. Our Scripture said that we are to be “united in fighting for the faith.” So, that means me and that means you!

II. A CALL TO MISSION: MY OPPORTUNITY

If you are in a right relationship with the Lord and want to share the Good News of Jesus, then opportunities will come. You have a life-giving word to share.

People are watching, you know. The difference between you, and those with no faith, is obvious. When the time is right, you will recognize your opportunity to be of help or to share the Gospel. The Citizen of the Kingdom who is mission-minded will be used of God, and it won’t always be in predictable ways.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are thrown in jail in the city of Philippi. Even back then, extreme politics were involved as Jewish community leaders objected to any preaching about Jesus.

The jailer knew the reputation of these two Jewish preachers as being followers of Jesus. The word in the city was that these men could tell him how his sins could be forgiven. He observed that, while they were in jail, Paul and Silas weren’t complaining and angry, even after being beaten, locked up, and put in restraints. In fact, he heard them singing and praying. The other prisoners were also listening. People knew Paul and Silas were followers of Jesus with a message of Good News!

By the way, how is your attitude today? How do you react to bad treatment? In your prayers, do you seek pity, or give God praise?

If you remember this story, you will know what happened next. An earthquake shook the jail so violently, it caused the cells to open and the prisoners to release their restraints. This put the jailer in a crisis. He knew that if prisoners escaped, he would lose his job, perhaps his life. He was so afraid, he spoke of committing suicide.

Paul, with his wits about him, reached out to the guard, reassuring him that no one had escaped. What followed? Talk about the earthquake? No. Talk about the conditions in the prison? No. The jailer rushed to Paul and Silas and the next recorded words were, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” That evening, God saved this man and his entire household.

The person who is extraordinarily mission-minded needs to be ready to share the Good News in the community. You are being observed. Someone might ask you, “what must I do to be saved?” But it is just as likely that someone will reach out to you for comfort or counsel during a crisis because of your kindness. Or someone will say, “there is something different about you,” and open the door for you to speak about your faith.

An early Salvation Army leader, Frederick Booth-Tucker, said, “The common church idea is of the minister doing all the fighting and feeding, while his congregation does all the looking on and swallowing. We are an Army. Every soldier is expected to fight.”

Are you ready to take the opportunities that the Lord brings your way? How can you be ready? Here is a word for us:

*“The good fight is the fight of faith,
Heaven’s victories are won
By men unarmed, save with the mind
That was in Christ, the Son.”* (SASB 991)

Recently when our territorial leaders were installed, Commissioner William Bamford helped us understand the importance of the opportunities God has arranged. Using examples from Matthew 4:18–22, Commissioner Bamford said, “We need to be like these disciples. We need to be willing to listen and to obey and to follow God... To the disciples, Jesus simply says, ‘Come, follow Me.’ You see, Jesus is seeking ordinary people to do extraordinary things—for Him.”

In light of the opportunities before us, and as followers of Jesus, we face all challenges and proclaim:

*“To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill,
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master’s will!”* (SASB 946)

Having determined this to be my stance as a Christian, I can expect to come face-to-face with opportunities to share the Gospel.

III. A CALL TO MISSION: MY GOOD NEWS

Don’t hesitate in this mission, my Christians. After all, the Good News brings faith! It’s Good News for you and Good News for people who will learn from your example.

Commissioner Barry Swanson advised, “Live each day as if it were a missions trip, an adventure with Christ. What are new ways to express your faith and bless people? Begin to see them through the eyes of Christ. Talk to them, walk with them, and discover the needs and challenges in your community. Then see the opportunity for change and redemption.”

It was interesting how Paul was able to be happy as the Lord used him. You can sense his joy when he talks about how people received him during his missionary journeys. He realized he was being talked about by people who hadn't even met him.

He said in Galatians 1:23–24 (VOICE); “Stories of my call and mission preceded me: ‘The very man who wanted to kill us all is now preaching the faith he once labored to destroy.’ And so they praised God for the miracle He did in my life.” Paul was thrilled. Like the experience of Paul, people can praise God for the miracle He has done in your life.

Our mission is vibrant with Good News. You can sense this in a *War Cry* magazine report shared by Lt. Colonel Marlene Chase.

“Through the generous giving and prayers of God’s people, a man in Cambodia is given a donkey to help him do his farm work more productively. Young women on the streets of Bangkok are rescued from prostitution, given a safe place to live, and taught how to sew goods for sale. A home for babies in Uganda provides love, care, clothing, and education for abandoned or orphaned babies who would otherwise have no chance to thrive or even survive. A village well is dug, a school is built and furnished, a hospital equipped—and the whole community benefits.

“A man just released from prison came to The Salvation Army for budgeting help. The budgeter told me, ‘We worked for six months on his anger issues, but once we got those sorted, his finances fell into place with no difficulty.’

“An alcoholic finally gives in and admits he has a problem. Seeking help, he finds sobriety, his life restored, and a whole new faith-filled way of living. ‘I don’t know much about miracles,’ he says, ‘but I know God turned my beer into furniture.’

“A woman gave her testimony in a Sunday service. ‘When I was little, I played with little toys,’ she says. ‘When I grew up, I gave away my little toys and started playing with big toys. But, they were bad toys—alcohol, drugs, and gambling. I lost everything, even my children. In linking up with God’s people, I’m learning everything new. Now, I have my children and grandchildren back again. I have nothing to lose because I had already lost everything. Now, I have everything to gain. I get up in the mornings, read the Bible, start the day with God, and everything is different.’” (*War Cry* 2015)

Do you sense how Good News is shared? In these examples we see mission-minded believers sharing God’s love with needy people who God wants to bless. This is the fight of faith in which we are privileged to participate. Good News can result in someone praising God.

So how is the Lord using you? If you are a Citizen of the Kingdom, if you are fighting for the faith, He will use you to share the Good News.

This is what it is like being a Citizen of the Kingdom. You are changed from the inside out and people notice it. You are part of the great move of God in this world. You take the privileges and responsibilities seriously. You have Good News to share and it permeates your very being.

APPLICATION

How does this call to mission influence you? Are you ready to respond as a disciple of Jesus? Is there anything that would keep you from joining with other Citizens of the Kingdom, fighting together for the faith?

Can you say?

As a Citizen of the Kingdom, I reflect the Good News rather than the evil in this world.

As a Citizen of the Kingdom, I know that what I am doing is observed by others. I don't live to myself.

As a Citizen of the Kingdom, I do God's work in harmony with others.

As a Citizen of the Kingdom, I am focused on the mission.

Will you say?

I am honored to be a Citizen of the Kingdom and to serve my God. I will give myself to this mission and take my place in active service. I accept the privileges and responsibilities that accompany this honor.

Today as Citizens of the Kingdom, we acknowledge the greatness of our mission and say with the songwriter:

*“As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.*

*So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
Thy Kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.” (SASB 1039)*

CHORUS OF SONG

877/504 “I'm the Child of a King”

SONG

943/922 “We've a Story to Tell to the Nations”

INCLUDE ME

(Extraordinarily Mission-Minded)

PREPARATION

This week, we include by playing a video from YouTube. This means the equipment will need to be in place, and the sound loud enough for all to hear. You will want the whole congregation to be able to view this. Unless the item is downloaded, you will need to be sure there is a working internet connection. Make sure you preview the video. It lasts 4:47 minutes.

INVITE THE CHILDREN TO GATHER

This week, we will have our World Services ingathering. That means people will bring money to give to help people in other countries. Boys and girls can give too. You'll be happy to know that you have helped.

Can you name all the countries where The Salvation Army is working?

(Allow for answers.)

I don't think anybody could name them all because we have a mission for Jesus in 128 countries. That is wonderful and makes us happy.

I want you to watch a video and try to count how many countries are mentioned. I think you will enjoy it. When it's done, you will be glad to be part of the Salvation Army's mission to tell others about Jesus.

Show video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aD-8obZ11Bo>

How many countries were shown? I think it went too fast to count, but just in that video, we saw more than 50 programs in 20 countries. Amazing!

I hope today you've learned there is "happy" in helping The Salvation Army do its work, here, and all around the world!